

for agricultural products, and will diversify rural economies while cleaning our air and fighting global warming. The bill also provides income assistance to producers of a number of different crops, such as fruit and vegetable growers, and producers whose crop and pasture land has been flooded. In addition, the bill includes important reforms I requested to the Child and Adult Care Food Program and allows the use of school lunch application data to identify more children eligible for Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program.

However, I am signing H.R. 2559 with reservations because its income assistance component is not targeted, is counter-cyclical, and does not require recipients to enroll in crop insurance. If there was any doubt that the 1996 Farm Bill failed to provide an adequate farm safety net, it should be dispelled by this bill that provides significant supplemental farm income assistance for the third year in a row.

As I said when I signed the 1996 bill, the fixed Agricultural Marketing Transition Act (AMTA) payments simply do not adjust to changes in crop prices or revenues, and the prolonged financial stress in the farm sector has required the Congress to repeatedly step in on an ad hoc basis to supplement farm bill assistance. To respond to the needs of producers suffering from continuing low crop prices and inadequate farm bill assistance, and to provide a sensible approach for the reauthorization of the farm bill in 2002, I proposed counter-cyclical farm income assistance in my FY 2001 Budget, which would provide higher payments on those crops with the most depressed prices and revenues. I am disappointed that the Congress did not adopt this proposal, and instead chose again simply to double the AMTA payments without regard to the hardships facing individual producers this year. Payments in this bill will be based on what producers grew prior to 1996,

not what they are growing now, and some payment recipients may not even be growing covered crops anymore, having switched to other commodities or livestock production. We need to move beyond this kind of untargeted, patchwork fix to secure a stronger, more reliable farm safety net that provides dependable assistance to family farmers based on their current farm income.

Another crucial component of my farm safety net proposal is to significantly increase funds for conservation programs, such as the Conservation and Wetlands Reserve Programs, and a new Conservation Security Program. These programs can boost farm income to a wide range of producers, while providing environmental benefits for all Americans. I am disappointed that virtually no funds were included for these programs, and I will continue to seek substantially increased funding for them this year. Additionally, we want to work with the Congress to prevent an unintended sequester.

This bill's farm income assistance will help many producers get through what is shaping up to be another tough year, and the crop insurance reforms should enhance producers' ability to survive natural disasters for years to come. But I would hope that the experience of the last 3 years has taught those who shape farm policy on Capitol Hill—as farm families across the country have learned first-hand the hard way—that we need to build a stronger, better farm safety net on which American producers, their families, and communities can depend.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
June 20, 2000.

NOTE: H.R. 2559, approved June 20, was assigned Public Law No. 106-224.

Statement on Senate Action on Hate Crimes Legislation *June 20, 2000*

Today the Senate held a historic and long-overdue vote on hate crimes legislation. I applaud the Senate for passing this crucial measure, and recognize the efforts of Senator

Kennedy on this important issue. This amendment recognizes that hate crimes are different from other crimes. When Americans are targeted just because of who they are—whether

June 20 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 2000

because of race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or disability—they hurt more. These crimes affect entire communities and strike at the heart of our American system of values. This important legislation sends a message that everyone is protected under the law.

This legislation also recognizes that State and local law enforcement still have primary responsibility for investigating and prosecuting hate crimes. It provides much needed assistance for State and local law enforcement agencies. It provides financial assistance through grants and

help with investigations and prosecutions so that Federal, State, and local law enforcement can work together to ensure that perpetrators of hate crimes are brought to justice. In addition, the legislation ensures that Federal law enforcement officers confer with State and local law enforcement before bringing a case in Federal court.

Today a majority of the Senate has spoken. We must all work together to ensure that this amendment is not removed during conference. I urge all Members of Congress to send me this legislation to sign into law.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on Tobacco Litigation Legislation

June 20, 2000

I am very pleased that the House of Representatives reversed its position in favor of tobacco companies and today passed an amendment to advance public health by siding with American veterans and taxpayers.

The House decision today to reconsider its support of tobacco companies clears the path for the Veterans Administration to help support tobacco litigation, which could mean billions of dollars to improve veterans medical care. I applaud the perseverance of a bipartisan group, led by Representative Henry Waxman, Representative Lane Evans, Representative Jim Hansen, Representative Martin Meehan, Rep-

resentative Debbie Stabenow, Representative David Obey, and Representative Lloyd Doggett, whose efforts in past days have resulted in this significant victory.

In the coming days and weeks, there will be other attempts by Congress to block the Federal Government's tobacco litigation with riders supported by tobacco companies. This bipartisan victory should be a model for Congress. The legal responsibility of the tobacco companies should be decided in the courts by the judicial process. I call upon Congress to reject the interests of big tobacco and permit justice to run its course.

Statement on European Security and Defense Policy

June 20, 2000

I welcome the progress the European Union made at the Feira Summit to develop a common European security and defense policy. It will strengthen Europe's ability—and responsibility—to act in times of crisis. It will improve cooperation between the European Union and NATO. It will advance European unity while maintaining the vitality of the transatlantic alliance. I look forward to early implementation of the agreed steps, including the establishment of

NATO–EU working groups and regular meetings with non-EU allies.

I also welcome the EU's commitment to create a standing roster of police officers who can be deployed to support peacekeeping missions. As we have seen in Bosnia and Kosovo, there is a critical need for international civilian police who can fill the gap between local police and military peacekeepers in countries emerging from conflict. We will continue to work with