

I want to thank Secretaries Albright and Slater and the negotiators at the Departments of State and Transportation for their sustained efforts in reaching this historic agreement.

Proclamation 7066—American Heart Month, 1998

January 30, 1998

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Fifty years ago, a heart attack meant an end to an active lifestyle, and, for a third of those stricken, it meant death. Thankfully, the past half-century has brought us an array of advances in the prevention and treatment of heart disease. Procedures such as balloon angioplasty and coronary artery bypass grafts, noninvasive diagnostic tests, and drugs that treat high blood pressure and clots and reduce high blood cholesterol have enabled Americans to live longer and healthier lives. Equally important, we have become better educated during the past five decades about heart disease risk factors and how to control them.

This year, two of the groups most responsible for this remarkable progress—the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute and the American Heart Association—are celebrating their golden anniversaries. The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, part of the National Institutes of Health, leads the Federal Government's efforts against heart disease by supporting research and education for the public, heart patients, and health care professionals. The American Heart Association plays a crucial role in the fight against heart disease through its research and education programs and its vital network of dedicated volunteers.

Despite the encouraging developments in that fight, we still face many challenges. Heart disease continues to be the leading cause of death in this country, killing more than 700,000 Americans each year. The number of Americans with heart disease or a risk factor for it is staggering. Approximately 58 million have some form of cardiovascular disease, about 50 million have high blood pres-

sure, and about 52 million have high blood cholesterol. Americans are also becoming more overweight and less active—two key factors that increase the risk of heart disease. Most disturbing, for the first time in decades, Americans are losing ground against some cardiovascular diseases. The rate of stroke has risen slightly, the prevalence of heart failure has increased, and the decline in the death rate for those with coronary heart disease has slowed.

Women are particularly hard hit by this disease, in part because public health messages too often have not focused on how this segment of our population can best protect their hearts. The American Heart Association recently discovered that only 8 percent of American women know that heart disease and stroke are the greatest health threats for women, and 90 percent of women polled did not know the most common heart attack signals for women.

For a variety of reasons, including poorer access to preventive health care services, minorities in America have high mortality rates due to heart disease. The American Heart Association reported that, in 1995, cardiovascular disease death rates were about 49 percent greater for African American men than for white men, and about 67 percent higher for African American women than white women. In addition, the prevalence of diabetes—a major risk factor for heart disease—is very high in some of our Native American populations, and Asian Americans have a high mortality rate for stroke.

However, both the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute and the American Heart Association have undertaken activities to counter these trends. Both groups have initiated major efforts to better inform women and minorities about the threat of heart disease and the steps that can be taken both to prevent and treat it. These fine organizations also continue their efforts to educate health professionals on improving medical practice in heart health and to inform patients and the public about how to reduce their risk of heart disease. As we celebrate their 50th anniversaries, let us resolve to build on their record of accomplishment. By

continuing our investment in research, raising public awareness of the symptoms of heart disease, and educating Americans about the importance of a heart-healthy diet and exercise, we can continue our extraordinary progress in saving lives and improving health.

In recognition of these important efforts in the ongoing fight against cardiovascular disease, the Congress, by Joint Resolution approved December 30, 1963 (77 Stat. 843; 36 U.S.C. 169b), has requested that the President issue an annual proclamation designating February as "American Heart Month."

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim February 1998 as American Heart Month. I invite the Governors of the States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, officials of other areas subject to the jurisdiction of the United States, and the American people to join me in reaffirming our commitment to combating cardiovascular disease and stroke.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this thirtieth day of January, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-second.

William J. Clinton

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NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on February 3.

Proclamation 7067—National African American History Month, 1998

January 30, 1998

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

African American history is one of the great human chronicles of all time. It is the story of men and women who, with extraordinary courage and faith, prevailed against centuries of slavery and discrimination to

build lives for themselves and their families and to contribute immeasurably to the strength and character of our Nation. It is the story of millions of people who arrived on these shores in chains, yet who had the greatness of heart and spirit to love this country for its possibilities. It is the story of generations of heroes who with their labor, voices, vision, and blood sought to change the essence of our society—our laws, institutions, and attitudes—to reflect the fundamental American ideals of freedom, justice, and equality. African American history is ultimately the story of America's struggle to become a more perfect union.

Each year during the month of February, we focus on a particular aspect of African American history to broaden our knowledge and deepen our appreciation of the countless contributions African Americans have made to the life of our Nation. This year's theme, "African Americans in Business: The Path Towards Empowerment," presents an opportunity not only to celebrate these contributions, but also to build on them.

Our Nation's system of free enterprise has been a sure path to inclusion and independence for generations of Americans, and today African American entrepreneurs are reaping its many rewards. In every facet of American endeavor, in the fields of health care, law, government, and education; as artists, bankers, scientists, and computer programmers, African Americans are excelling and adding significantly to the strength of our economy. If current trends continue, African Americans will account for nearly 12 percent of the American labor force by the year 2000. And even more promising, according to the most recent data available from the U.S. Census, the number of businesses owned by African Americans has grown at an impressive annual rate and significantly faster than the number of new U.S. businesses overall. These statistics are a testament to the perseverance, hard work, and energy of African Americans and of their enduring faith in the American Dream.

As we celebrate National African American History Month, let us resolve to build on this record of success. We must ensure that every American shares equal access to a quality education—an education that will