

July 12 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 2000

of the Act, to the extent that such information is available. These subsections address:

- Governmental Institutions Envisioned in the 1987 Haitian Constitution;
- Privatization of Haiti's Major Public Entities;
- Efforts to Re-sign the Lapsed Bilateral Repatriation Agreement, and Cooperation in Halting Illegal Migration;
- Investigations and Prosecution of Extrajudicial and Political Killings, and Cooperation with the United States in Such Investigation;
- Removal and Maintenance of Separation of Human Rights Violators from Haitian Public Security Entities or Units;
- Ratification of the 1997 Maritime Counter-Narcotics Agreement;
- Development of Haiti's Domestic Capacity to Conduct Free, Fair, Democratic, and Administratively Sound Elections; and
- Demonstrated Commitment of Haiti's Minister of Justice to the Professionalism of the Judiciary, and Progress Toward Judicial Branch Independence.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Jesse Helms, chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Ted Stevens, chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations, Benjamin A. Gilman, chairman, House Committee on International Relations, and C.W. Bill Young, chairman, House Committee on Appropriations. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 12.

Statement on the Accident in the Philippines

July 12, 2000

I was deeply saddened to learn of the lives lost and families devastated by the terrible incident that took place on the outskirts of Manila. On behalf of the American people, I extend my deepest sympathies to all those who have suffered losses and injuries. Our thoughts and prayers also go out to those who are still waiting

to hear word about friends and family members still missing.

NOTE: On July 11, debris from the collapse of the Payatas garbage dump killed more than 100 area residents.

Statement on Proposed Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit Legislation

July 12, 2000

Thirty-five years ago this month President Johnson enacted the Medicare program into law. The program has proven to be a remarkable success, providing basic health care services to tens of millions of older Americans and people with disabilities. Since its enactment, there has been a decrease of over 60 percent in elderly poverty and Americans over 65 now have the highest life expectancy of seniors anywhere in the world.

I am particularly proud of my administration's stewardship of the Medicare program. When I came into office, Medicare was projected to be-

come insolvent in 1999. Our success in keeping overall and health care inflation low, combating fraud, waste, and abuse, and making the Medicare program more competitive and efficient has resulted in the strongest Medicare Trust Fund solvency in a quarter century. We have extended the life of the Trust Fund to 2025 and Medicare premiums are nearly 20 percent lower today than projected in 1993. We have also modernized the program to cover preventive services and coverage for clinical trials.

We need to build on our successful management of the Medicare program and prepare it

for the inevitable health and demographic challenges it faces in the 21st century. No one would create a Medicare program today without a prescription drug benefit. With the announcement of the completion of the human genome and the revolutionary impact it will have on the diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of most, if not all, human disease, the importance of pharmaceuticals as a clinical tool will only increase.

That is why I have proposed a comprehensive plan that would take the Medicare Trust Fund off budget, extend the life of the Trust Fund to at least 2030, make the program more efficient, provide for increased health care provider payments, and modernize it to include a long overdue Medicare prescription drug benefit option. This benefit would be available and afford-

able to all beneficiaries, no matter where they live or how sick they are.

I am pleased that there is growing momentum on Capitol Hill to provide a real Medicare prescription drug benefit, not a flawed insurance model. Because we have managed the program so efficiently, due to the leadership of the longest serving Secretary of Health and Human Services in history, Donna Shalala, we can use our success in reducing the cost of the program and reinvest the savings to help finance a meaningful Medicare prescription drug benefit. I urge the Congress to work together in a bipartisan fashion to meet the challenges this program faces and to ensure that it continues to provide the critically important insurance coverage for the 39 million seniors and people with disabilities the program serves.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives on Hate Crimes Prevention Legislation

July 12, 2000

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I write to urge you to bring the Hate Crimes Prevention Act (HCPA) to the floor for a vote before the August recess. Last month, the Senate, in a strong bipartisan showing, voted overwhelmingly to pass this legislation that would strengthen federal hate crimes law. As the Senate vote demonstrates, passing hate crimes legislation is not a partisan issue. It is a national concern requiring a national response. Now it is time for the House to do its part to ensure that strong hate crimes legislation becomes law this year.

Since this legislation was introduced in November 1997, our country has witnessed countless acts of bigotry and hatred. In June 1998, James Byrd, Jr., an African-American man, was brutally dragged to his death. In October of that year, Matthew Shepard, a gay college student, died after being beaten and tied to a fence. In July 1999, Benjamin Smith went on a racially motivated shooting spree in Illinois and Indiana. At the end of this hate-fueled rampage, Ricky Byrdson, an African-American who was former basketball coach at Northwestern University, and Won-Joon Yoon, a Korean graduate student at Indiana University, were killed,

and eight others were wounded. In August 1999, Joseph Ilete, a native of the Philippines and U.S. postal worker, died at the hands of a gunman in Los Angeles. This same gunman also injured five persons, including three children, at a Jewish community center. Finally, this year there were two killing rampages in Pennsylvania. In March, an African-American man shot and killed three white men. In April, another man murdered an African-American man, a Jewish woman, two Asian-American men, and an Indian man. We must take action now to stop these acts of violence.

This legislation is absolutely necessary because hate crimes are fundamentally different from other crimes. Victims are targeted simply because of who they are—whether it is race, color, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or gender. These acts of violence affect entire communities, not just the individual victims. This legislation would provide more tools to State and local law enforcement to investigate and prosecute hate crimes. It would also expand protection to include hate crimes based on sexual orientation, gender, or disability.

I ask the House of Representatives to follow the bipartisan example of the Senate by passing