

Statement on Congressional Action on Proposed Foster Care Legislation November 20, 1999

Hillary and I are very pleased that the Congress today approved H.R. 3443, "Foster Care Independence Act of 1999." This legislation helps ensure that young people in foster care get the tools they need to make the most of their lives. It builds on proposals in my budget to empower those leaving foster care by providing them access to health care, better educational opportunities, training, housing assistance, counseling, and other support and services. We cannot let these young people walk their tough road alone.

Each year approximately 20,000 18-year-olds leave our Nation's foster care system without an adoptive family or other permanent family relationship. Without the emotional, social, and financial support that families provide, many of these young people are not adequately prepared for life after foster care. Unfortunately, Federal financial support ends just as they are making the critical transition to independence. This bill addresses that problem and will help these youth in their effort to become successful, independent adults.

I am also pleased that the Act provides additional funds for the adoption incentive payments, which are bonuses to the States for increasing the number of children adopted from public foster care. This additional funding will enable States to receive the full amount of the bonuses they have earned through outstanding performance.

Today's legislation is a fitting tribute to the late Senator John Chafee, who was a chief sponsor of the Act. A fierce champion of children, Senator Chafee paid particular attention to our Nation's most vulnerable young people. I am pleased that the bill renames the Independent Living Program in his honor.

I would also like to thank the House and Senate leadership, as well as Representatives Nancy Johnson and Ben Cardin, Chairman William Roth, Jr., and Senators Jay Rockefeller, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Charles Grassley, John Breaux, James Jeffords, Jack Reed, and Susan Collins for their hard work and dedication to this issue. I look forward to signing this bill into law.

Statement on Signing the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999 November 20, 1999

Today I have signed into law S. 468, the "Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999." I strongly support the objective of this legislation—to make it easier for State, local, and tribal governments and non-profit organizations to apply for and report on financial assistance. While different types of grant programs can and should have different applications, there is ample room for consolidation and streamlining of similar programs.

Nonetheless, I have strong reservations about some of the specific provisions in the Act. In particular, as my Administration has indicated to the Congress on several occasions, the Act does not provide resources for, nor allow sufficient time to accomplish even partially, the very ambitious overhaul of grant programs that it re-

quires. In addition, the Act anticipates a common application and reporting system for Federal grant programs, but does not amend the many program statutes that establish different application and reporting requirements for different grant programs. Furthermore, the deadlines in the Act are inconsistent with other legislation and unlikely to be achievable in practice. For example, the Act requires agencies to create a common system for electronic processing of all grant programs, but on a schedule that is inconsistent with related requirements of the Government Paperwork Elimination Act of 1998. For these reasons, even an extensive effort may yield only minimal improvements in the simplification of the grants process and the administration of Federal resources.

I remain concerned that S. 468 may create expectations that will not be fulfilled, and tarnish the success of the efforts we have already begun. My Administration will, of course, continue its long-standing efforts to streamline, simplify, and consolidate application and reporting requirements.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,

November 20, 1999.

NOTE: S. 468, approved November 20, was assigned Public Law No. 106–107.

Remarks at a Dinner for the Conference on Progressive Governance for the 21st Century in Florence, Italy

November 20, 1999

Thank you very much. Professor Dorsen, Dean Sexton, President Oliva, to my fellow leaders, and especially to our hosts, Prime Minister and Mrs. D'Alema. Let me say a special word of appreciation to my good friend Romano Prodi for the very good outline he has given us of the challenges facing not only the nations of Europe but the United States and all other economies more or less positioned as we are.

The hour is late, and what I think I would like to do is to briefly comment on why we're here and what exactly are the elements of progressive governance in the 21st century—what do we have consensus on, and what are the outstanding challenges facing us?—without going into any detail, in the hopes that that's what will be discussed tomorrow.

First of all, I think it's worth noting that it's entirely fitting that we're meeting here at this beautiful villa in this great city where the Italian Renaissance saw its greatest flowering, because we know instinctively that we now have a chance at the turn of the millennium to shape another extraordinary period of human progress and creativity.

There are many parallels to the Renaissance era in this time. For at the dawn of the Renaissance, Italy was a place of great economic ferment and change, rapidly expanding trade, new forms of banking and finance, new technologies and new wealth, more education, vibrant culture, broader horizons. Today, we have the Internet, the global economy, exploding diversity within and across national lines, the simultaneous emergence of global cultural movements, breathtaking scientific advances in everything

from the human genome to discoveries about black holes in the universe.

We have, in addition, a much greater opportunity to spread the benefits of this renaissance more broadly than it could have been spread 500 years ago. But there are also profound problems among and within nations. Making the most of our possibilities, giving all people a chance to seize them, minimizing the dangers to our dreams, requires us to go beyond the competing models of industrial age politics. That's why we're here. We think ideas matter. We think it's a great challenge to marry our conceptions of social justice and equal opportunity with our commitment to globalization. We think we will have to find what has often been called a Third Way, a way that requires governments to empower people with tools and conditions necessary for individuals, families, communities, and nations to make the most of their human potential.

In the United States, we have proceeded for the last 7 years under a rubric of opportunity for all, responsibility from all, and a community of all Americans. We have also recognized something that I think is implicit in the whole concept of the European Union, which is that it is no longer possible, easily, to divide domestic from global political concerns. There is no longer a clear dividing line between foreign and domestic policy. And, therefore, it is important that every nation and that all like-minded people have a vision of the kind of world we're trying to build in the 21st century and what it will take to build that world.

I think there is an emerging consensus which you heard in Romano Prodi's remarks about