

if we work together and put the interests of real people first, we can meet the challenges of this era.

I'd like to say on a personal note that I am especially grateful for the time and effort and stories that the family members of air tragedies have shared with me. And when I went to New York with Hillary to meet with the family members of the victims of TWA 800, a grandmother spoke to me movingly about how she had lost both her child—her daughter—and her grandson in that crash. And she gave me a picture of her 10-year-old grandson because of his particular attachment to the President and his desire to grow up to be in public life some day. I have carried that picture with me every single

day until this day and the signing of this bill. And I hope that this legislation will mean more children will have the chance to live out their dreams.

I'd like to ask Congressman Duncan, the Attorney General, and the family members to come up now as we sign the legislation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:20 a.m. in Room 450 of the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Doug Smith, president, National Air Disaster Alliance. The President also referred to his receipt of the initial report of the White House Commission on Aviation Safety and Security on September 9. H.R. 3539, approved October 9, was assigned Public Law No. 104-264.

## Statement on Signing the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Amendments Act of 1996

*October 9, 1996*

Today I have signed into law H.R. 2594, the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Amendments Act of 1996, proving once again that when management and labor work together they make their businesses, their communities, and our working families stronger.

This bill, which was supported by both labor and management, brings unemployment benefits for railroad workers in line with benefits for other workers. It also reduces the waiting periods for receiving unemployment and sickness benefits and increases the maximum daily rate for these same benefits.

In short, this bill is good for the American economy and the American worker. I applaud rail labor and management and those at the Railroad Retirement Board, the Department of Labor, the Department of Transportation, the National Mediation Board, and all others who had a hand in helping to create the climate that has led to good relations and progress in the industry.

NOTE: H.R. 2594, approved October 9, was assigned Public Law No. 104-251.

## Statement on Signing Veterans Legislation

*October 9, 1996*

I have signed into law today three veterans-related bills that will ensure that veterans benefits keep pace with inflation, improve the veterans health care system, and expand other veterans programs and benefits.

The first bill—H.R. 3458, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 1996—authorizes a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) on December 1, 1996, for recipients

of veterans' disability compensation, Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC), and clothing allowances. The COLA, identical to the one that Social Security recipients will receive on January 1, 1997, will go to about 2.3 million veterans with disabilities who receive disability compensation benefits, over 300,000 individuals who receive DIC as the surviving spouses and children of service members who died in service

and veterans whose deaths were service-connected, and veterans who receive clothing allowances because they wear or use prosthetic or orthopedic appliances.

The second bill—H.R. 3118, the Veterans' Health Care Eligibility Reform Act of 1996—includes many elements of the proposal that the National Performance Review, led by Vice President Gore, recommended to establish a modern, integrated health care system that will improve access to, and care for, the Nation's veterans. The bill, for instance, authorizes the Department of Veterans Affairs to furnish comprehensive medical services to all veterans, expanding the array of services that it now provides. Eligibility

reform has been a high priority of veterans for many years, and I am pleased that we finally could enact it.

Finally, the third bill—S. 1711, the Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act of 1996—expands and extends numerous veterans education, housing, life insurance, and employment and training benefits.

NOTE: H.R. 3458, approved October 9, was assigned Public Law No. 104-263; H.R. 3118, approved October 9, was assigned Public Law No. 104-262; S. 1711, approved October 9, was assigned Public Law No. 104-275.

## Statement on Signing the Helium Privatization Act of 1996

*October 9, 1996*

I have signed into law today H.R. 4168, the Helium Privatization Act of 1996, which privatizes the Department of Interior's Federal Helium Refining Program—as the Vice President's National Performance Review had recommended.

Once, our defense and aviation industries had a strong need for helium and the Nation lacked a market to supply it. A Government program was appropriate. But today, over 90 percent of U.S. helium needs are met by private producers

and suppliers. A Government-operated program is no longer needed. The private sector can meet, and now will be able to compete to supply, the needs of all users.

The bill brings us closer to our goal of creating a Government that works better and costs less.

NOTE: H.R. 4168, approved October 9, was assigned Public Law No. 104-273.

## Statement on Signing the Federal Aviation Reauthorization Act of 1996

*October 9, 1996*

I am pleased to sign into law today H.R. 3539, which will improve the security of air travel and carry forward our fight against terrorism.

After the TWA 800 disaster last summer, I asked Vice President Gore and a commission of experts to recommend improvements in our aviation security practices to protect against terrorist or criminal attacks. The Vice President's Commission on Aviation Safety and Security delivered its recommendations to me on September 9—45 days after it began its deliberations—and this bill complements and builds upon those recommendations.

The bill, for instance, gives the Federal Aviation Administration new authority to require criminal history checks for airline security screeners. Airline passengers will benefit from safety provisions such as the new requirement for airlines to share information on pilot performance to help make better hiring decisions.

The bill also codifies and builds upon my recent decision to give the National Transportation Safety Board responsibility to serve as the primary contact and liaison for families who have lost loved ones in an air disaster. Now, the families will know exactly where to go and