

the dishonesty of a spouse or former spouse, and it will take other steps to expand taxpayer rights.

Third, as a taxpayer you will have recourse when you believe you've been treated unfairly. We're greatly strengthening the taxpayer advocates, who already fight effectively for taxpayers in individual cases, by expanding their resources and giving them greater power to award taxpayers immediate relief. And we are creating new, independent, locally based citizen advocacy panels throughout the country. These independent watchdogs will be able to monitor how local IRS offices treat taxpayers, publicize problems, and help taxpayers to get relief. A taxpayer who has been treated unfairly should have somewhere to go, someone to fight on his or her side, someone to make the agency listen. With a stronger taxpayer advocate and these new citizen panels, they will have just that.

Fourth, we will strengthen the governance and oversight of the IRS. The steps I have taken today are building on the reforms already put in place and described by Secretary Rubin. In order to strengthen public accountability, I am seeking legislation to establish a new IRS board of trustees with the majority of members from the private sector. This board will review IRS performance on customer service, strategic plans, performance measures, and citizen advisory panel recommendations to ensure that taxpayers do, in fact, receive the treatment we say they deserve. The board would report independently, and at least annually, to the Secretary, the President, and the Congress. It will provide the private sector input we need. All of this should help to assure that leaders of the executive branch fulfill their responsibility to the American people to effectively oversee and govern the IRS. It is the right way to reform the agency.

In conclusion, let me say that I believe the attention given to this issue and the information made public by Congress has served the public and the public interest well. We have an opportunity to build on the reforms already put in place and to use this moment to extend them further, so that the IRS achieves its purposes and serves the public

in the spirit of the best institutions, both public and private.

I don't suppose anyone will ever enjoy paying their taxes, and the agency that collects taxes will undoubtedly never be the most popular part of our Government. But it's important work, and all the more important that it be done properly. If we act now, we can make sure that the IRS genuinely earns and deserves the trust of the American people, and we are determined to achieve that goal.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:57 a.m. in Room 450 of the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Lawrence H. Summers; National Economic Adviser Gene Sperling; Acting Commissioner of Internal Revenue Michael P. Dolan; and Robert M. Tobias, president, National Treasury Employees Union.

Statement on Signing the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act, 1998

October 10, 1997

I have today signed into law H.R. 2378, the "Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act, 1998," which provides \$12.8 billion in discretionary budget authority for various programs in the Department of the Treasury, the United States Postal Service, the General Services Administration, the Office of Personnel Management, the Executive Office of the President and several smaller agencies.

The Act provides funding for the Department of the Treasury of \$11.4 billion, including \$131 million for violent crime reduction programs. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is funded at \$7.8 billion, including \$325 million for Information Technology Investments. While this funding level is \$175 million below my request, I believe that the funds will strengthen the IRS's ability to provide timely and accurate data for American taxpayers. The bill also includes \$138 million for the Earned Income Tax Credit compliance initiative and \$377 million for Year 2000 conversion requirements for IRS computer systems. Law Enforcement bureaus within

the Department of the Treasury are funded at \$3.1 billion.

The Act provides \$195 million for the Office of National Drug Control Policy's (ONDCP) national media campaign. This money will enable ONDCP to develop a national media campaign targeting drug consumption by youth. The campaign will be a model public-private partnership, exposing 90 percent of all 9 to 17 year-olds to anti-drug messages at least four times a week.

The Act repeals cooperative purchasing authority that would have allowed States and localities to buy products off the General Services Administration's Federal supply schedule contracts. I am disappointed by this repeal, which will deprive us of the opportunity for potential savings achievable by leveraging the combined purchasing power of the Federal Government, States, and localities.

Section 640 of the bill prohibits the use of appropriations to pay the salary of any officer or employee of the Federal Government who interferes with certain communications or contacts between other Federal employees and Members of Congress or congressional committees. I understand this provision is intended to protect "whistleblower" employees who wish to inform the Congress of evidence of violations of law or other wrongdoing in the Government. Any broader interpretation of the provision that would apply to "nonwhistleblowers" would raise substantial constitutional concerns in depriving the President and his department and agency heads of their ability to supervise and control the operations and communications of the executive branch. I do not interpret this provision to detract from my constitutional authority in this way.

I urge the Congress to complete action on the remaining FY 1998 appropriations bills as quickly as possible, and to send them to me in an acceptable form.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
October 10, 1997.

NOTE: H.R. 2378, approved October 10, was assigned Public Law No. 105-61.

Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval Partial Birth Abortion Legislation

October 10, 1997

To the House of Representatives:

I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 1122, which would prohibit doctors from performing a certain kind of abortion. I am returning H.R. 1122 for exactly the same reasons I returned an earlier substantially identical version of this bill, H.R. 1833, last year. My veto message of April 10, 1996, fully explains my reasons for returning that bill and applies to H.R. 1122 as well. H.R. 1122 is a bill that is consistent neither with the Constitution nor sound public policy.

As I have stated on many occasions, I support the decision in *Roe v. Wade* protecting a woman's right to choose. Consistent with that decision, I have long opposed late-term abortions, and I continue to do so except in those instances necessary to save the life of a woman or prevent serious harm to her health. Unfortunately, H.R. 1122 does not contain an exception to the measure's ban that will adequately protect the lives and health of the small group of women in tragic circumstances who need an abortion performed at a late stage of pregnancy to avert death or serious injury.

I have asked the Congress repeatedly, for almost 2 years, to send me legislation that includes a limited exception for the small number of compelling cases where use of this procedure is necessary to avoid serious health consequences. When Governor of Arkansas, I signed a bill into law that barred third-trimester abortions, with an appropriate exception for life or health. I would do so again, but only if the bill contains an exception for the rare cases where a woman faces death or serious injury. I believe the Congress should work in a bipartisan manner to fashion such legislation.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
October 10, 1997.