

Statement on the Kennedy-Murray Amendment to Proposed Education Flexibility Partnership Legislation*March 11, 1999*

I have long supported the ed-flex concept, and I was pleased when the congressional leadership decided to take up this bill as one of its first matters of business. Today, however, the Senate used this bill to undermine one of our most important educational achievements—an initiative to hire 100,000 well-prepared teachers to reduce class size in the early grades to a national average of 18. The Senate not only voted down an amendment to ensure long-term funding for this initiative but passed an amendment that would allow local school districts to completely opt out of class size reduction. I will work hard for the elimination of this amendment in conference. We should be working together to make continued progress on obvious national needs such as reducing class size—not attempting to tear down the bipartisan work we did last year to address this problem.

Statement on House Action To Support Use of United States Armed Forces in Kosovo*March 11, 1999*

I am pleased with the House vote which demonstrates the broad, bipartisan support for our efforts to bring peace to Kosovo. This vote sends a clear message to both parties that it is time now to sign an agreement that stops the fighting in Kosovo and creates real self-government for the Kosovar people. The vote confirms the strong commitment of the United States to continue our efforts to provide the leadership necessary to bring about a peaceful resolution to this conflict.

Proclamation 7173—National Older Workers Employment Week, 1999*March 11, 1999**By the President of the United States of America***A Proclamation**

One of our Nation's most valuable but least appreciated assets is its workers aged 55 and older. Older Americans bring to the workplace sound judgment, broad knowledge and experience, proven problem-solving abilities, and a strong work ethic. Despite their often impressive qualifications, however, older men and women who attempt to change jobs or seek new careers frequently encounter difficulties. Some employers mistakenly fear that older workers lack the skills and flexibility to learn new technologies and procedures; others think that they no longer have the energy and motivation to compete in today's fast-paced and stressful work environment; still others are unwilling to pay older workers the salaries they deserve and prefer instead to hire younger, less experienced employees at lower rates. Such employers are short-sighted.

Americans are living longer, healthier, more active lives. In the next century, as our economy continues to expand and the demand for skilled workers continues to grow, older citizens will become an increasingly vital resource. If our Nation is to thrive in the 21st century, we must encourage businesses to recognize the rich potential of older workers, to make the most of their knowledge, skills, and experience, and to retain qualified older employees in the workforce.

We must also remain vigilant in protecting the rights and well-being of older Americans. Laws such as the Age Discrimination Act, the Older Americans Act, and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act protect older workers from age bias and discrimination and help assure their fair treatment in the workplace. In addition, the Department of Labor and the Department of Health and Human Services, through such efforts as the Senior