

their homes. Russia will pay a heavy price for those actions with each passing day, sinking more deeply into a morass that will intensify extremism and diminish its own standing in the world.

Another country about which we must continue to express concern is China. China is progressing and opening to the world in many ways that are welcome, including its entry into the WTO. Yet its progress is still being held back by the Government's response to those who test the limits of freedom. A troubling example, of course, is the detention by Chinese authorities, of adherents of the Falun Gong movement.

Its targets are not political dissidents, and their practices and beliefs are unfamiliar to us. But the principle still, surely, must be the same: freedom of conscience and freedom of association. And our interest, surely, must be the same: seeing China maintain stability and growth at home by meeting, not stifling, the growing demands of its people for openness and accountability.

For all these challenges, we have to say that we enter the new millennium more hopeful than we have been at any time in the past century. The second half of this century began with delegates from 18 nations, including the United States, coming together to write the Universal Declaration. The century ends with 18 nations having come together with the United States to reaffirm those basic rights in Kosovo—with progress from Indonesia and East Timor to Nigeria.

Now, as I've said, more than half the world's people live under governments of their own choosing. Shortly before the Congress went home, the United States Senate unanimously ratified the International Convention against Child Labor, and I became the third head of state to sign the convention. We are moving, but we have much to do as we enter a new century. And again I would say to my fellow Americans, we all know that our efforts have to begin at home.

On the 10th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Eleanor Roosevelt dedicated a book called "In Your Hands." On that day she said—and I quote—human rights begin "In small places, close to home . . . Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere.

Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world."

Today we honor that message by honoring five people whose work close to home has made the whole world a better place. May their work continue to inspire us all for generations yet to come.

Lieutenant Colonel, read the citations.

[At this point, Lt. Col. Carlton D. Everhart, USAF, Air Force Aide to the President, read the citations, and the President and First Lady presented the awards.]

The President. Thank you for coming. Thank you for honoring these great people. Thank you for reminding us of all the important work still to be done, Belquis.

We're adjourned. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:17 p.m. in Presidential Hall (formerly Room 450) in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Afghan refugee Belquis Ahmadi, who introduced the President; Rev. Jesse Jackson, civil rights leader, and his wife, Jacqueline; Commissioner Harold H. Koh, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom Robert A. Seiple; and President Boris Yeltsin of Russia.

Statement on Signing the Healthcare Research and Quality Act of 1999

December 6, 1999

Today I am pleased to sign S. 580, the "Healthcare Research and Quality Act of 1999," which authorizes appropriations for the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research (and renames it the "Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality") and authorizes a new grant program to support children's hospitals with graduate medical education programs.

This legislation combines two important health care priorities of my Administration: first, ensuring that our Nation's children, especially those who suffer from complex or unusual diseases, continue to receive the highest quality care that our health care system can provide; and second, developing the scientific evidence that we need to improve

the quality and safety of our health care system.

The Act takes an important first step to ensure the delivery of high quality health care for America's children by investing Federal funds in graduate medical education at freestanding children's hospitals. This long overdue initiative was included in my Administration's FY 2000 budget and was strongly advocated by the First Lady. Her leadership in this area is longstanding, and it is with great pride that I sign this groundbreaking legislation.

In an increasingly competitive health care market dominated by managed care, teaching hospitals struggle to cover the significant costs associated with training and research as private reimbursements decline. Millions of American children each year are treated by physicians affiliated with or trained in one of 60 independent children's hospitals across the country. While other teaching hospitals receive support for these costs through Medicare, children's hospitals receive virtually no Federal funds, even though they train nearly 30 percent of the Nation's pediatricians and nearly 50 percent of all pediatric specialists. This inequity exacerbates an already difficult financial situation for children's hospitals, which often serve the poorest, sickest, and most vulnerable children. In many cases, they provide the regional safety net for children, regardless of medical or economic need, and they are the major centers of research on children's health problems.

This Act creates a new grant program to provide much-needed support for the training of these critical health providers. I am pleased that the Consolidated Appropriations Act that I recently approved included my full \$40 million request to get this program started.

The Act also authorizes appropriations through 2005 for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) and represents the culmination of a genuine bipartisan effort to make better information available to health care decisionmakers to use to

improve health care. AHRQ will help close the numerous data gaps throughout the health care delivery system. It will also serve as a bridge between the best science in the world with the best health care in the world.

The AHRQ will build on the foundation of strong scientific approaches to health services research established by the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research. This legislation was passed on an overwhelmingly bipartisan basis by the Congress, which is a tribute to the many members of both chambers, from both sides of the aisle. I particularly want to single out Senators Frist and Kennedy and Congressmen Bliley, Dingell, Bilirakis, and Brown, who have championed quality information for quality health care, for their commitment to this important reauthorization.

The AHRQ is now designated the lead Federal agency in health care quality to help meet the needs of decisionmakers and work in partnership with the private sector. AHRQ will develop a national report on quality, stimulate evidence-based medicine, sponsor primary care research, help eliminate medical errors, and apply the power of information systems and technology in a manner that assures adequate patient privacy protections. AHRQ will also be a principal source of research that will guide health plans, purchasers, health care systems, clinicians, and policymakers as they seek to improve access to health care and make it affordable for all Americans.

I am delighted to sign S. 580, which will support research needed to improve health care and help train new pediatricians and pediatric sub-specialists who will be able to put this knowledge to work for America's children.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
December 6, 1999.

NOTE: S. 580, approved December 6, was assigned Public Law No. 106-129.

Proclamation 7258—Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week, 1999

December 6, 1999

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

President Carter once said, “America did not invent human rights. In a very real sense, it’s the other way around. Human rights invented America.” Human rights have been an integral part of America’s history since the birth of our Nation more than two centuries ago. Refusing to accept tyranny and oppression, our founders secured a better way of life with our Constitution and Bill of Rights. These revolutionary documents have continued to protect our cherished freedoms of religion, speech, press, and assembly and to preserve the principles of equality, liberty, and justice that lie at the heart of our national identity.

As Americans, we have always strived to advance these rights and values both at home and abroad, and just as our founders sought a brighter future for our Nation, we envision a better future for our world. One of our most powerful tools in realizing that vision has been the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which the United Nations General Assembly approved in December of 1948. It is not surprising that this document, which owed so much to the courage, imagination, and leadership of Eleanor Roosevelt, reaffirms in tone, thought, and language our own great charters of freedom. To honor Mrs. Roosevelt’s legacy, and to acknowledge those who follow her example of commitment to human rights around the world, last year we established the Eleanor Roosevelt Award for Human Rights.

In the 51 years since the adoption of the Universal Declaration, the United Nations has developed numerous legal instruments that specify the rights and obligations contained in the document, and the international community has made encouraging progress toward improving human rights for people of all nations. Today, more individuals than ever before are living in representative democracies where they can exercise their right

to freely choose their own government. The international community responded vigorously to halt ethnic cleansing in Kosovo and is helping the people of East Timor not only to achieve legal recognition of their independence but also to develop the institutions they need to thrive as an independent and secure state. But despite this heartening progress, there are still many regions of the world where human rights are daily denied and aspirations to freedom routinely crushed. Our work is still far from complete.

Rising to these challenges, we in the United States have strengthened our commitment to improving international human rights. To enable the world community to react more quickly to genocidal conditions, we have established a genocide early warning system. We continue to fund nongovernmental organizations that respond rapidly to human rights emergencies. And we have created an interagency working group to help implement the human rights treaties we have already ratified and to make recommendations on treaties we have yet to ratify.

We also continue to be a world leader in the fight to eliminate exploitative and abusive child labor. Last week, I signed the instrument of ratification of the International Labor Organization’s Convention on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor, declaring on behalf of the American people that we simply will not tolerate child slavery, the sale or trafficking of children, child prostitution or pornography, forced or compulsory child labor, and hazardous work that harms the health, safety, and morals of children. Through these and other initiatives, America continues to reaffirm both at home and across the globe our fundamental belief in human dignity and our unchanging reverence for human rights.

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 December 10, 1999, as Human Rights Day; December 15, 1999, as Bill of Rights Day; and the week beginning December 10, 1999, as Human Rights Week. I call upon the people of the United States to celebrate these observances with appropriate activities, ceremonies, and