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Statement on the Military Construction Appropriations Act, 1999

September 20, 1998

Today I have signed into law H.R. 4059, the ''Military Construction Appropriations Act, FY 1999,'' which provides funding for military construction and family housing programs of the Department of Defense (DOD).

The Act funds the vast majority of my request for military construction projects, including the military family housing program, other quality-of-life projects for our military personnel and their families, and the DOD base closure and realignment program.

I do have several concerns with the bill. The Congress has chosen to add funds for projects that the DOD has not identified as priorities. In particular, $243 million is provided for 38 projects that are not in the DOD's Future Years Defense Program. The bill also includes a prohibition on the use of any funds appropriated in the Act for Partnership for Peace Programs or to provide support for non-NATO countries. This restriction could impede NATO activities and could adversely affect future NATO-led military operations.

In addition, the Congress has again included a provision that requires the Secretary of Defense to give 30 days advance notice to certain congressional committees of any proposed military exercise involving construction costs anticipated to exceed $100,000. In approving H.R. 4059, I wish to reiterate an understanding, expressed by Presidents Reagan and Bush when they signed Military Construction Appropriations Acts containing a similar provision, that this section encompasses only exercises for which providing 30 days advance notice is feasible and consistent with my constitutional authority and duty to protect the national security.

I urge the Congress to complete action on the remaining FY 1999 appropriations bills as quickly as possible, and to send them to me in acceptable form.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
September 20, 1998.

NOTE: H.R. 4059, approved September 20, was assigned Public Law No. 105–237.

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September 20, 1998

Today I signed the Military Construction Appropriations Act, an important step for the well-being of our men and women in uniform and their families.

This is an example of what we can achieve when we work together—Congress and the President, Republicans and Democrats—for the public good. Unfortunately, with less than 2 weeks to go before the beginning of the new fiscal year, Congress has yet to pass a budget. In fact, Congress has finished work on only one of 13 appropriations bills—bills that are necessary to keep the Government running and to advance the interests of the American people.

I am pleased that the Senate has taken steps to support the priorities laid out in my budget. But on key investments to improve education, provide affordable child care, expand health care coverage, protect our environment, and stabilize the international economy, the House of Representatives is moving in the wrong direction. For example, the House is preparing to deny funding for smaller classes, after-school programs, technology in the classroom, and summer job programs. At the same time, some lawmakers have attached controversial and unrelated provisions guaranteed to mire these bills in unnecessary delay.

The new fiscal year begins on October 1. It is time for Congress to put progress ahead of partisanship and focus on the urgent challenges facing the American people.