in the Germanic tongues of centuries past. German Americans honor the traditions of their lineage in the way they live, reflecting the sense of personal honor and strong work ethic passed down to them by their forebears.

As Americans seek to become a more united people, we must not forget our roots, for they remind us of who we are and of what we have to share with others. German-American Day offers us an invaluable opportunity not only to honor the contributions of Germany Americans, but also to celebrate the close relationship that we enjoy today with our German friends across the Atlantic. Next month, we will join them in commemorating the 10th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall—a symbolic triumph of democracy and self-determination. As we look back on half a century of joint accomplishments with Germany that reflect our shared respect for the rule of law, human rights, and social justice, we can look ahead to a new era of cooperation, whether working together to restore peace to the war-torn Balkans or assisting the former Eastern Bloc nations on their own road to democratization and economic recovery.

**Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton,** President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim Wednesday, October 6, 1999, as German-American Day. I encourage all Americans to applaud the important contributions made to our country by our millions of citizens of German descent and to celebrate our close ties to the people of Germany.

**In Witness Whereof,** I have hereunto set my hand this fifth day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

**William J. Clinton**

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., October 7, 1999]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 6, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on October 8.

## Remarks on the Legislative Agenda

*October 6, 1999*

Good afternoon. I want to say a few brief words about three critical issues now pending before Congress. There have been major developments on all of them in the last 24 hours that demand our attention and the attention of the American people.

First, yesterday's defeat of Ronnie White's nomination for the Federal district court judgeship in Missouri was a disgraceful act of partisan politics. Once again, this creates a real doubt about the Senate's ability to fairly perform its constitutional duty to advise and consent.

Unfortunately, by voting down the first African-American judge, who was already serving—the first African-American judge to serve on the Missouri State Supreme Court, the Republican-controlled Senate is adding credence to the perceptions that they treat minority and women judicial nominees unfairly and unequally.

I would just point out that that strict party-line vote included Republicans who had previously voted in the Judiciary Committee to recommend him to the full Senate.

I hope the Senate leadership will reverse this course and begin to provide timely and fair consideration of all judicial nominees. In particular, I ask the Senate to act on the nominations of Marsha Berzon and Richard Paez, who has been held up for years now. They're both excellent candidates for the Ninth Circuit and have been waiting for quite some time to receive a vote from the Senate.

Meanwhile, I will continue to fulfill my obligations to nominate and press for the confirmation of the most qualified candidates possible for the Federal bench.

The second thing I want to talk about is congressional action on the Patients' Bill of Rights. Today was supposed to be the day the American people have long waited for, the day a bipartisan majority passed a strong Patients' Bill of Rights. Now, the Republican leadership knows there is a majority for that bill. But unfortunately, as a result of an 11th hour appeal by the insurance industry lobbyists, which all of you reported on yesterday,

once again it appears that the will of the American people will be thwarted.

In the dead of the night last night the House leaders concocted a process filled with enough poison pills and legislative sleights of hand to practically guarantee the defeat of this bill. This is a travesty. It's the sort of thing they did to kill commonsense gun legislation in the aftermath of Littleton. The American people want something; there is a bipartisan majority for it; the leadership makes a deal with the special interest and figures out some procedural way to tie everything up in knots to keep it from passing.

Now, a bipartisan majority is poised to pass this bill. But now they are being blocked by legislative tactics concocted by the leadership that blatantly put special interests ahead of the interests of the American people.

What is the result of this? The Republican leadership would ensure that the American people will have to wait for the right to see a specialist, wait for the right to have access to the nearest emergency room care, wait for the right to stay with their health care provider throughout a course of cancer treatment or pregnancy, wait for the right to hold their health plan accountable for harmful decisions.

Again, I ask the bipartisan majority who favor the Patients' Bill of Rights: Don't make them wait. Reject these tactics. Insist that the leadership allow a fair up or down vote on the Norwood-Dingell bill. Insist on an up or down vote on a bill that is comprehensive, enforceable, and paid for. Don't let this 11th hour gimmick kill 2 years of hard work for something the overwhelming majority of Americans of all political persuasions know we need to do.

The American people deserve more than partisan posturing and legislative gamesmanship on an issue this vital. The people who think it's the wrong thing to do ought to just stand up on the floor and vote against it. But they know they're in the minority; they shouldn't be able to pull some 11th hour deal that keeps the vote from coming out the way a majority want it to come out.

Let me say, finally, we also should proceed with our actions to protect Americans from the threat of nuclear weapons. Later this afternoon, I'll meet here at the White House with Nobel laureates, former Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and others on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. I fervently believe, as all of you know, that this treaty will restrain the spread of nuclear weapons, while enabling us to maintain the effectiveness of our nuclear arsenal.

As you know, there are discussions between Republicans and Democrats on the Hill about a better process for deliberating on this important treaty. After 2 long years of inaction, one week is very little time for considered action. The Chemical Weapons Convention, for example, that we ratified in 1997, had 14 full days of hearings in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee after a long process of negotiations. But for now, the vote is scheduled for Tuesday, and I will continue to aggressively argue to the Senate and to the American people that this is in our national interests.

And I will have a little more to say about this later today at the other event.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:10 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

## Remarks Following a Meeting With Supporters of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty

*October 6, 1999*

Thank you very much. Let me begin by saying a profound word of thanks to Senator Glenn, to General Shalikashvili, to Dr. Townes, and to Secretary Cohen for what they have said. I thank General Jones and Admiral Crowe for being here. I thank all the other Nobel laureates who are here; Secretary Richardson and General Shelton and the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Mr. Berger and Mr. Podesta, the other people from the White House. And I thank Senators Biden and Dorgan for their presence here and their enormous leadership on this issue, and other committed American citizens who are in this audience.

Let me say that I was sitting here thinking two things when the previous speakers were speaking. One is, it made me very proud to be an American, to know that our country had been served by people like these four, without regard to party. The second is that