

Presidential Documents

Proclamation 7033 of October 6, 1997

Child Health Day, 1997

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

For children, childhood seems to last forever; but for adults—particularly for those of us who are parents—it passes in the blink of an eye. The little girl smiling at us from her tricycle and the little boy running to catch the school bus will soon be driving away to their first jobs. One of the greatest gifts we can offer our children while they are still in our care is a healthy start in life.

We are making tremendous progress as a nation in helping more children get that healthy start. This year I signed into law historic legislation to extend health care coverage to millions of uninsured children. This \$24 billion initiative over 5 years is the largest investment in children's health since the creation of Medicaid in 1965. On October 1, the Federal Government and the States began a partnership to help provide meaningful health insurance to children whose families earn too much for Medicaid but too little to afford private coverage.

This new initiative will take an enormous step toward improving the health of our Nation's children. In 1995, approximately 10 million of them were not covered by health insurance, and they were either ineligible for or not enrolled in publicly financed medical assistance programs. Last year, another 800,000 uninsured children joined their ranks. These children are less likely to receive the primary care services they need to maintain good health, and they are at risk of receiving lower quality care. Too often they become trapped in a tragic downward spiral—poor health keeps them out of school, keeps them from pursuing their studies with energy and enthusiasm, and often keeps them from acquiring the knowledge and self-esteem they need to reach their full potential. With this new children's health initiative, we can provide millions of children the coverage they need to grow up healthy and strong.

We are making progress in other areas, as well. Thanks to advances in medical research and our increasing knowledge about prevention and the importance of good nutrition, many childhood diseases and illnesses can now be averted. Funding for childhood immunization has doubled since 1993, and immunization rates are at an all-time high. In addition, we recently announced an important Food and Drug Administration regulation requiring manufacturers to do studies on pediatric populations for new prescription drugs—and those currently on the market—to ensure that our prescription drugs have been adequately tested for the unique needs of children. We have dramatically increased participation in the Women, Infants and Children Supplemental Nutrition Program, providing nutrition packages and information and health referrals to more than 7 million infants, children, and pregnant women. With the enactment of the Kassebaum-Kennedy bill last year, we have helped millions of children keep their healthcare coverage when their parents change or lose jobs.

We are also taking strong actions to prevent our children from smoking. Each day 3,000 children become regular smokers and 1,000 of them will die from a tobacco-related illness. Last year, my Administration issued guide-

lines to eliminate easy access to tobacco products and to prohibit companies from directing advertising towards children.

To acknowledge our profound responsibility to nurture the health and development of America's children, the Congress, by joint resolution approved May 18, 1928, as amended (36 U.S.C. 143), has called for the designation of the first Monday in October as "Child Health Day" and has requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this day.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim Monday, October 6, 1997, as Child Health Day. I call upon my fellow Americans to join me on that day, and every day throughout the year, in strengthening our national commitment to the well-being of our children.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this sixth day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-second.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "William J. Clinton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "W" and "C".

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