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And again I say to all of you, this is an act of high citizenship, what you're doing. And we cannot afford to let the American people become skeptical or cynical about this endeavor just at the time when our country is on a roll. And if we do the right things, it will stay on a roll and we'll be able to have a positive impact on all the good people in the rest of the world who are trying to make the most of their freedom, too. That's what you're part of, and when you go home tonight, I want you to be proud of it.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:29 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Elizabeth F. Bagley, former U.S. Ambassador to Portugal, and her husband, Smith; former Assistant to the President for Policy and Strategy and Executive Assistant to the Chief of Staff George R. Stephanopoulos; and Steve Grossman, national chair, Democratic National Committee.

Remarks on Signing the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1998

November 13, 1997

You may have to consider a move from math to public service. [*Laughter*]

Well, thank you, Philip and Tina Israel. Thank you, Kikuyu Shaw. Mr. Vice President, Secretary Riley, Secretary Herman, Deputy Secretary Thurm, all the Members of Congress who are here, and Mrs. Udall, thank you for coming.

Ladies and gentlemen, before I make my remarks about this legislation that we have all worked on, I'd like to say a few words about yesterday's United Nations Security Council resolution on Iraq.

Plainly, it sent the right message: Comply now with the U.N. resolutions and let the UNSCOM inspection team go back to work. Iraq's announcement this morning to expel the Americans from the inspection team is clearly unacceptable and a challenge to the international community.

Let me remind you all again—I will say this every time I discuss this issue—these inspectors, in the last 6 years, have uncovered more weapons of mass destruction potential and destroyed it than was destroyed in the entire Gulf war. It is important to the safety of the world that they continue their work. I intend to pursue this matter in a very determined way.

I think it's fair to say that this is one of those days in public service that these Members of Congress in both parties work for and live for and put up with a lot of the hassles of public life for. We have been on a journey for the last 5 years to a new century that is now just around the corner, driven by a vision to provide opportunity to everybody who is responsible enough to work for it, to continue to lead the world for peace and freedom and prosperity, and to bring our people together, across all the lines that divide us, into one America. And we're clearly making progress. Our economy is the strongest in a generation; crime, welfare, and unemployment are falling.

I think all of us believe that the best way to sustain and build on that progress is to make sure that all of our people have a world-class education. In my State of the Union Address, I challenged our people to join me in a nonpartisan effort to make sure that every 8-year-old can read, every 12-year-old can log on to the Internet, every 18-year-old can go on to college, every adult can continue to learn for a lifetime. For the very first time, I feel that we are determined to finish that part of our journey.

Congress and the United States of America have answered the call. When I sign this bill into law, I will have the privilege of signing into the record books what is plainly the best year for American education in more than a generation.

First, we are taking historic steps to make sure that every child in America can meet the high national standards of academic achievement that the Israels spoke about so that every children can master the basics. This bill represents a genuine breakthrough in what is now quite a long effort by many people to achieve national academic standards in the United States. For the first time, we will have workable and generally agreed-upon standards in math and reading. And for the very first time, Congress has voted to

support the development of voluntary national tests to measure performance in fourth grade reading and eighth grade math. The tests will be created by an independent, bipartisan organization and will be piloted in schools next October.

The importance of this cannot be overstated. Our children rise with the expectations we set for them. We know that every child can meet high standards if we set them and measure our progress against them. I want to especially thank Senator Bingaman and Representative Miller and everyone else who worked on this particular part of the legislation.

This legislation also takes concrete steps to help our children meet the standards and, indeed, to achieve all our national education goals. It will help every 8-year-old in America read on his or her own by funding the America Reads challenge and expanding national service so that our AmeriCorps members can recruit trained literacy tutors for our schools. Already, over 800 colleges and universities and numerous other organizations are providing tens of thousands of volunteer tutors that are going into our schools every week to help make sure our children can read. We can give our children the extra attention and practice they need so that we can assure that they'll be able to read independently by the end of the third grade if we continue to pursue this.

Second, the bill takes significant steps to ensure that every 12-year-old can log on to the Internet. I must say, I had ambivalent feelings when I realized that Mr. Israel was logging on to the Internet and reading what was on the website about the exam. Some day somebody may figure out how to find the actual exam on the website. [*Laughter*] But I was glad to know you were. This measure nearly doubles—nearly doubles—our national investment in education technology. It puts us well on the way to connecting every classroom and library to the information superhighway by the year 2000, something the Vice President has made a particular commitment to.

And I want to emphasize something else, because I met with a group of young people yesterday in their twenties who were hammering me on this. They said, ''What difference will it make if you connect every classroom in the country to the information superhighway if the teachers aren't trained to use the technology, and the kids know more than they do?'' So I want to emphasize that a big part of this legislation provides investments to make sure that our teachers have the training they need to maximize the use of this new technology.

Third, the bill, along with the college tuition tax credits I signed into law this summer and the improvements in the college loan program we have been implementing since 1993, will make it possible for every 18-year-old who's willing to work for it to go on to college. And it gives us the chance to make the 13th and 14th years of education as universal as a high school diploma is today. This measure includes the largest increase in Pell grant scholarships in two decades, raising the maximum grant, and serving an additional 220,000 students.

I might add that the Congress—and I thank the members of this committee who are here—has added in the last two budgets another 300,000 work-study positions as well.

The bill also promotes innovation and expands public school choice, helping parents, teachers, and community leaders to open some 500 new charter schools and clearing the way for 3,000 such schools by early in the next century. It recognizes that learning begins in the earliest years of life and significantly expands investment in Head Start. It challenges teachers to reach higher standards along with students and honors those who do by helping 100,000 more teachers seek certification for the National Board of Teacher Standards as master teachers.

Let me emphasize the significance of the 100,000 figure. The year before last, there were only 500 teachers in the entire country who had been certified as master teachers. Because of the unique training and performance required to gain this certification, it is our firm belief—and I know Secretary Riley believes this—if we can get one master teacher certified in every school building in America, it will change the entire culture of teaching across the country and elevate the quality of education dramatically. So this is very important.

The bill brings more to our efforts to build the discipline and order and safety and positive activity into the lives of our children, with $40 million to help schools stay open late, on the weekends, and in the summer, to help keep young people off the streets and out of trouble, along with job training for out-of-school youth. Now, let me emphasize the importance of this. Most juvenile crime is committed between the hours of 3 in the afternoon and 7 at night. While the crime rate has dropped in America dramatically, it's only in the last 2 years that it's begun to level off among young people.

But we ought to look at this in a positive way. This is an opportunity to take kids who otherwise don't have the institutional support they need, who are capable of getting a good education and being good, productive citizens, and giving them the institutional framework within which to do that. It also helps a lot of them whose parents have to work until later in the evening and cannot be at home.

So it may sound like a little money, but a little money given to a school on a tight budget for this purpose can make all the difference in the world in the lives of a lot of our young people. So I'm very pleased by that. And again, I want to thank all the Members who are here for what they have done.

I hope now we will use this momentum in education to take some new steps, to pass finally a ''GI bill'' for America's workers that would enable us to give a certificate to any American who needs it to take to the nearest educational institution to learn new skills to reenter the workplace, and to meet the quiet crisis of crumbling and crowded school buildings across America. We have more children in our schools than at any time in our history, with serious overcrowding problems and serious building deterioration problems, which I believe we should help to address.

Let me say, finally, that this bill continues our efforts to strengthen families on many other fronts. It expands educational opportunity for recent immigrants, children with disabilities, children growing up in our poorest neighborhoods. It significantly increases funding for biomedical research, from cancer to Parkinson's disease—and we're particularly glad to have Mrs. Udall with us today—to the astonishing human genome project. And I would like to thank Congressman Porter and Congressman Obey and Congressman Spratt for the work that they have done on this particular thing. And I would like to especially thank Congressman Upton for the work that he's done on the Parkinson's issue. This is a remarkable, remarkable bill with an astonishing bipartisan commitment to keep our country on the front ranks of medical research.

Finally, it will help to make new, very powerful AIDS therapies more available to needy patients. Along with the FDA reform legislation this Congress has passed that we will be signing in the next several days, moving promising medical therapies to market more quickly in a more efficient way and then making them more available to the people that need them can change the lives and improve the quality as well as the length of lives for many, many tens of thousand of our fellow Americans.

And believe it or not, with all these issues on the education checklist and all the things I just mentioned in health care, these are just some of the important provisions in this bill that honor our duty to prepare our people for the future. As much as any bill I have signed, as much as any bill the Congress has passed in recent years, this bill genuinely does fulfill our strategy of opportunity for all, responsibility from all, a community of all Americans. I am very proud to sign it into law.

And again, let me thank every single person in this room who had anything to do with its enactment, but especially, let me thank the Members of Congress who are here for working together in good spirit and honest and principled compromise to hammer out this truly remarkable bill.

Thank you very much.

Now I'd like to ask the Members of Congress and the people from the executive departments and our speakers to join me up here while we sign the legislation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:29 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to fifth grade student Philip Israel, who introduced the President, and his mother, Tina; Kikuyu Shaw, a junior at Howard University; and Norma Udall, wife of former Representative

Morris K. Udall. H.R. 2264, approved November 13, was assigned Public Law No. 105–78.

Statement on Signing the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1998

November 13, 1997

Today I have signed into law H.R. 2264, the "Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1998."

This Act provides over $80 billion in discretionary budget authority to fund important education, training, and health programs. I am pleased that H.R. 2264 funds a number of my highest domestic priorities at or above my request.

The Act provides $29.6 billion for the Department of Education, which will allow us to prepare tomorrow's leaders for the challenges of the future. I am very pleased to see such strong support for Education programs by the Congress, support I hope will only grow stronger in the coming years. First, I am pleased that the Congress has voted to fund the development of voluntary national tests linked to high academic standards in reading and math. I am also very pleased that the Act increases the maximum Pell grant award to my request of $3,000. This increase, in conjunction with a $1.4 billion increase in funding, will ease the burden of increasing college costs for low- and middle-income families. Finally, I am very pleased that the Act nearly doubles the Federal investment in educational technology and funds 500 new Charter Schools. I am concerned, however, about the inadequate funding provided for my America Reads Challenge literacy initiative in FY 1998. I am committed to working with the Congress to enact authorizing legislation for a child literacy initiative that will use the $210 million contingently provided in the bill for FY 1999.

The Act provides $33.8 billion for the Department of Health and Human Services, providing large increases to a variety of important public health programs. Funding for biomedical research through the National Institutes of Health is increased dramatically. Support for AIDS programs, including programs to assist in the acquisition and provision of break-through AIDS treatments, is stronger than ever. Funding provided in the Act for Head Start moves us closer to achieving my goal of placing 1,000,000 children in Head Start by the year 2002. Head Start provides early childhood development and other social services to children, and this funding level will allow the program to add at least 36,000 new slots.

The Department of Labor receives $10.7 billion for FY 1998. This will provide strong support for important programs such as assistance to dislocated workers, Summer Jobs, and Job Corps. My Administration will work with the Congress to ensure enactment of training reform legislation by July 1, 1998, to use the $250 million provided as an advance appropriation in FY 1999 for targeted projects to improve employment among out-of-school youth in high poverty areas. The Act also funds critical worker protection programs, championing the rights of the men and women who keep America working.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
November 13, 1997.

NOTE: H.R. 2264, approved November 13, was assigned Public Law No. 105–78.

Statement on Congressional Action on the "Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997"

November 13, 1997

I am pleased that the Senate and the House of Representatives have passed historic, bipartisan legislation to promote adoption and improve our Nation's child welfare system, giving our Nation's most vulnerable children what every child deserves—a safe and permanent home. I very much look forward to signing the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 into law.

This legislation makes clear that children's health and safety are the paramount concerns of the public child welfare system. I am particularly pleased that the bill incorporates my administration's recommendations to provide