

High school is a make-or-break time for all young people, but teenagers with disabilities often need more help to succeed as they make the transition from school to work. This legislation will require schools to give students that help by developing individual plans that may include independent living skills, job training, and preparation for higher education. And because acquiring these skills may take extra time, these plans must begin by the time the students with disabilities reach the age of 14.

Now, that is what the expansion of the legislation these Members of Congress have passed will achieve. In a few moments I will sign it into law. As I do, I want you to think about what it really accomplishes.

To the 5.8 million children whose futures are in the balance, we are saying: We believe in you. We believe in your potential, and we are going to do everything we can to help you develop it.

To the millions of families who are depending upon us to help them prepare their children to take their place in the world, we are saying: We are proud of you for your devotion to your children, for your belief in them, for your love for them, and we are going to do everything we can to help you succeed in preparing them.

To the teachers and the administrators who make all the difference, we are saying: We are depending upon you, and we are going to do what we can to support you.

To the American people, we are saying that we do not intend to rest until we have conquered the ignorance and prejudice against disabilities that disables us all.

And to the world, we are sending a message, the same message that the FDR Memorial I was honored to dedicate last month will send: In America, you are measured by what you are and what you can achieve. In America, the American dream is alive for all our people. In America, we recognize that what really counts is the spirit and the soul and the heart, and we honor it with this legislation.

Now I would like to ask the children and the people here with me on the platform to join me as I sign the legislation. And I would like to ask the Members of Congress who are here, every one of them, to come up, along with Tom Hehir, the Director of the Office of Special Education, as we sign into law the Individual with Disabilities Education Act of 1997.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:12 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to student Joshua Bailey, who introduced the President; Assistant Secretary of Education Judith E. Heumann; and Eunice Shriver, founder, Special Olympics International. H.R. 5, approved June 4, was assigned Public Law No. 105-17.

Statement on Signing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997

June 4, 1997

It is with great pleasure that I have today signed into law H.R. 5, the "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997." This Act reaffirms and strengthens our national commitment to the education of children with disabilities and their families.

Since the enactment of Public Law 94-142 over 20 years ago, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has made it possible for millions of children with disabilities to receive an education, helping them become productive adults. The bill before me today builds on that success story by:

- putting an even sharper focus on improving educational results for these children through greater access to the general curriculum and inclusion in State and district-wide assessments;
- giving parents more information, including regular reports on their children's progress, and a greater role in decisions affecting their children's education;
- reducing paperwork and increasing administrative flexibility;
- asking children with disabilities, along with schools, teachers, and parents to assume

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greater responsibility for the children's success; and

—promoting the use of mediation to resolve disagreements between parents and schools.

This bill also gives school officials the tools they need to ensure that the Nation's schools are safe and conducive to learning for all children, while scrupulously protecting the rights of children with disabilities. It also includes a substantial commitment from the Federal Government to support the professional development of special and regular education teachers who work with children with disabilities, research and technological innovations to improve their education, the training of parents, and the provision of technical assistance.

This bipartisan legislation is the result of a unique process involving the Congress, the Department of Education, parents, educators, the disability community, and other interested parties. I thank all who played a part in this great achievement. Successful implementation of the revised IDEA is the key to the future for children with disabilities and it will help them become successful and contributing members of their communities.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
June 4, 1997.

NOTE: H.R. 5, approved June 4, was assigned Public Law No. 105-17.

Statement on Supplemental Disaster Assistance Legislation

June 4, 1997

In moving ahead on this flawed legislation, the Republican leadership is once again delaying the disaster assistance needed by people and communities in the Dakotas, Minnesota, and 30 other States. With individuals, families, and businesses awaiting the assistance they need to rebuild, I urge the Republican leadership to set politics aside and pass a clean disaster assistance bill.

If the Republican majority is set on this course of adding contentious and extraneous provisions, they should send me this bill as quickly as possible. I will veto it as soon as it arrives and send it back so they can send me a clean disaster assistance bill immediately that keeps aid flowing to those in need. Americans in need should not have to endure this unnecessary delay.

Letter to the Federal Election Commission Requesting Action To End the Soft Money System in Domestic Politics

June 4, 1997

To the Members of the Federal Election Commission:

I am writing to you, pursuant to 11 CFR Part 200, to request that you take action under your existing statutory authority to ban "soft money" and end the system under which both political parties compete to raise unlimited sums from individuals, labor unions, and corporations.

The rules governing our system of financing Federal election campaigns are sorely out of date. Enacted more than two decades ago when election campaigns were much less expensive,

the rules have been overtaken by dramatic changes in the nature and cost of campaigns and the accompanying flood of money.

Today, money is raised and spent in ways that simply were not contemplated when the Congress last overhauled our campaign finance laws. We must bring the rules up to date to reflect the changes in elections and campaigning.

An important step in this process would be to change the rules governing the use and solicitation of "soft money"—funds not subject to