

**Proclamation 7141—National Character Counts Week, 1998**

October 16, 1998

*By the President of the United States of America*

**A Proclamation**

As Americans, we are a people full of hope, confident in our capacity to make life better for ourselves and others. We look forward to the promise of the future, and we have high goals for the 21st century: to remain the world's leading force for peace, freedom, prosperity, and security; to keep the American Dream alive for everyone willing to work for it; to come together across lines of race, religion, and other individual differences to become one America. But everything we hope to accomplish depends, as it always has, on the hearts and minds of the American people.

One of the greatest building blocks of character is citizen service. We must do more as individuals and as a society to encourage all Americans—especially our young people—to share their time, skills, enthusiasm, and energy with their communities. Whether we teach children to read, mentor young people, work at a food bank or homeless shelter, or care for people living with AIDS, citizen service calls forth the best from each of us. It builds a sense of community, compassion, acceptance of others, and a willingness to do the right thing—all hallmarks of character.

We can take great pride today in the numbers of energetic, idealistic Americans who are participating in service activities across our country and around the world. Almost 90,000 young men and women have served their communities through AmeriCorps during the past 4 years, tutoring students, mentoring children, building homes, fighting drug abuse. Through our America Reads initiative, Americans of all ages are volunteering their time to help children learn to read independently by the end of the third grade. Through Learn and Serve America, the Corporation for National and Community Service encourages America's schools to add service learning to their curricula so that all students—from kindergarten through graduate

school—can develop their character, skills, and self-confidence while making their own unique contributions to the life of their communities. In the National Senior Service Corps and the Peace Corps, in religious, school, community, and charitable organizations, Americans strengthen the character of our Nation by volunteering to improve the quality of life for their fellow human beings. During National Character Counts Week, let us reaffirm to our children that the future belongs to those who have the strength of character to live a life of service to others.

**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 October 18 through October 24, 1998, as National Character Counts Week. I call upon the people of the United States, Government officials, educators, religious, community, and business leaders, and the States to commemorate this week with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs.

**In Witness Whereof**, I have hereunto set my hand this sixteenth day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-third.

**William J. Clinton**

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 12:05 p.m., October 19, 1998]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on October 20. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

**The President's Radio Address**

October 17, 1998

Good morning. This week we reached an agreement on a balanced budget that invests in our people and our future. I'm proud of the results: 100,000 new teachers and funds for after-school programs for hundreds of thousands of children; new environmental protections and an advance in our clean water initiative to deal with the 40 percent of our lakes and rivers that aren't yet fit for

swimming or drinking; aid for struggling farmers. We set aside the surplus until we save Social Security.

This new budget will also help to strengthen our economy by meeting our commitment to the International Monetary Fund, a challenge I set for America in my State of the Union Address 9 months ago.

Although I'm pleased we've accomplished this, 8 days of progress cannot entirely make up for 8 months of partisanship. Let me tell you why this challenge has been so important. Our economy is the strongest in a generation. We have a budget surplus and nearly 17 million new jobs. Unemployment has been below 5 percent for more than a year, at a 28-year low. Inflation is at historic lows. Wages are once again on the rise.

More than ever, this economic strength rests upon the strength of an increasingly interdependent world. Our own recent growth depends heavily on expanded exports of American products and services. But over the last year, the world's financial markets have been in turmoil. Countries all around the world are having a difficult time managing their own economies and, therefore, affording American goods, from wheat to apples, from computer chips to jumbo jets. We must act to promote our own prosperity and to protect our people at this critical moment by working to stabilize the global economy and helping our friends to restore growth. This week we did.

A month ago I said that the balance of risk in the world economy had shifted from inflation to slowdown and that all nations must work together to promote growth. Through the International Monetary Fund, nations can join forces to help countries in trouble help themselves. That's why I worked with Democratic and Republican Members of Congress to meet our commitment to the IMF, with a package of tough reforms to make the Fund more accountable, more focused on growth, better equipped to address the economic crisis of the 21st century.

Our contribution will leverage a total of \$90 billion in new funds for the IMF, expanding its reserves by 40 percent. Now the IMF is stronger and ready to act. We must make certain that when it acts, it acts to promote global growth and to limit the reach

of financial crisis. In turn, this will foster a stronger economy here at home and help our own workers, farmers, and ranchers. It is an insurance policy for our own economy.

By funding the IMF and keeping our economy sound and strong, the United States is doing its part in the world economy. But the world's other leading economies must also do theirs. Europe must continue to promote growth and keep its markets open. And Japan, the world's second largest economy and by far the largest in Asia, faces the most important task of all. I welcome the substantial assistance in Japan's legislation to repair its troubled banking system. Now it's critical to avoid further delay by moving quickly and using that money most effectively.

The United States values our strong relationship with Japan, our political, our security, and our economic partnership. But now the health of Asia's economy and, indeed, the world, depends upon Japan. That is why it must spur economic growth, open and deregulate its economy, and take these immediate steps to strengthen its financial system.

Working with our international partners, we must take further action to promote global growth and to strengthen the world financial system. It is particularly important to find new ways to keep this crisis from spreading. We stand ready to help countries that develop policies to keep their economy strong, and we must continue our work to modernize international financial institutions to meet the challenges of this changing world economy.

When he led the effort to create the International Monetary Fund, President Franklin Roosevelt said that it "spelled the difference between a world caught again in the maelstrom of panic and economic warfare, or a world in which nations strive for a better life through mutual trust, cooperation, and assistance." This week we have strengthened the IMF's ability to make that difference. When America acts and America leads, we can build a stronger, more prosperous economy, not only for our own people but also for the entire world.

Thanks for listening.

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

**Statement on Signing the Strom Thurmond National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999**

*October 17, 1998*

I have today signed H.R. 3616, the "Strom Thurmond National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999." This Act authorizes Fiscal Year 1999 appropriations for military activities of the Department of Defense, military construction, and defense activities of the Department of Energy. Naming this Act in honor of Senator Thurmond is a well-deserved and appropriate tribute. Senator Thurmond served for 36 years in the U.S. Army Reserve. During his more than 40 years of Senate service, his primary legislative focus has been the national defense of this country and the well-being of our service members and veterans.

This Act provides for a strong national defense and supports our commitment to a better quality of life for our military personnel and their families. Although I have reservations about some of the provisions of the Act, it authorizes funds for many defense readiness and modernization priorities. By providing the necessary support for our forces, it will ensure continued U.S. global leadership. I am especially pleased that the Act authorizes \$1.9 billion in emergency funding for peacekeeping operations in Bosnia. Moreover, the conferees' revisions to the Act satisfactorily addressed several objectionable provisions that were included in earlier versions.

The Act supports my Administration's views on gender-integrated training by leaving intact our current system of gender-integrated flights, squadrons, and companies in basic training. The Act's provisions on gender-separate housing at basic training are fully consistent with Secretary of Defense Cohen's recent directives.

The Act contains a prudent and balanced approach on antipersonnel landmine issues. The 1-year moratorium on U.S. military use of such mines is repealed, providing the legislative relief that I had requested. Also, as requested, funds are authorized for research and development on alternatives to anti-personnel landmines and technologies to improve humanitarian demining efforts.

I am pleased with the Congress' continuing support for the important national security activities of the Department of Energy, including the Stockpile Stewardship Program, a program I directed the Department to develop 5 years ago. The success of this program is key to Senate ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, a building block for U.S. national security in the 21st century.

I also commend the Congress for authorizing virtually the entire amount requested for Cooperative Threat Reduction to assist in the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and prevention of their proliferation.

Finally, I am pleased the Act fully funds my request for the development of a national missile defense system.

Notwithstanding the important steps that we have taken to protect military readiness, we need to do more on this critical issue, as I stated in my September 22, 1998, letter to the congressional leadership. In this regard, I have instructed the Office of Management and Budget and the National Security Council to work with the Department of Defense to formulate a multi-year plan, which will detail the resources needed to preserve military readiness, support our troops, and modernize the equipment needed for the next century. I hope the Congress will support my efforts to implement better management practices, cut wasteful overhead, and reduce unnecessary base infrastructure and support services.

Although I believe that the majority of the provisions included in H.R. 3616 are beneficial and support our national defense program, a small number remain problematic. I am disappointed that funds were added to several unrequested research and development and procurement programs at the expense of more constructive programs. I am also dismayed that the Congress failed to enact cost-saving measures, such as additional base realignments and closures. This will upset the balanced financial plan in the Quadrennial Defense Review and delay our efforts to reduce costs by restructuring our defense establishment.