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National AIDS Awareness and Prevention Month, 1988

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Nearly 75,000 Americans have been diagnosed as having the fatal disease AIDS, and more than 41,000 have already died from it. The Public Health Service estimates that an additional one to one-and-a-half million Americans have been infected by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), which causes AIDS. Most of the infected individuals now show no symptoms, but it is likely that over the next few years they will develop AIDS or AIDS-related illnesses.

Extensive efforts by Government and the private sector are underway in the fight against AIDS and HIV infection, and great strides have been made. In the 7 years since the first reports of AIDS cases, the virus has been identified; the ways in which it is spread have been pinpointed; an AIDS antibody screening test has been developed and is being used to protect blood supplies; the first steps toward development of a protective vaccine have been taken; and promising drugs to fight the HIV and its manifestations are being synthesized and tested.

Nevertheless, today we have neither a cure for AIDS nor a vaccine against HIV infection. For this reason, it is vital that every individual know how HIV infection is spread—and that we understand how to prevent the spread. The virus is most commonly spread through sexual contact with an infected person, especially through homosexual practices; through intravenous drug use with contaminated needles; and through other transmissions of infected blood. The virus is not commonly spread through ordinary, everyday, nonsexual contact.

To prevent the further spread of AIDS and HIV infection, we must heed lessons taught by medicine and morality alike. The Surgeon General has reminded all of us that the best way to prevent AIDS and the HIV is to abstain from sexual activity until adulthood and then to restrict sex to a faithful, monogamous relationship. This wise counsel, along with saying "no" to illegal drugs, can prevent the spread of most AIDS and HIV cases. Parents should explain to their children the goodness and blessings of chastity before marriage, of solid family life, and of a drug-free way of life.

One of America's greatest strengths has always been our ability to work together in times of adversity. We must rely on this strength to sustain us as we work to prevent the spread of AIDS and the HIV and as we care for those already afflicted.

The Congress, by Senate Joint Resolution 192, has designated October 1988 as "National AIDS Awareness and Prevention Month" and authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this occasion.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim October 1988 as National AIDS Awareness and Prevention Month, and I call upon Americans to observe this occasion with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-eighth day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirteenth.

Ronald Reagan