

stand with you, as you seek a door that would open and give all of Ireland access to the hope of peace.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:34 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

## Message on the Observance of Saint Patrick's Day *March 17, 1994*

Warm greetings to everyone celebrating Saint Patrick's Day 1994. On this feast of the patron Saint of Ireland, we reflect on Saint Patrick's bravery and determination in delivering to the Irish people his message of faith and hope for the future—a spirit passed down through the many generations that followed.

With tremendous courage and strength of belief, Saint Patrick helped his native Ireland usher in a new era. Before Patrick returned to his island home as a Christian convert and missionary, Ireland was the last bastion of Celtic Europe. He encouraged the Irish people to adapt their ancient culture and deep spirituality to the new faith that had already transformed much of Europe. By bringing Christianity to Ireland, Saint Patrick heralded a new Eire and

prepared his people to embrace the changing world around them.

In celebrating Saint Patrick's Day, our nation not only remembers the apostle of Ireland for his achievements, but we also honor the many contributions that Irish Americans have made to their adopted homeland. As inheritors of Saint Patrick's legacy, Irish Americans have strengthened the United States with the richness of their unique history. Blessed with educators and business people, political leaders and people of faith, our nation owes a debt of gratitude to this thriving community from the Emerald Isle.

As Americans everywhere gather to celebrate our "Irishness," I extend best wishes to all for a wonderful St. Patrick's Day.

BILL CLINTON

## Statement on Signing Legislation on Highway Bridge Seismic Retrofitting *March 17, 1994*

Today I am pleased to sign into law S. 1789—a bill that responds to January's earthquake in Southern California and will help States reduce potential losses from future earthquakes. This legislation expands the eligible uses of Federal bridge replacement and rehabilitation funds to include seismic retrofitting of highway bridges, regardless of whether the bridges are in need of other repairs or work. S. 1789 will greatly assist States in their efforts to reinforce bridges to better withstand earthquakes.

The California earthquake crippled much of the regional transportation system, serving as a sharp reminder of the vulnerability of our infrastructure to natural disasters and of the need to increase our preparedness for such events. The damage to the transportation network in

Southern California had far reaching consequences. People's everyday lives were changed because of the difficulty of travel in the region, most notably in the time and effort spent getting to work. All levels of government immediately pulled together to minimize the disruption and resulting economic losses. That effort is continuing.

In my visits to the earthquake-damaged areas with members of my Cabinet and the Congress, one question was repeatedly raised: "We cannot prevent another earthquake, but can we prevent any of the resulting loss of life and debilitating infrastructure damage?" With regard to much of the damage to bridges and overpasses, the answer to that question is "yes." The California earthquake proved that seismic retrofitting

works. None of the bridges in the Los Angeles area that were seismically retrofitted failed or suffered major damage as a result of the earthquake. The 12 bridges that were severely damaged during the earthquake had not been fully retrofitted.

The Congress responded quickly by providing much needed additional financial aid to victims of the earthquake through emergency supplemental funds. However, we need not only to provide assistance for repairs, but also to provide the flexibility to allow States to make sensible investments to prevent future losses.

I am very pleased that the Congress, led by Senator Boxer, has acted again to provide an additional tool to California and other States that may face similar natural disasters. This seismic retrofitting legislation does not increase

Federal expenditures but allows States the flexibility to determine their own bridge needs. Together, these actions will not only speed recovery from the California earthquake but will also help mitigate potential losses to life and property in any State by future earthquakes.

S. 1789 will empower States throughout the Nation to make critically important investments in infrastructure to prevent highway bridge collapses. Ultimately, it will save both lives and dollars.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,  
March 17, 1994.

NOTE: S. 1789, approved March 17, was assigned Public Law No. 103-220.

## Remarks at the Bosnian Federation Agreement Signing Ceremony

March 18, 1994

*The President.* President Izetbegovic, President Tudjman, Prime Minister Silajdzic, Mr. Zubak: The Secretary of State, Mr. Lake, the Vice President, and I are happy to be joined by you, as well as by others here today. We have the Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia, Vitaly Churkin; representing the European Union troika, the Foreign Ministers of Greece, Mr. Papoulias, of Belgium, Mr. Claes, of Germany, Mr. Kinkel; and of course, David Owen and Thorvald Stoltenberg, who have been the cochairs of the international conference.

In addition to that, we're very pleased to be joined by the Ambassadors to the UNPROFOR nations who have been so active in working for peace and in preserving the peace, General Shalikashvili, Ambassador Albright, and Members of the Congress. In the front row, Senator Lugar, Senator Stevens, Senator Levin, Senator Hatch, Congressman Lantos, and I believe Congressman McCloskey is here. There he is, in the second row. So we thank all of you for coming today.

We have come to bear witness to a moment of hope. For 33 months the flames of war have raged through the nations of the former Yugoslavia. By signing these agreements today, Bosnian and Croatian leaders have acted to turn

back those flames and to begin the difficult process of reconciliation.

Around the globe, the tension between ethnic identity and statehood presents one of the great problems of our time. But nowhere have the consequences been more tragic than in the former Yugoslavia. There nationalists and religious factions aggravated by Serbian aggression have erupted in a fury of ethnic cleansing and brutal atrocity.

The agreements signed today offer one of the first clear signals that parties to this conflict are willing to end the violence and begin a process of reconstruction. The accords call for a federation between Muslims and Croats of Bosnia. This Muslim-Croat entity has agreed on the principles of a confederation with Croatia. Together these steps can help support the ideal of a multiethnic Bosnia and provide a basis for Muslims and Croats to live again in peace as neighbors and compatriots. The agreements are as important for Croatia's future as they are for Bosnia's. And it is the hope of all present today that the Serbs will join in this process toward peace as well.

These agreements are a testament to the perseverance and to the resolve of many people: the Croatian and Bosnian diplomats who kept