

Week Ending Friday, November 14, 1997

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

November 7, 1997

Legislation passed by the House of Representatives this evening provides an impressive victory for American education. It moves us down the road to high national standards and voluntary national tests in the basic skills, and it invests in providing our country with better schools and increased educational opportunities.

I am very pleased that we have reached an agreement on one of my top priorities for this year and for my Presidency: making sure that America's schoolchildren can master the basics and achieve higher academic standards. America's parents, teachers, and principals can now be sure that we are going to hold children's educational skills up to the same high standard whether they live in Michigan, Maine, or Montana.

The educational agenda I have established for the Nation—from high standards and testing to making a college education possible for every young American—is designed to give our children the tools they need to succeed in a changing global economy. Today's agreement fulfills a critical part of that agenda, and I appreciate that politics indeed stopped at the schoolhouse door.

The Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill, which includes the agreement on national standards and tests, also helps meet our national commitment to expand educational opportunities for all students. It provides a \$1.5 billion increase in Pell grants to help an additional 210,000 young people attend college, and increases the maximum Pell grant to \$3,000, the highest level in history. Special education funding is increased by \$800 million, funding for technology for our schools is almost doubled, and there is \$7.4 billion to help our most disadvantaged

students master the basic skills. Goals 2000 is funded at \$491 million, to continue to support school reform in every State, and funding for after-school programs is increased from \$1 million to \$40 million.

I am also pleased to see the House pass bipartisan charter school legislation to promote choice and accountability in the public schools and help achieve my goal of 3,000 charter schools.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Message to the Senate on Transmitting Agreement Establishing the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme and Documentation

November 7, 1997

To the Senate of the United States:

I transmit herewith, for the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, the Agreement Establishing the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, done at Apia on June 16, 1993 ("the Agreement"). The report of the Department of State with respect to the Agreement is attached for the information of the Senate.

The South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) has existed for almost 15 years to promote cooperation in the South Pacific region, to protect and improve the South Pacific environment and to ensure sustainable development in that region. Prior to the Agreement, SPREP had the status of an informal institution housed within the South Pacific Commission. When this institutional arrangement began to prove inefficient, the United States and the nations of the region negotiated the Agreement to allow SPREP to become an intergovernmental organization in its own right and enhance its ability to promote cooperation among its members.