

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT  
STATE OF CALIFORNIA



**PROCLAMATION**

Nothing brings greater relief to parents than knowing that their newborns are healthy. It's true that some factors, including genetics, don't give us a say in this, but whether our children are born with or without birth defects is far from a roll of the dice.

70% of brain and spinal cord birth defects can be prevented if mothers-to-be consume 400 micrograms of folic acid a day during their child-bearing years – a practice recommended by the U.S. Public Health Service. A woman can further increase the likelihood of having a healthy baby if she receives proper prenatal care and nutrition, abstains from alcohol, tobacco and other drugs and learns more about potential birth defects through genetic counseling.

In the United States, one in every thirty-three babies is born with a birth defect, which is the leading cause of death in children under the age of one. Birth defects can exact a tremendous mental, emotional and financial toll on parents and families, and those young ones who do survive may face a host of health problems and other difficulties throughout their lives. In addition, medical treatment and special education for children with birth defects costs California taxpayers \$1.4 billion a year.

We may not be able to stop every birth defect, but we can work hard to prevent many of them from happening. As we begin a new year, California remains committed to fighting birth defects and applauds the researchers, doctors, educators and counselors who are finding new methods of prevention, treatment and care. We also thank concerned parents and the dedicated men and women of the California Department of Public Health's Birth Defects Monitoring Program, the March of Dimes, the National Birth Defects Prevention Network and many others who are devoted to the healthy future of our littlest and newest Californians.

**NOW, THEREFORE, I, ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER**, Governor of the State of California, do hereby proclaim January 2010, as "Birth Defects Prevention Month."

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of California to be affixed this 5th day of January 2010.



ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER  
Governor of California

ATTEST:

DEBRA BOWEN  
Secretary of State