

Week Ending Friday, November 19, 1999

**Message on the Observance of  
International Day of Prayer for  
the Persecuted Church, 1999**

*November 10, 1999*

Warm greetings to all those observing the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church.

Throughout my Presidency, I have strived to promote the cause of international religious freedom. I am proud that my Administration has completed the first phase outlined in the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. In September, we published the first annual report on the status of religious freedom worldwide; and in October, we publicly designated the most severe violators of religious freedom.

On this special occasion, we pause to reflect on the importance of religious freedom and the profound role that religion continues to play in the lives of citizens around the world. Throughout human history, religion has helped countless individuals address profound questions about life and the universe. Across the globe, in places large and small, we have seen the resilience and depth of the human desire to worship freely.

We have also seen in our communities and in other nations around the world the violence and human tragedy spawned by hatred, intolerance, and fear born of ignorance—even ignorance of one another's religion. But religion encourages us to recognize our capacity for forgiveness and love. On this sacred day, we pray most fervently to Almighty God to change the hearts of those who persecute others and to help us in building just communities united in understanding, compassion, and mutual respect.

Best wishes to all for a blessed observance.

**Bill Clinton**

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 12. This item

was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

**Statement on the Proposed  
“Southeast Europe Trade  
Preference Act”**

*November 12, 1999*

Today I instructed the Office of the United States Trade Representative to transmit to Congress the “Southeast Europe Trade Preference Act” (“SETPA”), which would authorize expansion of duty-free treatment to a much broader range of imports from the region for 5 years. This legislation implements in part a trade expansion initiative that I launched at the Sarajevo Summit in July. This initiative is an important part of the broader Stability Pact developed by the United States, our European allies and partners, and others to speed the economic development and democratization of southeast Europe and advance its integration into an undivided Europe. Along with trade benefits provided by European nations, these efforts can help the countries of the region achieve long-term economic growth. This, in turn, will strengthen the region's stability and reduce the risk of another destructive conflict.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

**Statement on Signing the District of  
Columbia College Access Act of 1999**

*November 12, 1999*

Today I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 974, the “District of Columbia College Access Act of 1999.” This Act helps to level the playing field for the young people of the District of Columbia by expanding opportunities for affordable higher education. My FY 2000 Budget requested \$17 million to improve access to higher education for D.C.