

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

legislation to providing relief for families suffering under the impact of Hurricane Floyd, to paying our U.N. dues, to passing the work incentives improvement act so that people with disabilities can gain a job without losing their health care.

In addition to the budget, I urge Congress to keep working on other critical issues: commonsense gun safety legislation to keep guns out of the wrong hands; a real Patients' Bill of Rights families have been waiting for for too long; a raise in the minimum wage, which shouldn't be held hostage to special interest tax cuts that aren't paid for and don't address national needs; and finally, measures to save Social Security and Medicare for the 21st century and modernize Medicare to include a voluntary prescription drug benefit. I urge Congress to work with me in meeting all these goals.

This has been a good week for America. We're staying on the path that has brought us the longest peacetime expansion in history, the highest homeownership in history, nearly 20 million new jobs, a 30-year low in unemployment, a 20-year low in poverty rates, and the first back-to-back budget surpluses in 42 years. Now we've got the chance of a lifetime to shape the future of our dreams for our children. Let's finish the job.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 3:15 p.m. on November 12 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on November 13. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 12 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Statement on the Announcement of Cyprus Peace Talks *November 14, 1999*

The Secretary-General of the United Nations has just informed me that President Clerides of Cyprus and Turkish Cypriot leader Denktash have accepted an invitation to start proximity talks in New York on December 3. The goal of the talks is to prepare the ground for meaningful negotiations leading to a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem.

The talks will be held under U.N. auspices. They will go forward without precondition. They will focus on the substantive issues that divide the parties. The United States will work closely with the Secretary-General to ensure that the talks are productive.

This summer the United States took the lead in calling on the United Nations to convene Cyprus talks. Ever since, together with our European allies and the U.N., we have been intensively engaged in an effort to bring the parties back to the negotiating table after a stalemate

of more than 2 years. I am pleased that these efforts—including my meeting with Turkish Prime Minister Ecevit at the White House, Secretary Albright's conversation with President Clerides, and a month of shuttle diplomacy by my Special Envoy Al Moses—have helped to produce this result.

These Cyprus talks can bring us one step closer to a lasting peace. A negotiated settlement is the best way to meet the fundamental interests of the parties, including real security for all Cypriots and an end to the island's division.

The Cyprus problem has been with us for far too long. It will not be resolved overnight. But today we have new hope. I ask the parties to approach this opportunity with good faith and the determination to build for all the people of Cyprus a future that is brighter than the past.