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90-day period that are not permitted in the 30-day period. But I think this is a legal question, and it should be done based on an independent legal review with no pressure from the outside, from me or from anyone else. And that's the way I intend to keep it, at least on my part.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:59 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Memorandum on the Food Safety Initiative

October 2, 1997

Memorandum for the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Secretary of Agriculture

Subject: Initiative to Ensure the Safety of Imported and Domestic Fruits and Vegetables

American consumers today enjoy the safest food supply in the world, and I am proud of my Administration's record in this area. We have taken significant steps to ensure that we maintain the safest food possible. We have put in place improved safety standards for meat, poultry, and seafood products, and we have begun the process of developing enhanced safety standards for fruit and vegetable juices. We have also expanded research, education, and surveillance activities through coordinated efforts of all agencies involved in food safety issues. Together, these measures will greatly improve the safety of the Nation's food supply.

We need to build on these efforts, and today I ask you to do so by focusing on the safety of fruits and vegetables. Although the produce Americans eat is very safe, we can and must do even better, especially at a time when Americans are eating more fruits and vegetables from all over the world. Last year, 38 percent of the fruit and 12 percent of the vegetables consumed by Americans came from overseas. We must ensure that fruits and vegetables coming from abroad are as safe as those produced in the United States, especially as we upgrade our own domestic standards.

To help accomplish this task, I plan to send to the Congress proposed legislation that will require the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to halt imports of fruits, vegetables, or other food from any foreign country whose food safety systems and standards are not on par with those of the United States. This legislation, which will be similar to existing law requiring the USDA to halt the importation of meat and poultry from such countries, will enable the FDA to prevent the importation of potentially unsafe foreign produce. My Fiscal Year 1999 budget will provide the necessary funds to enable the FDA to expand dramatically its international food inspection force. With this greatly increased ability to inspect food safety conditions abroad and at points of entry, the FDA will be able to determine when to halt the importation of fruits and vegetables from foreign countries.

Today, I hereby direct two administrative actions that will better ensure the safety of fruits and vegetables coming from abroad, while continuing to improve the safety of domestic produce.

First, I direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in partnership with the Secretary of Agriculture and in close cooperation with the agricultural community, to issue within 1 year from the date of this memorandum, guidance on good agricultural practices and good manufacturing practices for fruits and vegetables. This guidance should address ways to prevent potential sources of contamination, should take into account differences in both crops and regions, and should address food safety issues throughout the food production and distribution system. By providing the first-ever specific safety standards for fruits and vegetables, the guidance will improve the agricultural and manufacturing practices of all those seeking to sell produce in the U.S. market. To ensure that this guidance has the widest possible effect, I also direct the development of coordinated outreach and educational activities.

Second, I direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Secretary of Agriculture, to report back to me within 90 days from the date of this memorandum with a status report and complete schedule for the good agricultural and manufacturing practices, and a plan on how to improve the mon-

itoring of agricultural and manufacturing practices abroad, to assist foreign countries to improve those practices where necessary, and to prevent the importation of unsafe produce, including by detecting unsafe food at the dock or border. I especially urge you to consider the best ways to target inspection and testing toward those areas where problems are most likely to occur.

In addition to taking these actions, you should accelerate whatever food safety research is necessary to support them. You should also call upon the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Labor, and other agencies as necessary, to provide you with assistance in achieving this goal. These steps, taken together and in coordination with the proposed legislation I will send to the Congress, will improve the safety of fruits and vegetables for all Americans.

William J. Clinton

Proclamation 7031—National Disability Employment Awareness Month, 1997

October 2, 1997

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

America has always been blessed with abundant natural resources; but we sometimes fail to recognize that we have been blessed with rich human resources as well. Millions of people in thousands of professions have built this great country with their labor and made a reality of the American Dream for themselves and their families. But for 20 percent of our population, that dream has too often been deferred or denied. Americans with disabilities have had to overcome barriers in communication, transportation, architecture, and attitude to take their rightful place in our Nation's work force.

If America is to continue to grow and prosper, if we are to lead the challenging global economy of the 21st century, we cannot afford to ignore the talents, energy, and creativity of the 54 million Americans with disabilities. Thanks to the Americans with Disabilities Act, we are making significant progress in eliminating workplace discrimination and ensuring equal job opportunities for people with disabilities. This landmark civil rights legislation, enacted 7 years ago with bipartisan support, has opened doors and brought down barriers across our country for people with disabilities. It has empowered them with the opportunity to become employees, taxpayers, and active participants in the life of their communities.

To build on this progress, government at every level must work in partnership with business, labor, and community organizations to ensure that all Americans, regardless of disability, can live and learn and work alongside their fellow citizens. Only when we guarantee the inclusion, empowerment, and independence of all our people will America fulfill its great promise of freedom and opportunity.

To recognize the full potential of individuals with disabilities and to encourage all Americans to work toward their full integration into the work force, the Congress, by joint resolution approved August 11, 1945, as amended (36 U.S.C. 155), has designated October of each year as ''National Disability Employment Awareness Month.''

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim October 1997 as National Disability Employment Awareness Month. I call upon government officials, educators, labor leaders, employers, and the people of the United States to observe this month with appropriate programs and activities that reaffirm our determination to achieve the full integration into the work force of people with disabilities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this second day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-second.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 10:53 a.m., October 3, 1997]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on October 6.