
Presidential Documents

Title 3—

Proclamation 7185 of April 16, 1999

The President

National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week, 1999

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Organ donation is one of humanity's most noble expressions of compassion and generosity. It reflects the extraordinary selflessness of the donor and gives the recipient a second chance to experience life's abundant blessings.

For many people across our country, receiving an organ or tissue transplant means relief from suffering and a marked improvement in the quality of their lives. For others, it literally means the difference between life and death. And the demand for such donations continues to grow. In the last six years, the number of people on the national organ transplant list has doubled, from more than 30,000 in 1993 to more than 62,000 patients today. A new name is added to that list every 18 seconds.

Fortunately, thanks to remarkable medical breakthroughs, each of us has the power to improve these troubling statistics. In December of 1997, Vice President Gore and Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) Donna Shalala launched the National Organ and Tissue Donation Initiative to raise awareness of the successes of transplantation and to educate our citizens about the urgent and continuing need for organ and tissue donations. Building on this effort, the Health Care Financing Administration now requires hospitals participating in Medicaid and Medicare to notify organ procurement organizations of all deaths and imminent deaths at their facilities and to train their personnel to discuss donation with the families of potential donors. Judging from the positive impact of similar legislation in Pennsylvania, we anticipate that this new Federal regulation will substantially increase the number of donations throughout the country.

Becoming a donor is simple, requiring only that we complete and carry a donor card and inform our families and friends about our wish to donate. This second step is a critical one because, according to a new study issued by HHS, almost all Americans would agree to donate their loved one's tissue or organs if they knew their loved one had requested it. Fewer than half would consent if they did not know their loved one's wishes.

During National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week, I urge all Americans to become potential donors. By doing so, we can bring new hope and improved lives to thousands of our fellow citizens and hasten the day when no American on the organ transplant waiting list loses the race against time.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 18 through April 24, 1999, as National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week. I urge all health care professionals, educators, the media, public and private organizations concerned with organ donation and transplantation, the clergy, and all Americans to join me in promoting greater awareness and acceptance of this humanitarian action.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this sixteenth day of April, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-third.

William Clinton

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