

Maricopa Indian Community; Mary Thomas, governor, Gila River Indian Community; Brian Wallace, chairman, Washoe Tribal Council; and John Yellow Bird Steele, president, Oglala Sioux. The President also referred to his memorandum of April 29, 1994 (59 FR 22951); Executive Order

13084 of May 14 (63 FR 27655); Executive Order 13096 of Aug. 6 (63 FR 42681); and the Medicare, Medicaid, and Children's Health Provisions, title IV of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, Public Law 105-33, approved August 5, 1997.

Memorandum on Economic Development in American Indian and Alaska Native Communities

August 6, 1998

Memorandum for the Secretary of Commerce, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of the Treasury, Administrator of the Small Business Administration

Subject: Economic Development in American Indian and Alaska Native Communities

Across America, communities are recognizing that technology and information technologies are key to creating economic opportunities and increasing productivity. My Administration has made substantial gains in spurring the development of an advanced information infrastructure in order to bring the benefits of the Information Age to all Americans.

Looking to the future, we know that technology is critical to economic growth. We need to stimulate the growth of modern production facilities, small business incubators, capital access for start-up companies, and strategic planning to develop a vision for technologically competent communities. In particular, as telecommunications and information technologies continue to play a key role in providing new job and educational opportunities, we must ensure that all of our communities are able to participate fully in the new information economy.

Because of their often remote locations, American Indian and Alaska Native communities stand to benefit greatly from the Information Age, yet are in grave danger of being left behind. For example, a recent Department of Commerce study on Internet and computer usage in America shows that, although many more Americans now own computers, minority and low-income households are still far less likely than white and more affluent households to

have personal computers or access to the Internet. Even more disturbing, this study reveals that this "digital divide" between households of different races and income levels is growing. We must act to ensure that American Indian and Alaska Native communities gain the new tools they need to battle high levels of unemployment and low per-capita income.

The ability to own a home and have access to capital are also very important for economic development. Residents of Indian reservations encounter several unique issues when seeking to obtain a mortgage. Trust land status, tribal sovereignty, and requirements to gain clear title from the Bureau of Indian Affairs are examples of issues that lenders and borrowers must grapple with during the mortgage lending process. Thus, individuals seeking to acquire a homesite lease or a residential mortgage are often required to obtain approval from several Federal, tribal, State, and local agencies as well as private providers.

I am proud that the Department of Commerce, particularly through the Economic Development Administration, has a 30-year history of investing over \$730 million in economic development projects in American Indian and Alaska Native communities, working with its existing network of 65 tribal planning organizations. Additionally, the Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration has funded demonstration projects that help show Native American communities how they can use technologies to improve the quality of life on reservations. And the Commerce Department's Minority Business Development Agency has funded eight Native American Business Development Centers that

provide assistance with accounting, administration, business planning, construction, and marketing.

To continue our focus on infrastructure technology needs and business development in American Indian and Alaska Native communities, I direct the following actions.

First, I direct the Secretary of Commerce, in collaboration with the Department of the Interior and tribal governments, to report back to me within 9 months on the state of infrastructure technology needs in Indian communities, including distance learning facilities, telecommunications capabilities, and manufacturing facilities. This report should identify the infrastructure technology needs in Indian country and set forth proposals that would help address these needs.

Second, I direct the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Commerce, and the Administrator of the Small Business Administration to report back to me within 90 days with a strategic plan for coordinating existing economic development initiatives for Native American and Alaska Native communities, including initiatives involving the private sector. In developing this strategic plan, the Secretaries and the Administrator

should consult with all interested parties, including tribal governments and other Federal agencies and offices—particularly, the Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Transportation, and Agriculture. The plan should build upon current efforts in the agencies and detail future efforts such as providing technical assistance, enhancing infrastructure, and developing software.

Third, I direct the Secretaries of the Treasury and of Housing and Urban Development, in partnership with local tribal governments and in cooperation with other Federal agencies—particularly, the Departments of the Interior, Veterans Affairs, and Agriculture—to initiate a project to help streamline the mortgage lending process in Indian country in order to improve access to mortgage loans on Indian reservations. The Secretaries should initiate this effort through a year-long pilot program on the Navajo Nation and in at least one other location.

These steps, taken together, will help ensure the continued economic development of American Indian and Alaska Native communities and help them recognize the full benefits of the Information Age.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Statement on House Action on Campaign Finance Reform Legislation *August 6, 1998*

The vote for final passage of the Shays-Meehan bipartisan campaign finance reform bill is a heartening sign for the health of our democracy. The House vote to ban soft money and improve disclosure, in defiance of the Republican leadership, is a rebuke to the cynical view that political reform can never happen. Now, only a minority of the United States Senate stands in the way of campaign finance reform

becoming the law of the land. I call upon those few Senators who now block reform to heed the actions of the House and the will of the people and pass bipartisan campaign finance reform. I again congratulate Representatives Christopher Shays, Marty Meehan, and all their colleagues who set aside partisanship to make real progress today.