

Aug. 17 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1999

Statement on Signing the Military Construction Appropriations Act, 2000 *August 17, 1999*

Today I have signed into law H.R. 2465, the “Military Construction Appropriations Act, 2000,” which provides funding for military construction and family housing programs of the Department of Defense (DOD).

The Act funds the vast majority of my request for military construction projects, the military housing program, and other quality-of-life projects for our military personnel and their families. The requested projects are critical to supporting military readiness and the quality of life of our soldiers and their families. However, I have several concerns with the bill:

- For the second consecutive year, the Congress has not provided the requested level of construction funding for the Chemical Weapons Demilitarization program. This year’s reduction of \$93 million to my request substantially increases the risk that the United States will not meet the 2007 Chemical Weapons Convention deadline for the destruction of these chemical weapons. The sooner these weapons are destroyed, the safer we will all be.
- The Congress has chosen to add funds for projects that DOD has not identified as priorities. In particular, \$301 million is provided for 40 projects that are not in DOD’s Future Years Defense Program (FYDP).
- The Congress has again included a provision (section 113) that requires the Secretary of Defense to give 30 days advance notice to certain congressional committees of any proposed military exercise involving construction costs anticipated to exceed \$100,000. In approving H.R. 2465, I wish

to reiterate an understanding, expressed by Presidents Reagan and Bush when they signed Military Construction Appropriations Acts containing a similar provision, that this section encompasses only exercises for which providing 30 days advance notice is feasible and consistent with my constitutional authority and duty to protect the national security.

I urge the Congress to pass all of the FY 2000 appropriations bills as quickly as possible and send them to me in an acceptable form. As of today, the Congress has finished its work on only two of the thirteen appropriations bills. Moreover, many of the remaining bills would require deep cuts in essential government programs, including education, law enforcement, science and technology, the environment, and programs to advance global security through the peaceful use of diplomacy, helping minimize our chances of needing to use military force to the same ends.

When it returns in September, the Congress still has a great deal of work to do. I urge the Congress to approach this work responsibly in order to pass funding bills which are sufficient to meet our Nation’s needs in the year 2000.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
August 17, 1999.

NOTE: H.R. 2465, approved August 17, was assigned Public Law No. 106–52.

Statement on Signing the Water Resources Development Act of 1999 *August 17, 1999*

Today I have signed into law S. 507, the “Water Resources Development Act of 1999,” a multibillion dollar omnibus bill to authorize water projects and programs of the United States Army Corps of Engineers. I am pleased that the Act includes some program reforms,

as well as a number of authorizations for projects and programs that are important to the Nation, but I also have serious reservations about this bill.

I am pleased that the bill increases flood protection for Sacramento, California, and that the

Congress accepted a reform proposed by my Administration to optimize the use of Folsom Dam, a Federal facility protecting the city. However, I am disappointed that the Congress did not authorize other features needed to provide the higher level of flood protection sought by my Administration. I am committed to working with the Congress to reduce further the risk of flood damage facing this community.

In 1998, I proposed an innovative approach to integrate Federal flood protection and environmental restoration efforts: the "Challenge 21" program. I am pleased that the Congress has embraced this proposal and has included a \$200 million authorization for it in this bill. The bill also removes impediments to better flood plain management and broadens the tools available to communities that seek to reduce their risk of flood damage. The bill will promote the use of effective, nonstructural means to address flooding concerns and complement efforts across the Nation to restore the environmental value of flood plains and aquatic ecosystems.

I support the bill's authorization to develop and implement a comprehensive fish and wildlife habitat restoration plan for the Missouri River and to increase the amount of land along the river corridor authorized for acquisition from willing sellers. These authorizations will allow us to recreate a string of natural areas along the length of this great American river once traveled by Lewis and Clark. The legislation also includes an important authorization to study the effects of bank stabilization on the Yellowstone River, the Nation's last major freely meandering river.

On July 1, 1999, my Administration transmitted to the Congress its comprehensive long-term plan to restore the Florida Everglades, which is one of our national treasures. I am pleased that S. 507 continues the authority for related Federal water resources projects in South Florida and look forward to working with the Congress over the next year to authorize the first steps in this important restoration effort.

I also support several of the bill's provisions that authorize improvements to our Nation's ports and harbors. I urge the Congress to enact my proposed Harbor Services Fund legislation, which will ensure a stable source of funding to improve our national port infrastructure and meet the demands of the global economy.

I am disappointed, however, in many of the provisions of S. 507. The amount of construction spending authorized in S. 507—over \$4 billion in new Federal spending—far exceeds a reasonable assessment of the available future Federal budgetary resources for the Corps of Engineers program. With an existing construction backlog of more than \$27 billion of Army Corps of Engineers water resources projects, it would require nearly 20 years at current funding levels just to complete all of the ongoing projects that the Congress previously has authorized. This legislation will place significant further stress on the funding capabilities of this program and create expectations for future funding that are not likely to be forthcoming.

Roughly three-quarters of the significant new projects in this Act and many of its project modifications are still in the planning stage or undergoing review and, therefore, simply are not ready for authorization at this time. Until the completion of the review required for proposed Federal water resources projects under Executive Order 12322, neither the Executive branch nor the Congress is likely to know which of these projects will raise significant concerns regarding their scope, economic and technical feasibility, environmental acceptability, or the ability of local sponsors to provide the required cost-share.

This legislation authorizes nearly \$900 million for local environmental infrastructure and other projects that may be worthwhile, but most of which should not become a responsibility of the Army Corps of Engineers. In addition, although S. 507 would reduce Federal costs for future shore protection projects and is a first step towards establishing a more equitable sharing of their substantial long-term costs, it does not go far enough.

My Administration will work with the Congress on the next water projects authorization bill for the Army Corps of Engineers to address these problems.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
August 17, 1999.

NOTE: S. 507, approved August 17, was assigned Public Law No. 106-53.