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## Statement on the Executive Order on Environmental Justice

*February 11, 1994*

All Americans have a right to be protected from pollution—not just those who can afford to live in the cleanest, safest communities. Today, we direct Federal agencies to make environmental justice a part of all that they do.

NOTE: This statement was part of a White House press release announcing the signing of Executive Order 12898. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

## Remarks on Signing California Earthquake Relief Legislation and an Exchange With Reporters

*February 12, 1994*

***The President.*** Good morning. I'm glad to be here with the Speaker and members of the California delegation and one member of the Missouri delegation, Secretary Brown and Senator Hatfield and others, to sign this bill today.

This was legislation requested by our administration to provide the most comprehensive national response ever to a region experiencing a natural disaster, the earthquake which inflicted such damage in the Los Angeles area on January 17th. Many people had their lives shaken and transformed by the damage caused by the Northridge quake. They faced the human tragedy of 61 deaths, nearly 10,000 injuries requiring hospitalization, and many, many thousands of people who lost their homes, their jobs, or otherwise had their lives turned upside down.

We saw the fierce power of the shifting earth twist and break highways, uproot homes, ignite fires, and literally reshape parts of the Los Angeles landscape. More than 150 public schools were damaged. Five hospitals suffered destruction requiring as much as $700 million in repair. Much of the damage will take months if not years. It is only the latest hardship that the people of that area have experienced.

The first line of defense was the spirit the people of Los Angeles brought to this tragedy. Before the tremors had a chance to subside, we saw all the moving stories of neighbors helping neighbors; police, fire, rescue, and medical people serving without rest; and dedicated public officials who put people above politics. Although the central highway throughout the region sustained enormous damage, imaginative means were immediately employed to permit a return to some semblance of normal life. Crime was down 21.5 percent in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake. Something good happened amidst all that tragedy as people pulled together and they stayed together.

The second line of defense against the quake was coordinated by FEMA under the leadership of James Lee Witt. FEMA has already accepted over 300,000 applications for disaster assistance. HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros led his Department's efforts to provide emergency housing aid. The SBA is processing nearly a quarter of a million applications from homeowners and businesses for disaster loans. Transportation Secretary Peña and Highway Administrator Slater are doing work to try to speed the highway repairs and to try to help provide alternative means of transportation. In each of these agencies, people are serving the way the taxpayers deserve to be treated, as customers, neighbors, and friends.

Today we put in motion the third line of defense: Federal disaster relief for California. It was the largest package of such aid in history, and as Congressman Volkmer's presence here reminds us, it also contains some aid for the people who suffered from the 500-year flood in the Middle West.

The bill provides $8.6 billion in housing assistance and home repairs, repairs to public