

remarks there prevented him from completing his planned participation in the awards ceremony.

Statement on the Report of the Interagency Task Force on the United States Coast Guard Roles and Missions

February 25, 2000

I am pleased to receive the report of the Interagency Task Force on the U.S. Coast Guard Roles and Missions. I extend my sincere appreciation to Chairman Mortimer Downey and the 15 other members who provided advice as to the appropriate future roles and missions for our Coast Guard. I also would like to commend the leadership of Secretary Rodney Slater and the Department of Transportation for their vision and vigilance in maintaining safety—my administration's highest transportation priority.

As we have witnessed time and again, and most recently with the tragic loss of Alaska Air Flight 261, the Coast Guard provides America with a maritime military and a multimission presence that is flexible and adaptable.

The Coast Guard will continue to safeguard America's maritime safety and security. I look forward to working with the Congress to ensure that the world's best Coast Guard remains as its motto proclaims: *Semper Paratus*—Always Ready.

Statement on Assistance to Communities Struck by Hurricane Floyd

February 25, 2000

When Hurricane Floyd hit communities on the eastern seaboard nearly 6 months ago, it left many thousands homeless, destroyed countless businesses, and caused severe loss of crops. While this storm took a terrible toll, hard-hit communities have shown determination and courage as they have made great efforts to rebuild. It is our job to help them, and today I am asking Congress to provide an additional \$347 million to do so.

These funds include essential assistance to farmers who have suffered crop loss, to help to construct low income rural housing, and to provide some 2,000 housing vouchers for families displaced from their homes. I am also asking

Congress to fund a feasibility study for the historic Princeville, North Carolina, to best determine options to protect this culturally significant town from future flooding.

We have already made \$2.6 billion available in grants and loans to help the victims of Hurricane Floyd. I urge Congress to approve my request today for additional funding in order to support the efforts of hard-pressed communities as they continue to rebuild and to bring to nearly \$3 billion total funds available to them.

NOTE: A portion of the President's statement was also made available on the White House Press Office Actuality Line.

Statement on Emergency Assistance to Fishing Communities

February 25, 2000

Due to the decline in important fishing stocks on the west and east coasts, many fishing communities are suffering unexpected losses that se-

riously threaten their livelihoods. In Long Island Sound, the lobster catch has fallen sharply this year. On the west coast, in Oregon, Washington,

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and California, there has been a serious decline in groundfish stocks.

The economic threat to fishing communities is severe. I am asking Congress to provide emergency assistance of \$56 million to provide aid to those whose economic welfare is threatened by this crisis and to fund research to identify the causes and potential solutions to these prob-

lems to restore the long-term health of our vital fishing industry. I urge Congress to act quickly to provide relief to communities that are clearly in need.

NOTE: A portion of the President's statement was also made available on the White House Press Office Actuality Line.

Statement on Signing the Poison Control Center Enhancement and Awareness Act

February 25, 2000

Today I am pleased to sign a bipartisan bill that will help save lives by giving families immediate access to vital information about poison control. Each year, more than 2 million poisonings are reported to the Nation's poison control centers, and more than half of the victims are young children. The Poison Control Center Enhancement and Awareness Act authorizes \$140 million over the next 5 years to fund the Nation's poison control centers, carry out a national media campaign, and establish a national toll-free telephone poison control hot-

line to give callers immediate information if there is an accident in the home. This new funding will help provide vital resources and information to inform the public about poison control and assist parents in protecting the health and safety of their children.

NOTE: S. 632, approved February 25, was assigned Public Law No. 106-174. A portion of the President's statement was also made available on the White House Press Office Actuality Line.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Cuba

February 25, 2000

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication, stating that the emergency declared with respect to the Government of Cuba's destruction of two un-

armed U.S.-registered civilian aircraft in international airspace north of Cuba on February 24, 1996, is to continue in effect beyond March 1, 2000.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Albert Gore, Jr., President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.