

Each year approximately 20,000 18-year-olds leave our Nation's foster care system without an adoptive family or other permanent family relationship. Without the emotional, social, and financial support that families provide, many of these young people are not adequately prepared for life after foster care. Unfortunately, Federal financial support ends just as they are making the critical transition to independence. This bill addresses that problem and will help these youth in their effort to become successful, independent adults.

I am also pleased that the Act provides additional funds for the adoption incentive payments, which are bonuses to the States for increasing the number of children adopted from public foster care. This additional funding will enable States to receive the full amount of the bonuses they have earned through outstanding performance.

Today's legislation is a fitting tribute to the late Senator John Chafee, who was a chief sponsor of the Act. A fierce champion of children, Senator Chafee paid particular attention to our Nation's most vulnerable young people. I am pleased that the bill renames the Independent Living Program in his honor.

I would also like to thank the House and Senate leadership, as well as Representatives Nancy Johnson and Ben Cardin, Chairman William Roth, Jr., and Senators Jay Rockefeller, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Charles Grassley, John Breaux, James Jeffords, Jack Reed, and Susan Collins for their hard work and dedication to this issue. I look forward to signing this bill into law.

Statement on Signing the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999

November 20, 1999

Today I have signed into law S. 468, the "Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999." I strongly sup-

port the objective of this legislation—to make it easier for State, local, and tribal governments and nonprofit organizations to apply for and report on financial assistance. While different types of grant programs can and should have different applications, there is ample room for consolidation and streamlining of similar programs.

Nonetheless, I have strong reservations about some of the specific provisions in the Act. In particular, as my Administration has indicated to the Congress on several occasions, the Act does not provide resources for, nor allow sufficient time to accomplish even partially, the very ambitious overhaul of grant programs that it requires. In addition, the Act anticipates a common application and reporting system for Federal grant programs, but does not amend the many program statutes that establish different application and reporting requirements for different grant programs. Furthermore, the deadlines in the Act are inconsistent with other legislation and unlikely to be achievable in practice. For example, the Act requires agencies to create a common system for electronic processing of all grant programs, but on a schedule that is inconsistent with related requirements of the Government Paperwork Elimination Act of 1998. For these reasons, even an extensive effort may yield only minimal improvements in the simplification of the grants process and the administration of Federal resources.

I remain concerned that S. 468 may create expectations that will not be fulfilled, and tarnish the success of the efforts we have already begun. My Administration will, of course, continue its long-standing efforts to streamline, simplify, and consolidate application and reporting requirements.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
November 20, 1999.

NOTE: S. 468, approved November 20, was assigned Public Law No. 106-107.

Proclamation 7255—Thanksgiving Day, 1999*November 20, 1999**By the President of the United States of America***A Proclamation**

Well over three and a half centuries ago, strengthened by faith and bound by a common desire for liberty, a small band of Pilgrims sought out a place in the New World where they could worship according to their own beliefs. Surviving their first harsh winter in Massachusetts and grateful to a merciful God for a sustaining harvest, the men and women of Plymouth Colony set aside three days as a time to give thanks for the bounty of their fields, the fruits of their labor, the chance to live in peace with their Native American neighbors, and the blessing of a land where they could live and worship freely.

We have come far on our American journey since that early Thanksgiving. In the intervening years, we have lived through times of war and peace, years of poverty and plenty, and seasons of social and political upheaval that have shaped and forever changed our national character and experience. As we gather around our Thanksgiving tables again this year, it is a fitting time to reflect on how the events of our rich history have affected those we care about and those who came before us. As we acknowledge the past, we do so knowing that the individual blessings for which we give thanks may have changed, but our gratitude to God and our commitment to our fellow Americans remain constant.

Today we count among our national blessings a time of unprecedented prosperity, with an expanding economy, record low rates of poverty and unemployment among our people, and the limitless opportunities to improve the quality of life that new technologies present to us. We can give thanks today that for the first time in history, more than half the world's people live under governments of their own choosing. And we remain grateful for the peace and freedom America continues to enjoy thanks to the courage and patriotism of our men and women in uniform.

But the spirit of Thanksgiving requires more than just an acknowledgment of our blessings; it calls upon us to reach out and share those blessings with others. We must strive to fulfill the promise of the extraordinary era in which we live and enter the new century with a commitment to widen the circle of opportunity, break down the prejudices that alienate us from one another, and build an America of understanding and inclusion, strong in our diversity, responsible in our freedom, and generous in sharing our bounty with those in need.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 25, 1999, as a National Day of Thanksgiving. I encourage all the people of the United States to assemble in their homes, places of worship, or community centers to share the spirit of fellowship and prayer and to reinforce the ties of family and community; to express heartfelt thanks to God for the many blessings He has bestowed upon us; and to reach out in true gratitude and friendship to our brothers and sisters in the larger family of humankind.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twentieth day of November, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

William J. Clinton

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NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on November 23.

Remarks at a Dinner for the Conference on Progressive Governance for the 21st Century in Florence, Italy*November 20, 1999*

Thank you very much. Professor Dorsen, Dean Sexton, President Oliva, to my fellow leaders, and especially to our hosts, Prime Minister and Mrs. D'Alema. Let me say a