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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