

Statement on Signing the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1998

November 18, 1997

I am pleased to have signed into law today H.R. 2160, the "Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1998."

The Act provides \$13.6 billion in discretionary budget authority for programs of the Department of Agriculture and the Food and Drug Administration. These programs include the Special Supplemental Feeding Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); food safety programs; efforts to reduce children's access to tobacco products; and various programs to protect and support rural communities.

The Act provides a total of \$35.3 billion for the Food Stamp program, the Child Nutrition program, the Commodity Credit Corporation, and other mandatory programs.

I am disappointed that the Congress failed to provide the full amount of my requested increase for the WIC program in order to reach a full participation level of 7.5 million women, infants, and children. Full participation in WIC is one of my highest priorities, and the funding level that this Act provides does not assure that we can achieve this goal in FY 1998.

I am concerned about the provision of this bill that alters the administration and funding for research on nutrition programs serving the poor and disadvantaged. The research needs of these important programs should continue to be addressed in the context of the programs' administration. I am asking the Secretary of Agriculture to look into this matter and to work with the Director of the Office of Management

and Budget on the most effective approach to address my concerns.

I am pleased, however, that the Act includes nearly all of my request for the Food Safety and Inspection Service. The funding provided for meat and poultry inspection will ensure adequate inspection coverage and allow the agency to further implement the modernization of the inspection system that I announced on July 6, 1996. I am also pleased that the Act provides almost all of the requested level for my Administration's food safety initiative and the requested level for our efforts to reduce children's access to tobacco products.

In addition, the Act provides significant increases in rural development programs to improve the quality of life in rural America and help diversify the rural economy. The Act also includes a portion of my proposal to create a Rural Development Performance Partnership, which will provide greater flexibility to tailor Federal assistance to local needs, reflecting my Administration's belief that there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution to the economic challenges facing rural areas. I will continue to seek authority to utilize the full flexibility that was authorized for these programs in the 1996 Farm Bill.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
November 18, 1997.

NOTE: H.R. 2160, approved November 18, was assigned Public Law 105-86.

Teleconference Remarks to the Council of Jewish Federations

November 18, 1997

Thank you. And ladies and gentlemen, I have been told that because I was a few moments late, that Dore Gold filled in for me, and that's a pretty good substitute. I want to thank him as well.

It's an honor for me to be able to speak to the Council of Jewish Federations General

Assembly and to all of you who are watching your local federations over the CJF satellite network. I'm pleased to know that Connie Giles, Joel Tauber, Billie Gold have convened this general assembly to further the proud tradition of the Jewish federation system, and I trust that

my good friend Jeff Smulyan is being a gracious host in his hometown of Indianapolis.

Six years ago, when I announced my candidacy for President, I said that I had a vision for America in the 21st century—a vision that would put us on a mission to keep the American dream alive for every person who is responsible enough to work for it, to continue to lead the world for peace and freedom and prosperity, and to bring our own people together, across all the lines that divide us, into one America.

We've worked hard to advance this vision here at home, thanks in great measure to the volunteer efforts of groups like CJF and Jewish federations all across our Nation. I share with you the deep belief that the strength of our society is the product of our active commitment to one another. Volunteer organizations are the glue that hold our communities together, and I've worked hard to make sure the National Government sticks by you as your steadfast partner. If not for Government support, Jewish federations and other groups would have to drastically scale back their health and human service efforts. We must never let this happen.

We also know we can't allow Congress to deny charities and other not-for-profit groups the right to take a stand on public issues. It would lessen our democracy if you were deprived of your voice, for your voice has given strength and support to millions of other Americans. For example, as we worked to enact a balanced budget, you made sure we did it in the right way. You spoke out on behalf of legal immigrants; together, we restored critical health and disability benefits that had been taken from these groups unfairly. You spoke out on behalf of older Americans, and together we protected and strengthened Medicare and Medicaid. And I'm very grateful for your voice and your support.

I would also like to thank you for your support of our administration's effort to expand peace and stability in the Middle East and around the world. We must never give in to the forces of destruction and terror. We must never give up on promoting peace. Our law enforcement officials went halfway around the world to bring to justice the man responsible for the cold-blooded murder of Americans outside the CIA Headquarters. The World Trade Center bombers are going to jail for a long, long time. Saddam Hussein cannot be allowed to expel international weapons inspectors be-

cause we cannot accept another dictator with weapons of mass destruction.

And I want to reiterate to you my solemn and personal commitment that we will continue to press forward on all fronts to redeem the promise of the peace process in the Middle East. The road to peace is never easy, but with confidence and determination and patience, let us continue to travel that road.

Let us also work together to expand religious freedom around the world. Hillary, just a few minutes ago, returned to the White House from her trip to Central Asia, Ukraine, and Russia, where she visited several centuries-old synagogues and met with members of Jewish communities that have reemerged after years of oppression under Soviet rule. These visits highlighted our strong conviction that the transition of peaceful democracy requires a deep commitment to religious, cultural, and ethnic tolerance.

And I know all of you believe that tolerance of difference is no less important here at home. We've overcome many of the challenges that our grandparents and great-grandparents faced when they arrived on these shores, but we still have a lot of work to do to bring all of us together into one America.

So in addition to what you do day-in and day-out to help America seize the opportunity inherent in our diversity, I ask for your help in two other important priorities. First of all, let me urge you to stand up for Bill Lann Lee, my nominee to head the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department. He is the son of immigrants who has dedicated his entire life to fighting discrimination in all its forms. I've nominated him because I think he's the best person in the country to do the job, and no one—no one—has questioned his ability, his experience, or his integrity. He is being held up for political reasons on the dubious proposition that he shouldn't head the Civil Rights Division because he agrees with the President on the issue of affirmative action.

Second, I ask you to participate in our historic race initiative. For many decades, members of the Jewish community have marched side by side with Americans of other faiths and races, fighting for civil rights and racial reconciliation. So I ask you to urge your member federation and coalition partners to convene townhall meetings and find other ways of bringing people together across racial lines to address common concerns. Please help to promote the interaction

that allows us to celebrate our differences and still recognize the overarching values that unite us all.

Ninety years ago, Israel Zangwill coined the term “melting pot” in his play about a young Jewish composer in New York. In that play, he beautifully summed up the promise of our Nation. He said, and I quote, “The palm and the pine, the pole and the equator, the crescent and the cross. Here shall all races and nations unite. Here shall they come to labor and look forward.”

I thank you for what you have done over this past century to unite us and to keep us looking forward. And at the threshold of a new century, I look forward to working with you to keep our beacon shining brightly for all the world to see.

Congratulations on your successful general assembly. Again, thank you for all the support that you have given to our efforts and, most especially, thank you for what you do every day to reflect the best in our country and the best hope of the world.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:21 p.m. by satellite from Room 459 of the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Dore Gold, Policy Adviser to Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel; Conrad Giles, president, Council of Jewish Federations; Joel Tauber and Billie Gold, cochairs, 1997 Council of Jewish Federations General Assembly Planning Committee; and Jeffrey H. Smulyan, chairman and chief executive officer, Emmis Broadcasting.

Remarks to the Democratic Business Council

November 18, 1997

Thank you very much. Thank you, Tom. Steve Grossman, Alan Solomont, and all the people who worked on this dinner tonight, thank you very much for being here.

I have just returned from a great trip to California. I stopped yesterday in Wichita, Kansas, at the Cessna plant, and I saw there a picture of why I got into public life. So, I thought I would start by telling you what I did. We wanted to go to Wichita to the Cessna plant because they have what I believe is the best corporate welfare-to-work program I have ever seen in America, and because they have support from any number of Federal agencies who are helping them to do what they're trying to do.

Cessna has about 10,000, 11,000 employees in Wichita, and they have this program called the 21st Street Program, where they built a training center for people who have been on public assistance. First, if you want to come there, you go through their training program; that's 3 months. Then if you like it, you go through a sort of prework program; that's 3 more months. If you survive them both, they guarantee you a job with good income and good benefits.

And they take the most difficult to place people on welfare—people who have almost no

education, no skills, people who have been subject to terrible cases of domestic abuse. And not only that, if you don't have a car or if you've been beat up in your own home, they'll give you an apartment across the street from the training center for yourself and your kids.

I went there, and two of these women got up and talked who had graduated from this program. And there were over 200 there who had. And there were all the local officials, all the State officials in this incredible celebration of this partnership, doing basically what we all ought to do anyway, trying to make sure that everybody has a chance in life—once you set up a system where people are required to be responsible, you've got to give them an opportunity—and recognizing that our destinies are dependent upon one another in very profound ways. It was wonderful.

And when I walked out of that place—the two women that spoke to introduce me were by far the most popular speakers there, I can tell you that, and they just basically told their life stories. And this lady came up to me and she—on the way out, I shook hands with all of the people who were graduates of the program. She said, “You can read about me in the morning paper today, and I'm really glad