

June 20 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 2000

promoting democracy, lifting those left behind, touching the hearts of your people. Morocco is a sterling example of Islamic tolerance, a force for peace, rooted in the common values of humanity.

In the 20th century, Morocco helped to make the world safe for democracy. In the 21st century, let us, together, make it also safe for diversity.

On the day that he died, His Majesty King Hassan, had a letter sitting on his desk ready to be signed, a letter he had asked to be drafted, that reaffirmed what he called "our shared principles of freedom and solidarity, and our unshakable belief in the values of democracy, peace, prosperity, and progress." That letter was written on the very same kind of parchment as the letter passed between Sultan Mohammed

III and President George Washington, more than two centuries ago. Your Majesty, in the days ahead, may we affirm that letter and our old, old friendship with deeds as well as words. May the partnership between our nations continue to show the way for the rest of the world.

Your Majesty, we are honored that you are here. We are honored by the way you represent your nation and the potential we have to build on our rich, long partnership. Welcome to the White House. Welcome to America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:24 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House, where King Mohamed VI was accorded a formal welcome with full military honors. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the King.

Remarks on the District of Columbia College Access Act of 1999

June 20, 2000

Thank you very much. Well, this is a very happy day. Welcome. I'd like to thank Representatives Eleanor Holmes Norton, Tom Davis, and Jim Moran for their role in this day; and Secretary Riley; OMB Director Lew, especially for his role as the Chair of the Federal DC Interagency Task Force. And I'd like to thank Grant Stockdale, who first proposed this idea several years ago.

I am sorry that Mayor Williams couldn't be with us today, but the city is very well represented. And I want to welcome the university presidents from George Mason, Trinity, Bowie State, and Delaware State who are here today, as well as students they'll be welcoming because of the DC College Access Act. We also have some of the educators and parents who helped get these children to college and the leaders of the DC College Access program who are raising private funds to help local students meet all the costs of a university education.

Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit

I want to talk in a moment about all that you have done together, but because this is my only opportunity to be with the press today, I want to say just a few words about another issue where your example of bipartisanship

could stand us in good stead, and that is our stewardship of the Medicare program.

This week the House is preparing to vote on a proposal for a prescription drug benefit for older Americans and people with disabilities. Unfortunately, in my opinion at least, the private insurance drug plan does not achieve that objective of giving affordable, dependable coverage to every senior who needs it. At the same time, we have to face the challenge of making sure we pay the Medicare providers enough so they can give our seniors the high quality care they deserve. Payments are too low in important areas, and Medicare patients are at risk. Some think we have to choose between the prescription drug benefit and adequate quality care. But because of our remarkable prosperity, I believe we can do both, especially given the present strength of the Medicare Trust Fund. And I think we should do it right.

Today I am proposing to dedicate \$40 billion over the next 10 years to ensure that our providers can continue to provide quality care. I think all of us recognize, and I do think this is a bipartisan recognition, that when we passed the Balanced Budget Act of '97, we did not provide adequate funding for the medical providers of the country. And this will help, by

increasing Medicare payments to hospitals, teaching facilities, nursing homes, and the home health care programs, so that Medicare patients can get what they need.

My proposal also endorses Vice President Gore's initiatives to say for the very first time, the Medicare surplus will be off-budget, like the Social Security surplus, and therefore can no longer be diverted for other purposes. Under the Vice President's plan, Medicare must be saved for paying down the debt in order to strengthen the life of the Medicare program.

Today the House is voting on a proposal that embraces this concept and takes an important step toward achieving the goal. And I'm very pleased, and again, I think it will have strong bipartisan support. I hope it will be strengthened in the Senate, so there will be absolutely no question that any loophole can allow the money to be spent in other ways.

District of Columbia College Access Act

Now, just as we bear a heavy responsibility to our seniors, we also have perhaps an even heavier one to our young people, to do all we can to prepare them for the future. More and more, that requires that we offer every student the chance to go to college. In the coming years, the number of new jobs requiring a bachelor's degree will actually grow twice as fast as the jobs that require only a high school diploma. Over the course of a career, someone with a college degree today will earn, on average, \$600,000 more than someone with a high school diploma.

I have often said that I was the first person to go to college in my family, and I couldn't have done it without not only help from my family but without loans, scholarships, and jobs. Those things enabled me to have opportunities my parents' generation did not have, and without them, clearly, I wouldn't be standing here today making these remarks. So I think, like everyone in Congress who's been through the same experience, we want to make sure that the next generation has the same opportunity.

For years, too many of this city—our Capital City's young people have been left behind, not because they didn't have the ability but because they didn't have the resources to go on to college. This fall things will be different. Thanks to a remarkable coalition of business leaders, city and Federal officials, Republicans and Democrats, working together, many of them

here today, the children of Washington will have the chance to go to public colleges around the country at in-State rates or get some help to go to a private school close to home.

The District of Columbia College Access Act makes the playing field a little more level for the children of Washington, DC. More students and parents will know that if they study hard and believe in themselves, the doors of college and the opportunity college brings will be open to them. And more middle income families will find that our great Nation's Capital is also a great place to live and raise their own children.

This fall more than 1,000 young people, many of whom might never have had the chance, will get the help to go to college. We're paying the difference between in-State and out-of-State tuition, sometimes as high as \$10,000 a year. And we're providing \$2,500 for young people who have chosen to attend local private colleges.

Washington businesses are helping many of these children pay for the costs of college—the other costs—and they've helped increase funding for the University of the District of Columbia, as well. This is a great example of what we can do if we put aside our differences to work toward a common goal. It is one of the best investments we could ever make.

One of the things that I am proudest of in my service as President is that we've had the opportunity to have the biggest expansion in college aid since the GI bill 50 years ago: expanded Pell grants, which many young Washingtonians use, education IRA's, the \$1,500 HOPE scholarship tax credit, and the lifetime learning tax credit for the third and fourth years of college and graduate school and adult education. And now I've asked Congress to pass a college opportunity tax cut that would allow every family to deduct up to \$10,000 of college tuition from their income tax every year.

We have the resources now. The question is whether we have the vision and will to give all our children a shot at living their dreams. This bill indicates that we do. And again, I want to thank these Representatives here who played a leading role and all of you who helped to pass this bill.

I'd like to now ask Dr. Alan Merten, the president of George Mason University; Zack Gamble; Secretary Riley; and Representatives Norton, Davis, Moran; and Jack Lew to come forward. I want to tell you that Zack Gamble is a young man who did well in college and

June 20 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 2000

was acceptable—accepted—acceptable and accepted—[laughter]—into several colleges. The DC College Access Act is making it possible for him to go to George Mason this fall to study computer science. We're going to present his tuition check now. It is just the first of many.

Zack, congratulations. And to all the other young people here, congratulations to you. Good luck to you. God bless you. And now, in the

immortal words of that great movie, we're going to show you the money. [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:23 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Anthony A. Williams of the District of Columbia; Evan S. Dobelle, president, Trinity College; Calvin W. Lowe, president, Bowie State University; and William B. DeLauder, president, Delaware State University.

Radio Remarks on Signing the Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000

June 20, 2000

Today I'm signing into law the Agriculture Risk Protection Act, which makes the Federal crop insurance system more inclusive and affordable. The bill also includes \$7.2 billion in emergency farm assistance to help farmers suffering from plummeting crop prices.

While this bill is important, it still fails to fix what is plainly an unsuccessful farm policy. We should be targeting assistance where it's truly needed instead of making payments to farmers who haven't planted a crop and don't need our help. That's why we need to revise, revamp, and improve the 1996 freedom to farm

bill—to build a safety net that adequately protects our Nation's farmers.

NOTE: The President's remarks were recorded at approximately 11:30 a.m. on June 19 in Room 200 at the Joseph C. Lanzetta School (Public School 96) in New York City for later broadcast. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 20. These remarks were also made available on the White House Press Office Actuality Line. H.R. 2559, approved June 20, was assigned Public Law No. 106–224.

Statement on Signing the Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000

June 20, 2000

Today I have signed into law H.R. 2559, the "Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000," which authorizes permanent reforms to the crop insurance program, provides temporary farm income assistance in FY 2000, and provides funding and authorities for other agricultural and nutrition programs for FY 2001.

I support the reform of the crop insurance program that is included in this bill, because it is generally consistent with principles my Administration has advocated over the last 2 years. I have heard many farmers say that the crop insurance program was simply not a good value for them, providing too little coverage for too much money. My FY 2001 budget proposal and this bill directly address that problem by making

higher insurance coverage more affordable, which should also mitigate the need for ad hoc crop loss disaster assistance such as we have seen for the last 3 years. The reforms in this bill will put risk management where it belongs: in the hands of producers. The bill will also expand coverage to more crops and provide incentives for new insurance product development, which will extend risk management to more producers and foster innovation in the risk management marketplace.

The bill includes a number of other provisions that I also support. The bill expands research authorities and funding for biomass and bioproducts, including next-generation ethanol, which will benefit producers by increasing the demand