

**Proclamation 7269—National
Biotechnology Month, 2000**

January 19, 2000

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

As we stand at the dawn of a new century, we recognize the enormous potential that biotechnology holds for improving the quality of life here in the United States and around the world. These technologies, which draw on our understanding of the life sciences to develop products and solve problems, are progressing at an exponential rate and promise to make unprecedented contributions to public health and safety, a cleaner environment, and economic prosperity.

Today, a third of all new medicines in development are based on biotechnology. Designed to attack the underlying cause of an illness, not just its symptoms, these medicines have tremendous potential to provide not only more effective treatments, but also cures. With improved understanding of cellular and genetic processes, scientists have opened exciting new avenues of research into treatments for devastating diseases—like Parkinson's and Alzheimer's, diabetes, heart disease, AIDS, and cancer—that affect millions of Americans. Biotechnology has also given us several new vaccines, including one for rotavirus, now being tested clinically, that could eradicate an illness responsible for the deaths of more than 800,000 infants and children each year.

The impact of biotechnology is far-reaching. Bioremediation technologies are cleaning our environment by removing toxic substances from contaminated soils and ground water. Agricultural biotechnology reduces our dependence on pesticides. Manufacturing processes based on biotechnology make it possible to produce paper and chemicals with less energy, less pollution, and less waste. Forensic technologies based on our growing knowledge of DNA help us exonerate the innocent and bring criminals to justice.

The biotechnology industry is also improving lives through its substantial economic impact. Biotechnology has stimulated the cre-

ation and growth of small businesses, generated new jobs, and encouraged agricultural and industrial innovation. The industry currently employs more than 150,000 people and invests nearly \$10 billion a year on research and development.

Recognizing the extraordinary promise and benefits of this enterprise, my Administration has pursued policies to foster biotechnology innovations as expeditiously and prudently as possible. We have supported steady increases in funding for basic scientific research at the National Institutes of Health and other science agencies; accelerated the process for approving new medicines to make them available as quickly and safely as possible; encouraged private-sector research investment and small business development through tax incentives and the Small Business Innovation Research program; promoted intellectual property protection and open international markets for biotechnology inventions and products; and developed public databases that enable scientists to coordinate their efforts in an enterprise that has become one of the world's finest examples of partnership among university-based researchers, government, and private industry.

Remarkable as its achievements have been, the biotechnology enterprise is still in its infancy. We will reap even greater benefits as long as we sustain the intellectual partnership and public confidence that have moved biotechnology forward thus far. We must strengthen our efforts to improve science education for all Americans and preserve and promote the freedom of scientific inquiry. We must protect patients from the misuse or abuse of sensitive medical information and provide Federal regulatory agencies with sufficient resources to maintain sound, science-based review and regulation of biotechnology products. And we must strive to ensure that science-based regulatory programs worldwide promote public safety, earn public confidence, and guarantee fair and open international markets.

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 January 2000 as National Biotechnology Month. I call upon

the people of the United States to observe this month with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this nineteenth day of January, in the year of our Lord two thousand, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

William J. Clinton

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NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 20, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on January 24.

Remarks on Launching the Agenda for Higher Education and Lifetime Learning

January 20, 2000

Thank you very much, Nina, for being exhibit A for the announcement that we're here for today. Thank you, Secretary Riley, for your leadership in every aspect of education and especially in this one.

I thank Secretary Slater for coming. I suspect he's here for two reasons. One is, Rodney Slater grew up in a county that, when I was Governor, was one of the 10 poorest counties in America. And he happened to be a good football player and was able to go to college in Michigan and play football. And he, later in his career, became an officer at a university in our home State. So he also is exhibit A for why every child should be able to go to college.

I want to thank Representative Rush Holt for being here. He is not only a former distinguished professor at Princeton, but he has a task force on access to higher education in his congressional district. And the people who live in his district actually are among those who will be most benefited if this entire proposal passes, as we hope it will.

In their absence, I want to thank Congressman Ford and Senator Olympia Snowe, who had been very, very strong on this issue. And the two people I want to thank most obviously, are Senator Schumer and the First Lady, who lobbied me relentlessly on this for

the better part of a year. If you've ever been lobbied by either one of them, you know—[*laughter*]*—it's sort of like, are you going to say yes now, or put yourself through all this misery and say yes later? But it's been very interesting. I'll say more about it in a moment. [Laughter]*

We know when we open the doors to college, we open the doors to opportunity. When we make college more affordable, we make the American dream more achievable. That's why we're all here today. I'm glad there are so many young people here today. They're probably sorry that they're not really getting out of school; they could have gotten out of school anyway—[*laughter*]*—but I'm glad you all came and waited.*

Some in Congress, I note, are saying that because this is an election year, we really shouldn't try to do anything for the American people. We're here today to give perhaps the most powerful example for why we should reject that view. Nothing, not a national election or a Washington snowstorm, should get in the way of making a college education more affordable for all Americans. [*Applause*] Thank you. Students can't put off their growing up for a year; families can't put off going to work for a year; and neither should we.

Today is a happy day for me. This is my seventh anniversary as President of the United States. I am profoundly grateful for the long way we have come as a nation in these last 7 years, that today we have the lowest poverty rate in 20 years, the lowest unemployment and welfare rates in 30 years, the first back-to-back budget surpluses in over 40 years. I am grateful that we are coming together, that we have the lowest African-American and Hispanic unemployment rates we have ever recorded, that we have the lowest female unemployment rate in 40 years, the lowest single-parent household poverty rate in 46 years, and that in the last couple of years we have finally begun to see a reversal in the increase in inequality of incomes of working people, which was going on for nearly three decades.

So the family of America is growing stronger, and that is fundamentally a tribute to the hard work and adaptability of the American people. It has also been helped along the way