

illegal immigration enforcement legislation without this misguided measure.

Sincerely,

Bill Clinton

NOTE: This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 3.

The President's Radio Address

August 3, 1996

Good morning. Today I'm pleased to announce a major step for protecting the health and safety of all Americans, especially our children. In a few moments I'll sign into law legislation that will revolutionize the way we protect our food from harmful pesticides. This is a positive and hopeful time, an age of enormous possibility for our people, a chance for us to build a country and a world that is stronger and safer and more full of opportunity than any that has existed before.

The way we will master this moment of change is the way we always have, by meeting our challenges and holding fast to our enduring values. Central among these is the belief that American families are owed some basic security. They should know that the food they eat and the water they drink will not make them sick.

From the day I took office I've worked hard to meet this fundamental promise. We strengthened and expanded the community right to know law, which requires industries to tell our citizens exactly what substances are being released into the world around us. Last year we put in place strong new protections to ensure that the seafood we eat is safe, and last month I announced steps to revamp our meat and poultry inspection system for the first time in 90 years.

Today we add the cornerstone to the solid foundation we've built for America's families, the Food Quality Protection Act. Three years ago I proposed reforms to overhaul and strengthen the way we regulate pesticides. This landmark legislation meets the goals I set forth then. I like to think of it as the "peace of mind" act, because it will give parents the peace of mind that comes from knowing that the fruits, vegetables, and grains they set down in front of their children are safe.

This legislation is long overdue. The old safeguards that protected our foods from pesticides were written with the best intentions, but they're simply no longer up to the job. Bad pesticides have stayed on the market too long; good alternatives have been kept out. There are strong protections against cancer but not against other health dangers. There is no uniform standard for what is safe.

Those weaknesses in the present law put us all at risk, but especially our children. According to the National Academy of Sciences, infants and young people are particularly vulnerable to pesticides; chemicals can go a long way in a small body. The Food Quality Protection Act puts the safety of our children first. First, it sets clear, consistent standards for all pesticide use on all foods for all health risks. It also sets that standard high. If a pesticide poses a danger to our children, then it won't be in our food, period.

Second, the act will reform the regulatory process for pesticides. New, safer substitutes will be approved faster. The sooner they get on the market, the sooner farmers will be able to use them to replace older pesticides that may pose greater health risks. All pesticides will be reviewed regularly using the best science available.

Third, this legislation will see to it that consumers get the facts they need. Supermarkets will be required to provide health information to shoppers about the pesticides used on the food they're buying. A family should be able to gather for a summer dinner knowing that the fruits and vegetables before them will provide nothing more than nourishment and joy. Americans have enough on their minds without having to worry about whether or not the food they eat will put them in harm's way. With this legislation, Americans will continue to have the security of knowing that the world's most bountiful food supply is also its safest.

Just as important as what this law does is how it came into being. The Food Quality Protection Act comes to my desk with the support of farmers and environmentalists, consumer groups and agriculture groups and the medical industry. After more than a decade of work, these diverse groups have come together to say with this bill, we do not have

to choose between a strong economy and a safe environment. We can have both.

This bill also comes to the White House with the unanimous backing of all Republicans and all Democrats in Congress. What a difference a year makes. Last August, we were fighting off a concerted effort to roll back our most basic safeguards for clean air, clean water, and clean food. Our traditional bipartisan commitment to protecting the public health and our environment was at risk. Today, on this issue, I'm proud to say that we again stand on common ground.

That is how we must meet all the challenges of our time, not by drifting apart but by coming together. In the last week, members of both parties have joined in common cause to do what's best for America, to end welfare as we know it, to raise the minimum wage and aid small businesses, to pass health care reform, and to safeguard our food. Last night, Congress passed strong legislation to help keep our drinking water safe. This is truly a season of progress because we're turning away from extremism and coming together around our basic values of opportunity, responsibility, and community. If we keep it up, we surely will make this an age of possibility for all Americans.

Thank for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks on Signing the Food Quality Protection Act of 1996

August 3, 1996

Thank you very much. Thank you all for being here today. I'm delighted to see you. I know that a lot of you have come from a very long way away, and I know that was an extreme effort. But I think in some ways the most extreme effort was made by the Members of Congress who are here because they finished an exhaustive and very productive week late last night, and I can't believe they're still around in Washington, and I want to thank them for staying: Chairman Bliley; Chairman Roberts; Congressmen Waxman, Bilirakis, Condit, Dooley, and Richardson.

And I'd like to say a special word of thanks not only to Congressman Dingell but to Congressman Fazio, who is not here, who also worked on this bill, and to Senator Heflin and Senator Leahy and Senator Lugar and my friend Senator Pryor, who worked on this bill, who is not here. And I want to thank the Agriculture Department. Deputy Secretary Rominger is here and the FDA Commissioner Kessler. And I'd like to thank the members of the administration, especially Carol Browner and Katie McGinty.

I'd like to thank the Vice President, who told me that he held the first hearings on dealing with this issue 15 years ago in the Congress. This issue has been around a long time, and it's a great, great day. I'd also like to say that the happiest person in the administration today is Leon Panetta, because in his other life he is a walnut farmer. [*Laughter*] But I assure you this is not special interest legislation. [*Laughter*] There's nothing in here with a disproportionate impact on Italian walnut farmers from northern California—[*laughter*—that is, to the best of my knowledge there is nothing.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are here today in celebration, and we should be immensely proud of the Food Quality Protection Act that will revolutionize the way we protect food from harmful pesticides. It proves we don't have to choose between a healthy environment and a healthy economy. It shows when we come together across party lines and do the right thing for the American people we can get real results. This is important, not only for what was done but for how it was done, and I want to thank everyone here who has been a part of it.

From the day I took office I have worked hard to meet what I think is a fundamental promise that we should make to our people. People should know the food they eat and the water they drink will not make them sick. We strengthened and expanded the community right to know law, which requires industries to tell our citizens what substances are being released into the world around us. Last year we put in place strong new protections to ensure that seafood is safe. Last month we announced steps to revamp our meat and poultry inspection system for the first time in 90 years.