

Week Ending Friday, May 1, 1998

**Message on the Observance of  
Armenian Remembrance Day, 1998**

*April 24, 1998*

This year, as in the past, we join with Armenian-Americans throughout the nation in commemorating one of the saddest chapters in the history of this century, the deportations and massacres of a million and a half Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in the years 1915–1923.

This painful event from the past also serves as a powerful lesson for the future: that man's inhumanity to man must not be tolerated, and that evil cannot conquer. The Armenian people have endured, surviving the ravages of two World Wars and seven decades of Soviet rule. Throughout the world, and especially in this country, Armenians have contributed to the material, intellectual and spiritual lives of their adopted homes. Today's Armenians are building a free and independent nation that stands as a living tribute to all those who died.

The United States will continue working to preserve a free Armenia in a peaceful, stable and prosperous Caucasus region. In that spirit, I extend to all Armenians my best wishes on Remembrance Day in the fervent hope that those who died will never be forgotten.

**William J. Clinton**

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue. An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

**The President's Radio Address**

*April 25, 1998*

Good morning. This morning I'd like to talk to you about one way we are working to restore Americans' faith in our National Government, in our efforts to shore up Social

Security and other vital benefits by cracking down on fraud and abuse.

For 60 years, Social Security has meant more than just an ID number on a tax form, even more than a monthly check in the mail. It has reflected our deepest values, the duties we owe to our parents, to each other, to our children and grandchildren, to those whom misfortune strikes, to those who deserve a decent old age, to our ideal of one America.

That's why I was so disturbed some time ago to discover that many prisoners who are, by law, barred from receiving most of these Federal benefits, were actually collecting Social Security checks while locked up behind bars. Inmates were, in effect, under our law, getting away with fraud, primarily because it was so difficult to gather up-to-date information on criminals in our Nation's more than 3,500 jails. But thanks to an unprecedented Federal, State, and local cooperation, as well as new, innovative incentive programs, we're now finishing the job.

The Social Security Administration has produced a continually updated database that now covers more than 99 percent of all prisoners, the most comprehensive list of our inmate population in history. And more important, the Social Security Administration is using the list to great effect. By the end of last year we had suspended benefits to more than 70,000 prisoners. That means that over the next 5 years we will save taxpayers \$2.5 billion—that's \$2.5 billion—that will go toward serving our hard-working families.

Now we're going to build on the Social Security Administration's success in saving taxpayers from inmate fraud. In just a few moments I will sign an executive memorandum that directs the Departments of Labor, Veterans Affairs, Justice, Education, and Agriculture to use the Social Security Administration's expertise and high-tech tools to enhance their own efforts to weed out any inmate who is receiving veteran's benefits, food

stamps, or any other form of Federal benefit denied by law.

We expect that these comprehensive sweeps by our agencies will save taxpayers millions upon millions of more dollars, in addition to the billions already saved from our crackdown on Social Security fraud. We will ensure that those who have committed crimes against society will not have an opportunity to commit crimes against taxpayers as well.

The American people have a right to expect that their National Government is always on guard against every type of waste, fraud, and abuse. It is our duty to use every power and every tool to eliminate that kind of fraud. We owe it to the American people to ensure that their Social Security contributions and other tax dollars are benefiting only those who worked hard, played by the rules, and are, by law, eligible to receive them. That's exactly what we're trying to do.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

### **Memorandum on Prevention of Prison Inmates Inappropriately Receiving Federal Benefits**

*April 25, 1998*

*Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies*

*Subject:* Use of the Social Security Administration's Prisoner Database to Prevent Prison Inmates from Inappropriately Receiving Federal Benefits

The Social Security Administration ("SSA") is required by law to suspend Old Age and Survivors and Disability Insurance or Supplemental Security Income benefits to certain persons who are incarcerated. To carry out the law, the SSA, with the assistance of the Federal Bureau of Prisons and various State and local entities, developed a database of persons who are incarcerated. Other agencies, too, including the Departments of Agriculture, Education, Labor, and Veterans Affairs, operate Federal benefit programs that have statutory requirements to

reduce, suspend, or terminate benefits to those who are incarcerated.

All of these agencies have been carrying out the requirements to suspend or reduce Federal benefits to prison inmates. However, the agencies' enforcement of these requirements independently, rather than in coordination, is not the most efficient use of Government resources and has not allowed the agencies to enforce these requirements to the greatest effect. Therefore, to provide for a coordinated governmentwide effort to improve the implementation of the laws permitting suspension or reduction of Federal benefits to prison inmates and to use Government resources more efficiently, I hereby direct executive departments and agencies to take the following actions, to the extent permitted by law:

(1) By November 1, 1998, the Social Security Administration shall provide access to its prisoner database, on a reimbursable basis, to Federal agencies that administer benefit programs and to appropriate State and local entities that administer benefit programs in cooperation with Federal agencies. The SSA shall assist these agencies as necessary to allow quick and efficient access to the SSA prisoner database. By May 1, 1999, the agencies should make operational their computer systems that are to conduct the matches between their benefit program databases and the SSA prisoner database;

(2) The Departments of Education, Labor, and Veterans Affairs and Food Stamp agencies acting as agents for the Department of Agriculture, shall conduct matches between their benefit program databases and SSA's prisoner database to identify ineligible recipients of benefits on their benefit rosters. Agencies that have begun to conduct matches of their benefit program databases with SSA's prisoner database or other agencies' databases shall continue that work;

(3) Other executive agencies with benefit programs shall review such programs and determine whether it is appropriate and cost effective to conduct a match of their benefit program databases with the SSA prisoner database;