

Message to the Congress Transmitting Proposed Fast-Track Trade  
Authority Legislation  
*September 16, 1997*

*To the Congress of the United States:*

I am pleased to transmit a legislative proposal entitled the "Export Expansion and Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act of 1997." Also transmitted is a section-by-section analysis.

This proposal would renew over 60 years of cooperation between the Congress and the executive branch in the negotiation and implementation of market-opening trade agreements for the benefit of American workers and companies.

The sustained, robust performance of our economy over the past 5 years is powerful proof that congressional-executive cooperation works. We have made great strides together. We have invested in education and in health care for the American people. We have achieved an historic balanced budget agreement. At the same time, we have put in place trade agreements that have lowered barriers to American products and services around the world.

Our companies, farms, and working people have responded. Our economy has produced more jobs, more growth, and greater economic stability than at any time in decades. It has also generated more exports than ever before. Indeed, America's remarkable economic performance over the past 5 years has been fueled in significant part by the strength of our dynamic export sector. Fully 96 percent of the world's consumers live outside the United States. Many of our greatest economic opportunities today lie beyond our borders. The future promises still greater opportunities.

Many foreign markets, especially in the developing world, are growing at tremendous rates. Latin American and Asian economies, for example, are expected to expand at three times the rate of the U.S. economy over the coming years. Consumers and industries in these countries prize American goods, farm products, services, and the many expressions of American inventiveness and culture. While America is the world's greatest exporting nation, we need to do more if we want to continue to expand our own economy and produce good, high-wage jobs.

We have made real progress in breaking down barriers to American products around the world. But many of the nations with the highest growth

rates almost invariably impose far higher trade barriers than we do. We need to level the playing field with those countries. They are the nations whose markets hold the greatest potential for American workers, firms, and agricultural producers.

Today, the United States is the world's strongest competitor. The strength of the U.S. economy over the past several years is testimony to the creativity, productivity, and ingenuity of American firms and workers. We cannot afford to squander our great advantages by retreating to the sidelines and watching other countries conclude preferential trade deals that shut out our goods and services. Over 20 such agreements have been concluded in Latin America and Asia alone since 1992. The United States must continue to shape and direct world trading rules that are in America's interest and that foster democracy and stability around the globe.

I have pledged my Administration to this task, but I cannot fully succeed without the Congress at my side. We must work in partnership, together with the American people, in securing our country's future. The United States must be united when we sit down at the negotiating table. Our trading partners will only negotiate with one America—not first with an American President and next with an American Congress.

The proposal I am sending you today ensures that the Congress will be a full partner in setting negotiating objectives, establishing trade priorities, and in gaining the greatest possible benefits through our trade agreements. The proposal expands upon previous fast-track legislation to ensure that the Congress is fully apprised and actively consulted throughout the negotiating process. I am convinced that this collaboration will strengthen both America's effectiveness and leverage at the bargaining table.

Widening the scope of consultations will also help ensure that we will take all of America's vital interests into account. That is particularly important because today our trade agreements address a wider range of activities than they once did. As we move forward with our trade agenda, we must continue to honor and reinforce the other values that make America an

example for the world. I count chief among these values America's longstanding concern for the rights of workers and for protection of the environment. The proposal I am transmitting to you recognizes the importance of those concerns. It makes clear that the agreements we conclude should complement and reinforce those values.

Ever since President Franklin Roosevelt proposed and the Congress enacted America's first reciprocal trade act in the depths of the Great Depression, the Congress and the President

have been united, on a bipartisan basis, in supporting a fair and open trading system. Our predecessors learned from direct experience the path to America's prosperity. We owe much of our own prosperity to their wisdom. I urge the Congress to renew our longstanding partnership by approving the proposal I have transmitted today.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,  
September 16, 1997.

## Statement on Senate Action on Education Programs *September 16, 1997*

The vote by a narrow majority of the U.S. Senate to support the Gorton amendment undermines the bipartisan spirit of cooperation that is so vital to improving American education. At worst, this decision to block grant education programs is, as Secretary Riley said, a "back-door attempt to kill off the Department of Education." At best, the vote was a hasty, ill-considered decision that would have a serious impact on our schools.

I welcome the Senate's overwhelming support for my proposal to offer States and communities voluntary national tests in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math. However, the adoption of the Gorton amendment less than 2 hours later eliminated the very funding needed to continue development of these tests.

The Gorton amendment would halt many of our most successful efforts to improve education, including our efforts to get computers into every classroom, raise standards through Goals 2000, establish more charter schools, assist young people in making the transition from school to work, help parents and schools keep our children safe and drug-free, and create more opportunities to help immigrant children learn English and stay in school. The amendment would seriously harm the title I program, which provides extra help to low-income students so they can master the basic skills of reading and

math and reach high academic standards. It also undermines programs targeted to help gifted and talented students, support arts education, and promote exciting new efforts to create technology partnerships. Further, this amendment would slash funds used to help adults with severe disabilities obtain employment.

This is not a vote, as some would suggest, about who controls public education. Rather it is a vote about whether the Federal Government will maintain its commitment to help local communities strengthen accountability and raise academic standards in basic skills, improve teaching and learning, assist parents and schools in keeping children safe and drug-free, promote public school choice for parents and students, and prepare all of our students for the 21st century.

The Department of Education has historically targeted its funding to schools that serve disadvantaged students. If the Gorton amendment became law, the wealthiest school districts would be the winners and the rest of our communities would inevitably be the losers.

Politics must stop at the schoolhouse door. The Gorton amendment is unacceptable. I understand a similar provision may be offered in the House. Let me be clear. If necessary, I will use my veto power to make sure that no such provision becomes the law of the land.