AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

at the National Zoo here in our Nation's Capital, where seven young people were shot and wounded in a senseless act, our country still has too much violence and too much crime.

I'd like to express my concern and support to the Mayor and the entire community and, obviously, to the victims and their families. But whether it's a random act against children or a crime driven by hate, it should be obvious to all of us that we can do more, and we must do more.

Seven years ago and 3 months now, when I became President, I think there were a lot of people who really wondered whether the crime rate could be brought down in our country; whether we could become less violent. In such an atmosphere, maybe reservations about taking even sensible steps could be justified. But today we don't have any excuses. We know we can make America a safer place.

But while the crime rate may be at a 25-year low, and gun crimes may be down 35 percent, and the homicide rate may be down to a 30-year low, there's not a single soul in this room or in this entire country who believes that our children are as safe as they ought to be, that people are safe from hate crimes, no matter what their race, their religion, their condition, or their sexual orientation, that we have done all we can to make this the country it ought to be.

So if you believe that everyone counts and that everyone should have a chance to live his or her life, and if you believe we all do better when we work together, then you've got to help us pass this legislation. It's very important, and we don't have a single excuse not to do it.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:32 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Amy Klobuchar, Hennepin County attorney, Minnesota; and Mayor Anthony A. Williams of the District of Columbia.

Statement on Signing Legislation To Encourage Free and Fair Elections in Peru

April 25, 2000

Today I have signed into law S.J.Res. 43, expressing the sense of the Congress on the importance of free, fair, and democratic elections in Peru. Transparent elections are the foundation of a democratic society.

The people of Peru will go to the polls in the near future for a second and final round to choose their president. I urge that the concerns about the electoral process underscored by the Organization of American States mission to Peru, and by the U.S. Congress in this resolution, be fully addressed in preparations for the second round. The democratic countries of this hemisphere are united in our hope that the election be conducted in a transparent, peaceful, and statesmanlike manner. Democracy is strengthened when all Peruvians have the opportunity to debate and determine the future of Peru.

The people of the United States look forward to continuing the excellent relationship we have enjoyed with the Peruvian people and their democratically elected leaders and to strengthening the bonds that unite our countries.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
April 25, 2000.

NOTE: S.J. Res. 43, approved April 25, was assigned Public Law No. 106–186.

Message to the Senate Returning Without Approval the "Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act of 2000"

April 25, 2000

To the Senate of the United States:

I am returning herewith without my approval S. 1287, the "Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act of 2000."

The overriding goal of the Federal Government's high-level radioactive waste management policy is the establishment of a permanent, geologic repository. This policy not only addresses commercial spent nuclear fuel but also advances our non-proliferation efforts by providing an option for disposal of surplus plutonium from nuclear weapons stockpiles and an alternative to reprocessing. It supports our national defense by allowing continuing operation of our nuclear navy, and it is essential for the cleanup of the Department of Energy's nuclear weapons complex.

Since 1993, my Administration has been conducting a rigorous world-class scientific and technical program to evaluate the suitability of the Yucca Mountain, Nevada, site for use as a repository. The work being done at Yucca Mountain represents a significant scientific and technical undertaking, and public confidence in this first-of-a-kind effort is essential.

Unfortunately, the bill passed by the Congress will do nothing to advance the scientific program at Yucca Mountain or promote public confidence in the decision of whether or not to recommend the site for a repository in 2001. Instead, this bill could be a step backward in both respects. The bill would limit the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) authority to issue radiation standards that protect human health and the environment and would prohibit the issuance of EPA's final standards until June 2001. EPA's current intent is to issue final radiation standards this summer so that they will be in place well in advance of the Department of Energy's recommendation in 2001 on the suitability of the Yucca Mountain site.

There is no scientific reason to delay issuance of these final radiation standards beyond the last year of this Administration; in fact, waiting until next year to issue these standards could have the unintended effect of delaying a recommendation on whether or not to go forward with Yucca Mountain. The process for further review of the EPA standards laid out in the bill passed by the Congress would simply create duplicative and unnecessary layers of bureaucracy by requiring additional review by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the National Academy of Sciences, even though both have already provided detailed comments to the EPA. This burdensome process would add time, but would do nothing to advance the state of scientific knowledge about the Yucca Mountain site.

Finally, the bill passed by the Congress does little to minimize the potential for continued claims against the Federal Government for damages as a result of the delay in accepting spent fuel from utilities. In particular, the bill does not include authority to take title to spent fuel at reactor sites, which my Administration believes would have offered a practical near-term solution to address the contractual obligation to utilities and minimize the potential for lengthy and costly proceedings against the Federal Government. Instead, the bill would impose substantial new requirements on the Department of Energy without establishing sufficient funding mechanisms to meet those obligations. In effect, these requirements would create new unfunded liabilities for the Department.

My Administration remains committed to resolving the complex and important issue of nuclear waste disposal in a timely and sensible manner consistent with sound science and protection of public health, safety, and the environment. We have made considerable progress in the scientific evaluation of the Yucca Mountain site and the Department of Energy is close to completing the work needed for a decision. It is critical that we develop the capability to permanently dispose of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste, and I believe we are on a path to do that. Unfortunately, the bill passed by the Congress does not advance these basic goals.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
April 25, 2000.

Remarks Prior to Departure for Whiteville, North Carolina

April 26, 2000

Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage

The President Thank you very much. Thank you. I am on my way to North Carolina for another leg of our new markets tour