

Radio Remarks on the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998

June 23, 1998

Today I signed into law a new bill to help expand opportunity for America's farmers. The agricultural research act will put funding for crop insurance on a sure footing for the future and boost investment on agricultural research and rural development.

After Congress phased out Federal farm price supports, it became more essential for American farmers to sell grains, meats, fruits, and vegetables to markets around the world. And today, products from one of every three acres planted in America are sold abroad. Thanks to cutting-edge research, strong food safety standards, and innovations in biotechnology, our farmers enjoy advantages over their competitors around the world in many sectors. In fact, American farmers have become so productive and so advanced that agriculture should be considered another high-tech industry. By strengthening investment in research and technology, this bill will help our farmers retain that competitive edge so they can export more of what they grow and raise. But to secure the success of U.S. farmers in the global marketplace, we must do more.

That's why we're also fighting hard to tear down unfair trade barriers, to stabilize Asian markets for our products, and to make sure that sanctions do not unfairly penalize American farmers. I've asked the World Trade Organization to take an aggressive approach to reducing tariffs and subsidies on agricultural products and to deliver better scientific-based rules to govern that trade. We're also fighting to enforce our trade agreements and have won critical agricultural disputes, including the European Union's restrictions on hormone-grown beef and greater access to pork in the Philippines. We will continue to use every tool at our disposal to ensure that agreements made are agreements kept.

And I will push Congress to give the IMF the resources it needs to help stabilize the economies of Asia, which are such big markets for American farm products. Finally, we need to make sure that our sanctions policy furthers our foreign policy goals without

hurting our farmers. That's why I support legislation that ensures that U.S. wheat will not be the unintended victim of an important nonproliferation law. Our policy has been and will be that food should not be used as a weapon. We'll resist any action that would lead to a de facto grain embargo.

American farmers can continue to compete and win the global marketplace. To make sure that they do, I'll continue to fight to make sure they're given a fair chance to build a better future for themselves and their families.

NOTE: The President's remarks were recorded on the morning of June 23 in the Oval Office at the White House for later broadcast.

Statement on Signing Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998

June 23, 1998

Today I am pleased to sign into law S. 1150, the "Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998." This bill is an example of the Federal Government at its best: the Congress and the Administration working together on a bipartisan basis, bringing together a broad coalition of individuals and groups to address the important needs of our citizens in a fiscally responsible manner. I want to thank Senators Lugar and Harkin and Representatives Smith and Stenholm, whose efforts to forge this compromise were tireless, as well as all the other Members of the Senate and the House of Representatives who voted for S. 1150. Their support reflects the strong consensus in this country for the reforms and funding contained in this bill.

S. 1150 and last year's Balanced Budget Act go a long way toward fulfilling the commitment, which I made when I signed the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, to reverse the unfair treatment of legal immigrants included in that legislation, which had nothing to do with welfare reform. The Food Stamp provisions of S. 1150 restore benefits to 250,000 elderly, disabled, and other needy legal immigrants, including 75,000 children who lost such assistance under the 1996 Act.

The Food Stamp provisions in S. 1150 build on our success last year in restoring Supplemental Security Income and Medicaid benefits to 420,000 legal immigrants who lost such assistance under the 1996 Act. S. 1150 also restores benefits to Hmong immigrants from Laos who aided our country during the Vietnam War and extends the period during which refugees and asylees may qualify for Food Stamps while they await citizenship. We will continue to work to ensure that those who honor our laws and contribute to our society can be free from hunger.

Similarly, when I signed the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (1996 Farm Act) that radically changed the decades-old Federal programs to balance crop supply and demand, I made a commitment to work with the Congress to strengthen the farm safety net. With the bill I am signing today, our Nation's farmers know that crop insurance will be there for them if disaster strikes, with the program fully funded for the next 5 years.

To improve farming productivity and efficiency, we must increase our investment in agricultural research. In the 1996 Farm Act deliberations, the Congress believed the agricultural research title to be so important that work on it was postponed so it could receive the time and consideration that it deserved. The research provisions in S. 1150 were worth waiting for, and I commend the Congress for its work.

The Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems in S. 1150 will channel an additional \$120 million a year over the next 5 years to vital investments in food and agriculture genome research, food safety and technology, human nutrition, and agricultural biotechnology. These investments will lead to advances in new production systems for crops and livestock. This will help farmers and agricultural processors produce an abundant supply of safe food, with less impact on the environment, and meet the challenge of new, more virulent pest and disease outbreaks. In addition, the bill reforms the working arrangements between the Secretary of Agriculture and the universities that carry out important agricultural research. These changes will encourage and enable universities to take on larger-scale challenges

and enhance their integration of research, education, and extension functions while improving the accountability and management of their programs.

Rural communities cannot rely on agriculture alone to sustain their economy and quality of life. That is why, throughout my Administration, I have strongly supported increasing the investments in rural development, and pushed to find innovative solutions to unique local needs. We worked hard with the Congress in the 1996 Farm Act to create the Fund for Rural America, which provided funds for rural development and innovative agricultural research. I am pleased that S. 1150 provides \$300 million for the Fund and extends it funding through FY 2003.

While signing S. 1150, I am concerned that some in the Congress are already threatening to block significant portions of its funds from being spent in FY 1999. Appropriation actions in the House and Senate would deny any funds from being used for the Fund for Rural America, and the House bill would also block any research funding in this bill from going forward next year. I strongly object to such ill-advised cuts in these vital programs. I call on the Congress to provide the needed funds for these important activities.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
June 23, 1998.

NOTE: S. 1150, approved June 23, was assigned Public Law No. 105-185.

**Statement on Signing the U.S.
Holocaust Assets Commission
Act of 1998**

June 23, 1998

Today I am pleased to sign into law S. 1900, the "U.S. Holocaust Assets Commission Act of 1998." This legislation is the result of the bipartisan support of the Congress, and the efforts of many people inside and outside of government who have worked to achieve its passage. It represents an important step in advancing the United States Government's efforts to bring justice to Holocaust victims, survivors, and their heirs.