

Week Ending Friday, November 14, 1997

Statement on House of Representatives Action on Voluntary National Testing for Basic Education Skills

November 7, 1997

Legislation passed by the House of Representatives this evening provides an impressive victory for American education. It moves us down the road to high national standards and voluntary national tests in the basic skills, and it invests in providing our country with better schools and increased educational opportunities.

I am very pleased that we have reached an agreement on one of my top priorities for this year and for my Presidency: making sure that America's schoolchildren can master the basics and achieve higher academic standards. America's parents, teachers, and principals can now be sure that we are going to hold children's educational skills up to the same high standard whether they live in Michigan, Maine, or Montana.

The educational agenda I have established for the Nation—from high standards and testing to making a college education possible for every young American—is designed to give our children the tools they need to succeed in a changing global economy. Today's agreement fulfills a critical part of that agenda, and I appreciate that politics indeed stopped at the schoolhouse door.

The Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill, which includes the agreement on national standards and tests, also helps meet our national commitment to expand educational opportunities for all students. It provides a \$1.5 billion increase in Pell grants to help an additional 210,000 young people attend college, and increases the maximum Pell grant to \$3,000, the highest level in history. Special education funding is increased by \$800 million, funding for technology for our schools is almost doubled, and there is \$7.4 billion to help our most disadvantaged

students master the basic skills. Goals 2000 is funded at \$491 million, to continue to support school reform in every State, and funding for after-school programs is increased from \$1 million to \$40 million.

I am also pleased to see the House pass bipartisan charter school legislation to promote choice and accountability in the public schools and help achieve my goal of 3,000 charter schools.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Message to the Senate on Transmitting Agreement Establishing the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme and Documentation

November 7, 1997

To the Senate of the United States:

I transmit herewith, for the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, the Agreement Establishing the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, done at Apia on June 16, 1993 ("the Agreement"). The report of the Department of State with respect to the Agreement is attached for the information of the Senate.

The South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) has existed for almost 15 years to promote cooperation in the South Pacific region, to protect and improve the South Pacific environment and to ensure sustainable development in that region. Prior to the Agreement, SPREP had the status of an informal institution housed within the South Pacific Commission. When this institutional arrangement began to prove inefficient, the United States and the nations of the region negotiated the Agreement to allow SPREP to become an intergovernmental organization in its own right and enhance its ability to promote cooperation among its members.

The Agreement was concluded in June 1993 and entered into force in August 1995. Nearly every nation—except the United States—that has participated in SPREP and in the negotiation of the Agreement is now party to the Agreement. As a result, SPREP now enjoys a formal institutional status that allows it to deal more effectively with the pressing environmental concerns of the region. The United States and its territories can only participate in its activities as official observers.

The Agreement improves the ability of SPREP to serve the interests of American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and Guam. Its ratification is supported by our territories and will demonstrate continued United States commitment to, and concern for, the South Pacific region.

Under its terms, the Agreement entered into force on August 31, 1995. To date, Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, France, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Western Samoa have become parties to the Agreement.

I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the Agreement and give its advice and consent to ratification.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
November 7, 1997.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

November 8, 1997

Good morning. This weekend the United States House of Representatives will decide whether America will continue to move forward with confidence on the road to continued prosperity or give in to fear and fail to seize all the opportunities of the 21st century. There's a lot at stake.

Over the past 5 years, our economic strategy has worked to make the new economy work for all Americans. We're balancing the

budget, investing in our people through education and health care, and expanding exports through tough trade deals.

Yesterday, we learned again that this strategy is succeeding: Unemployment is at 4.7 percent—that's the lowest in 24 years—a quarter million new jobs in October alone, and 13½ million since I took office; inflation in check; exports booming. And after dragging for decades, incomes for American workers are rising strongly, up \$2,200 after inflation since 1993.

Now, wages are rising in part because more American jobs are high-paying, export-related jobs. And if exports keep expanding, that will help to keep wages rising. We must press forward with this economic strategy. That's why I'm asking Congress to renew the so-called fast-track authority that enables America to negotiate new trade agreements. A strong bipartisan majority in the Senate backs this bill, which simply gives me the same authority to lower barriers to American products that Presidents of both parties have had for more than 20 years. That's why Presidents Bush, Carter, and Ford support this measure. Now it's up to the Members of the House of Representatives to decide.

A yes vote means America stays in the lead in fighting for new markets. That's now at risk. Just this week, Canada gained an advantage on us by signing a comprehensive agreement with Argentina, Brazil, and others. That means their products will sell in those countries at lower prices than ours because we'll still have to pay tariffs they don't. Now, that's a strategy of America last, not America first.

A yes vote means that America helps to write the rules for the new global economy. That's the only way to make sure that it works for the American people. We already have lower barriers in our country on foreign products than most countries. Other countries have higher barriers on the sale of our products and services.

A yes vote means that we can also address labor protections and environmental concerns around the world as part of our trade negotiations. This is the very first time this has been a part of the President's negotiating authority. Walking away from this will not create a single job or clean up a single toxic