

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report on Naval Petroleum Reserves

October 8, 1999

To the Congress of the United States:

In accordance with section 201(3) of the Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act of 1976 (10 U.S.C. 7422)(c)(2), I am informing you of my decision to extend the period of production of the naval petroleum reserves for a period of 3 years from April 5, 2000, the expiration date of the currently authorized period of production.

Attached is a copy of the report investigating the necessity of continued production of the reserves as required by 10 U.S.C. 7422(c)(2)(B).

In light of the findings contained in that report, I certify that continued production from the naval petroleum reserves is in the national interest.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
October 8, 1999.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 12.

Statement on Signing the Department of Transportation and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2000

October 9, 1999

I have signed into law H.R. 2084, the "Department of Transportation and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2000." The bill provides \$47.1 billion in funding for the Nation's vital transportation and related safety needs. The record level of infrastructure investment provided by this measure, which I requested, will enhance use and efficiency, provide better connections, and help improve the conditions and performance of the Nation's transportation system.

This bill's funding levels for highway and transit programs will allow us to continue making substantial improvements in travel conditions and transit ridership. Completing the full funding of our request for Coast Guard operating expenses will improve the safety of all Americans by enabling the expansion of the Coast Guard's vital search and rescue, law enforcement, and drug interdiction activities. Provision of our request for Amtrak capital funds will improve passenger service and keep the rail service on the 5-year glide path to operating self-sufficiency that was agreed to in 1997 by the Congress and my Administration.

I am concerned about the funding level provided in the bill for Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) operations and capital programs.

For example, the bill provides \$144 million less than my request for FAA operations. This reduction will slow hiring for safety and security positions and postpone implementation of needed efficiency and management improvements. The bill also constrains funding for the modernization of the air traffic control system, including needed modernization and improvement of the Global Positioning System. These reductions may increase air travel delays and ill-position the FAA to meet the growing challenges of the future. My Administration will work with the Congress to rectify the consequences of these harmful reductions.

Section 321 of this bill again blocks the Department of Transportation from evaluating corporate average fuel economy standards to determine whether the vehicles we drive can be more fuel efficient. Because of similar provisions, the Department has been unable to carry out its responsibility to review this issue for several years, during which time the average fuel economy has dropped to its lowest level since 1980, adding to pollution and to the Nation's dependency on imported oil. I am very disturbed by this limitation on my Administration's ability to address this critical issue. We cannot continue to ignore this. For that reason, we will soon

invite the leaders of the auto industry to the White House to try to find a way to address this issue notwithstanding the limitation in this bill.

I appreciate the increase in funding for motor carrier safety provided in the bill, as it is the goal of the Secretary of Transportation to reduce motor carrier safety fatalities by 50 percent within 10 years. However, I am disappointed that the full funding requested for motor carrier safety grants to States was not provided, as this funding is needed to help achieve this goal. I am also concerned about language that precludes enforcement action, and my Administration will work with the Congress to address this problem.

I am also troubled by the widespread earmarking of vital highway and transit programs without regard to criteria that have been established to ensure that these are sound investments. For example, a number of projects specified for the Job Access and Reverse Commute program are strictly for research, an activity that would not otherwise be eligible for this funding. In general, earmarks tend to be aimed at projects that have not advanced in the local

planning process and, as a result, the funding will likely remain unused for a longer period of time, depriving ready-to-go projects of needed Federal assistance.

I recognize the widespread transportation needs of our country, which is why transportation infrastructure investment during my Administration has increased by 32 percent above the previous Administration's average. However, our transportation investment must be strategic and applied to critical needs, and excessive earmarking can undermine this goal. I ask the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to work with the Department of Transportation to see that essential projects that can quickly utilize Federal funding are given the ability to move forward.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
October 9, 1999.

NOTE: H.R. 2084, approved October 9, was assigned Public Law No. 106-69. This statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 12.

Statement on Signing Family Farmers Bankruptcy Relief Legislation *October 9, 1999*

I have signed into law S. 1606, which extends the provisions of chapter 12 of the Bankruptcy Code until July 1, 2000.

Chapter 12 of the Bankruptcy Code was enacted in 1986 to provide bankruptcy relief to our Nation's family farmers, enabling them to avoid the loss of their farms and their way of life. Chapter 12 has also benefited creditors, who would be unlikely to obtain repayment if these farmers went out of business.

This is the third short-term extension of chapter 12 that I have approved since last fall. As

I stated in March when I approved the most recent extension, I urge the Congress to make chapter 12 permanent.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
October 9, 1999.

NOTE: S. 1606, approved October 9, was assigned Public Law No. 106-70. This statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 12.