
Presidential Documents

Proclamation 6976 of March 3, 1997

Save Your Vision Week, 1997

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Our eyes are our windows to the world. They give us the freedom to gaze at a sunset, read a book, or drive a car. Our sight allows us to jog along a garden pathway or enjoy a panoramic view.

All of us need to care for our vision, but older Americans in particular should be aware of their susceptibility to eye disease. As the "baby boom" generation ages, it is critical that these Americans receive regular eye examinations from eye-care professionals.

A thorough exam can lead to early detection and control or cure of eye diseases such as glaucoma, cataract, and diabetic retinopathy. A professional eye exam can also diagnose age-related macular degeneration (AMD), a leading cause of severe visual impairment and blindness in the United States. This common disease affects the retina, the part of the eye that helps to produce sharp, central vision required for activities such as reading and driving. AMD causes a loss of this clear, central vision; in some cases, vision loss is rapid and dramatic. The risk of AMD dramatically increases after age 60. It is estimated that this disease already causes visual impairment in approximately 1.7 million of the 34 million Americans now older than 65. As these numbers continue to grow, researchers are working to find the cause of, and develop treatment for, this debilitating disease.

People with AMD and its accompanying visual impairment often cannot perform daily activities such as reading the newspaper, preparing meals, or recognizing faces of friends. The inability to see well affects routine activities and social interactions and can lead to a loss of independence.

However, low-vision services and devices can greatly improve the quality of life for visually impaired patients and help them maintain their independence. Devices such as hand-held magnifiers, computer monitors with large type, and large-print newspapers and books can help the visually impaired dramatically improve their quality of life.

To remind Americans of the importance of protecting their eyesight, the Congress, by joint resolution approved December 30, 1963 (77 Stat. 629; 36 U.S.C. 169a), has authorized and requested the President to proclaim the first week in March of each year as "Save Your Vision Week."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim March 2 through March 8, 1997, as Save Your Vision Week. Our eyes play a vital role in our independence and daily living and need to be examined regularly. Let us recognize the work done by vision researchers across our Nation on AMD and other eye diseases and the efforts they are making to enhance and retain our precious sight. Education on good vision starts with us, and we should take progressive steps to protect our eyes.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this third day of March, 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-first.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William J. Clinton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "W".

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