

## Statement on Signing the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 1993

*October 6, 1992*

I have signed into law H.R. 5679, the "Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 1993."

The Act provides important funding for the space program, environmental protection, and programs for our Nation's veterans.

The Act provides the funds necessary to maintain a balanced civil space program. Space Station Freedom, an essential step in meeting our future space objectives, is funded at a level that will keep the project on schedule during fiscal year 1993.

H.R. 5679 also meets important needs of our Nation's veterans. The Act provides \$14.6 billion for VA Medical Care, an increase of \$1 billion over the FY 1992 enacted level. With this increase, funding for VA Medical Care will have grown by 28 percent since FY 1990.

The Act provides funding for a range of environmental protection programs. I am pleased that the Act funds my request for EPA construction grants targeted to high-priority, coastal secondary treatment facilities, such as Boston Harbor, New York, Los Angeles, and San Diego. Expedited construction of these facilities can help clean the water on America's coasts.

Regrettably, the Act provides significantly less funding than I requested for EPA to carry out environmental commitments in support of the North American Free Trade Agreement. Despite my urging the Congress to fund fully these vital environmental initiatives, the Act cuts \$47 million from the request to control border area sewage flows that pose a public health threat to citizens in San Diego and Calexico, California, and Nogales, Arizona. These cuts will severely constrain the Administration's efforts to clean up the U.S.-Mexico border and to support our proposed program of U.S.-Mexico environmental cooperation.

I also regret that, for the fourth year in

a row, the Congress has chosen to reduce my request to clean up hazardous waste sites. This year's \$176 million reduction in EPA's Superfund program brings the total reduction over 4 years to \$643 million. These reductions unnecessarily delay the cleanup of these sites.

I am particularly troubled that the Congress has cut over \$1 billion in civilian research and development programs within NASA, EPA, and NSF. These cuts will have a significant impact on a broad range of important research and education efforts, including my request for crosscutting initiatives in materials science, biotechnology, global change research, high performance computing and communications, and math and science education. These investments are important in maintaining our Nation's economic competitiveness, and they are critical in the training of our next generation of scientists and engineers. These investments also contribute to sustaining our commitment to environmental stewardship.

Although the Act provides funds for priority activities requested by the Administration, several housing provisions are flawed. I am greatly concerned over the inadequate funding levels for the Administration's important housing initiatives that emphasize tenant choice and homeownership opportunities. The Congress has provided only \$361 million out of a requested \$1 billion for the HOPE program, a program that would enable low-income people to take control of their lives through homeownership.

I am also disappointed that the Congress has reversed some previously enacted reforms critical to the financial health of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) mortgage fund. Eliminating the 57-percent limit on the amount of closing costs a borrower can finance with an FHA mortgage will cause an increase in homeowner defaults, weakening the FHA fund and hurting homebuyers. The Congress has also in-

creased the maximum single-family mortgage above \$125 thousand—an amount that was agreed upon by the Congress and the Administration in the National Affordable Housing Act. This increase moves FHA away from its traditional role as a financial resource for middle- and lower-income buyers.

On the other hand, I am pleased that the Congress agreed to the Administration's request that it remove a prohibition on the issuance by HUD of a rule that would prevent the provision of housing subsidies to vacant public housing units.

The Act directs the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and the Resolution Trust Corporation each to award 8 percent of funding for Federal contracts to businesses owned or controlled by minorities or women. A congressional grant of Federal money or benefits based solely on the recipient's race or gender is presumptively unconstitutional under the equal protection standards of the Constitution. Ac-

cordingly, I will construe these provisions consistently with the demands of the Constitution, and, in particular, I direct the heads of the relevant agencies not to award monies appropriated by this Act solely on the basis of race or gender.

Although I am disappointed that this bill contains damaging cuts in HOPE tenant ownership, civilian research and development, U.S.-Mexico border cleanup, and Superfund, I recognize that the bill does fund important veterans programs, space initiatives, and environmental programs at acceptable levels. In addition, the total level of spending in the bill maintains progress toward the achievement of my proposal to freeze domestic discretionary spending. For these reasons, I am signing the bill.

GEORGE BUSH

The White House,  
October 6, 1992.

*Note: H.R. 5679, approved October 6, was assigned Public Law No. 102-389.*

## Statement on Signing Legislation on Commemorative Olympic Coins, Reform of the United States Mint, and For Other Purposes October 6, 1992

I am approving H.R. 3654, a bill "To provide for the minting of commemorative coins to support the 1996 Atlanta Centennial Olympic Games and the programs of the United States Olympic Committee, to reauthorize and reform the United States Mint, and for other purposes."

I am proud that the United States Mint, the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games, and the United States Olympic Committee have worked together to develop a unique coin program that offers the potential of \$100 million in profits to be evenly divided between the two Olympic committees. By working together to maximize the sale of these coins we will assist our Olympic athletes. This program will also have a positive economic impact and help create jobs for the people of Georgia.

This is a wonderful opportunity to sup-

port those goals that are important to every citizen in this country—the successful hosting of the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games of Atlanta, Georgia, and the continued participation of our athletes in the Olympic Games.

In approving this legislation, I must, however, note that certain provisions concerning the newly established Numismatic Public Enterprise Fund might be construed to infringe on my constitutional authority to determine what legislative proposals to submit to the Congress and to supervise and guide executive branch officials. I will construe these provisions so as not to interfere with the President's constitutional duties.

GEORGE BUSH