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proved October 9, was assigned Public Law No. 104–264.

Statement on Signing the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Amendments Act of 1996

October 9, 1996

Today, I have signed into law H.R. 2594, the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Amendments Act of 1996, proving once again that when management and labor work together they make their businesses, their communities, and our working families stronger.

This bill, which was supported by both labor and management, brings unemployment benefits for railroad workers in line with benefits for other workers. It also reduces the waiting periods for receiving unemployment and sickness benefits and increases the maximum daily rate for these same benefits.

In short, this bill is good for the American economy and the American worker. I applaud rail labor and management and those at the Railroad Retirement Board, the Department of Labor, the Department of Transportation, the National Mediation Board, and all others who had a hand in helping to create the climate that has led to good relations and progress in the industry.

NOTE: H.R. 2594, approved October 9, was assigned Public Law No. 104–251.

Statement on Signing Veterans Legislation

October 9, 1996

I have signed into law today three veterans-related bills that will ensure that veterans benefits keep pace with inflation, improve the veterans health care system, and expand other veterans programs and benefits.

The first bill—H.R. 3458, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 1996—authorizes a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) on December 1, 1996, for recipients of veterans' disability compensation, Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC), and clothing allowances. The COLA, identical to the one that Social Security recipients will receive on January 1, 1997, will go to about 2.3 million veterans with disabilities who receive disability compensation benefits, over 300,000 individuals who receive DIC as the surviving spouses and children of service members who died in service and veterans whose deaths were service-connected, and veterans who receive clothing allowances because they wear or use prosthetic or orthopedic appliances.

The second bill—H.R. 3118, the Veterans' Health Care Eligibility Reform Act of 1996—includes many elements of the proposal that the National Performance Review, led by Vice President Gore, recommended to establish a modern, integrated health care system that will improve access to, and care for, the Nation's veterans. The bill, for instance, authorizes the Department of Veterans Affairs to furnish comprehensive medical services to all veterans, expanding the array of services that it now provides. Eligibility reform has been a high priority of veterans for many years, and I am pleased that we finally could enact it.

Finally, the third bill—S. 1711, the Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act of 1996—expands and extends numerous veterans education, housing, life insurance, and employment and training benefits.

NOTE: H.R. 3458, approved October 9, was assigned Public Law No. 104–263; H.R. 3118, approved October 9, was assigned Public Law No. 104–262; S. 1711, approved October 9, was assigned Public Law No. 104–275.

Statement on Signing the Helium Privatization Act of 1996

October 9, 1996

I have signed into law today H.R. 4168, the Helium Privatization Act of 1996, which privatizes the Department of Interior's Federal Helium Refining Program—as the Vice President's National Performance Review had recommended.

Once, our defense and aviation industries had a strong need for helium and the Nation lacked a market to supply it. A Government program was appropriate. But today, over 90 percent of U.S. helium needs are met by private producers and suppliers. A Govern-