

nership, together with the American people, in securing our country's future. The United States must be united when we sit down at the negotiating table. Our trading partners will only negotiate with one America—not first with an American President and next with an American Congress.

The proposal I am sending you today ensures that the Congress will be a full partner in setting negotiating objectives, establishing trade priorities, and in gaining the greatest possible benefits through our trade agreements. The proposal expands upon previous fast-track legislation to ensure that the Congress is fully apprised and actively consulted throughout the negotiating process. I am convinced that this collaboration will strengthen both America's effectiveness and leverage at the bargaining table.

Widening the scope of consultations will also help ensure that we will take all of America's vital interests into account. That is particularly important because today our trade agreements address a wider range of activities than they once did. As we move forward with our trade agenda, we must continue to honor and reinforce the other values that make America an example for the world. I count chief among these values America's longstanding concern for the rights of workers and for protection of the environment. The proposal I am transmitting to you recognizes the importance of those concerns. It makes clear that the agreements we conclude should complement and reinforce those values.

Ever since President Franklin Roosevelt proposed and the Congress enacted America's first reciprocal trade act in the depths of the Great Depression, the Congress and the President have been united, on a bipartisan basis, in supporting a fair and open trading system. Our predecessors learned from direct experience the path to America's prosperity. We owe much of our own prosperity to their wisdom. I urge the Congress to renew our longstanding partnership by approving the proposal I have transmitted today.

**William J. Clinton**

The White House,  
September 16, 1997.

### **Statement on Senate Action on the Gorton Amendment**

*September 16, 1997*

The vote by a narrow majority of the U.S. Senate to support the Gorton amendment undermines the bipartisan spirit of cooperation that is so vital to improving American education. At worst, this decision to block grant education programs is, as Secretary Riley said, a "back-door attempt to kill off the Department of Education." At best, the vote was a hasty, ill-considered decision that would have a serious impact on our schools.

I welcome the Senate's overwhelming support for my proposal to offer States and communities voluntary national tests in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math. However, the adoption of the Gorton amendment less than 2 hours later eliminated the very funding needed to continue development of these tests.

The Gorton amendment would halt many of our most successful efforts to improve education, including our efforts to get computers into every classroom, raise standards through Goals 2000, establish more charter schools, assist young people in making the transition from school to work, help parents and schools keep our children safe and drug-free, and create more opportunities to help immigrant children learn English and stay in school. The amendment would seriously harm the Title I program, which provides extra help to low-income students so they can master the basic skills of reading and math and reach high academic standards. It also undermines programs targeted to help gifted and talented students, support arts education, and promote exciting new efforts to create technology partnerships. Further, this amendment would slash funds used to help adults with severe disabilities obtain employment.

This is not a vote, as some would suggest, about who controls public education. Rather it is a vote about whether the Federal Government will maintain its commitment to help local communities strengthen accountability and raise academic standards in basic skills, improve teaching and learning, assist parents and schools in keeping children safe and drug-free, promote public school choice

for parents and students, and prepare all of our students for the 21st century.

The Department of Education has historically targeted its funding to schools that serve disadvantaged students. If the Gorton amendment became law, the wealthiest school districts would be the winners and the rest of our communities would inevitably be the losers.

Politics must stop at the schoolhouse door. The Gorton amendment is unacceptable. I understand a similar provision may be offered in the House. Let me be clear. If necessary, I will use my veto power to make sure that no such provision becomes the law of the land.

**Statement on House of Representatives Action on Voluntary National Testing for Basic Education Skills**

*September 16, 1997*

I am disappointed that the House of Representatives voted tonight to block my proposal for voluntary national tests in the basic skills. These tests will help raise expectations for our students, provide clear standards of achievement in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math, and give parents the tools they need to measure the progress their children are making. They will help our students learn and our schools continue to improve.

Yet the House of Representatives tonight cast a vote for the status quo and against better schools. The same old forces that have resisted education reform over the past decade came together to defeat high national standards in the basics. They have voted against a plan to improve our schools by raising standards, empowering parents, and increasing accountability.

The House vote is unacceptable, and it will not stand. Last week, by a bipartisan vote of 87–13, the Senate endorsed my plan for voluntary national tests to help students master the basics and embraced my proposal to place them under the control of the independent, bipartisan National Assessment Governing Board. My administration will work hard to make sure that the final legislation reflects the bipartisan support of the

Senate and the broad support of the American people.

**Proclamation 7022—Citizenship Day and Constitution Week, 1997**

*September 16, 1997*

*By the President of the United States of America*

**A Proclamation**

Of all the dates in American history, one of the most important is perhaps the least well-known—September 17, 1787. On that day, our Nation’s Founders signed the Constitution of the United States, a document that has steadily grown in stature throughout the world as a model for democratic government under the rule of law.

As with most human enterprises, the Constitution was the product of compromise. The delegates to the Constitutional Convention brought with them to Philadelphia conflicting local and regional concerns, differing viewpoints, fears of creating a government that was either too powerful or too weak. When the convention seemed close to dissolving with nothing accomplished, Benjamin Franklin reminded his fellow delegates that history would judge them harshly if they failed in this great experiment of self-government: “. . . [M]ankind may hereafter, from this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing governments by human wisdom, and leave it to chance, war and conquest.”

But human wisdom did prevail. The delegates devised a framework for democracy with an ingenious design of checks and balances, broad protection of individual rights, and a mechanism for amendment to ensure that it would be able to respond to the ever-changing needs of our people. This remarkable document has rightly earned the world’s admiration for its success in combining structural solidity with practical adaptability—a combination that has served our Nation through times of rapid change as well as times of stability.

We can measure that success by the thousands of men, women, and children who travel to our shores each year, seeking a chance to live out their dreams. Many of them know what life can be like without the blessings