

their families, and the Department of Defense base closure and realignment program.

But I am disappointed that the Act provides more funding than I requested. Specifically, I am concerned that the Congress has chosen to spend \$154 million on projects that the Department of Defense has not identified as priorities and that will not improve the quality of life for our service members. These projects are clear examples of spending that is neither warranted nor justified, and is funded at the expense of higher-priority domestic programs.

Indeed, this Act is part of an overall approach by the Congress to provide more funds than necessary for nonpriority items through the Defense budget at the expense of important domestic priorities in education and training, the environment, science and technology, law enforcement, and other key priorities. At a time

of scarce resources, we should not squander funds on items that we don't need while underfunding the very priorities that will help improve living standards and the quality of life of average Americans—both now and in the future.

I urge the Congress to complete action on the remaining 1997 appropriations bills as quickly as possible, and to send them to me in an acceptable form.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
September 16, 1996.

NOTE: H.R. 3517, approved September 16, was assigned Public Law No. 104–196. This statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 17.

Statement on Signing the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 1997 *September 16, 1996*

I have today signed into law H.R. 3754, the “Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 1997.”

The Act provides fiscal year 1997 appropriations for the Congress, the Congressional Budget Office, the Architect of the Capitol, the General Accounting Office, the Government Printing Office, and the Library of Congress.

I am especially pleased to sign into law a provision that will allow blind and visually impaired persons to get earlier access to books and other reading matter. As a result of an agreement between the publishing industry and advocates for people with disabilities, books can now be converted into alternative formats such as Braille as soon as they appear in print. Prior to this change, the Library of Congress and other organizations that sought to provide these materials had to obtain permission from copyright holders on a case by case basis, leading to lengthy delays in access to all types of reading material. This law will help us reach our goal of full inclusion of people with disabilities.

I am also pleased with the provision that encourages the Senate to transfer excess or surplus computers and other educationally useful equipment to public schools at the lowest possible cost. This complements our initiative to encour-

age Federal agencies to do the same to help integrate technology into school curriculums, and ensure that all students have the skills they will need to succeed in the information-intensive 21st century.

I am disappointed, however, that the Congress has passed up yet another opportunity to establish a drug testing policy for those who work in the legislative branch. The Congress should follow the example of the White House and the other executive branch agencies and establish a comprehensive testing program for illegal drug use.

I urge the Congress to complete action on the remaining regular FY 1997 appropriations bills and to send them to me in an acceptable form.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
September 16, 1996.

NOTE: H.R. 3754, approved September 16, was assigned Public Law No. 104–197. This statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 17.