

pressed families trying to provide long-term care for elderly and sick family members. Surely we can agree on this bipartisan compromise that has already been endorsed by a broad array of members of Congress, advocates for seniors and people with disabilities, and insurers. Similarly, I am perplexed that we cannot agree to include the bipartisan credit for vaccine research and purchases that is essential to save lives and advance public health.

I also am disappointed that you have made virtually no attempt to address the concerns my Administration has expressed to you about the pension provisions of your bill. By dropping the progressive savings incentives from the Senate Finance Committee bill, you have failed to address the lack of pension coverage for over 70 million people. Moreover, employers may have new incentives to drop pension coverage for some of the low- and moderate-income workers lucky enough to have pension plans today.

Finally, I remain deeply concerned that your Medicare and Medicaid refinement proposal continues to fail to attach accountability provisions to excessive payment increases to health maintenance organizations (HMOs) while rejecting critical investments in beneficiaries and vulnerable health care providers. Specifically, you insist on an unjustifiable spending increase for HMOs at the same time as you exclude bipartisan policies such as health insurance options for children with disabilities, legal immigrant pregnant women and children, and enrolling uninsured children in schools, as well as needed payment increases to hospitals, academic health centers, home health agencies, and other vulnerable providers. Congress should not go home without responding to the urgent health needs of our seniors, people with disabilities, and children and the health care providers who serve them.

A far better path than the current one is for Congressional Republicans, Democrats, and my Administration to come together in a bipartisan process to find common ground on both tax relief and Medicare/Medicaid refinements.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Trent Lott, majority leader of the Senate. An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Commerce, Justice, and State Appropriations Legislation

October 26, 2000

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. Leader:)

I am writing to raise my serious concerns with the FY 2001 Commerce, Justice, and State appropriations bill that was filed this morning as part of the FY 2001 District of Columbia conference report. Although neither my Administration nor virtually any Member of Congress has had an opportunity to review this bill, it is our understanding that it fails to adequately address a number of high-priority issues that the Administration has previously brought to your attention. Therefore, I have no choice but to veto this bill.

It is our understanding that this bill fails to redress several injustices in our immigration system as called for by the Latino and Immigrant Fairness Act. Those provisions would help normalize the immigration status of individuals and their families who have been living for many years in the United States, and, as such, would restore fairness and equity to our immigration laws. Current Republican proposals would not help most of the people who need relief and would perpetuate the current patchwork of contradictory and unfair immigration policies.

In addition, it is our understanding that this bill fails to provide the resources needed for the Department of Justice to let justice work its course by pursuing tobacco litigation to address the need for tobacco companies to bear responsibility for the staggering costs of tobacco-related illnesses. Congress should not block the judicial process, especially in a matter that is of supreme importance to the public health and the public interest.

This bill also fails to include hate crimes legislation that would cover crimes motivated by bias on the basis of a victim's gender, disability, or sexual orientation. Both the House

and Senate have had bipartisan votes indicating their support for strong hate crimes legislation and it should become law this year.

The bill fails to address in any meaningful way the real privacy concerns about Social Security numbers raised by the Administration. Regrettably, it does not include needed protections against the inappropriate sale and display of individual citizens' social security numbers. Moreover, the bill creates loopholes that seriously undermine the goal of the legislation to protect privacy. In addition, by not reauthorizing the Violent Crime Reduction Trust Fund, the bill fails to support successful Federal efforts to protect critical law enforcement funding and reduce violent crime.

We also understand that a range of anti-environmental, anti-competitive, and other damaging riders have been under consideration and may have been added to this bill. I urge Congress to refrain from adding riders that would reward special interests at the expense of the public interest. I also urge Congress to drop the rider that would prevent the Federal Communications Commission from licensing new low-power FM radio stations to provide for a diversity of voices in communities around the country. And regrettably, Congress has attached a deeply flawed Commerce, Justice, and State bill to an otherwise signable District of Columbia bill.

I urge the Congress to complete its work by sending me acceptable bills. I regret that the bipartisan discussion to resolve these issues in this bill were abandoned. The recent passage of several other appropriations bills shows that when we work together and Congress puts progress over partisanship, we are able to deliver real results for the American people. It is long past time for Congress to do the same for the Commerce, Justice, and State bill and to produce a bill I can sign.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives; Richard A. Gephardt, House minority leader; Trent Lott, Senate majority leader; and Thomas A. Daschle,

Senate minority leader. An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

Remarks on the Budget and the Legislative Agenda and an Exchange With Reporters

October 27, 2000

The President. Good morning—good afternoon. [Laughter] Don't tell anybody I didn't know what time it was. [Laughter]

I would like to say a few words about the budget, the progress we have made, and the work still to be done in this Congress.

The appropriations bills we pass every year do a lot more than keep our Government running. They tell us something very basic about our priorities as a nation. There's no great secret to getting things done around here. When we put progress over partisanship, we get results. When we work together, we get results.

For example, I just signed a very fine VA/ HUD appropriations bill, along with the energy and water appropriations bill. It includes some impressive advances for the American people: 79,000 housing vouchers to help people move from welfare to work; more support for housing for the elderly and disabled; investment for our economic empowerment agenda that the Vice President has led, including empowerment zones and community development banks; more funds for AmeriCorps; funds for climate change research and technology in the Energy Department; funds to support our space program; the largest increase ever in the Veterans Administration and in the National Science Foundation, something that is critically important to our future; and adequate funding for FEMA to meet our national emergencies.

The energy and water bill also contains funds for climate change technology and research in solar and renewable energies. These things will have a direct, positive impact on our long-term energy future and help us to become less dependent on and less vulnerable to supply interruptions and price explosions in oil. This is very, very important.

Now, I could say the same thing about the Interior bill I signed the other day, which