

Statement on Federal Compensation for Losses Incurred in the Bandelier National Monument Fire *May 26, 2000*

This administration is committed to ensuring that all those who have been affected by the fire that began at Banderliel National* Monument are fully compensated for their losses. At this time, we are working with the New Mexico delegation to craft legislation that would govern

Federal compensation and make available the funds needed to pay for this legislation. We are committed to working with the Congress to ensure that this matter is addressed as promptly as possible.

Statement on Signing the Hmong Veterans Naturalization Act of 2000 *May 26, 2000*

Today I signed H.R. 371, the Hmong Veterans Naturalization Act of 2000. This legislation is a tribute to the service, courage, and sacrifice of the Hmong people who were our allies in Laos during the Vietnam war. After the Vietnam war, many Hmong soldiers and their families came to the* United States and have become part of the social fabric of American society. They work, pay taxes, and have raised families and made America their home. However, some Hmong seeking to become American citizens have faced great difficulty meeting the requirements for naturalization for reasons associated with the unique circumstances of the Hmong culture. Until recently, the Hmong people had no written language. Without this experience, learning English, a requirement of naturaliza-

tion, has been much more difficult for some Hmong. This requirement has prevented many Hmong from becoming full participants in American society. This new law will waive the English language requirement and provide special consideration for the civics requirement for Hmong veterans and their families. This law is a small step but an important one in honoring the immense sacrifices that the Hmong people made in supporting our efforts in Southeast Asia. I would like to recognize Representative Bruce Vento and Senator Wellstone, sponsors of the legislation, for their leadership on this issue.

NOTE: H.R. 371, approved May 26, was assigned Public Law No. 106-207.

Statement on the Meat and Poultry Inspection System *May 26, 2000*

When this administration came into office, meat and poultry were inspected by the same old method used for 90 years. In 1996, we began a comprehensive, science-based system that, for the first time, requires plants to reduce bacterial contamination in meat and poultry.

This system has been a tremendous success. In just 2 years, the presence of dangerous salmonella on meat and poultry has been reduced

by up to 50 percent, and illnesses caused by salmonella are also down.

Unfortunately, a small minority of meat plants are acting against the best interests of the American people. They threaten to undermine an inspection system that is clearly effective in reducing food poisoning, jeopardizing the confidence that consumers have in the safety of the food they eat.

* White House correction.