Believe it or not, there are even some who are trying to kill one of our most successful efforts to provide on-the-job training to our young people and to give them something positive to do and ensure that they stay out of trouble in their free time. For a generation in our country, legislators from both our major political parties have supported the summer jobs program that has helped millions of our most disadvantaged young people appreciate the responsibility of a regular job and the reward of a regular paycheck.

Eliminating summer jobs would mock the very values we Americans cherish most, hard work, responsibility, opportunity. If we truly believe in these things, then we should help to expose all our young people, especially those who need it, to the world of work. If we insist upon responsibility from all our people, then those of us in power must take responsibility for giving our teenagers the jobs that will help them succeed in the future and keep them on a good path today.

If we believe in opportunity for all, then we must not deny our young people this vital springboard to opportunity. I say this to point out to all of you that if you don't get your way on education every day in your own countries, don't be surprised if we don't get to do everything we want to do, either. What seems so self-evident to you and me is still not entirely clear to all decisionmakers. But I want to encourage you to keep up the fight.

In all my visits at home and abroad, I have found out that you can learn a lot about a country's future by visiting its public schools. Does every child—boy and girl, rich and poor—have the same opportunity to learn? Are they engaged by patient, well-trained and inspiring teachers? Do they have access to the materials they need to learn? Are they learning what they need to know to succeed in the country they will live in and in the future that they will create? Do they have opportunities to go on to university if they do well and deserve the chance to do so? Are the schools themselves safe, positive, good places to learn?

We have to build a future together where the answer to all these questions is "yes" in every community, in every nation. I believe we can build a future where every child in every corner of the world, because of the explosion of technology and because of the dedication of teachers, will have the skills, the opportunity, the education to fulfill his or her God-given potential.

I know this will happen if teachers lead the way. I know that there will be political fights to be fought and won. I know one of your honorees at this conference is being honored for taking huge numbers of children out of bondage and putting them back in school. Some people still view children as little more than a material asset. They are us as children, and they are our future and the future of the world.

When he came to the White House to be honored as our National Teacher of the Year, Philip Bigler said, "To be a teacher is to be forever an optimist." I thank you for your unshakeable optimism. I ask you not only to be vigorous in the classroom but vigorous as citizens. You must not stop until every political leader with any political influence, in any political party, in any nation knows that this is something that has to be lifted above political partisanship. This is something that ought to be beyond all debate.

If you understand how the world is going to work tomorrow and you have any concern about the integrity and the richness of the human spirit in every child, then all of us must join hands to help you succeed in giving all those children the tomorrows they deserve.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:31 a.m. at the Washington Hilton. In his remarks, he referred to Mary Hatwood Futrell, president, Education International; Robert Chase, president, National Education Association; and Sandra Feldman, president, American Federation of Teachers.

Statement on Signing the National Science Foundation Authorization Act of 1998

July 29, 1998

Today I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 1273, the "National Science Foundation Authorization Act of 1998."

Science, engineering, and technology are potent forces for progress and achievement. Over the past century, advances in science

and technology have driven much of our economic growth and shaped the lives of every generation of Americans in previously unimaginable ways. As we approach the 21st Century, many of our society's expectations for a better future are dependent upon advances in science and technology.

The science and engineering investments made by the National Science Foundation (NSF) will create new knowledge, spur innovations, foster future breakthroughs, and provide cutting-edge research facilities to help power our Nation in the next century. These investments will help secure the continued prosperity of our economy, improvements in health care and our standards of living, and better education and training for America's students and workers.

This Act will enable the NSF to continue to play an important leadership role in sustaining scientific and technological progress. I am pleased to note that the appropriation authorization levels in H.R. 1273 are the same as proposed in my FY 1999 Budget, and I urge that these amounts be appropriated. The proposed funding for the NSF is part of my Administration's broader, aggressive agenda for science and technology investments throughout the Federal Government, which includes the NSF's participation in the Global Observations to Benefit the Environment Initiative, the Partnership for a New Generation of Vehicles Program, and the Education and Training Technology Initiative. I especially commend the Congress for authorizing the NSF's participation in the Next Generation Internet Program. This multi-agency program will push the frontiers of computation and communications and help fuel the revolution in information technology.

I want to acknowledge the bipartisan efforts in the House and the Senate that produced this important legislation and, in particular, remember the contributions of the late Steve Schiff of New Mexico, Chairman of the House Basic Research Subcommittee. Throughout his life and career, Steve Schiff dedicated his time and talents to make life better for the people of New Mexico and for this fellow Americans. Even as he waged his final courageous battle against cancer, he continued his efforts to make life better for families across this country. This Act is just one piece of his legacy and demonstrates how the Congress and the Administration can work together to help continue U.S. leadership in science and technology. I am pleased to sign it into law.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
July 29, 1998.

NOTE: H.R. 1273, approved July 29, was assigned Public Law No. 105–207.

Statement on Signing the Homeowners Protection Act of 1998

July 29, 1998

Today I am pleased to sign into law S. 318, the Homeowners Protection Act, which will save many American families thousands of dollars over the lifetime of their home mortgages. This bill will enable homeowners to cancel private mortgage insurance ("PMI") that they no longer need and make sure they receive full disclosure of their right to cancel.

Mortgage insurance has helped expand homeownership by allowing homeowners to make lower downpayments. But far too many homeowners continue to pay for mortgage insurance long after they have built enough equity so that the lender has little risk of loss. This bill would address that problem by making sure that homeowners have the right to cancel PMI, or by making that cancellation automatic, when homeowners build up enough equity in their homes. For a family that buys a $160,000 home, this bill would ensure savings of $1,600 if they do not move or refinance for 15 years.

Since I took office, homeownership has climbed to its highest rate in American history. But now is not a time to rest. I have set a national goal of helping 8 million new families move into homes of their own by the year 2000. Lowering the cost of homeownership is one more way we are helping America's working families. That is why I am pleased to sign this homeowner- and consumer-friendly legislation.

NOTE: S. 318, approved July 29, was assigned Public Law No. 105–216.