

Statement on Proposed Parental Antidiscrimination Legislation *November 11, 1999*

I am pleased that last night Senators Dodd and Kennedy introduced the “Ending Discrimination Against Parents Act of 1999.” This landmark bill protects America’s working parents from unfair treatment on the job. It builds on our Nation’s longstanding commitment to equal opportunity. And it sends a clear message that parents striving to meet their responsibilities both at home and at the office should never be considered second-class workers.

This bill would, for the first time, protect parents and those with parental responsibilities against job discrimination. It does not stop employers from making hiring and promotion decisions on the basis of qualifications or job performance, but it does ensure that workers are not discriminated against simply because they are parents or exercise parental responsibilities. It would, for example, bar employers from taking a parent off the “fast track” because of un-

substantiated concerns that parents cannot perform in demanding jobs. Similarly, it would not allow employers to prefer applicants without children over equally or better qualified working parents or to refuse to hire single parents.

As more mothers enter the work force and as more families rely on the earnings of single parents, these protections are increasingly important. We cannot afford to let working parents be held captive to baseless assumptions about their ability to work.

Already, a number of States have enacted commonsense laws that prohibit or pave the way to prohibiting discrimination on the basis of parental or familial status. I urge Congress to safeguard the interests of America’s working families and give this legislation prompt and favorable consideration. Our workplaces should work for all Americans.

Message on the Observance of the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church *November 10, 1999*

Warm greetings to all those observing the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church.

Throughout my Presidency, I have strived to promote the cause of international religious freedom. I am proud that my Administration has completed the first phase outlined in the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. In September, we published the first annual report on the status of religious freedom worldwide; and in October, we publicly designated the most severe violators of religious freedom.

On this special occasion, we pause to reflect on the importance of religious freedom and the profound role that religion continues to play in the lives of citizens around the world. Throughout human history, religion has helped countless individuals address profound questions about life and the universe. Across the globe, in places large and small, we have seen the resilience

and depth of the human desire to worship freely.

We have also seen in our communities and in other nations around the world the violence and human tragedy spawned by hatred, intolerance, and fear born of ignorance—even ignorance of one another’s religion. But religion encourages us to recognize our capacity for forgiveness and love. On this sacred day, we pray most fervently to Almighty God to change the hearts of those who persecute others and to help us in building just communities united in understanding, compassion, and mutual respect.

Best wishes to all for a blessed observance.

BILL CLINTON

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