

Statement on Signing the Energy Act of 2000 *November 9, 2000*

Today I have signed into law H.R. 2884, the “Energy Act of 2000.” This Act extends key authorities that aid management of energy emergencies, specifies the conditions under which the Northeast Home Heating Oil Reserve can be used, and updates the operating rules for the Weatherization Assistance Program.

The Act reauthorizes the operation of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, a critical line of defense against the threat of energy shortages that can cripple our economy. Extension of the direct authority for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve guarantees that the full range of means will be available to any Administration that may need to take actions necessary to secure our Nation’s energy supplies.

The Act also restores the limited antitrust protection for U.S. oil companies assisting the Department of Energy and the International Energy Agency in planning for and responding to an oil emergency. With this protection, these companies can continue their vital participation in preparing and implementing a coordinated and effective response.

As I also requested, the Act provides authority to establish and use a Northeast Home Heating Oil Reserve with a capacity of up to 2 million barrels. This Reserve will serve New England and the upper Mid-Atlantic States where consumers rely to a great extent on heating oil to heat their homes. Creation of the Northeast Home Heating Oil Reserve was a priority of my Administration, and I am pleased the Congress provided bi-partisan support for its inclusion in this Act.

The Act also amends the Department of Energy’s Weatherization Assistance Program, a program that reduces heating and cooling costs for

low-income Americans by improving the energy efficiency of their homes. These changes will make it easier for States to provide timely energy weatherization services and include a repeal of a financially burdensome cost-sharing requirement for the States.

Unfortunately, this Act also contains an objectionable provision that transfers licensing authority for small hydroelectric projects in Alaska from Federal jurisdiction to the State of Alaska. I remain strongly opposed to this provision because it could erode the Federal Power Act’s uniform system for licensing hydroelectric projects in the United States and impair the Federal Government’s ability to protect Federally managed resources.

The Act also amends the President’s existing authority, under section 161(h) of the Energy Policy and Conservation Act, to draw down the Strategic Petroleum Reserve by making exercise of the authority dependent upon a finding by the Secretary of Defense that the drawdown would not impair national security. This amendment is objectionable because, in effect, it conditions the exercise of judgmental authority by the President upon the agreement of one of his subordinates.

Despite these objectionable features, I believe that the Act demonstrates this Nation’s and my own commitment to providing for a more secure energy future, and I am pleased to sign it today.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
November 9, 2000.

NOTE: H.R. 2884, approved November 9, was assigned Public Law No. 106–469.

Statement on Signing the Veterans Claims Assistance Act of 2000 *November 9, 2000*

Today I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 4864, the “Veterans Claims Assistance Act of 2000.” The Act reaffirms and clarifies the duty of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to assist

claimants in developing evidence pertinent to their claims for VA benefits. It eliminates the previous requirement that a claim be well-grounded before VA’s duty to assist arises. The

Act requires the Secretary to make reasonable efforts to assist a claimant in obtaining evidence to substantiate his or her claim unless it is clear that no reasonable possibility exists that the Secretary's assistance would aid in substantiating the claim. As under current law, the Secretary must consider the entire record of evidence, and when there is an approximate balance of positive and negative evidence regarding an issue material to the determination of a matter, the Secretary must give the benefit of the doubt to the claimant.

Veterans seeking benefits from this Government are deserving of all reasonable assistance that VA has to offer. The benefits administered by the Secretary are a means by which the Nation expresses its profound gratitude for the many sacrifices our veterans have made to pro-

tect and defend our freedom. Veterans Day, a day set aside to honor all veterans, is an especially appropriate time for us to ensure that we will continue to pay our debts to these men and women. This Act demonstrates to veterans and to all those currently serving in our military and to those who may serve in the future, that America honors its commitments to those who have served. I am very pleased to approve this new law.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
November 9, 2000.

NOTE: H.R. 4864, approved November 9, was assigned Public Law No. 106-475.

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

November 9, 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, stating that the Iran emergency declared by Executive Order 12170 on November 14, 1979, is to continue in effect beyond November 14, 2000, to the *Federal Register* for publication.

Because our relations with Iran have not yet returned to normal, and the process of imple-

menting the January 19, 1981, agreements with Iran is still underway, the national emergency declared on November 14, 1979, and the measures adopted pursuant thereto to deal with that emergency, must continue in effect beyond November 14, 2000. Therefore, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to Iran for 1 year.

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.