

May 10 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 2000

Statement on Congressional Action on Appropriations Legislation *May 10, 2000*

Today both the House and Senate subcommittees passed appropriation bills for Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education that fail to invest in the Nation's future and turn back our progress in helping opportunity and prosperity reach all corners of America. During this period of economic prosperity and budget surplus, we should seize the opportunity to improve our Nation's schools, advance the health and well-being of our citizens, and train and protect our workers. Regrettably, misguided priorities and insufficient resources in the bills adopted today have led the Congress in a different direction. Unfortunately, these actions today invest too little in our schools and demand too little from them.

The House bill shortchanges essential initiatives and fails to support our Nation's children and schools. It fails to provide sufficient funding to strengthen accountability and help turn around low-performing schools, reduce class size, increase after-school opportunities, renovate aging and neglected schools, close the digital divide, improve teacher quality, and provide mentoring to help children go to and succeed in college. It hurts unemployed and working Americans by cutting training and other programs that help them find jobs and work in safe environments. The bill fails to make key investments in childcare, preschool, and other important services for poor working families.

The House bill fails to support key health programs by reducing funding for mental health services, family planning services, and substance abuse programs and eliminates funding to improve access to health care for the uninsured. The bill also cut funding needed to ensure nursing home quality and strengthen health benefits administration.

The Senate bill provides more acceptable funding levels for many key programs but does so by bankrupting the Social Services Block Grant, shifting money from children's health insurance, and making other cuts. The bill does not guarantee funding for critical education priorities such as school renovation and reducing class size and underfunds programs to help unemployed workers and youth get job training. The Senate bill also fails to support critical health programs, including funding for HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, mental health and substance abuse services, and nursing home quality oversight.

If a bill that fails to address these concerns were to come to me in its current form, I would have to veto it. I look forward to working with Congress to ensure that this bill strengthens our Nation's schools and supports and enhances other important national priorities while continuing to honor our commitment to fiscal integrity.

Letter to Senator Dianne Feinstein on Signing an Executive Order on Access to HIV/AIDS Pharmaceuticals and Medical Technologies *May 10, 2000*

Dear Senator Feinstein:

I am pleased to inform you that today I will sign an Executive Order that is intended to help make HIV/AIDS-related drugs and medical technologies more accessible and affordable in beneficiary sub-Saharan African countries. The Executive Order, which is based in large part on your work in connection with the proposed Trade and Development Act of 2000, formalizes U.S. government policy in this area. It also di-

rects other steps to be taken to address the spread of HIV and AIDS in Africa, one of the worst health crises the world faces.

As you know, the worldwide HIV/AIDS epidemic has taken a terrible toll in terms of human suffering. Nowhere has the suffering been as great as in Africa, where over 5,500 people per day are dying from AIDS. Approximately 34 million people in sub-Saharan Africa

have been infected and, of those infected, approximately 11.5 million have died. These deaths represent more than 80 percent of the total HIV/AIDS-related deaths worldwide.

To help those countries most affected by HIV/AIDS fight this terrible disease, the Executive Order directs the U.S. Government to refrain from seeking, through negotiation or otherwise, the revocation or revision of any law or policy imposed by a beneficiary sub-Saharan government that promotes access to HIV/AIDS pharmaceuticals and medical technologies. This order will give sub-Saharan governments the flexibility to bring life saving drugs and medical technologies to affected populations. At the same time, the order ensures that fundamental intellectual property rights of U.S. businesses and inventors are protected by requiring sub-Saharan governments to provide adequate and effective intellectual property protection consistent with World Trade Organization rules. In this way, the order strikes a proper balance between the need to enable sub-Saharan governments to increase access to HIV/AIDS pharmaceuticals and medical technologies and the need to ensure that intellectual property is protected.

I know that you preferred that this policy be included in the Conference Report on the Trade and Development Act of 2000, as did I. However, through this Executive Order, the policy this Administration has pursued with your support will be implemented by the U.S. Government. The Executive Order will encourage beneficiary sub-Saharan African countries to build a better infrastructure to fight diseases like HIV/AIDS as they build better lives for their people. At the same time, the Trade and Development Act of 2000 will strengthen African economies, enhance African democracy, and expand U.S.-African trade. Together, these steps will enable the United States to forge closer ties with our African allies, broaden export opportunities for our workers and businesses, and promote our values around the world.

Thank you for your leadership on this critically important issue.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter. The Executive order is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Interview With Diane Rehm of WAMU National Public Radio May 10, 2000

Ms. Rehm. Mr. President, thank you for joining us.

The President. I'm glad to do it.

Permanent Normal Trade Relations With China/ 2000 Election

Ms. Rehm. It looks as though the normalized trade relations with China isn't likely to go through. Would you agree with that?

The President. I'm not sure yet.

Ms. Rehm. You're still not sure?

The President. We don't have the votes yet. I think we'll get the votes, because I think it's the right thing for the country. But I think it will be—I won't know for a few days yet.

Ms. Rehm. If you do, how might that hurt or help Mr. Gore in his bid for the Presidency?

The President. Well, I think that, on balance, it will help him because he's been a very strong

supporter of this agreement and, generally, of our trade policy. And even though some of the strongest elements of the Democratic Party and some of our best friends are on the other side of this fight, it shows that he's willing to take an independent stand to do what he believes is right. And I think that's very, very important.

I think that's something people will look to. And they might compare that, for example, with Governor Bush's going to Bob Jones University and defending his outreach to Jerry Falwell and the members of the far right in his party, and conclude that—our people, the people that we're disagreeing with are good folks, and we're proud to have them as a part of our party; we want them to. But we need a President who will make an independent judgment from time to time.