

July 25 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 2000

a lot of ideas floated around. None of it amounted to large numbers of people. But they were potentially significant in terms of the psychology of the situation. But there was no decision made about that.

On the money, basically, you know, I think that the United States should be prepared to make a significant contribution to resolving the refugee problem. You've got refugees that have to be resettled. You've got some compensation which has to be given. And there are lots of issues in that refugee pot that cost money. And then there's the whole question of working out the economic future of the Palestinians, and the whole question of working out what the security relationships will be and the security needs will be for Israel and in this new partnership that they will have—the Palestinians. How is that going to work, and what should we do?

I also, when I went to the G-8, I gave a briefing to the G-8, and I asked the people who were there to help pay, too. I said, you know, this is going to have to be a worldwide

financial responsibility, but because of the United States' historic involvement, which goes back many decades in the Middle East—we were the first country under President Truman to recognize Israel; we've had Republicans and Democrats alike up to their ears in the Middle East peace process for a long time—and because we have such a lot of strategic interest over there, if there could be an agreement, I think we ought to lead the way in financial contributions, but the others who are able to do so should play their part, as well.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:07 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House upon returning from Camp David, MD. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; National Security Adviser Samuel R. (Sandy) Berger; and Ambassador Dennis B. Ross, Special Middle East Coordinator.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on Community Economic Renewal Legislation

July 25, 2000

I commend the House of Representatives for passing today the bipartisan new markets, empowerment zone, and community renewal legislation. At a time of unprecedented prosperity, too many Americans in our cities and rural areas still do not have access to investment capital and economic opportunity. This legislation will

spur more private sector investment in these new markets so that all Americans can fully participate in our thriving economy. I look forward to working with Members of both parties in the House and the Senate this year to enact this historic and innovative legislation.

Statement on Signing the Valles Caldera Preservation Act

July 25, 2000

I am very pleased today to sign bipartisan legislation authorizing protection of New Mexico's Baca Ranch as the new Valles Caldera National Preserve.

From time to time, we are presented with an opportunity to save a truly magnificent piece of America's rich natural endowment. Today we seize one such opportunity. At the heart of the

scenic Jemez Mountains west of Santa Fe, the Baca Ranch contains the remarkable Valles Caldera—the collapsed crater of an ancient volcano—and sustains one of our Nation's largest wild elk herds. Thanks to the careful stewardship of the Dunigan family, this extraordinary landscape appears today much as it did when the first settlers arrived. And thanks to the

bipartisan efforts of the New Mexico delegation, we will ensure that it remains healthy and whole for generations to come.

I commend the Dunigans, for offering us the chance to open this treasure to the American people; Senators Bingaman and Domenici, and Representatives Udall and Wilson, for helping to lead this historic conservation effort; and the leaders of the Santa Clara Pueblo, for sharing with us their reverence for this land.

Today's success should inspire us to work even harder to conserve America's natural heritage. The acquisition of Baca Ranch was made possible with increased conservation funding I secured last year through my lands legacy initiative. I have proposed another significant increase in lands legacy funding for the coming fiscal year. Unfortunately, appropriations bills passed by both the House and the Senate would provide only a third of my request, cutting lands legacy funding considerably below this year's level. In addition, riders attached to several appropriations measures aim to cripple wildlife

protections, surrender public lands to private interests, and hamper commonsense efforts to combat global warming. I urge Congress to drop these anti-environmental riders and to fully fund my lands legacy initiative.

Ultimately, our goal must be to establish permanent conservation funding so that each new generation will have the resources to protect other critical lands across America. I am very pleased that the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee today approved a version of bipartisan legislation passed overwhelmingly by the House that moves us closer to that goal. I am fully committed to working with Congress to create a lasting endowment to support Federal, State, and local conservation efforts. Let us work together, in the spirit of today's historic conservation achievement, to strengthen, not weaken, environmental protections.

NOTE: S. 1892, approved July 25, was assigned Public Law No. 106-248.

Statement on Signing the Valles Caldera Preservation Act *July 25, 2000*

I am very pleased to sign into law S. 1892, the "Valles Caldera Preservation Act." This legislation is the culmination of a gratifying cooperative effort with the Congress, led by Senator Bingaman, Senator Domenici, Representative Udall, and Representative Heather Wilson of New Mexico. Its enactment will permit us to protect over 95,000 acres of unique, irreplaceable land in northern New Mexico—one of my top conservation priorities—for future generations to enjoy.

Specifically, this Act authorizes the acquisition and preservation of nearly 95,000 acres in the Valles Caldera, New Mexico. It also permits the sale of about 5,000 acres, containing the headwaters of the Santa Clara Creek, to the Santa Clara Pueblo, to allow the Pueblo to protect its water quality and resource values. A separate title of the bill authorizes the proceeds from the sale or exchange of certain Federal lands identified by the Bureau of Land Management as surplus to be used to purchase and protect

other lands with exceptional natural resource values.

The Valles Caldera is at the heart of the Jemez Mountains and is the site of perhaps the greatest of New Mexico's volcanic features. It also is home to a wide range of scenic, wildlife, cultural, and ecological resources, and provides incomparable scenic beauty and recreational potential. The importance of the preservation of the Valles Caldera lies in the unique combination of all of these features in a relatively pristine setting that is nevertheless close by, and accessible to, the people of New Mexico. It has remained intact as a single unit in private ownership since the original land grant in 1860. Known as Baca Ranch, it has been well managed for several decades and is an example of a sustainable working ranch.

The caldera is an enormous depression more than a half-mile deep and 15 miles wide that was created by a volcanic eruption over a million years ago. Secondary volcanic domes arise from the caldera floor to elevations as high as 11,000