

Statement on the Workforce Investment Act *August 11, 2000*

Two years ago this week I signed the bipartisan Workforce Investment Act (WIA), launching an historic initiative that Vice President Gore and I first proposed in 1992 as a way to streamline and bring greater accountability to our Nation's job training system. Today, with these reforms underway in all 50 States, we reach another key milestone by adopting the final rule implementing the major provisions of this landmark act. I congratulate our Federal partners, Congress, the States, local communities, businesses, and American workers on how far we have come.

Largely as a result of WIA's reforms, States now have established 1,200 One-Stop Career Centers to provide job seekers and employers in each community with a single, customer-focused point of entry to a wide range of employment services. Developed with extensive input from the many people with a stake in our job training system, the final rule provides additional direction to State and local partners while pre-

serving their planning and operating flexibility. The rule also gives State and local partners guidance on creating individual training accounts that allow workers to choose the training that meets their needs.

Unfortunately, currently proposed congressional funding for workforce development programs, including the administration's Fathers Work/Families Win initiative, falls far short of the amount needed both by American businesses to meet the growing demand for skilled workers and by working families to gain access to lifelong learning. WIA provides broad access to employment opportunities, often for people with disabilities or others who have been excluded, and it should be properly funded. I call on Congress to fully fund the bipartisan program it passed 2 years ago so that all Americans can participate in today's era of economic opportunity. With WIA up and running across the country, now is the time to invest in the system we built together.

Statement on Improving Access to Services for Persons With Limited English Proficiency *August 11, 2000*

Today I am issuing an Executive order to help people with limited English proficiency (LEP) access Federal services. Many people who are eligible for Federal services cannot effectively use those services because they are not proficient in English. The Executive order directs Federal agencies to improve the language-accessibility of their programs by December 11, 2000. This initiative complements our commitment to promoting programs to help individuals learn English.

I am concerned that language barriers are preventing the Federal Government and recipients of Federal financial assistance from effectively serving a large number of people in this country who are eligible to participate in their programs. Failure to systematically confront language barriers can lead to unequal access to Federal benefits based on national origin and

can harm the mission of Federal agencies. Breaking down these barriers will allow individuals with limited English proficiency to more fully participate in American society.

This Executive order directs Federal agencies to break down language barriers by implementing consistent standards of language assistance across agencies and among all recipients of Federal financial assistance. Under this flexible standard, agencies and recipients must take reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to their programs and activities, taking into account a variety of considerations. Among the factors to be considered are the number or proportion of LEP persons in the eligible service population, the frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with the program, the nature and importance of the service provided by the program, and the available resources.