

worst crisis in over a decade. We have to do more to help them.

Three months ago I called on Congress to give farmers the loan assistance they needed to start the spring planting. Congress didn't act then, and every day they waited brought more farms closer to foreclosure.

So in March our administration took extraordinary action to make \$300 million in loans available to America's farming families now, instead of at the end of the year when they normally would have come up. Congress, Friday, acted to provide funds for those loans and more. On Friday I signed an emergency appropriations bill that will restore the \$300 million to the loan program to help our farmers, ranchers, and rural communities.

But with thousands of them still in danger of failing, we must continue our efforts. My balanced budget for next year includes additional help for agriculture. Unfortunately, next week the House of Representatives will vote on a bill that would gut some of those commitments and the Senate is considering even deeper cuts. Our farmers and ranchers feed us. They've helped us to get this prosperity we're enjoying. Now they're in need and we should help them.

After passing a bill that will do so much good, it would be a real shame and a bad mistake for Congress to reverse course and cut back on our commitment to America's farming and ranching families. I'm committed to working with Congress to give them the support they need.

NOTE: The President's remarks were recorded at approximately 1:30 p.m. on May 21 in the Oval Office at the White House for later broadcast. These remarks were also made available on the White House Press Office Radio Actuality Line. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

## **Proclamation 7199—National Maritime Day, 1999**

*May 21, 1999*

*By the President of the United States of America*

### **A Proclamation**

The history of the United States has always been linked to the sea. For more than 2 centuries, American ships and crews have made enormous contributions to the strength of our economy, the security of our shores, and the success of our efforts to create a more peaceful, prosperous world.

Today's U.S. Merchant Marine is building on that rich maritime heritage. Our commercial ships and marine infrastructure—and the dedicated men and women who are part of our maritime industry and U.S. Merchant Marine—continue to meet the challenges and opportunities of a rapidly changing marketplace and the expanding globalization of trade. Our merchant fleet is a key component of our Nation's intermodal transportation system, carrying more than one billion tons of cargo between domestic ports and supporting our connection to overseas markets. The fleet helps facilitate our engagement in world affairs and helps protect U.S. national security interests.

Recognizing that a strong America requires a strong merchant marine, my Administration has worked closely with the Congress to promote the development and maintenance of a modern, efficient, well-balanced merchant fleet, capable of facilitating international commerce and meeting the military needs of our Armed Forces during times of conflict or national emergency. Through the Maritime Security Program and the Voluntary Intermodal Sealift Agreement, which implement the Maritime Security Act of 1996, we have forged new public-private partnerships to ensure that our country will maintain a modern commercial fleet owned and operated by U.S. citizens and crewed by well-trained, highly skilled American sailors. We have strengthened U.S. shipyards

through the National Shipbuilding Initiative. We also have helped keep our shipbuilding industry competitive in the global marketplace by providing financing guarantees, granting tax deferrals, and making it easier to operate ships under the U.S. flag.

The United States Merchant Marine has served our Nation boldly and well through challenge and change. As we enter a new century, we must reaffirm our commitment to this proud legacy. We must maintain the strength and vitality of our merchant fleet and the skills and training of the men and women who have made America a great maritime Nation. By doing so, we will ensure that U.S.-flag vessels continue to sail the world's oceans, preserving our leadership of the global economy, strengthening our prosperity, and defending our freedom for generations to come.

In recognition of the importance of the U.S. Merchant Marine, the Congress, by a joint resolution approved May 20, 1933, has designated May 22 of each year as "National Maritime Day" and has authorized and requested the President to issue annually a proclamation calling for its appropriate observance.

**Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton,** President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 22, 1999, as National Maritime Day. I urge all Americans to observe this day with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities and by displaying the flag of the United States in their homes and in their communities. I also request that all merchant ships sailing under the American flag dress ship on that day.

**In Witness Whereof,** I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-first day of May, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, 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, 9:04 a.m., May 25, 1999]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on May 26. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

**Message to the Congress  
Transmitting the Proposed  
"Educational Excellence for All  
Children Act of 1999"**

*May 21, 1999*

*To the Congress of the United States:*

I am pleased to transmit for your immediate consideration the "Educational Excellence for All Children Act of 1999," my Administration's proposal for reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) and other elementary and secondary education programs.

My proposal builds on the positive trends achieved under current law. The "Improving America's Schools Act of 1994," which reauthorized the ESEA 5 years ago, and the "Goals 2000: Educate America Act" gave States and school districts a framework for integrating Federal resources in support of State and local reforms based on high academic standards. In response, 48 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have adopted State-level standards. Recent results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show improved performance for the economically disadvantaged and other at-risk students who are the primary focus of ESEA programs. NAEP reading scores for 9-year olds in high-poverty schools have improved significantly since 1992, while mathematics achievement has also increased nationally. Students in high-poverty schools and the lowest-performing students—the specific target populations for the ESEA Title I program—have registered gains in both reading and math achievement.

I am encouraged by these positive trends, but educational results for many children remain far below what they should be. My proposal to reauthorize the ESEA is based on four themes reflecting lessons from research and the experience of implementing the 1994 Act.

First, we would continue to focus on high academic standards for all children. The underlying purpose of every program within the ESEA is to help all children reach challenging State and local academic standards. States have largely completed the first stage of standards-based reform by developing content standards for all children. My bill