

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