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National Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Awareness Week, 1984

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is one of the major known causes of birth defects with mental retardation and the only one which, at present, is totally preventable.

FAS can result in many serious health problems including prenatal and postnatal growth retardation; developmental disabilities that may cause an infant to experience delays in activities such as walking and speaking; mental retardation; and other organ abnormalities such as heart defects.

In addition, in cases where FAS is not fully present, infants may suffer other alcohol-related birth effects—a series of health risks and problems that include low birthweight; increased prenatal infections; irritability or hyperactivity during the newborn period; birth defects and problems associated with mental impairment. Learning deficits may also occur, although these may not be apparent for a number of years.

Although some questions remain unanswered on consumption of alcohol during pregnancy, research over the past 10 years has established that prenatal alcohol exposure can pose a threat to the health of the unborn child. This knowledge led the Surgeon General of the United States, in 1981, to issue an advisory strongly encouraging women who are pregnant or considering pregnancy to avoid the use of alcohol. In addition, the medical and scientific community, many public and private agencies, and institutions and concerned citizens have, over the years, undertaken valuable efforts to promote public awareness of FAS and related health concerns.

In recognition of the potential for serious consequences of fetal alcohol exposure, and in the interest of increasing public awareness that these consequences are preventable, the Congress, by House Joint Resolution 324 (Public Law 98-188), has designated the week beginning January 15, 1984, as "National Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Awareness Week" and has requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of that week.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the week of January 15 through January 21, 1984, as National Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Awareness Week.

I invite the Governors, the chief officials of local governments, and all Americans to observe this week with appropriate activities, particularly those which seek to protect the health of children through heightened awareness of the consequences of alcohol use during pregnancy.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 12th day of January, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and eighth.

Ronald Reagan