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provisions include in the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act, section 595; in the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Act, provisions under the headings "Innovation and Improvement," "Rehabilitation Services and Disability Research," "Higher Education," and "Institute of Education Sciences"; in the Transportation-Treasury Appropriations Act, sections 125 and 173; and in the VA-HUD Appropriations Act, provisions under the headings "Community Development Fund" and "Department of Housing and Urban Development, Management and Administration, Salaries and Expenses."

Several provisions of CAA relate to race, ethnicity, or gender. The executive branch shall construe such provisions in a manner consistent with the requirements that the Federal Government afford equal protection of the laws under the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution.

Section 12 of the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act authorizes overseas travel for members of the U.S. Capitol Police in support of travel by Senators. To ensure consistency with the President's constitutional authority to conduct the Nation's foreign affairs, the executive branch shall construe section 12 as authorizing travel for the limited purposes of advance, security, and protective functions in support of the official travel of Senators. The executive branch shall construe the term "intelligence gathering" in section 1007 of the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, which relates to activities of the U.S. Capitol Police outside their geographic jurisdiction, as limited to collection of information for law enforcement and protective functions authorized by other laws relating to the U.S. Capitol Police, as any other construction would be inconsistent with the Constitution's vesting of the executive power in the President.

The executive branch shall construe section 638 of the Transportation-Treasury Appropriations Act, relating to assignment of executive branch employees to perform functions in the legislative branch, in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to supervise the unitary executive branch and as Commander in Chief, and recognizing that the President cannot be compelled to give up the authority of his office as a condition of receiving the funds necessary to carrying out the duties of his office.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
December 8, 2004.

NOTE: H.R. 4818, approved December 8, was assigned Public Law No. 108–447.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Concurring on the Designation of Funds for the African Union Security Force and Construction of a Mail Irradiation Facility in Washington, DC

December 8, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

I hereby concur with the Congress in the designation of two provisions totaling $100 million provided in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2005 (H.R. 4818), as emergency requirements.

These funds are necessary to support the African Union security force in Darfur, as well as to construct a mail irradiation facility in Washington, D.C. Additional information is set forth in the attached letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate.

Remarks on the Nomination of R. James Nicholson To Be Secretary of Veterans Affairs

December 9, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Please be seated. Good morning. I'm pleased to announce my nomination of Ambassador Jim Nicholson to the—to be the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Jim Nicholson is a patriot, a man of deep conviction who has answered his country's call many times. As a young man from Iowa, raised in modest circumstances, he became a cadet at West Point in the late 1950s and went on to become an Army Ranger and paratrooper. As a Ranger, he fought in Vietnam, where he won multiple decorations for bravery in combat, including the Bronze Star and the Combat Infantry Badge. After 8 years on active duty, he joined the Army Reserves, where he served for 22 more years before retiring as a full colonel.

Throughout his career, Jim has shown the same honor, integrity, and commitment to service that defined his life as a military officer. He and his wife, Suzanne, have given back generously to their community and have been leaders in numerous volunteer causes in their home State of Colorado. He was a respected chairman of the Republican National Committee. And for the past 3 years, he has served as the United States Ambassador to the Vatican. Jim has worked with the Vatican to advance many vital foreign policy goals, including fighting poverty, hunger, AIDS, expanding religious liberty around the world, and ending the brutal practice of human trafficking.

I'm grateful to Jim for his superb work as our Ambassador, and I now have asked him to accept a new assignment, to serve his country and his fellow veterans.

As Secretary of Veterans Affairs, he will lead a department of more than 230,000 employees responsible for ensuring our Nation's—that our Nation's veterans receive the health care and other benefits our country has promised them. Twenty-five million Americans are military veterans who stepped forward to serve when the Nation needed them. The Nation owes them in return a VA that is dedicated to effective, prompt attention to their needs. That has been a commitment of my administration for the last 4 years, and it will remain a commitment for the next 4 years.

When confirmed by the Senate, Jim Nicholson will succeed Tony Principi, who has been a fine member of my Cabinet. Secretary Principi is a man who insists on results, and he has gotten results. Thanks to his leadership, veterans and their families have seen many improvements in VA services. They're receiving better care, and their claims are processed more quickly. Tony Principi has made it the Department's highest priority to assist veterans with service-related disabilities, low incomes, and other special needs. He's also launched a program to help homeless veterans find permanent housing. In all his work as Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Tony Principi has shown himself to be an outstanding executive, a friend to his fellow veterans, and a goodhearted man. I'm proud of his service, and I wish him and Liz all the very best.