

It's easy to get started and to have an immediate impact. Volunteering your time at a soup kitchen, teaching a child to read, visiting a patient in the hospital, or taking a meal to an elderly neighbor or a shut-in are all simple acts of compassion that can brighten someone's life. Every act of love and generosity, however small it may seem, is significant. Every time you reach out to a neighbor in need, you touch a life, you improve your community, and you strengthen our Nation.

Earlier this year, I created the USA Freedom Corps office in the White House to harness the power of millions of acts of charity, compassion, and love to make America a better place. I hope you'll consider joining the armies of compassion and dedicating time and energy and service to others. I'm so proud of the millions of Americans who have answered the call to service, enriching the lives of others with acts of kindness. It is a testament to the good heart and the giving spirit of the American people.

There's no better time than this season of Thanksgiving to renew our commitment to helping those in need. The USA Freedom Corps web site—usafreedomcorps.gov—is a wonderful place to get started. This resource offers valuable information about service opportunities in your hometown, across America, and around the world. You can also get information by calling 1-877-USA-CORPS.

Take the time to find out how you can help your fellow Americans and make this holiday season a season of service.

Happy Thanksgiving, and thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 3:15 p.m. on November 26 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on November 30. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 29 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks on Signing the North American Wetlands Conservation Reauthorization Act

December 2, 2002

The President. Please be seated. Thank you. Glad you're here. Welcome to the White House.

Today we're taking important action to conserve North America's wetlands, which will help keep our water clean and help provide habitat for hundreds of species of wildlife. Through this legislation, the Federal Government will continue its partnership with landowners, conservation groups, and States to save and improve millions of acres of wetlands. The North American Wetlands Conservation Reauthorization Act shows our concern for the environment and our respect for future generations of Americans.

I appreciate two members of my Cabinet who are here today. I'm honored the Secretary of the Interior, Gale Norton, is with us, the Secretary of Agriculture, Ann Veneman. Thank you both for coming.

I appreciate the Ambassador, Ambassador Kergin from Canada, for being here as well. Mr. Ambassador, glad you're here. Thanks for coming.

I want to thank Bob Smith, Senator from New Hampshire, for being here and for his work on this bill. I want to thank Wayne Gilchrest from Maryland—he's got a big interest in wetlands as well as the Chesapeake Bay—for coming here. I appreciate so very much Robert Underwood, ranking

member from Guam, for coming. I'm sorry that Jim Hansen is not with us today. He was the chairman of the House Committee on Resources, who helped write and sponsor and get this legislation passed through the Congress.

I appreciate Steve Williams, who is the director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, for coming today. Where are you, Steve? There you are. Thanks for coming.

And I want to thank the president of Ducks Unlimited, John Tomke; thanks for coming, John. I'm glad you all are here. And I want to thank you all for coming as well.

With this signature today, the North American Wetlands Conservation Act will be reauthorized for 5 years. The law authorizes Federal money to match donations from sportsmen, State wildlife agencies, conservationists, and landowners. Since 1991, more than \$462 million in Federal grants have helped to encourage \$1.3 billion in contributions from others. Together these funds have restored streams and rivers, reestablished native plants and trees,

acquired land that is home to more than a third of America's threatened and endangered species.

Because about 75 percent of the wetlands are held privately, we need to encourage cooperation with our landowners. This legislation shows that when Government and landowners and conservationists and others work together, we can make dramatic progress in preserving the beauty and the quality of our environment.

I want to thank the Congress for supporting this legislation. And I ask the Members of the Congress and the two Cabinet members who are here today to join me as I sign this important piece of legislation.

[At this point, the President signed the bill.]

The President. Thank you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:30 a.m. in Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Canadian Ambassador to the U.S. Michael Kergin. H.R. 3908, approved December 2, was assigned Public Law No. 107-308.

Remarks on Signing the Bob Stump National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003 in Arlington, Virginia *December 2, 2002*

Thank you, Mr. Secretary. And thank you for your leadership. Thank you for your candor. Thank you—you're doing a fabulous job on behalf of the American people. It's an honor for me to be here today with the leaders of our military, the good folks who are serving our country, to sign the 2003 defense authorization bill.

We're a nation at war. America must understand we're at war. But those who wear the uniform must understand how proud all of America is for your service to our great country. On behalf of a grateful nation, I'm here to thank you.

Our military is making good progress in this war. We've liberated an oppressed and friendless people. We're hunting down the terrorists all across the globe. We're performing our missions with speed and skill. You have the strong, united support of this great land, and this bill should reflect the strong and united support of the United States Congress.

And I want to thank the Members of the Congress who are here on stage, Senator Warner and Congressman Duncan Hunter. And Members of the Senate and the Congress who are with us, I want to