

Statement on Signing the Hmong Veterans Naturalization Act of 2000

May 26, 2000

Today I signed H.R. 371, the Hmong Veterans Naturalization Act of 2000. This legislation is a tribute to the service, courage, and sacrifice of the Hmong people who were our allies in Laos during the Vietnam war. After the Vietnam war, many Hmong soldiers and their families came to the * United States and have become part of the social fabric of American society. They work, pay taxes, and have raised families and made America their home. However, some Hmongs seeking to become American citizens have faced great difficulty meeting the requirements for naturalization for reasons associated with the unique circumstances of the Hmong culture. Until recently, the Hmong people had no written language. Without this experience, learning English, a requirement of naturalization, has been much more difficult for some Hmongs. This requirement has prevented many Hmongs from becoming full participants in American society. This new law will waive the English language requirement and provide special consideration for the civics requirement for Hmong veterans and their families. This law is a small step but an important one in honoring the immense sacrifices that the Hmong people made in supporting our efforts in Southeast Asia. I would like to recognize Representative Bruce Vento and Senator Wellstone, sponsors of the legislation, for their leadership on this issue.

NOTE: H.R. 371, approved May 26, was assigned Public Law No. 106-207. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Statement on the Meat and Poultry Inspection System

May 26, 2000

When this administration came into office, meat and poultry were inspected by the same old method used for 90 years. In 1996, we began a comprehensive, science-based sys-

tem that, for the first time, requires plants to reduce bacterial contamination in meat and poultry.

This system has been a tremendous success. In just 2 years, the presence of dangerous salmonella on meat and poultry has been reduced by up to 50 percent, and illnesses caused by salmonella are also down.

Unfortunately, a small minority of meat plants are acting against the best interests of the American people. They threaten to undermine an inspection system that is clearly effective in reducing food poisoning, jeopardizing the confidence that consumers have in the safety of the food they eat.

The Justice Department has vigorously defended this vital program and will decide on an expedited basis what further legal action to take. I am also calling on the food industry to use its vast resources to help ensure that all meat processing plants maintain the strictest possible safety standards.

This administration will continue to use every available tool to ensure that our food supply remains the safest in the world.

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

The President's Radio Address

May 27, 2000

Good morning. Memorial Day weekend is a special time to honor those who have fought for our freedom but also to gather with our family and friends at picnics and backyard barbecues. Where we take pride in serving up plenty of good food, we should also take pains that the food we serve is good for us. Today I want to talk about new steps we're taking to empower Americans with the latest and best information on food and nutrition.

For 20 years now, the Federal Government has been setting guidelines for good nutrition based on the best scientific evidence. And for over 6 years, the Government has required nutrition labeling on most foods. With better information, Americans are making better choices. We're eating less fat as a percentage of our diet, more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and average blood cholesterol levels are going down.

* White House correction.

Yet despite this progress, the vast majority of Americans still don't have healthy diets. And some changes in our lifestyles are making matters worse. We're eating more fast food because of our hectic schedules, and we're less physically active because of our growing reliance on modern conveniences, from cars to computers to remote controls. As a result, more and more Americans are overweight or obese, including 1 in 10 children. This is an alarming trend, because obesity and bad eating habits contribute to four of the leading causes of death: heart disease, stroke, cancer, and diabetes.

To address these challenges, experts from around our Nation will meet next week in Washington for a summit on nutrition sponsored by the Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services. It will be the first national nutrition summit in 31 years. To kick off the summit, today I am releasing the Federal Government's new Dietary Guidelines 2000. They're updated every 5 years. These guidelines serve as the gold standard of nutritional information. They determine, among other things, the nutritional content of the lunches served to 26 million of our children every day in school.

These new guidelines strengthen the message that doctors and scientists have been telling us for some time now: We should choose more whole-grain foods and a variety of fruits and vegetables every day, and we should moderate the saturated fat, cholesterol, sugar, salt, and alcohol in our diets.

There are two new guidelines this year as well. One emphasizes the importance of handling and storing food safely. The other makes clear the enormous benefits of building physical activity into our daily lives. Just a brisk 30-minute walk five times a week, for instance, can cut the chance of developing or dying from heart disease in half.

I'm also pleased to announce today that this summer the Federal Government will propose that packaged meat and poultry sold in stores must come with nutrition labels. This is just plain common sense. Shoppers value the fact that when they pick up a box of cereal or a frozen meal, they can check the nutrition labels and see how many calories or grams of saturated fat these foods contain. That's the same kind of information

that ought to be put on every package of ground beef. Currently, fewer than 60 percent of retailers do so, because nutrition labeling for meat is voluntary. It's time we made it mandatory.

Providing citizens with accurate information that affects their lives is one of Government's most vital responsibilities. But citizens have a responsibility to use that information wisely, as well, especially when it comes to the food they provide their children and the habits they encourage in them. So this weekend, have a good time. Let's all eat well and eat right. Let's enjoy the outdoors and get some physical activity and be thankful for the bounteous times in which we live and the country that makes us so proud.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 4:39 p.m. on May 26 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on May 27. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 26 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Statement on the Ulster Unionist Council Vote in Northern Ireland

May 27, 2000

I am delighted that, with today's historic developments, the Northern Ireland peace process is back on track. I congratulate David Trimble and the Ulster Unionist Council on their decision to return to self-government in Northern Ireland. This is a giant step toward fulfillment of the historic promise of the Good Friday accord to provide self-government to all the people on the basis of equality, consent, and the use of exclusively peaceful means. The parties are now ready to reenter the Executive and Legislative Assembly in the coming days. It is now possible for the politics of conflict to be transformed into the politics of consensus. I applaud the leadership of Tony Blair, Bertie Ahern, and all the parties. The wind is back in the sails of peace in Northern Ireland.