

Feb. 9 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1996

Statement on the Floods in Oregon and Washington *February 9, 1996*

Our hearts and prayers go out to the thousands of people in Oregon and Washington who have been inundated by the devastating floods and those who are waging a brave fight to keep the water from pouring over the river banks.

In an effort to provide quick action in their urgent time of need, today I have signed Federal disaster declarations for Oregon and Washington. These declarations will give help to individuals, including temporary housing, family grants, and low-interest loans. We are also providing funds to help rebuild the State and local infrastructure.

I have asked FEMA Director James Lee Witt to go to both Oregon and Washington, survey the damage, and lead the Federal response and recovery efforts.

The people of Oregon and Washington have demonstrated a remarkable amount of courage and resilience in this difficult time. I know they cannot recover alone. We are with them for as long as it takes.

Finally, let me take a moment to express my deepest sympathies to the families and friends of those who have lost their lives during this natural disaster. Our thoughts and prayers are with them.

Memorandum on Benefits for Military Personnel Subject to Involuntary Separation as a Result of HIV *February 9, 1996*

Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Transportation, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs

Subject: Benefits for Military Personnel Involuntarily Separated from the Armed Services as a Result of HIV

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1996 (S. 1124) contains a provision I strongly oppose, which requires the discharge of all military personnel living with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), regardless of whether there is any medical necessity for such discharge. This provision is clearly discriminatory and wholly unwarranted. It is also highly punitive. Service members discharged pursuant to this provision would not receive the benefits to which they would otherwise be entitled had they continued to serve until it became medically necessary for them to retire.

Consequently, I will give my full support to legislative efforts to repeal this provision.

In the meantime, I am committed to ensuring full benefits to these service members and their families to ameliorate the unfair burden this legislation will place on them. I am therefore directing you, in consultation with the Office of Management and Budget and such other agencies as may be appropriate, to take all necessary steps, consistent with applicable law, to ensure that these service members and their families receive the full benefits they are entitled to, including, among other things, disability retirement pay, health care coverage for their families, and transition benefits such as vocational education.

This memorandum is for the internal management of the executive branch and does not create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable by any party against the United States, its agencies or instrumentalities, its officers or employees, or any person.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON