Statement on Senate Action on Internal Revenue Service Reform Legislation

July 9, 1998

I am pleased that the Senate has finally passed bipartisan legislation to reform the IRS and strengthen taxpayer rights. This reform will help my effort to create an IRS that respects American taxpayers and respects their values. I look forward to signing it into law.

Statement on Senate Action on India-Pakistan Sanctions Legislation

July 9, 1998

I am pleased that the Senate has passed legislation today that is consistent with my view that U.S. food exports should not become an unintended victim of an important nonproliferation law. Food should not be used as a weapon, and I will resist any action that would lead to a de facto grain embargo.

I look forward to working with Congress to make sure this legislation or separate legislation gives us the broadest possible flexibility to further our nonproliferation policy without putting American businesses and farmers at an unfair disadvantage.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Emigration Policies of Certain Former Eastern Bloc States

July 9, 1998

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

On September 21, 1994, I determined and reported to the Congress that the Russian Federation was in "full compliance" with the freedom of emigration criteria of sections 402 and 409 of the Trade Act of 1974. On June 3, 1997, I determined and reported to the Congress that Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine were in "full compliance" with these same criteria, and I made an identical determination on December 5, 1997, with respect to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. These actions allowed for the continuation of most-favored-nation (MFN) status for these countries and certain other activities without the requirement of an annual waiver.

As required by law, I am submitting an updated report to the Congress concerning the emigration laws and policies of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. The report indicates continued compliance of these countries with international standards concerning freedom of emigration.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Albert Gore, Jr., President of the Senate.

Remarks on Presenting the Congressional Medal of Honor to Hospital Corpsman Third Class Robert R. Ingram, USN

July 10, 1998

Welcome. Thank you, Admiral, for your invocation. Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the White House. I thank Secretary Cohen and Secretary West, Secretary Gober, Deputy Secretary Hamre, Secretary Dalton, Secretary Caldera, Acting Air Force Secretary Peters, General Shelton, and other members of the Joint Chiefs, and general officers here present today. I thank the Members of the Congress from the Florida delegation who are here, and other Members of Congress, including Senator Thurmond, Senator Graham, Senator Mack, Senator Glenn, Senator Cleland, Representative Brown, Representative McHale, and all those in Congress whose action helped to make this day possible.

Today we present the Medal of Honor, our Nation's highest military honor, to Robert R. Ingram for extraordinary heroism above and beyond the call of duty on March 28, 1966, in Quang Ngai Province, South Vietnam.

Today, more than 30 years later, Bob Ingram is manager of a medical service practice in Jacksonville, a registered nurse, a man who loves to work on cars. His wife, Doris,

his children and his close friends are here with us today, and we welcome them.

His story spans decades and continents, but across these divides, friendship and loyalty have endured and have brought us to this moment. Mr. Ingram enlisted in the Navy in 1963 and joined the Hospital Corps. He went to Vietnam with Company C, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, in July, 1965.

One day in February of 1966, the company came under heavy fire and Petty Officer Ingram rushed forward to treat the wounded. Enemy bullets punctured both his canteens. When the unit's machine gunner was hit, he manned the gun. And for his bravery on that day, he received the Silver Star.

On March 28, 1966, Petty Officer Ingram accompanied the point platoon of his company as it was suddenly attacked by 100 North Vietnamese in a hail of automatic rifle fire. In moments, the platoon was decimated. Oblivious to the danger, he crawled across the terrain to reach a wounded marine. While administering aid, a bullet went through his hand. After administering aid there, he heard more calls for a corpsman. Still bleeding, he edged across the fire-swept landscape, collecting ammunition from the dead and attending to the wounded, receiving two additional wounds from rifle fire.

Though severely wounded, he continued administering aid to the wounded and the dying marines while gathering ammunition and encouraging others capable of doing so to return fire. While dressing the head wound of another corpsman, he sustained his fourth wound. Enduring extreme pain from his own wounds and disregarding the probability of this own death, Petty Officer Ingram pushed, pulled, cajoled, and doctored his marines for hours more. Losing strength and almost unrecognizable from his injuries, finally he was pulled to safety, where he tried to refuse evacuation, saying that others should go first. His vital signs dropped to the point that he was tagged ''killed in action'' and placed in a dead pile.

But, as you can see, he did not die. Eleven members of Charlie Company, however, were killed that day, and 53 more were wounded. Some are alive today because of the extraordinary selflessness and bravery of Robert Ingram.

Harvey Kappeler, a corporal in the lead platoon, wrote last year, ''I observed Robert Ingram perform acts of heroism I have never seen before, during, or after my tour of Vietnam.'' Mr. Ingram later recalled, ''I was just doing my job; my job was to take care of the men.''

Three weeks after the attack, he wrote his platoon from his hospital bed: ''I've got a tube in my throat, leg elevated, arm elevated, can't move, but I wanted you all to know I'm still alive.'' After 8 months recovering, he went back to sea on another deployment.

Other members of the company were honored for their bravery on that day in March of 1966, but no one doubted that Robert Ingram deserved the highest honor. We don't know how his citation got lost all those years ago, but we do know why he is here today, because his friends never forgot what he did for them.

Jim Fulkerson commanded the 3d Platoon of Charlie Company. In 1995 he organized a reunion of members of the battalion, including Bob Ingram. They remembered the war, the endless cold soaking rains, the terrible firefights. And Ingram's friends resolved to do everything possible to ensure that America finally gave him appropriate recognition.

Charlie Company's commander, Ben Goodwyn, wrote to General Krulak, ''I saw my fair share of combat in Vietnam. Of all the men I brought with me, Doc Ingram was undoubtedly the most courageous.''

Mr. Ingram is the 22d Navy corpsman to receive the Medal of Honor, and his reward comes appropriately as we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Navy Hospital Corps. Through all our conflicts, they have been there on ships at sea, on the front lines, performing foxhole surgery, saving thousands of lives while risking and sometimes sacrificing their own. I salute their courageous service to our Nation.

The last troops left Vietnam almost 25 years ago now. But we do not, and we must not forget their sacrifices and bravery. As Mr. Kappeler recently wrote of the firefight in Quang Ngai that day, ''As I grow old, I look back to that day and the heroism of the marines and our Navy corpsman, and I understand what is meant by the highest traditions

of service. I am extremely proud to call Robert Ingram a friend.''

On that battlefield so many years ago, Robert Ingram performed truly heroic deeds, and asked for nothing in return. At long last, it is time to honor him.

Mr. Ingram, on behalf of all Americans, we thank you for your service, for your courage, for your determination, for your loyalty to comrades and country. We are all proud to call you an American. Hillary and I are proud that you are in the White House with us today, and I am very proud to award you the Medal of Honor.

Major Everhart, read the citation.

[*At this point, Maj. Carlton Everhart, USAF, Air Force Aide to the President, read the citation, and Lt. Comdr. Wes Huey, USN, Naval Aide to the President, assisted the President in presenting the medal.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:18 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Rear Adm. A. Byron Holderby, USN, Chief of Chaplains, U.S. Navy, who offered the invocation.

Statement on Senate Action on Higher Education Reauthorization Legislation

July 10, 1998

The bill passed last night by the Senate will help my effort to usher more Americans through the doors of higher education, doors we have opened wide since 1993. There are still serious fiscal and policy issues that need to be resolved, and I am committed to working with Congress to do that. But I am pleased that the Senate bill endorses the new, low interest rate for student loans that I proposed, to save students $11 billion; improves teacher recruitment and training provided by our colleges; takes important steps in response to my call for colleges to help children at high-poverty schools prepare for and attend college; expands access to quality distance learning technologies; and creates what would be the Government's first performance-based organization, an innovation recommended by our reinventing Government effort.

Joint Statement on United States-Polish Relations

July 10, 1998

President Bill Clinton and Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek of Poland met today at the White House to discuss Poland's anticipated entry into NATO, common efforts to advance regional cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe and steps to deepen the close bilateral relations between the United States and Poland. Vice President Gore met separately with the Prime Minister earlier today and hosted a luncheon for the Prime Minister, his delegation and members of the Polish-American community.

The President and Prime Minister Buzek stressed the paramount importance of the U.S. Senate vote on NATO enlargement. They welcomed Poland's entry into the Alliance. Prime Minister Buzek declared that this step will fulfill the aspirations of the Polish people to belong to the Transatlantic community, guaranteeing the security of a sovereign and democratic Poland. President Clinton responded that Poland's membership in the Atlantic Alliance will advance the interests of the American people in a secure, undivided Europe. Both leaders agreed that NATO is the essential foundation of transatlantic security and reaffirmed their support for NATO's ''open door'' policy for aspiring new members, as an indispensable instrument to strengthening stability and eliminating the old dividing lines in Europe.

President Clinton expressed strong support for Poland's strides in building ties with its neighbors and efforts to promote stability, democracy, and free market economics throughout Central and Eastern Europe. The two leaders discussed efforts already under way to establish trilateral economic cooperation among the United States, Poland and Ukraine, as well as Poland's efforts to establish peacekeeping battalions with Ukraine and Lithuania. They resolved that, as allies, they should expand such common efforts to strengthen democracy and regional stability.