

funds to invest in technology to serve the communications industry more effectively.

In conference action, a rider was added that would amend the recently-enacted Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act to expand the prohibition of discrimination against individuals who refuse to “prescribe” contraceptives to individuals who “otherwise provide for” contraceptives (all nonphysician providers) in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program. As an example, this language could allow pharmacists to refuse to dispense contraceptive prescriptions. This action violated jurisdictional concerns and is also unacceptable policy.

The bill underfunds a number of high-priority programs within the Department of Commerce. My Administration sought an additional \$9 million to help public broadcasters meet the Federal deadline to establish digital broadcasting capability by May 1, 2003. The bill would provide less than half of last year’s funding level for the Critical Infrastructure Assurance Office. The bill also fails to fund the Department’s other

programs to protect critical information and communications infrastructures. The Congress must restore these funds if the Department is to continue performing its important and emerging role in coordinating activities that support our economic and national security.

The bill does not include any funds to reimburse Guam and other territories for the costs of detaining and repatriating smuggled Chinese aliens. These entities deserve our support for assisting in this interdiction effort.

I look forward to working with the Congress to craft an appropriations bill that I can support, and to passage of one that will facilitate our shared objectives.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
October 25, 1999.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 26.

Statement on Senate Action on Proposed Legislation To Provide Assistance to African Nations

October 26, 1999

I applaud the strong, bipartisan vote in the Senate to move forward with consideration of the African growth and opportunity act. This historic legislation will help build a partnership that will strengthen economic and political ties, increase trade, and boost economic growth and

opportunity in both the United States and Africa. It will strengthen the relationship between our Nation and a continent entering a new era of democracy and economic progress. I urge Congress to pass this legislation this year.

Statement on Signing the Wireless Communications and Public Safety Act of 1999

October 26, 1999

Today I am pleased to sign into law the Wireless Communications and Public Safety Act of 1999. By making it easier to use wireless phones to report emergencies, this bill could save thousands of lives every year.

Nearly 100,000 times each day, someone uses a wireless phone to make an emergency call. People with wireless phones can speed the deliv-

ery of public safety services by providing rapid reports of car crashes, incidents of aggressive or drunk driving, serious crimes, and natural disasters. Getting rapid care to someone who is suffering from a heart attack or is involved in a car crash can mean the difference between life and death.