

Week Ending Friday, May 5, 2000

**Statement on the Legal Framework Agreement for the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Oil Pipeline**

*April 28, 2000*

I am very pleased that today delegations from Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey reached agreement on the legal framework for the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline. Last November in Istanbul, I witnessed the signing of initial documents for this framework. Today's achievement completes this work and brings the pipeline project a critical step closer to fruition.

By this action, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey have shown once again their commitment to building regional cooperation, peaceful relations, and better lives for all their people. I congratulate Presidents Aliyev, Shevardnadze, and Demirel, along with all the negotiating teams, for their leadership in moving this project forward.

I look forward to the next phase of this effort, when companies from the United States, Western Europe, and Russia will work with those of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Turkey to transform legal frameworks into commercial reality.

The United States is committed to the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline as a key part of our overall approach to Caspian energy development. We want to ensure access to world markets for the countries of the region, while helping diversify sources of energy supply for consumers in the United States and around the globe.

NOTE: In his statement, the President referred to President Heydar Aliyev of Azerbaijan; President Eduard Shevardnadze of Georgia; and President Suleyman Demirel of Turkey. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

**Proclamation 7297—National Charter Schools Week, 2000**

*April 28, 2000*

*By the President of the United States of America*

**A Proclamation**

Providing our children the high-quality education they need to succeed is one of the greatest challenges we face as a Nation, and helping communities establish public charter schools is one of the best ways we can meet that challenge.

Charter schools—public schools that are started by parents, educators, and communities working in partnership—are open to students of every background and ability. They also afford greater autonomy and flexibility in staffing decisions, curriculum design, and other areas than traditional public schools do. In return for this flexibility, charter schools must set and meet the highest standards, and they can remain open only as long as they do so.

These schools are helping us to meet many of our Nation's most important education goals. They are driving change in public schools across America by showing the benefits of greater parent participation, longer school years, higher academic standards, and character education. Charter schools offer reform, innovation, and increased choice in public education, and, by doing so, they spur improvement throughout our public school system.

I am proud that my Administration has taken a leadership role in promoting and funding public charter schools. When I took office almost 8 years ago, there was only one charter school in our Nation. By September of last year, that number had grown to more than 1,600 in 30 States and the District of Columbia, with more than 250,000 students enrolled and many more on waiting lists.