

duty-free treatment to a much broader range of imports from the region for 5 years. This legislation implements in part a trade expansion initiative that I launched at the Sarajevo summit in July. This initiative is an important part of the broader Stability Pact developed by the United States, our European allies and partners, and others to speed the economic development

and democratization of southeast Europe and advance its integration into an undivided Europe. Along with trade benefits provided by European nations, these efforts can help the countries of the region achieve long-term economic growth. This, in turn, will strengthen the region's stability and reduce the risk of another destructive conflict.

### **Statement on Signing the District of Columbia College Access Act of 1999 *November 12, 1999***

Today I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 974, the "District of Columbia College Access Act of 1999." This Act helps to level the playing field for the young people of the District of Columbia by expanding opportunities for affordable higher education. My FY 2000 Budget requested \$17 million to improve access to higher education for D.C. residents by enabling them to attend public colleges and universities in Maryland and Virginia at in-State tuition rates. I am grateful for the bipartisan effort in the Congress to work with my Administration to build on that proposal and develop this Act.

The District of Columbia College Access Act of 1999 will allow the Federal Government, through a program run by the Mayor of the District of Columbia, to pay the difference between in-State and out-of-State tuition at public colleges and universities in Maryland, Virginia, and other States, under certain circumstances, on behalf of qualified D.C. residents. District of Columbia residents could receive up to \$10,000 per year, with a \$50,000 maximum overall, in tuition subsidies under this Act. This tuition subsidy is critical, because it will provide an opportunity for D.C. residents, like the residents of all 50 States, to attend a variety of affordable public colleges and universities. A lack of financial resources can be a roadblock to entering college, as well as a major reason why many students who enroll in college do not complete their degree programs. By providing this tuition subsidy, we are providing D.C. residents more opportunities to attend college, and encouraging families with college-bound children to remain in, or move to, the District. By assisting individual D.C. residents through these tuition subsidies, we will also be

contributing to the continued revitalization of the District of Columbia.

In addition, the Act would authorize grants of up to \$2,500 per year, with a \$12,500 per student maximum, to D.C. residents who choose to attend private colleges and universities in the Washington, D.C. area, including private historically Black colleges and universities in Maryland or Virginia. Together with the tuition subsidy for public colleges and universities, these grants would greatly expand both public and private post-secondary opportunities for D.C. residents.

Throughout the legislative development of this bill, my Administration stated its preference for ensuring that Federal resources are provided to those students with greater need for financial assistance. The Act goes a long way toward reaching that goal by providing the Mayor of the District of Columbia with the authority, in the event of insufficient appropriations, to establish priorities regarding the making or amount of tuition and fee payments on the basis of the income and need of eligible students.

The Act would also authorize financial support to the University of the District of Columbia (UDC), if it does not receive funds under the Higher Education Act of 1965 on the basis of its status as a historically Black college and university. In order to provide a range of high quality higher education opportunities to D.C. residents, this Act will ensure that Federal funds are available to support the only public institution of higher education in the District of Columbia and to help ensure that D.C. residents who choose to attend UDC will receive a solid education.

Finally, I must point out that this Act is only part of the efforts currently underway to improve higher education opportunities for D.C. students. I congratulate the private sector's outstanding efforts to prepare D.C. students to attend college, and to provide additional tuition assistance beyond that provided in this Act. The commitment of both the private and public sectors to broaden postsecondary education opportunities available to D.C. residents will have a significant impact on the education, economic well-being, and lives of many D.C. students and

their families for years to come. I look forward to working with D.C. Mayor Anthony Williams as he implements this groundbreaking new program.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,  
November 12, 1999.

NOTE: H.R. 974, approved November 12, was assigned Public Law No. 106-98.

## The President's Radio Address *November 13, 1999*

Good morning. In recent weeks, Congress and our administration have been engaged in final budget negotiations that will set the direction our Nation takes as we enter the new millennium. This week we made good progress. Today I want to talk to you about what we achieved, why I fought hard for priorities like better schools and safer streets, and what we still must do to finish a budget that prepares for the future, continues to pay down the debt, and honors our values.

I wanted to make sure the very first budget of the 21st century puts education first. That's why I stood firm on our commitment to hire 100,000 quality teachers to reduce class size in the early grades. We made this promise with Congress last year, and schools around the country already are hiring more than 29,000 teachers to give 1.7 million children the chance to learn in smaller classes.

The research is clear on this. Students learn more in smaller classes where they get more attention. And as I said in the State of the Union Address, we not only need more teachers; we need better teachers. Under the plan we worked out with Congress this week, every teacher hired with these funds must be fully qualified and know the subjects he or she is hired to teach. School districts can also use some funds to better prepare their existing teachers to meet the needs of 21st century students. We need to stay on this path of hiring 100,000 quality teachers to reduce class size.

The budget agreement also more than doubles our investment for after-school programs and increases funding for our efforts to connect all our schools to the Internet, for our GEAR UP program which provides mentors to prepare at-risk children for college, and for our Hispanic education initiatives. I am pleased Congress has put politics aside and put education first in this budget.

We're making progress in other areas as well. We know America is safer. The crime rate is at a 25-year low. But it's not nearly as safe as it can and should be. We must keep the crime rate coming down. The budget agreement invests in the success of our COPS program which has already funded 100,000 community police officers, by providing the resources to hire up to 50,000 more of them over the next 5 years in neighborhoods where crime rates are still too high.

We've made progress on the efforts that Vice President Gore and I have developed to set aside funds to preserve natural areas and to protect our environment for future generations. However, we've still got some work to do on this and we must oppose antienvironmental provisions that put special interest ahead of the public interest.

With all this progress, our budget work isn't complete yet. And I'm committed to working with Congress to reach agreement before they recess this year on the issues that are still outstanding, from passing meaningful hate crimes