

July 27 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 2000

Statement on Signing the Griffith Project Prepayment and Conveyance Act July 26, 2000

Today I have signed into law S. 986, the “Griffith Project Prepayment and Conveyance Act,” a bill to direct the Secretary of the Interior to convey the Griffith Project to the Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA).

This legislation is consistent with Administration policy of transferring certain facilities to private water districts where it is more efficient for the nonfederal entity to manage the project. I am pleased that the Congress addressed many Administration concerns with earlier versions of this legislation. For example, the bill clarifies questions regarding the lands to be transferred and eligibility for future benefits for Bureau of Reclamation programs.

I am disappointed that the bill directs rather than authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to convey the facilities of the Project. My Administration believes that prior to transferring title, the Secretary should conduct a meaningful National Environmental Policy Act analysis so that the Department, the Congress, and the public can fully understand the impacts of the proposed transfer, its alternatives, and potential mitigation measures. My Administration continues to oppose such mandatory provisions in transfer bills. However, because of the cooperative efforts with the SNWA and the progress made to date in the environmental review, the Department of the Interior indicates that it believes that the process can be satisfactorily completed with regard to this Project.

In signing S. 986, I state my interpretation that section 5(c) of the bill, which provides that nothing in the Act shall transfer or affect Federal ownership, rights, or interest in Lake Mead National Recreation Area associated lands, nor affect the authorities of the National Park Service to manage the Area, read together with section 3(b)(2), makes clear that no interests in real property would transfer to the SNWA other than the right-of-way that is reasonably necessary for the Authority to operate, maintain, replace, and repair the Griffith Project, as constituted on the date of enactment of this Act. Further, notwithstanding language in the bill that provides that the right-of-way shall be “at no cost,” the Federal Government is not prevented from seeking reimbursement for expenditures associated with implementing this Act and protecting the resources of Lake Mead National Recreation Area when rights-of-way are established.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
July 26, 2000.

NOTE: S. 986, approved July 26, was assigned Public Law No. 106-249. This statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 27.

Radio Remarks on Restoration of the Wild Salmon of the Pacific Northwest July 27, 2000

Today my administration is proposing a comprehensive strategy to bring back the wild salmon of the Pacific Northwest. We'll pursue a practical course that will help both the economy and the environment. Congress must also do its part by fully funding my salmon restoration budget, and the people of the Pacific Northwest must be prepared to take the necessary steps. Only in partnership with State and tribal govern-

ments and other stakeholders can we restore the salmon without resorting to costlier measures. I welcome the recommendations of the region's Governors and look forward to working together to ensure our success.

NOTE: The President's remarks were recorded at 2:30 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House for immediate broadcast. These remarks were also

made available on the White House Press Office
Actuality Line.

Remarks on the Legislative Agenda *July 27, 2000*

The President. Well, ladies and gentlemen, first of all, on behalf of all of us, I want to apologize—please be seated—for keeping you waiting. But these are the closing hours of the congressional session, before the August recess. And Senator Daschle and Leader Gephardt and the other Members of Congress have come here today to speak with one voice about our position. But Congress is packing up and preparing to adjourn for the summer recess and the two conventions. And I only wish we were late because they'd been out there passing our bills. [Laughter]

Let me say, we're here because we believe the congressional Republican leadership is leaving town with a trunk full of unfinished business vital to the health of our economy and the well-being of our people. We spent the last 7 years charting a course of fiscal discipline and investment in our people, and it has paid off, with the longest economic expansion in history, over 22 million new jobs, the lowest minority unemployment rate in our history, the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years.

Instead of continuing on that path in the last few weeks, indeed, for the last year, the Republican majority has risked squandering our progress. They have passed reckless tax cut after reckless tax cut after reckless tax cut, to drain away our hard-earned surplus and put us back in the red. When you add them all up, this Congress has passed tax bills that would cost nearly \$2 trillion over 10 years. Even by the most optimistic estimates, this wouldn't leave a dime for lengthening the life of Social Security or Medicare—not one dime; not a dime for voluntary and affordable Medicare prescription drug benefits or for education and school construction. And it would make it impossible for us to get America out of debt by 2012.

There is a better way. We can do all the things I just mentioned and still give the American people needed, targeted tax relief. Let me be clear. We do support the right kind of tax

cuts for working Americans. I have proposed a program of cuts that will give a middle class American family substantially more benefits than the Republican plan at less than half the cost; two-thirds of the relief going to the middle 60 percent of our people, including our carefully targeted marriage penalty relief.

The tax cuts will also help families save up to \$2,800 a year on the cost of college by making tuition tax deductible; a \$3,000 long-term care tax credit to help millions of Americans shoulder the enormous financial burden of caring for chronically ill family members; and a tax cut that will help millions of families pay up to \$2,400 a year for child care; to expand the EITC, providing up to \$1,100 of tax relief for millions of hard-working families.

Today we have more evidence that our plan will help more of the people who really need it. We're releasing a State-by-State analysis, showing that the estate tax repeal, recently passed by the Republican majority, would benefit only about 2 percent of America's families—the wealthiest 2 percent, of course—providing them of an average tax cut of \$800,000. And fully half those benefits would go to just one-tenth of one percent of all Americans.

Let me hasten to say the Democrats offered an alternative which would have taken two-thirds of the people subject to the estate tax out from under it but would have left its progressive character, not repealed it entirely, and not cost the budget \$100 billion over the first 10 years and \$750 billion thereafter.

In contrast to these proposals, our Medicare prescription drug benefit would provide affordable coverage for 39 million seniors and people with disabilities, with average incomes of about \$20,000 a year. This report clearly shows that our approach put the interest of American families first and ensures that the Nation's unprecedented prosperity benefits everyone.

Let me just mention one other thing. I never want to talk about this without mentioning—