

Oct. 30 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1998

Commercialization and the Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Technology. These programs address two important components of our overall competitiveness strategy: our wise use of commercial space capabilities, consistent with public safety and national security requirements, and enhancement of technological opportunities for the States.

This Act furthers my Administration's commitment to ensure that technology remains the engine of economic growth. We have more work

to do. My Administration will work with the 106th Congress on legislation to reauthorize the Commerce Department's Technology Administration and other NIST programs.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
October 30, 1998.

NOTE: H.R. 1274, approved October 30, was assigned Public Law No. 105-309.

Statement on Signing Wildlife and Wetlands Legislation

October 30, 1998

Today I am signing into law H.R. 2807, an omnibus measure that includes many provisions I supported to enhance fish and wildlife protection.

The Act reauthorizes the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act through FY 2002 and prohibits the sale, importation, and exportation of products labeled or advertised as derived from rhinoceroses or tigers. This will substantially eliminate the demand for products made from these endangered species. The Act also reauthorizes, through FY 2003, the North American Wetlands Conservation Act and the Partnerships for Wildlife Act, two of the most popular, cost-effective, and productive environmental conservation programs.

I note that section 304 of the Act amends the criteria for appointing individuals to the North American Wetlands Conservation Council. Specifically, this provision purportedly designates an officeholder of a named private organization as a Council member. This raises two issues. First, the Council is involved in the implementation of Federal wetlands conservation programs and, therefore, its members are considered offi-

cers of the United States. Pursuant to the Appointments Clause of the Constitution, the Congress may not appoint Federal officers. Consequently, I will instruct the Secretary of the Interior merely to consider the designated individual along with other appropriate candidates for appointment to the Council.

Second, if the Secretary ultimately selects the individual designated by the Act, that individual will be subject to executive branch standards of conduct and criminal conflict-of-interest statutes. The individual's ability to act fully as a Council member therefore may be somewhat curtailed by his or her affiliation with a private organization.

On balance, the Act provides a considerable benefit to the conservation of fish and wildlife, and I am pleased to sign it into law.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
October 30, 1998.

NOTE: H.R. 2807, approved October 30, was assigned Public Law No. 105-312.

Statement on Signing the Identity Theft and Assumption Deterrence Act of 1998

October 30, 1998

Today I signed into law H.R. 4151, the "Identity Theft and Assumption Deterrence Act of

1998." This legislation will make identity theft a Federal crime, with penalties generally of up

to 3 years imprisonment and a maximum fine of \$250,000.

Specifically, the legislation would penalize the theft of personal information with the intent to commit an unlawful act, such as obtaining fraudulent loans or credit cards, drug trafficking, or other illegal purposes. It would also direct the Federal Trade Commission to help victims deal with the consequences of this crime.

Tens of thousands of Americans have been victims of identity theft. Impostors often run up huge debts, file for bankruptcy, and commit serious crimes. It can take years for victims of identity theft to restore their credit ratings and their reputations. This legislation will enable the United States Secret Service, the Federal Bu-

reau of Investigation, and other law enforcement agencies to combat this type of crime, which can financially devastate its victims.

I want to thank the Vice President for his leadership on this and other privacy issues. As we enter the Information Age, it is critical that our newest technologies support our oldest values.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
October 30, 1998.

NOTE: H.R. 4151, approved October 30, was assigned Public Law No. 105-318.

Statement on Signing the Torture Victims Relief Act of 1998 *October 30, 1998*

Today I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 4309, the "Torture Victims Relief Act of 1998." This Act authorizes continued and expanded U.S. contributions to treatment centers, both in the United States and around the world, for persons who suffer from the mental and physical anguish of having been tortured.

The United States has contributed to these centers for many years—directly to domestic centers through the Department of Health and Human Services and to overseas centers through the Agency for International Development, and indirectly, through Department of State contributions to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for the Victims of Torture. Contributions of this nature are a concrete and practical step that the U.S. Government takes to mitigate the effects of this serious, and far too pervasive, human rights violation.

I want to stress, however, that assisting torture victims does not end the curse of torture. The

United States will continue its efforts to shine a spotlight on this horrible practice wherever it occurs, and we will do all we can to bring it to an end.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all those who have contributed to the successful passage of this legislation. I also salute those nongovernmental organizations active in the cause of human rights, who encouraged congressional passage of this Act and who work tirelessly to keep alive the spirit of human rights, in our hearts and in our domestic and foreign policy.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
October 30, 1998.

NOTE: H.R. 4309, approved October 30, was assigned Public Law No. 105-320.