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to work with chemicals or machinery are at increased risk of eye injury. Macular degeneration takes a dramatic toll on the vision of people aged 60 and over, causing severe visual impairment and even blindness in its victims. Diseases such as glaucoma, cataract, and diabetic retinopathy can silently steal the vision of their victims without pain or other early symptoms to signal the need for immediate medical attention.

The greatest defense we have in protecting our eyesight is early detection and treatment. While many Americans receive regular physical examinations to ensure their overall fitness, they often ignore the health of their eyes. Yet, by the time many patients realize their eyesight is deteriorating, it is often too late to restore vision already lost. Even though they may not be experiencing vision problems, Americans should make a dilated eye examination part of their preventive health care routine. A dilated eye exam can reveal early signs of eye disease and make it possible to treat the affliction and preserve vision.

Good eye care is not solely for those who know they are at high risk for eye disease—it is for everyone. Certain types of eye disease tend to develop primarily in children, while others manifest themselves most often in working-age adults or older men and women. By taking good care of our eyes, we can take the important steps to maintain our quality of life and ensure the full enjoyment of all that our world has to offer.

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 1 through March 7, 1998, as Save Your Vision Week. I urge all Americans to participate by making eye care and eye safety an important part of their lives and to ensure that dilated eye examinations are included in their regular health maintenance programs. I invite eye care professionals, the media, and all public and private organizations dedicated to preserving eyesight to join in activities that will raise awareness of the measures we can take to protect and sustain our vision.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-sixth day of February, 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

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., March 2, 1998]

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

Statement Announcing Grants Under the Violence Against Women Program

February 27, 1998

Today, the Justice Department is awarding more than $135 million in grants under the Violence Against Women program to help State and local authorities combat domestic violence, stalking, and sexual assault. This money will be used to train police, hire prosecutors and provide assistance to victims. Since I signed the Crime Act in 1994, we have begun to transform the way law enforcement deals with domestic violence. We should be proud of the efforts underway in communities across our Nation to stop these serious crimes. These funds will help every State build and expand on the programs they have developed to ensure that abusers are captured, prosecuted, and punished.

Letter to the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission on Campaign Finance Reform

February 27, 1998

Dear Chairman Kennard:

Yesterday's defeat of comprehensive campaign finance reform legislation in the Senate makes it even more imperative that the Federal Communications Commission act to provide free and reduced rate airtime to candidates and take any other steps that would

reform political debate over the public airwaves.

I applaud your previous decision to take the next steps toward providing such free and reduced rate time. The issues surrounding such a proposal are complex; there are a variety of ways to proceed, and the views of all interested parties should be considered. But I continue to believe that providing such airtime is the critical next step to strengthen our democracy, improve our political system, and give voters the loudest voice.

I strongly oppose any effort in the Congress to block your ability to take the next important steps for reform. Yesterday's defeat means that it will be virtually impossible for the Congress to move forward on campaign finance reform. The Congress should not make matters worse by actively blocking your progress.

The most realistic next steps for reform will come from the actions of regulatory agencies, acting within their legal authority, to renew our democracy. I thank you for your leadership and pledge to work with you as you move forward.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

Letter to Members of the Federal Election Commission on Campaign Finance Reform

February 27, 1998

To the Members of the Federal Election Commission:

Yesterday's defeat of comprehensive campaign finance reform legislation in the Senate makes it even more imperative that the Federal Election Commission (FEC) act to end the soft money system.

On June 4, 1997, I petitioned the FEC to act within its current statutory authority to end the soft money system. Your General Counsel, Lawrence Noble, has concluded that the FEC does, in fact, have the legal authority to act. This would be a major breakthrough for reform. I understand you have asked the General Counsel to explore other options—but the inability of the Congress to act on this vital public matter underscores how urgent it is that the FEC proceed without delay.

The rules governing soft money are principally the legacy of decades of decisions by the FEC. You have it in your power to act now to end this system. If no action is taken, then in coming years the fundraising arms race that has consumed both parties will only worsen.

The Senate's failure to pass campaign finance reform legislation means the most realistic next steps for reform will come from the actions of regulatory agencies, acting within their legal authority, to renew our democracy. I thank the FEC for the steps it has taken thus far and urge you to press forward to end the soft money system.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

Proclamation 7069—American Red Cross Month, 1998

February 27, 1998

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Americans share a long tradition of compassion for others and lending aid to those in need. Since our earliest days as a Nation, we have been able to bear the heartbreak of family tragedy, personal hardship, or natural disaster because of the help of caring friends and neighbors. For 117 years, the American Red Cross has been the staunchest of friends and neighbors to millions of people both here at home and around the world, adding its own vital contributions to our history of service.

The American Red Cross brings both comfort and practical assistance to the victims of more than 65,000 disasters each year, from hurricanes and tornadoes affecting thousands of people to a house fire involving a single family. Members of the Red Cross also work on the front lines of armed conflicts and disasters across the globe to relieve suffering