AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

as clear. We will stand with the new democratic government as it pursues economic and political reform, meets its international obligations, and works with neighboring countries to promote lasting stability throughout the region.

We helped launch the Stability Pact last year with a common understanding that an undivided, democratic, and peaceful Europe will be a reality only when the countries of southeast Europe are integrated with the rest of the continent. To achieve this goal, the governments of the region are pressing ahead with reforms; the international community is supporting the region's economic development and integration; and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia can now play its own indispensable role in that effort.

At previous Stability Pact conferences, we invited participation by the political opposition in Serbia and by the democratic government in the Republic of Montenegro, both of which had the courage to stand up to the violence and corruption of the Milosevic regime. But we always kept open a chair for the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Now the dramatic changes in Belgrade allow the chair for Yugoslavia to be filled. This is a major step towards realizing our shared vision of a region committed to peace, to healing the wounds of war, and to taking its place in a peaceful, undivided, and democratic Europe.

Statement on the 2000 Annual Report on School Safety

October 26, 2000

I am pleased that the 2000 Annual Report on School Safety released today by the Departments of Justice and Education shows that crime and violence in our Nation's schools continue to decline. Since 1992, rates of serious crime, including violent crime, have declined steadily in our schools, and the number of non-fatal crimes in schools is down by more than 21 percent. Between 1992 and 1997, the number of students who report carrying a weapon to school decreased by 25 percent. School homicides, which remain extremely rare, are also on the decline. This report provides encouraging data that our efforts to protect our children are having an impact.

Since Vice President Gore and I took office, we have encouraged communities to come together to ensure that our schools are safe places for learning. By making school safety a top priority, our administration has helped provide more and better trained police officers in schools, vastly increased funding for after-school programs, required zero tolerance for guns in schools, and funded more mentors and school counselors to help our kids stay on the right track.

We owe it to our children to make sure that crime in school continues to decline. We can continue our progress by supporting comprehensive, locally based efforts such as the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative. Across the Nation, 77 communities have received $147 million under this innovative program to fund enhanced educational, mental health, and law enforcement services. Programs such as this one allow us to promote the healthy development of our students and to identify those children who may be having problems and get them the help they need to turn things around. By working together, we can continue our success in making America's schools safe for each and every student in our Nation.

Statement on Reaching the Nation's Highest Homeownership Rate

October 26, 2000

Today I am proud to announce that our Nation has broken a new record. According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, America has reached its highest homeownership rates ever. This is tremendous new evidence that more and more American families

are realizing the dream of owning their own home. Higher homeownership rates help build stronger families, create more stable communities, and raise living standards for all Americans.

Vice President Gore and I came to office committed to a strategy to make it easier for American families to buy their own homes. By providing record levels of homeownership loan assistance, increasing the availability of affordable housing, providing incentives to save for a home purchase, and maintaining our commitment to fiscal discipline that has kept interest rates low, we have worked to ensure that every family has the opportunity to own their own home. I would like to particularly thank Vice President Gore and Secretary Cuomo for their excellent leadership in working with families, especially in low-income and empowerment communities, to help make homeownership a reality.

Statement on Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act

October 26, 2000

Older Americans all across the country have reason to cheer today. After more than 5 years of congressional inaction, the Senate voted to approve legislation to reauthorize the Older Americans Act. I look forward to signing this measure of vital importance to our Nation's older Americans.

The Older Americans Act ensures that seniors in every State have access to meals, nursing home ombudsmen, legal assistance, elder abuse prevention, employment and transportation services that are essential to their dignity and independence. Enactment of the Older Americans Act Amendments of 2000 will strengthen and improve these services.

I am especially pleased that the final legislation includes the National Family Caregiver Support Program—a key administration priority designed to provide respite care and other supportive services to help hundreds of thousands of families who are struggling to care for their older loved ones who are ill or disabled.

I applaud the bipartisan leadership in the U.S. Senate for its outstanding efforts to approve the Older Americans Act Amendments of 2000. Finally, and most important, I want to pay special tribute to the aging community for its tireless commitment to the needs of older Americans.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Counterdrug Assistance to Colombia and Neighboring Countries

October 26, 2000

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I hereby report, in accordance with section 3202 of the Military Construction Appropriations Act, 2001, on current U.S. policy and strategy for counterdrug assistance to Colombia and neighboring countries. The enclosed report sets forth the rationale for expanded support to Colombia and neighboring countries and highlights the comprehensive initiatives now underway in the Andean region in support of the National Drug Control Strategy.

Colombia's success in combating the threat of drugs is profoundly in the interest of the United States. A peaceful, democratic, and economically prosperous Colombia will result in a significant reduction of the supply of illicit drugs and help promote democracy and stability throughout the hemisphere. I am proud of the bipartisan effort that has made our Colombian initiative possible.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Letters were sent to Jesse Helms, chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations;