

Now, these emergency measures are vital to the national interest. They have broad bipartisan support. But unfortunately, some in Congress are preparing to slip unrelated, controversial provisions into the bill, proposals guaranteed to produce gridlock and delay. One provision is a controversial issue related to family planning. Another would even block the Federal Communications Commission from offering candidates free TV air time which would cut the cost of campaigns and reduce special interest influence. Now, it's bad enough that Congress won't pass campaign financial reform; now some in Congress want to stamp it out anywhere it sees it.

These unrelated issues, whatever side you have on them, absolutely have no place on emergency legislation. Congress shouldn't hold emergency aid for families hostage to controversial provisions. Congress shouldn't demand ransom to maintain America's world leadership and

meet America's responsibility to our own national security.

Last year, when Congress tried to attach partisan measures to similar disaster legislation, I said, no. Congress would be unwise to head down that same road again. Instead, let's work together to enact a straightforward emergency measure. No unacceptable provisions, no political gimmicks. Let's work together to meet the long-term needs of our families, our economy, our Nation. If we will once again put aside partisanship, reject narrow agendas, and focus on the national interest, the remaining 68 days of this congressional session can be a time of real achievement for our people and our future.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 3:38 p.m. on March 13 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 14.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

March 14, 1998

Dear Mr. Leader:

The Senate will soon act on the proposed accession of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. I want to thank you for the energetic and bipartisan leadership that you, Democratic Leader Daschle and many others have demonstrated on this historic initiative. The enlargement of NATO directly will benefit America's security, and I urge all members of the Senate to support its ratification.

The addition of these countries to NATO is an essential part of our effort to consolidate the stability and security that resulted from the end of the Cold War. The Alliance's enlargement will make America safer by making NATO stronger, adding new forces and new allies that can share our security burdens. NATO's core mission will remain the collective defense of the territory of its members, and neither the addition of new members nor NATO's other adaptations to Europe's new security environment will change that.

The accession of these three countries also will help make Europe more stable; already the prospect of membership has encouraged states throughout the region to accelerate reforms, resolve disputes, and improve cooperation. In addition, adding these states to NATO—combined with other efforts to reach out to all of the region's new democracies—will help to erase the Cold War dividing line and contribute to our strategic goal of building an undivided, democratic, and peaceful Europe.

The addition of these states to NATO, which will yield tremendous benefits to our own security, is also affordable. After extensive review of this proposal by NATO, our Administration, and the Congress, we now have strong basis to believe that the costs to the U.S. will be about \$400 million for the United States over the next ten years, and that the total costs will be equitably shared with our current and new allies.

There are other steps we will need to take together in order to help ensure the security of the transatlantic area. We are moving ahead

with efforts to increase cooperation with the Russian Federation and to build on the openings for constructive dialogue created by the NATO-Russia Founding Act. I am committed to continue efforts with Russia and other countries to reduce our nuclear stockpiles, combat the dangers of proliferation, and stabilize arms levels across Europe. We must continue working together to create the opportunity for a lasting peace in Bosnia and the Balkans. We will continue working with the European Union, which also is adding members, and which makes its own important contribution to Europe's stability.

NATO is the cornerstone of our transatlantic security efforts, however, and the Alliance is proving its value—through the Partnership for Peace program and many other efforts—in projecting stability throughout Europe. For that same reason, we must leave the door open to the addition of other qualified new members in the future. The “open door” commitment made by all the allies has played a vital role in ensuring that the process of enlargement benefits the security of the entire region, not just these first three new members.

At last summer's summit in Madrid, NATO agreed to examine the process of the Alliance's enlargement at our next summit. At this point, however, neither NATO nor my Administration has made any decisions or commitments about when the next invitations for membership should be extended, or to whom. I consulted broadly with Congress on decisions about admission of these first three countries, and I pledge the same pattern of consultation before any decisions on these matters in the future. In any case, any future addition of members will require the advice and consent of the Senate.

For these reasons, I strongly urge the Senate to reject any effort to mandate a pause on the

process of enlargement. Such a mandate is unnecessary and unwise, for it would reduce our own country's flexibility and leverage, fracture NATO's open door consensus, and draw a new and potentially destabilizing dividing line in Europe.

I am gratified by the outstanding cooperation between our two branches of government, and between both parties, that has been a part of the ratification effort. I commend you for the creation of the Senate's NATO Observer Group, which has worked closely with the Administration in development of this policy, and I commend Senators Helms and Biden and the Foreign Relations Committee, as well as other committees, for their thorough examination of the complex questions involved in NATO's enlargement.

That kind of bipartisan cooperation was indispensable to our successful efforts throughout the Cold War to sustain a strong Alliance, to defend our security, and to pursue the goal of freedom and democracy across Europe. In the same spirit, I hope the Senate will draw together on the question of NATO's enlargement. By doing so, the Senate can help signal America's continuing engagement in Europe, our commitment to a strong NATO Alliance, and our determination to build a foundation for transatlantic security into the next century.

Sincerely,

BILL CLINTON

NOTE: This letter was sent to Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott. A similar letter with minor differences was sent to Senate Minority Leader Thomas A. Daschle. The letters were made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 16 but were not issued as White House press releases.

Opening Remarks at a Roundtable Discussion on Education and an Exchange With Reporters in Silver Spring, Maryland March 16, 1998

The President. First of all, let me welcome you all here. Let me thank you for coming. Many have made an extraordinary effort to come from a long way away, and I thank you so much

for that. I want to make some brief opening remarks and ask Secretary Riley and Mr. Schmidt to make some remarks, and then we'll