

we lose our children, we are thwarting the opinion of God. We are blessed with our children. They will be America in the 21st century. What America will be depends upon what we do to help them become all they can be. That depends upon us. It is our responsibility.

I can't tell you how moved I am by all the stories I have read, all the examples I have seen, all the work that has been done by the people that are in this room and the people they represent all across America. Some of them have been out there for years and years and years. But now, they have found a way to work together that will have dramatic, profound, and permanent success. We owe it to them to help them.

We're taking a big first step today, and if Congress will give me the funds, we'll put the

welfare of the American people first. Even in an election year, let's not let partisanship get in the way of this critical mission. We will see these stories sweep across this country, and we'll have a lot more children to celebrate.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:55 a.m. in Room 450 of the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Rev. Lewis M. Anthony, senior pastor, Metropolitan Wesley AME Zion Church, Washington, DC, who introduced the President; Paul Evans, Boston police commissioner; Reuben Greenberg, police chief, Charleston, SC; Michelle B. Mitchell, sheriff, Richmond, VA; and Rev. Eugene F. Rivers III, codirector, National Ten Point Leadership Foundation.

Remarks on Signing the Internal Revenue Service Restructuring and Reform Act of 1998

July 22, 1998

Death of Alan B. Shepard, Jr.

Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, before I make my statement, I would like to amplify a little bit on the remarks I made earlier this morning on the death of Alan Shepard.

He is one of the great heroes of modern America: our first astronaut; our first American in space. None of us who were alive then will ever forget him sitting so calmly in *Freedom 7*, atop a slender and sometimes unreliable Mercury Redstone rocket. As President Kennedy observed at the time, America chose to make this first risky launch in full view of the world, and our entire Nation, in his words, "which risked much, gained much."

Alan Shepard understood the odds. He faced them bravely, and he led our country and all humanity beyond the bounds of our planet, across a truly new frontier, into the new era of space exploration.

A decade later, in 1971, Commander Shepard fought his way back from a debilitating ear infection to become the commander of *Apollo 14* and the fifth person to walk on the Moon. On behalf of myself and Mr. Bowles, I can't help noting that there, on the Moon, he lived every golfer's dream—[laughter]—taking his six iron

and hitting the ball, in his words, "for miles and miles." [Laughter]

Alan Shepard truly had the right stuff. His service will always loom large in America's history. I extend to his wife, Louise, his family, and his colleagues in the Navy and at NASA the thanks of a grateful Nation and our thoughts and prayers.

Internal Revenue Service

Now, I'd like to join Secretary Rubin in thanking Commissioner Rossotti, the Vice President, and you, Mr. Secretary, for what you have done. But I especially want to acknowledge the presence of all the Members of Congress here. And in particular, let me thank Senator Kerrey and Congressman Portman, Senator Roth, Senator Moynihan, Senator Grassley, Congressman Archer, Congressman Rangel, Congressman Cardin for their leading work that makes it possible for me to sign into law today the Internal Revenue Service Restructuring and Reform Act. The bill is a culmination of the commitment and hard work of many people but especially those whom I have just mentioned.

We've all worked hard to give the American people an IRS that reflects America's values and

respects America's taxpayers. Two years ago I was proud to sign into law a Taxpayer Bill of Rights—again, passed by an overwhelming bipartisan majority of the Congress—that has helped to make the IRS fairer and more responsive. Under the leadership of the Vice President and Secretary Rubin, we've upgraded customer service at the IRS, appointing Charles Rossotti, a seasoned private sector CEO, to reshape the agency; expanding office hours and phone hours; making it easier to file taxes over the telephone or by computer. We've created problem-solving days where taxpayers can work face-to-face with IRS customer service representatives.

For the first time this year, IRS helplines were open for the full 24 hours preceding the final filing deadline, April 15th. And in 1999, they will be open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, all year long. This year 40 million more callers heard a human voice, not a busy signal, when they called an IRS helpline. Nearly 25 million taxpayers took advantage of our new high-tech filing options. That's a 25 percent increase from the previous year.

Our streamlined IRS webpage had nearly half a billion hits this year. All this has meant quicker refunds, less paperwork, and fewer hassles for American taxpayers.

But clearly, there is more to do to build an IRS for the 21st century. This bill takes important steps in that direction. It will help the IRS to serve taxpayers as well as the best private companies serve their customers, building on efforts to offer simple high-tech options for filing taxes and making tax forms more easily available over the Internet.

As Secretary Rubin has said, it expands taxpayer rights, extending refund periods, protecting innocent spouses, cutting penalties in half for 2½ million taxpayers who are paying what they owe on installment plans. In all these ways, the bill will give the American people an IRS they deserve.

Again, let me thank the Congress for helping the IRS to meet the challenge of serving taxpayers by giving it the time it needs also to meet the challenge of the year 2000 computer conversion. I call on the Congress to fully fund our year 2000 effort to allow all Federal agencies to respond flexibly to unforeseen difficulties that are sure to arise.

This bill shows what we can do when we work together, when we put the progress of America ahead of our partisan concerns, when

we put our people over politics. That is how we have balanced the budget for the first time in 30 years while cutting taxes, expanding trade, and investing in our people. It is how I believe we can continue to make the Tax Code fairer for our people.

I have asked Congress to provide targeted tax relief for American families for child care, to expand pensions, to spur school construction, to protect our environment. In the context of comprehensive legislation to protect our children from tobacco, I have supported the effort to address the marriage penalty by cutting taxes for American families.

Every one of these tax cuts is prudent, bipartisan, and fully paid for. For 29 years, our country ran up large deficits, quadrupling our debt in the 12 years before I became President. It caused us to fall behind in the global economy; it caused our incomes to stagnate. Now we're on the verge of achieving our first balanced budget and our first surplus in a generation, and our economy is the envy of the world.

Fiscal responsibility has driven this economic expansion. A return to irresponsibility would put that prosperity at risk. After 29 years, it seems to me, it's worth taking one year to address the challenge of fixing the Social Security system before we start spending the surplus on tax cuts or new spending programs, however worthy they might be.

The American people expect us to have the good sense to rack up the surplus before we spend it and to save Social Security first. I know there are many people who think we should spend the surplus now and spend hundreds of billions of dollars on tax cuts before we have the bipartisan plan to save Social Security. I think it's the wrong course for America, in no small measure because we haven't fixed the price tag for saving Social Security and because, as we all know, we can't really predict with any absolute certainty what will happen 10 or 15 years from now.

I believe we should tell our children and our grandchildren that we think enough of them and their future that we're going to resist spending a penny of the surplus on things that I would very much like to spend it on—or you would—until we have met our basic obligation to our future, passing a bipartisan plan to save Social Security, which I am convinced the Congress will do early next year. I do not intend

to waver from my commitment to future generations, and I hope the rest of us will do the same.

Now it is my honor to sign into law the Internal Revenue Service Restructuring and Reform Act. I would like to ask all the Members of

Congress to come up here and join me on the stage. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. H.R. 2676, approved July 22, was assigned Public Law No. 105–206.

Message to the Congress Designating Provisions of the Internal Revenue Service Restructuring and Reform Act of 1998 as an Emergency Requirement

July 22, 1998

To the Congress of the United States:

Pursuant to section 3309(c) of the Internal Revenue Service Restructuring and Reform Act of 1998, I hereby designate the provisions of subsections (a) and (b) of section 3309 of such Act as an emergency requirement pursuant to section 252(e) of the Balanced Budget and

Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, as amended.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
July 22, 1998.

NOTE: The Internal Revenue Service Restructuring and Reform Act of 1998, approved July 22, was assigned Public Law No. 105–206.

Statement on House of Representatives Action To Extend Normal Trade Relations With China

July 22, 1998

I welcome the strong, bipartisan vote in the House today to extend normal trade relations with China.

This vote reflects my conviction that active engagement with China—expanding our areas of cooperation while dealing forthrightly with our differences—is the most effective way to advance our interests and our values. Over the past year and during my recent trip to China, engagement has produced tangible results and steady progress on vital issues: fostering political and economic stability in Asia, stopping the spread of weapons of mass destruction, com-

bating international crime and drug trafficking, protecting the environment, promoting human rights and religious freedom.

Trade is a vital part of engagement, supporting jobs here at home, lowering product prices, and helping us to build ties to nearly one quarter of the world's people. Normal trade relations with China will help us strengthen those ties and continue our efforts to make China an increasingly open and productive partner for America.