

June 11 / Administration of George W. Bush, 2002

And it is a huge honor to be the President of the greatest nation on the face of the Earth.

Thank you for coming. May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:30 p.m. in the Imperial Ballroom at the Marriott Kansas City Downtown. In his remarks, he referred to Ann Wagner, chairman, Missouri Republican Party, and cochairman, Republican National Committee; and Gov. Bill Graves of Kansas.

Remarks on Signing the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002

June 12, 2002

The President. Good afternoon, and thank you all for coming.

On September the 11th, the world learned how evil men can use airplanes as weapons of terror. Shortly thereafter, we learned how evil people can use microscopic spores as weapons of terror. Bioterrorism is a real threat to our country. It's a threat to every nation that loves freedom. Terrorist groups seek biological weapons. We know some rogue states already have them.

It's important that we confront these real threats to our country and prepare for future emergencies. Protecting our citizens against bioterrorism is an urgent duty of American—American governments. We must develop the learning, the technology, and the health care delivery systems that will allow us to respond to attacks with state-of-the-art medical care throughout our entire country.

I want to thank the Members of the United States Congress who are here today, members of both parties who have worked together on this bill. I appreciate Governor Tom Ridge's hard work, Tommy Thompson and your staff's hard work on this bill. I want to thank Tony Principi and Christie Todd Whitman from the Veterans Department as well as the EPA for being here and working on this bill.

I appreciate very much Senator Ted Kennedy, the Chairman of the Senate

Health and Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, for working with Bill Frist. I want to thank the other cosponsors from the committee who are here. I appreciate Members of the House Billy Tauzin and John Dingell for combining their talents and experience and energy to get the bill done. I want to thank Mike Bilirakis, Judd Gregg, who isn't here, and all the other Members of the Congress, to show the American people that when people of both parties work together they can do good work on behalf of our country.

I want to thank Elias Zerhouni, who is the Director of the National Institution of Health, who is here with us today—I appreciate you being here, Elias; Dr. Les Crawford, who is the Acting Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration; as well as Dr. David Fleming, who is the Acting Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. I want to thank you all for being here as well.

Biological weapons are potentially the most dangerous weapons in the world. Last fall's anthrax attacks were an incredible tragedy to a lot of people in America, and it sent a warning that we needed and have heeded. We must be better prepared to prevent, identify, and respond. And this bill I'm signing today will help a lot in this essential effort.

First, the bill will enhance our ability to prevent and detect bioterrorist attacks.

We must and we will improve inspections of food entering our ports and give officials better tools to contain attacks on our food supply. We'll have new authority to track biological materials anywhere in the United States.

Second, the bill will strengthen the communications networks that link our health care providers with public health authorities. Biological attacks can be carried out quietly. Our health care professionals are likely to be the first to recognize that there has been an attack. The speed with which they detect and respond to a threat to public health could be the difference between containment and catastrophe.

Thirdly, the bill will strengthen the ability of our health care system to expedite treatments across our country. It will provide our State and local health authorities with resources and tools needed to do their job. And this bill will further develop our stockpiles of smallpox vaccines.

Finally, the bill will help us develop better medicines for the future. It reauthorizes and improves the Prescription Drug User Fee Act.* This will make new lifesaving drugs and therapies available more quickly and will help ensure the safety and effectiveness of the treatments. We'll also be

able to use the combined research expertise of the Government and the private sector to improve our vaccines, our medicines, and our diagnostic tests.

Strengthening our protections against bioterror is part of a larger effort to deal with the new threats of the 21st century. If we're going to succeed, we need to reorganize our Government. And that's why I look forward to working with Congress to create the Department of Homeland Security, to make sure we align authority and responsibility, to make sure that we have an effective response to the enemy that still wants to hit America.

This bill today I sign is a part of the process of doing our duty to protect innocent Americans from an enemy that hates America. I'm proud to sign the bill, and I'm proud to welcome the bill's sponsors here to the Rose Garden.

Thank you all very much.

[At this point, the President signed the bill.]

The President. Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:50 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. H.R. 3448, approved June 12, was assigned Public Law No. 107-188.

Remarks at a Meeting of the President's Homeland Security Advisory Council

June 12, 2002

Well, thank you all very much for taking on this assignment. Joe, thank you for your being Chairman. And Bill Webster, we've got a lot of talented folks around this table. And I want to thank you for agreeing to help our Nation.

We're under attack; that's the way it is. The more we love freedom, the more we espouse values that are decent and honor-

able, the more we welcome religion in our society, open political discourse, the more this enemy is going to try to hit us. And we've got two courses of action. One is to run them down, wherever they try to hide, and bring them to justice. That's precisely what we're going to do.

These people are the kind of people that—they try to find a soft spot around

* White House correction.