

Statement on the Senate Finance Committee Action on Fast-Track Trading Authority Legislation

October 1, 1997

I am pleased that the Senate Finance Committee, with overwhelming bipartisan support, has reported out legislation that renews the partnership between the President and the Congress in reaching trade agreements, a negotiating authority every President has had since 1974. To keep the American economy strong, we must continue to break down unfair foreign trade barriers to our goods and services. This legislation will allow us to tear down those barriers and help American businesses and workers compete and win in the global marketplace. I look forward to working with the congressional leadership to build on the bipartisan spirit we saw in the Senate Finance Committee today and to secure passage of this important legislation this year.

Proclamation 7029—National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, 1997

October 1, 1997

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Every year we dedicate the month of October to focus on breast cancer and to reaffirm our national commitment to eradicate it. But for thousands of American women and their families and friends, breast cancer is a devastating reality that casts a shadow over their lives every day. In this decade alone, nearly half a million women will die of breast cancer, and more than 1.5 million new cases of the disease will be diagnosed.

Our greatest weapon in the crusade against breast cancer is knowledge; knowledge of its causes and knowledge about prevention and treatment. My Administration has established a National Action Plan on Breast Cancer to unite organizations across the country in a collaborative effort to find out more about the disease and how best to respond to it.

The Department of Health and Human Services is taking the lead in this national effort, through education and research at the National Cancer Institute and the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research; through nationwide screening and detection programs at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; through certification of mammography facilities by the Food and Drug Administration; through prevention services and treatment by health benefit programs such as Medicare and Medicaid; and through increased access to clinical treatment trials for cancer patients who are beneficiaries in Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs programs. The Department of Defense has also initiated a breast cancer research program to reduce the incidence of breast cancer, increase survival rates, and improve the quality of life for women diagnosed with the disease.

We can be proud of the progress we have made. One of the most promising recent research achievements is our increased understanding of the role of genetics in the cancer process. We have learned that cancer is a disease of altered genes and altered gene function, and research into the relationship between breast cancer and genes is helping us to better understand the basis of the disease. However, we must ensure that progress in genetic information is used only to advance and to improve the Nation's health—not as a basis for discrimination. That is why this year I have urged the Congress to pass a law that prevents health insurance plans from discriminating against individuals on the basis of genetic information.

High-quality mammography has also proved to be a powerfully effective tool in the effort to detect breast cancer in its earliest, most treatable stage. The National Cancer Institute, the American Cancer Society, and many other professional organizations agree that women in their forties benefit from mammography screening, and earlier this year I was pleased to sign legislation that will help Medicare beneficiaries with cost-sharing for annual screening mammograms. The First Lady has also launched an annual campaign to encourage older women to use the Medicare mammography screening benefits.