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the Congress will work with me and so that all Americans can have health care security.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
August 21, 1996.

NOTE: H.R. 3103, approved August 21, was assigned Public Law No. 104–191.

Statement on Signing the War Crimes Act of 1996

August 21, 1996

Today I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 3680, the ''War Crimes Act of 1996.'' This bill, in furtherance of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, extends U.S. criminal jurisdiction over certain war crimes and provides the United States with clearer authority to prosecute violations of the laws of war.

Most grave breaches of the Conventions are already subject to U.S. prosecution if committed in the United States and many—such as hostage taking, terrorism or genocide—could be prosecuted even if committed abroad. However, many other crimes which would be considered grave breaches of the Conventions could not be prosecuted in United States courts. This legislation is designed to help fill that gap. It authorizes the prosecution of war criminals if they are found in or extradited to the United States. It applies to U.S. nationals or members of the Armed Forces who are perpetrators or victims of war crimes. It would apply, for example, in the case of American civilians subjected to war crimes in an overseas conflict.

This legislation represents an important reaffirmation of American leadership in the development of the law for the protection of victims of war.

In keeping with this leadership role, however, we can and should do even more to strengthen the law in this area. To that end, my Administration is committed to working with the Congress to expand the scope of this legislation. This expansion should address: (1) war crimes committed by *any* person who comes within the jurisdiction of the United States courts, including crimes committed by non-U.S. persons against non-U.S. victims; (2) cases involving other serious war crimes not covered by H.R. 3680, such as those prohibited by The Hague Conventions of 1907; and (3) cases involving acts to be made criminal under the recently improved landmines protocol of the Convention on Conventional Weapons. This broadening of the law would not require the United States to exercise jurisdiction in any particular case, but would provide the authority to do so in the national interest.

This bill and the expansions we seek have been endorsed by the American Red Cross, which has had an important role to play in this area ever since its founder Clara Barton took the lead in securing U.S. ratification of the first Geneva Convention. The International Committee of the Red Cross has also voiced its support for our efforts to broaden the scope of this legislation.

In sum, this bill serves important goals and is a significant step forward. Now we should build on this progress and seek further improvements in promoting respect for the laws of war and in reinforcing protections for the victims of war.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
August 21, 1996.

NOTE: H.R. 3680, approved August 21, was assigned Public Law No. 104–192.

Proclamation 6912—Women's Equality Day, 1996

August 21, 1996

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Since America's earliest days, our citizens have engaged in a passionate struggle to create a Nation where all can enjoy the benefits of democracy in equal measure. In 1920, we took a great step toward that noble goal by declaring that the right to vote could not be denied on the basis of gender. This 76th anniversary of the adoption of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution gives us an opportunity to celebrate the advances made in empowering women to fully participate in the