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Transportation is reforming and strengthening a program designed to open the doors of economic opportunity for those who have too often been shut out.

The Disadvantaged Business Enterprise program gives thousands of minority-owned and women-owned business an opportunity to compete for State and local contracts to maintain our roads, construct new highways, and improve public transportation, among many other projects.

After carefully considering hundreds of comments and suggestions from local leaders, business owners, and citizens from across the country, the Transportation Department has amended the DBE rules to ensure that this vitally important program works more fairly, more efficiently, and meets all constitutional requirements. The new rule is an excellent example of our efforts to mend, not end, affirmative action. I applaud the hard work and dedication of Secretary Slater and his staff to make sure that all Americans can share in this time of prosperity.

Proclamation 7164—National Consumer Protection Week, 1999

January 29, 1999

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Consumers are too often the target of unfair, deceptive, or fraudulent practices. Modern advances in telecommunications and marketing technology have dramatically increased both the sophistication and the potential threat of such practices. Perpetrators of fraud can reach consumers across the country through the Internet, on television, the telephone, or by direct mail, misrepresenting themselves as legitimate business people. Because their proposals appear legitimate, these unscrupulous operators frequently succeed in cheating vulnerable consumers out of hard-earned dollars.

One of the most damaging fraudulent practices is credit fraud. Credit fraud—stealing credit cards or credit identities and cheating consumers through deceptive or abusive lending practices—can be difficult to recognize. Fraudulent credit transactions are often complicated and can occur when perpetrators hide or fail to disclose essential information to consumers. By stealing consumers' credit identities, criminals can run up huge debts and ruin their victims' credit records. And credit fraud costs all of us in higher interest rates and fees.

The best defense we have against credit fraud is education. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the National Association of Consumer Agency Administrators, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the American Association of Retired Persons, the National Consumers League, the Consumer Federation of America, and the National Association of Attorneys General are working in partnership to inform Americans about the dangers of credit fraud. As part of this effort, the FTC and its partners offer information on-line, by telephone, and in writing to alert consumers about the warning signs of credit fraud and how to protect themselves against it. The FTC, in cooperation with State Attorneys General and the Internal Revenue Service, is also actively prosecuting credit fraud cases that target some of our most vulnerable citizens.

I encourage all Americans to learn more about credit fraud, to read their credit reports carefully, to protect such personal information as their bank account, credit card, and Social Security numbers, and to know how to recognize the characteristics of fraudulent proposals. By using credit wisely and remaining alert to the possibility of credit fraud, we can better protect the well-being of our families and preserve our financial health and security.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim January 31 through February 6, 1999, as National Consumer Protection Week. I call upon government officials, industry leaders, consumer advocates, and the American people to participate in programs that foster credit literacy and raise public awareness about the dangers of credit fraud and other deceptive and fraudulent practices.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-ninth day of January,

in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, 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, 8:45 a.m., February 2, 1999]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on February 3.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the United States Air Force Operating Location Near Groom Lake, Nevada

January 29, 1999

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Consistent with section 6001(a) of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) (the "Act"), as amended, 42 U.S.C. 6961(a), notification is hereby given that on September 25, 1998, I issued Presidential Determination No. 98–36 (copy attached) and thereby exercised the authority to grant certain exemptions under section 6001(a) of the Act.

Presidential Determination No. 98–36 exempted the United States Air Force's operating location near Groom Lake, Nevada, from any Federal, State, interstate, or local hazardous or solid waste laws that might require the disclosure of classified information concerning that operating location to unauthorized persons. Information concerning activities at the operating location near Groom Lake has been properly determined to be classified, and its disclosure would be harmful to national security. Continued protection of this information is, therefore, in the paramount interest of the United States.

The determination was not intended to imply that in the absence of a Presidential exemption, RCRA or any other provision of law permits or requires the disclosure of classified information to unauthorized persons. The determination also was not intended to limit the applicability or enforcement of any requirement of law applicable to the Air Force's operating location near Groom Lake except those provisions, if any, that would require the disclosure of classified information.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Albert Gore, Jr., President of the Senate.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

January 23

The President declared a major disaster in Arkansas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, tornadoes, and high winds on January 21 and continuing.

January 24

In the morning, the President traveled to Little Rock, AR, to inspect tornado damage in the surrounding areas. In the afternoon, he traveled to Beebe, AR, where he inspected tornado damage there.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

January 25

The President declared a major disaster in Mississippi and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe winter storms, ice, and freezing rain on December 22–26, 1998.

January 26

In the morning, the President and Hillary Clinton traveled to St. Louis, MO. In the evening, they returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to appoint Rudy de Leon as a member of the National Partnership Council.

January 27

In the afternoon, the President met with President-elect Hugo Chavez of Venezuela