

Week Ending Friday, October 16, 1998

**Statement on Senate Action on the
“International Religious Freedom
Act of 1998”**

October 9, 1998

I welcome today’s strong bipartisan Senate passage, and the anticipated passage in the House of Representatives, of the “International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.”

I have made the promotion of religious freedom a priority of my Presidency and an integral part of our foreign policy through, among other efforts, the creation of the Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad and my appointment last June of our special representative on international religious freedom.

The “International Religious Freedom Act of 1998” is a welcome and responsible addition to our ongoing efforts. Its principled, measured approach rightly emphasizes effective remedies over broad, symbolic gestures.

I also wish to applaud the bipartisan, cooperative approach that helped achieve this legislation, in particular the leadership of Senators Nickles, Lieberman, Hagel, Biden, Feinstein, and Specter and Representative Clement. I’d also like to pay tribute at this time to Representative Frank Wolf, whose longstanding and devoted advocacy for this issue has been an inspiration to those of us so determined to promote religious freedom abroad.

This legislation is not directed against any one country or religious faith. Indeed, this act will serve to promote the religious freedom of people of all backgrounds, whether Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Taoist, or any other faith. I look forward to signing this act.

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

**Proclamation 7137—National School
Lunch Week, 1998**

October 9, 1998

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

When the National School Lunch Program was established by President Truman in 1946, it built upon decades of local commitment by parents, educators, and community leaders who recognized a simple but important fact: hungry children can’t learn. Today, for millions of students, the National School Lunch Program provides nutritious meals that serve as a vital foundation for learning and growing. Many of these children receive their only nutritious meal of the day at school. Thanks to this practical and effective program, children and adolescents in school cafeterias across our country not only have the opportunity to enjoy a wholesome and balanced meal each day, but they also begin to understand the importance of making healthy eating choices.

Unfortunately, the eating habits of America’s children and adolescents often fall short. Parents, educators, school administrators, food service professionals, and community leaders must work in partnership to ensure that our youth learn the importance of good nutrition to overall good health. Learning about nutrition in school and having the daily opportunity to eat a well-balanced meal can help children develop the eating habits necessary to excel in the classroom and in life.

In recognition of the contributions of the National School Lunch Program to the health, education, and well-being of our Nation’s children, the Congress, by joint resolution of October 9, 1962 (Public Law 87–780), has designated the week beginning on the second Sunday in October of each year as

“National School Lunch Week” and has requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this week.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim October 11 through October 17, 1998, as National School Lunch Week. I call upon all Americans to join the dedicated individuals who lead child nutrition programs at the State and local levels in appropriate activities and celebrations that promote these programs.

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

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:43 a.m., October 13, 1998]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on October 14. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President’s Radio Address

October 10, 1998

Good morning. In the next few days, as it completes its work on the budget, Congress has the opportunity and the obligation to make enormous progress to renew and strengthen our schools. There is no more critical task before it.

Ten days ago we closed the books on our fiscal year, yet Congress still has not opened the books for the new fiscal year at hand. Last night, for the second time in 2 weeks, I signed stopgap legislation to keep our Government running. But I can’t keep granting extensions indefinitely.

This week, unfortunately, we saw partisanship defeat progress, as 51 Republican Senators joined together to kill the HMO Patients’ Bill of Rights. Rest assured, I will ask the next Congress to guarantee your right to see a specialist, to receive the nearest emergency care, to keep your doctor throughout your course of treatment, to keep your medical records private, and have other basic

health care rights. I hope next year we’ll have a Congress that agrees.

But I do not want to see this Congress walk away from America’s schoolchildren, as it has walked away from America’s patients. We should be able to make real, bipartisan progress on education. After all, we’ve got the first balanced budget and surplus in 29 years; our economy continues to create jobs and broaden prosperity, despite the economic turmoil abroad. We must use this moment of good fortune to make an historic investment in the quality of our public schools, and we’ve still got a few days to do it.

Our Nation needs 100,000 new, highly qualified teachers to reduce class size in the early grades. All the studies confirm what every parent already knows: smaller classes and better trained teachers make a big difference—better academic performance, fewer discipline problems, more individualized attention. Of course, basic math tells us that smaller classes plus more teachers demand more classrooms, especially since we already have a record number of children in our schools. All across America, children are being forced to learn in school buildings that are overcrowded or even crumbling or in temporary housing trailers.

So again today, I call on Congress to help communities build or modernize 5,000 schools with targeted tax credits. I can’t think of a better tax cut for our country’s future than one that gives our children a modern, safe, adequately equipped place to learn. And these tax credits are fully paid for in the balanced budget.

The budget should also bring cutting-edge technology to the classroom, continuing our efforts to connect all classrooms and libraries to the Internet by 2000, and make sure that the teachers are trained to use such technology. It should fund innovative charter schools so that parents and teachers can bring the benefits of choice and competition to our public schools. It should fully fund after-school programs, so young people learn their lessons in the classroom, not the streets. It should expand Head Start for the early years and insist on high standards in the basics, providing for voluntary national testing with a nonpartisan system to measure progress. It should fund our child literacy