

who are willing to assume responsibility, and give them the opportunity and the terms of responsibility.

Now, I'd like to ask Penelope Howard, Janet Ferrel, Lillie Harden, the Governors, and the Members of Congress from both parties who are here to come up and join me as I sign the welfare reform bill.

#### *Tobacco Regulation*

Q. Mr. President, before you sign the bill, could you tell us whether you think it's right to regulate tobacco or nicotine as a drug?

*The President.* You know, Wolf [Wolf Blitzer, CNN], under the law, I have to wait until the OMB makes a recommendation to me. I think we have to anticipate things. I can't say more than that right now.

[At this point, the President signed the legislation.]

#### *Welfare Reform*

Q. Mr. President, some of your core constituencies are furious with you for signing this bill. What do you say to them?

*The President.* Just what I said up there. We saved medical care. We saved food stamps. We saved child care. We saved the aid to disabled children. We saved the school lunch program. We saved the framework of support. What we did was to tell the States, now you have to create a system to give everyone a chance to

go to work who is able-bodied, give everyone a chance to be independent. And we did—that is the right thing to do. And now welfare is no longer a political football to be kicked around. It's a personal responsibility of every American who ever criticized the welfare system to help the poor people now to move from welfare to work. That's what I say.

This is going to be a good thing for the country. We're going to monitor it, and we're going to fix whatever is wrong with it.

Q. What guarantees are there that these things will be fixed, Mr. President, especially if Republicans remain in control of Congress?

*The President.* That's what we have elections for.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:15 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to the following Governors: Tom Carper of Delaware, Roy Romer of Colorado, Bob Miller of Nevada, Gaston Caperton of West Virginia, and James B. Hunt, Jr., of North Carolina. The President also referred to former Senator Russell B. Long and Carol H. Rasco, Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy, who was senior executive assistant to the Governor when President Clinton was Governor of Arkansas. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete. H.R. 3734, approved August 22, was assigned Public Law No. 104-193.

## Statement on Signing the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996

*August 22, 1996*

Today, I have signed into law H.R. 3734, the "Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996." While far from perfect, this legislation provides an historic opportunity to end welfare as we know it and transform our broken welfare system by promoting the fundamental values of work, responsibility, and family.

This Act honors my basic principles of real welfare reform. It requires work of welfare recipients, limits the time they can stay on welfare, and provides child care and health care to help them make the move from welfare to work.

It demands personal responsibility, and puts in place tough child support enforcement measures. It promotes family and protects children.

This bipartisan legislation is significantly better than the bills that I vetoed. The Congress has removed many of the worst provisions of the vetoed bills and has included many of the improvements that I sought. I am especially pleased that the Congress has preserved the guarantee of health care for the poor, the elderly, and the disabled.

Most important, this Act is tough on work. Not only does it include firm but fair work

requirements, it provides \$4 billion more in child care than the vetoed bills—so that parents can end their dependency on welfare and go to work—and maintains health and safety standards for day care providers. The bill also gives States positive incentives to move people into jobs and holds them accountable for maintaining spending on welfare reform. In addition, it gives States the ability to create subsidized jobs and to provide employers with incentives to hire people off welfare.

The Act also does much more to protect children than the vetoed bills. It cuts spending on childhood disability programs less deeply and does not unwisely change the child protection programs. It maintains the national nutritional safety net, by eliminating the Food Stamp annual spending cap and the Food Stamp and School Lunch block grants that the vetoed bills contained. In addition, it preserves the Federal guarantee of health care for individuals who are currently eligible for Medicaid through the AFDC program or are in transition from welfare to work.

Furthermore, this Act includes the tough personal responsibility and child support enforcement measures that I proposed 2 years ago. It requires minor mothers to live at home and stay in school as a condition of assistance. It cracks down on parents who fail to pay child support by garnishing their wages, suspending their driver's licenses, tracking them across State lines, and, if necessary, making them work off what they owe.

For these reasons, I am proud to have signed this legislation. The current welfare system is fundamentally broken, and this may be our last best chance to set it straight. I am doing so, however, with strong objections to certain provisions, which I am determined to correct.

First, while the Act preserves the national nutritional safety net, its cuts to the Food Stamp program are too deep. Among other things, the Act reinstates a maximum on the amount that can be deducted for shelter costs when determining a household's eligibility for Food Stamps. This provision will disproportionately affect low-income families with children and high housing costs.

Second, I am deeply disappointed that this legislation would deny Federal assistance to legal immigrants and their children, and give States the option of doing the same. My Administration supports holding sponsors who bring immigrants

into this country more responsible for their well-being. Legal immigrants and their children, however, should not be penalized if they become disabled and require medical assistance through no fault of their own. Neither should they be deprived of food stamp assistance without proper procedures or due regard for individual circumstances. Therefore, I will direct the Immigration and Naturalization Service to accelerate its unprecedented progress in removing all bureaucratic obstacles that stand in the way of citizenship for legal immigrants who are eligible. In addition, I will take any possible executive actions to avoid inaccurate or inequitable decisions to cut off food stamp benefits—for example, to a legal immigrant who has performed military service for this country or to one who has applied for and satisfied all the requirements of citizenship, but is awaiting governmental approval of his or her application.

In addition to placing an undue hardship on affected individuals, denial of Federal assistance to legal immigrants will shift costs to States, localities, hospitals, and medical clinics that serve large immigrant populations. Furthermore, States electing to deny these individuals assistance could be faced with serious constitutional challenges and protracted legal battles.

I have concerns about other provisions of this legislation as well. It fails to provide sufficient contingency funding for States that experience a serious economic downturn, and it fails to provide Food Stamp support to childless adults who want to work, but cannot find a job or are not given the opportunity to participate in a work program. In addition, we must work to ensure that States provide in-kind vouchers to children whose parents reach the 5-year Federal time limit without finding work.

This Act gives States the responsibility that they have sought to reform the welfare system. This is a profound responsibility, and States must face it squarely. We will hold them accountable, insisting that they fulfill their duty to move people from welfare to work and to do right by our most vulnerable citizens, including children and battered women. I challenge each State to take advantage of its new flexibility to use money formerly available for welfare checks to encourage the private sector to provide jobs.

The best antipoverty program is still a job. Combined with the newly increased minimum wage and the Earned Income Tax Credit—

which this legislation maintains—H.R. 3734 will make work pay for more Americans.

I am determined to work with the Congress in a bipartisan effort to correct the provisions of this legislation that go too far and have nothing to do with welfare reform. But, on balance, this bill is a real step forward for our country, for our values, and for people on welfare. It should represent not simply the ending of a system that too often hurts those it is supposed to help, but the beginning of a new era in which welfare will become what it was meant

to be: a second chance, not a way of life. It is now up to all of us—States and cities, the Federal Government, businesses and ordinary citizens—to work together to make the promise of this new day real.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,  
August 22, 1996.

NOTE: H.R. 3734, approved August 22, was assigned Public Law No. 104–193.

## Memorandum on Naturalization

August 22, 1996

*Memorandum for the Attorney General,  
Secretary of Health and Human Services, and  
Other Heads of Executive Agencies*

*Subject:* Naturalization

Citizenship is the cornerstone of full participation in our democracy. To become a United States citizen through naturalization represents a pledge to undertake the responsibilities of being a full member of our national community.

Naturalization is the best example of our legal immigration system at work. It reflects our society's recognition of those who came to this country to work hard, play by the rules, and pursue shared ideals of freedom, opportunity, and responsibility.

In the past, hundreds of thousands of eligible people have had to wait unnecessarily to become citizens. In some parts of the country, these people have had to wait well over a year after filing their application to realize their dream of United States citizenship.

This Administration is committed to eliminating the waiting lists of those eligible for citizenship. To accomplish this, we launched "Citizenship U.S.A.," the most ambitious citizenship effort in history. In fiscal year 1996, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) will spend more than \$165 million for naturalization.

Citizenship U.S.A. combines three broad strategies: hiring more people to handle applications, improving the naturalization process, and expanding partnerships with local officials and community organizations.

We are already making progress. We have increased the staff 235 percent in the five districts with 75 percent of the pending applications: Los Angeles, New York, Miami, San Francisco, and Chicago. In Los Angeles, where one-fourth of all new applications are filed, we have opened three new processing centers and have more than quadrupled the number of INS officers handling citizenship applications.

But this is just the beginning. This Administration's target is to process and swear-in within 6 months of application all individuals eligible for citizenship. As we meet this target, more than one million newcomers will become citizens by the end of this year. After that, INS shall maintain those reforms necessary to stay current with the demand of new citizen applicants.

Using all of the tools at your disposal, I ask you to ensure that policies and practices necessary to accomplish these targets of one million new citizens sworn-in and the elimination of the waiting list are implemented. This includes continuing, expanding or accelerating, as appropriate and practicable, the following:

1) *New Hires*. Hiring, training, and deployment of full staff to assist naturalization efforts should proceed to completion as quickly as possible.

2) *Cutting Red Tape*. This includes: establishing electronic filing and mailing-in of citizenship applications, extended weekday hours and Saturday interviews, further expansion of processing facilities, and improvements to make it easier