

May 20 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1999

Were it not for the pressing needs in Kosovo, Central America, the Middle East, and America's heartland, I would have rejected several of these measures that reward special interests, weaken environmental protection, and undermine our campaign to stop teen smoking. This is no way to do the people's business, and I will not tolerate this kind of special interest meddling as we complete the annual budget process.

This final legislation does show significant improvement upon Congress's earlier versions. Gone are the Congress's proposed cuts that weakened anti-terrorism programs, especially Embassy security upgrades; that threatened to undermine global economic stability by denying U.S. funds to multilateral development banks; and that imperiled the Government's ability to continue fixing its computers for the year 2000. Congress also removed or modified certain objectionable riders that, for example, would have blocked our efforts to protect the sensitive waters in Alaska's Glacier Bay, and weakened the Endangered Species Act.

It is a mistake for Congress to use this bill as a vehicle for a range of special interest provisions harmful to the environment and to the prudent stewardship of our Nation's natural resources. Several highly objectionable provisions remain in the final bill. For example, there are provisions that undermine our ability to ensure that mining on Federal lands is done in an envi-

ronmentally responsible manner. And by extending a moratorium on the Department of Interior's proposed oil valuation rules, the Congress is preventing the collection of fair royalty payments from the oil companies that extract oil from public lands. Again, I want to be clear that, were it not for the truly emergency needs to which this bill responds, I would be rejecting these environmental riders. I call on Congress to end these stealth attempts to weaken environmental and public health protections. I have vetoed bills in the past because they contained anti-environmental riders and, if necessary, am fully prepared to do so again.

Finally, Congress passed up an important opportunity to protect our children from the death and diseases caused by tobacco. This is wrong. I am also extremely disappointed that the Congress acted against recoupment of funds collected by the States from tobacco manufacturers and does not require States to use even a portion of those funds to prevent youth smoking. Even though 3,000 young people become regular smokers every day and 1,000 will have their lives cut short as a result, most States still have no plans to use tobacco settlement funds to reduce youth smoking. I will closely monitor State efforts in this area, and I will continue to fight for a nationwide effort to reduce youth smoking through counter-advertising, prevention activities, and restrictions on youth access to tobacco products.

Radio Remarks on Disaster Relief Provisions in 1999 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Legislation

May 20, 1999

On behalf of the many thousands of citizens struggling to put their lives back together following the recent string of devastating tornadoes, I want to thank the Congress for its approval of the supplemental budget. Some \$900 million in funding will go immediately to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, to ensure there will be no interruption in assistance to the disaster victims in Oklahoma, Kansas, Tennessee, Texas, and other States.

Vice President Gore and I saw the devastation first hand. We know that many families lost not only loved ones but also everything they

own. All these families remain in our prayers. And we want them to know that their Government will continue to be there for them throughout their time of need.

NOTE: The President's remarks were recorded at approximately 6:30 p.m. in the Oval Office on May 19 for later broadcast. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 20. These remarks were also made available on the White House Press Office Radio Actuality Line. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.