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minority-owned businesses have access to the capital, customers, and services that will enable them to succeed in high technology and other rapidly growing sectors.

Through my Administration's New Markets Initiative, we are building partnerships between business and government to encourage investments in areas that have not attracted investments in the past: inner cities, rural regions, and Indian reservations. We are striving to ensure that our Nation's economic expansion—which has benefited millions of Americans—will reach people who have been left behind for decades.

We are also working to help minority-owned firms harness the enormous power of the Internet. The Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) at the Department of Commerce, together with the Small Business Administration (SBA), provide minority-owned businesses with the tools they need to succeed in the Information Age. These efforts range from interactive educational courses on the fundamentals of E-commerce to the creation of Phoenix-Opportunity, an automatic electronic bid-matching system that notifies firms of opportunities through the Internet. Similarly, SBA's Pro-*Net* system provides contracting officers and small and minority-owned businesses with an electronic gateway to procurement opportunities and information.

During Minority Enterprise Development Week, as we honor the many minority businessmen and women whose energy, spirit, and creativity have strengthened our economy and enriched our country, let us rededicate ourselves to nurturing the dreams and talents of all Americans and to realizing the limitless possibilities of our free enterprise system.

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 laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim September 19 through September 25, 1999, as Minority Enterprise Development Week, and I call on all Americans to join together with minority business entrepreneurs across the country in appropriate observances.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fifth day of August, 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-fourth.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., August 27, 1999]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 26, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on August 30.

Proclamation 7217—Small Manufacturing Week, 1999

August 25, 1999

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

America's free enterprise system is continually energized by the skill, vision, and exceptional performance of our Nation's small manufacturers—those who employ fewer than 500 employees. Though small in size, these companies make enormous contributions to our economy and provide our society and the world with high-quality manufactured goods. More important, small manufacturers are a vital source of new jobs—almost 1 million between 1992 and 1996—and provide a livelihood for nearly 12 million Americans.

We live in an age dominated by information and technology, where the global marketplace grows ever more complex and interdependent. As large manufacturers expand their reliance on smaller firms for parts and services, the performance of small manufacturers becomes increasingly important to the competitiveness of America's manufacturing sector.

My Administration, working with the Congress and State governments, has strived to ensure that these small firms have access to the resources, technology, expertise, and training they need to realize their highest potential. By passing two consecutive balanced budgets and signing into law the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997, we have helped to reduce interest rates, ease the tax burden on small firms, and encourage investment and growth.

The Small Business Administration, through its vigorous lending and loan guaranty efforts, has improved access to capital so that small manufacturing firms and other small businesses can modernize, expand, and invest in worker training.

The Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) of the Department of Commerce, which is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year, gives small manufacturers a solid foundation on which to build innovative ideas and products. With a network of more than 70 nonprofit centers, the MEP serves small manufacturers in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, providing access to the newest technology, manufacturing processes, and business practices. The MEP's local centers offer personalized guidance to manufacturers on issues ranging from business to technology solutions. And because these centers are linked together through the Department of Commerce's National Institute of Standards and Technology, even the smallest manufacturing firms can enjoy instant access to the most advanced national resources.

Most important, we are continuing to invest in education and training to give America's working men and women the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the jobs of the 21st century. The Workforce Investment Act of 1998, which I was pleased to sign into law last year, provides skill grants directly to workers so they can choose the kind of training they want and where they want to obtain it.

As we observe Small Manufacturing Week, let us pay tribute to America's more than 385,000 small manufacturing firms whose commitment to hard work and excellence has helped set our country on a steady course for continued growth and prosperity.

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 laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim September 19 through September 25, 1999, as Small Manufacturing Week, 1999. I invite all Americans to observe this week with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs that recognize the achievements of our Nation's small manufacturers.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fifth day of August, 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-fourth.

William J. Clinton

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Proclamation 7218—America Goes Back to School, 1999

August 27, 1999

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Education has always been at the heart of opportunity in America. It opens doors for our young people, gives them the tools they need to succeed, and instills in them a sense of responsibility as they strive to make the most of their lives. However, while the importance of education is unchanging, the challenges facing America's schools and students are not. There are now more children, from more diverse backgrounds, in our public schools than at any time in our country's history. We must ensure that their education gives them the knowledge and skills they need to help our Nation thrive in the new century

America's current prosperity offers us an unprecedented opportunity to invest in our children's education. I am proud that we have begun that task by opening the doors of college to all our young people with tax credits and more affordable student loans, more Pell grants and work-study jobs, education IRAs, and the new HOPE Scholarship tax cut that more than 5 million Americans will have received by the end of this year. I have also announced $43 million in grants to help States and communities to recruit talented people into teaching jobs and improve the quality of teaching nationwide.