

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on October 4.

**Proclamation 7601—National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, 2002**

*October 1, 2002*

*By the President of the United States of America*

**A Proclamation**

Domestic violence in America is intolerable and must be stopped. According to the 2000 National Crime Victimization Survey, almost 700,000 incidents of violence between partners were documented in our Nation, and thousands more go unreported. And in the past quarter century, almost 57,000 Americans were murdered by a partner. Children who witness domestic violence often grow up believing that physical cruelty in relationships is acceptable behavior, and thus they may tend to perpetuate a cycle of violence in society.

Many Federal, State, and local programs addressing the domestic violence problem have achieved success, bringing greater safety to families. The success of coordinated community-based efforts is helping us win the battle against domestic violence. Community leaders, police, judges, advocates, healthcare workers, and concerned Americans are working together across America to develop solutions to this serious problem and to implement services that will improve our responses when it occurs. For example, many police departments and district attorneys offices have created specialized domestic violence units that cooperate with community advocates to enhance services for victims; and representatives from the faith community frequently provide essential support in areas where there may be no other services available. Programs designed to educate men and women about ways they can help prevent domestic violence are being developed across our Nation. Every citizen has the ability to aid and assist those suffering from domestic abuse and to let victims know that support is available through shelters, hotlines, and other services.

To better assist victims in need, my Administration recently implemented funding for new programs to improve outreach and services for people who are older or who have disabilities.

We have also intensified our efforts to provide meaningful access to Federally sponsored programs for individuals with limited English proficiency, making it easier for them to escape violence, report crime, and gain access to community services.

We must continue to hold domestic abusers accountable; we must punish them to the full extent of the law; and we must prevent them from inflicting more abuse. Protective orders are helpful and can be enforced in every jurisdiction in our country, which means their power extends across State lines and onto tribal lands. This legal authority makes it easier for police and prosecutors to keep aggressors away from their intended targets. Many abusers become more dangerous after court-enforced separation from their victims and often use visitation or exchange of children as an opportunity to inflict abuse. We are working to expand programs that improve the safety of family members in these situations.

During Domestic Violence Awareness Month, I urge all Americans to join together in recommitting themselves to eliminating domestic violence and reaching out to its victims, letting them know that help is available. With dedication and vigilance, we can increase safety for thousands of our citizens and bring hope to countless Americans.

**Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush**, 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 October 2002 as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. I urge all Americans to become a part of the coordinated community response to domestic violence and to send the message that this crime will not be tolerated in our Nation.

**In Witness Whereof**, I have hereunto set my hand this first day of October, in the year of our Lord two thousand two, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-seventh.

**George W. Bush**

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., October 3, 2002]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on October 4.

**Remarks at the White House  
Conference on Missing, Exploited,  
and Runaway Children**

*October 2, 2002*

Thanks for coming. One of the reasons I like this job so much is, you get to be introduced by your wife. [*Laughter*] And I appreciate Laura's love and compassion for all children, and I appreciate the job she's doing. I'm a lucky man to be able to call her my wife—call her my wife. And thanks for coming.

The kidnaping of a child is every parent's worst nightmare. Yet, too many moms and dads have experienced this nightmare across America. Too many have suffered. I've just met with parents—Laura and I met with parents—who have had the most precious person in their lives suddenly and brutally taken away from them. Some of these parents were eventually reunited with their children. Some are still hoping and waiting. Some know they will never see their loved ones again in this earthly life.

When a child's life or liberty or innocence is taken, it is a terrible, terrible loss. And those responsible have committed a terrible crime. Our society has a duty, has a solemn duty, to shield children from exploitation and danger. At this conference, we are discussing the steps that parents and community leaders and law enforcement can take to prevent such tragedies.

I want to thank the Justice Department's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children for helping organize this important and vital meeting. And I want to thank you all for coming.

I appreciate the senior members of my administration who are leading the sessions at today's conference. I thank our Secretary of State Colin Powell, Attorney General John Ashcroft, Secretary Tommy Thompson, Secretary Rod Paige. I appreciate the Director of the FBI, Bob Mueller, for coming. And

I want to thank the Commissioner, Robert Bonner, of the U.S. Customs.

I know there's a lot of Members of Congress who are here. I see the great Senator from Texas, Kay Bailey Hutchison, is here, as well as other Members of Congress. Thank you all for coming. Thank you for taking this issue seriously, and thanks for joining with a lot of concerned citizens.

I appreciate so very much the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. They do a really good job for America. I want to thank Ernie Allen—I want to thank Ernie, and I want to thank Carolyn Atwell-Davis, the legal consultant, for their hard work and for their care and concern. I also want to thank Margaret Spellings, who is Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy, for moderating this conference.

And of course, I've got to say something about John Walsh, TV star. But he's a guy who cares deeply about our country, about the safety of our citizens. And John, thank you for the service you do on behalf of the American people.

Our first duty as adults is to create an environment in which children can grow and thrive without fearing for their security. That's what we've got to do. Because children are so vulnerable, they need the care of adults. Because they're so vulnerable, those who are cruel and predatory often target our children.

We see the dangers to our children in the cases of abduction, many of which are known to us all. Each year, tens of thousands of children are abducted by non-family members, often in connection with a crime. And while the overwhelming majority of these children are returned from abductions, too many are not. One is too many, particularly for the mom or dad who suffers deeply.

We see the dangers in the experience of runaway children who are often victims of hunger and sickness and sexual abuse. Every year, assaults and illness and suicide take the lives of about 5,000 runaways. One life is too many.

The threats to our children are found not just on the streets, but they're found on the technology which we use in our homes. The Internet is a wonderful tool for our children to broaden their knowledge, expand their