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Message to the Congress Transmitting the Proposed "Central American and Haitian Parity Act of 1999"

August 5, 1999

To the Congress of the United States:

I am pleased to transmit for your immediate consideration and enactment the ''Central American and Haitian Parity Act of 1999.'' Also transmitted is a section-by-section analysis. This legislative proposal, which would amend the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act of 1997 (NACARA), is part of my Administration's comprehensive effort to support the process of democratization and stabilization now underway in Central America and Haiti and to ensure equitable treatment for migrants from these countries. The proposed bill would allow qualified nationals of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Haiti an opportunity to become lawful permanent residents of the United States. Consequently, under this bill, eligible nationals of these countries would receive treatment equivalent to that granted to the Nicaraguans and Cubans under NACARA.

Like Nicaraguans and Cubans, many Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Hondurans, and Haitians fled human rights abuses or unstable political and economic conditions in the 1980s and 1990s. Yet these latter groups received lesser treatment than that granted to Nicaraguans and Cubans by NACARA. The United States has a strong foreign policy interest in providing the same treatment to these similarly situated people. Moreover, the countries from which these migrants have come are young and fragile democracies in which the United States has played and will continue to play a very important role. The return of these migrants to these countries would place significant demands on their economic and political systems. By offering legal status to a number of nationals of these countries with long-standing ties in the United States, we can advance our commitment to peace and stability in the region.

Passage of the ''Central American and Haitian Parity Act of 1999'' will evidence our commitment to fair and even-handed treatment of nationals from these countries and to the strengthening of democracy and economic stability among important neighbors. I urge the prompt and favorable consideration of this legislative proposal by the Congress.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
August 5, 1999.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 6. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Remarks at the Arkansas Broadcasters Association's 50th Anniversary Dinner in Little Rock, Arkansas

August 6, 1999

Thank you very much. Congratulations on your 50th anniversary. And thank you for honoring my friend and my partner James Lee Witt.

You know, Bobby—I was wondering what Bobby would say. I thought he would say, ''You know, I knew I could guilt Bill Clinton into coming to this dinner once I found out he was going to be in Arkansas and I reminded him how many early-morning radio interviews I'd given him over the last 20 years.'' And I want to thank Bobby Caldwell, who is my longtime friend, and all of you for the work that you do, as well as for honoring a wonderful man tonight.

I am honored to be joined by Rodney Slater, and I know there are others here in our administration—Kay Goss, Buddy