

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this seventh day of April, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and seventh.

RONALD REAGAN

Proclamation 5044 of April 7, 1983

Crime Victims Week, 1983

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

For too many years, the scales of justice—the very hallmark of our free society—have been out of balance. Too often innocent victims of crime turn to their government for protection and support only to find that the criminal justice system seems unable to achieve two of its fundamental purposes—protecting those who obey the law and punishing those who break it. Victims and their families must bear the physical, financial, and emotional impact of the crime. It is unjust and inexcusable when they are ignored or mistreated by this system. Victims called for help, and they needed our assistance. Frequently, their pleas have been unheard and their needs have gone unattended.

These were the conclusions of the President's Task Force on Victims of Crime that I established last year. The Task Force conducted hearings around the country, taking testimony from professionals within and outside the system and, most importantly, from victims themselves. The Task Force concluded that the neglect and mistreatment of crime victims are a national disgrace.

I asked the Task Force for recommendations to restore balance to our system. It submitted 68 specific recommendations directed to the Executive Branch and the Congress, State and local legislative bodies, law enforcement officers, the judiciary, prosecutors, defense attorneys, parole boards, bar associations, the religious community, schools, hospitals, the mental health professionals, and the private sector.

No segment of our society should refuse to recognize its responsibility to help. This Administration has already begun implementation of the Task Force's recommendations.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the week beginning April 17, 1983, as Crime Victims Week. I urge officials at all levels of government to take immediate and decisive action to meet the needs of crime victims in their jurisdictions. I urge every American to take action to ease the burdens faced by innocent victims. I urge the victims themselves not to despair. You have made us aware of the inequities you have faced, and we are moving forward to correct them. For too long the justice system has failed to address adequately the rights of victims. The time has come to restore the balance. If our system is to survive, it must truly bring justice to all who seek it.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 7th day of April, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and seventh.

RONALD REAGAN