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Mary; musician Ray Benson; former Governors Ann Richards and Dolph Briscoe, Jr., of Texas; former Representative J. J. (Jake) Pickle; former Texas Land Commissioner Garry Mauro and his wife, Judith; Gov. George W. Bush of Texas; George Allen, candidate for U.S. Senate in Virginia; and Charlton Heston, president, National Rifle Association.

Statement on Congressional Action on Tobacco Litigation Legislation
June 19, 2000

Last year the Department of Justice filed a civil lawsuit against the tobacco companies to recover the billions of dollars the Federal Government spends each year on tobacco-related health care costs. Tobacco-caused diseases kill more than 400,000 Americans each year and cost billions in health care costs, including more than $20 billion in Federal payments under Medicare and other programs. The Justice Department's suit would simply hold the tobacco industry financially responsible for reimbursement of these costs.

The suit is based on overwhelming evidence, much of it from the tobacco industry's own documents. This evidence shows that the tobacco companies have conspired over the past 50 years to defraud and mislead the American public and to conceal information about the effects of smoking.

The Congress, in its appropriations bills, is undermining this lawsuit by preventing the agencies that have been harmed and that could recover billions—the Defense Department, the Veterans Administration, and the Department of Health and Human Services—from providing any support. If Congress cuts off funding for this lawsuit or interferes with the Justice Department's pursuit of the lawsuit, Congress will be capitulating to the tobacco industry once again at the expense of taxpayers and their children.

It would be wrong for Congress to undermine the authority of the Department of Justice and block this lawsuit rather than allow it to be decided on its merits in court. I call on Congress to support rather than undermine these efforts and allow the Justice Department to keep working to give taxpayers their day in court.

Statement on Greece's Entry Into the Economic and Monetary Union
June 19, 2000

I congratulate Prime Minister Simitis and the Greek people on the decision today at the EU Summit in Portugal to bring Greece into the EU's Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), effective January 1, 2001. Reaching agreement to become a full member of the EMU a year before the euro currency is introduced demonstrates Greece's remarkable economic progress in recent years. This economic success complements Greece's increasingly active political role within the EU.

Through determination and hard work, Greece succeeded in meeting all the Maastricht Treaty economic criteria. Entry into the EMU is not the end of the race but the start of a challenging new phase of economic reform. We wish the Hellenic Republic every success as it moves ahead and hope this will usher in a new era of increased trade and investment between our two nations.