

Management and Budget to ensure consideration for the FY 2002 budget; include input from provider, health care consumer, and nutrition communities, and develop a blueprint for action to:

1. expand the availability of automated systems or computer software to provide WIC clinics with information on childhood immunization schedules, with the eventual goal of providing this service in every WIC clinic nationwide, to provide more accurate and cost-effective immunization assessment, referral, and follow-up, in a manner that addresses cost-sharing concerns by both agencies;
2. disseminate a range of best practices for increasing immunization rates for low-income children to WIC State and local agencies, as well as immunization programs nationwide, including developing efficient and effective ways to educate WIC staff about the importance of immunization, appropriate immunization schedules, and the information necessary to make a meaningful referral;
3. foster partnerships (through written guides and/or technical assistance) between WIC offices and health care providers/advocates who can assist with immunization referrals and conduct appropriate follow-up with families;
4. include information on the importance of immunizations and appropriate immunization schedules in standard WIC efforts to educate families about breastfeeding, anemia, lead poisoning, and other health-related topics; and
5. evaluate whether other Federal programs serving children should require a standard question on immunizations as part of their enrollment process, and if deemed appropriate, develop a plan for implementing that requirement.

The actions I am directing you to take today, and any further actions developed as a result of interagency collaboration or public-private partnerships, should not create

barriers to WIC participation. Immunization outreach and assessment procedures should never be used as a condition of eligibility for WIC services or nutritional assistance. Rather, activities to improve immunization rates for children participating in WIC should be complementary, aggressive, and consistent with my Administration's overall initiative to increase immunization rates for children nationwide.

William J. Clinton

Remarks on Lighting the National Christmas Tree

December 11, 2000

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. First, I'd like to thank Peter Nostrand and all the people who work on the Pageant of Peace every year. They give us a wonderful night, and I think we ought to give them all a big hand. Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

I'd love to thank these people who have come out in the cold to perform for us: our friend Kathy Mattea; Charlotte Church; Billy Gilman; the cast of "Fosse;" the West Tennessee Youth Chorus; Al "Santa Claus" Roker. [*Laughter*]

I also want to thank Anastasia Wroblewski and Kwami Dennis, our Camp Fire Boy and Camp Fire Girl. They did a great job up here. It's not so easy to remember those speeches. [*Laughter*] I thought they were terrific.

And I'd like to thank Thomas Kinkade for his beautiful portrait that's on the cover of our program, and the United States Navy Band. Thank you very much.

On Christmas Eve more than 75 years ago, President Calvin Coolidge lit the first National Christmas Tree. He later said, "Christmas is not a time or a season but a state of mind, to cherish peace and goodwill, to be plenteous in mercy."

Every President since President Coolidge has been part of that tradition, gathering around the Colorado spruce to rejoice in the spirit of Christmas and to celebrate a new season of peace and good will.

Hillary, Chelsea and I always look forward to celebrating the Pageant of Peace with you, and the many traditions of the holiday season. Tonight, as we enjoy our last Christmas

season in the White House and the last time I'll have a chance to be here at the lighting of the Christmas tree, we are profoundly grateful for the gift you and all the American people have given us, the privilege to serve these last 8 years, to live in this marvelous old house, and to participate in wonderful ceremonies like this.

For Americans of many faiths, this is a season of renewal, of light returned from darkness, despair transformed to hope, a time to reflect on our lives, rejoice in our blessings, and give thanks. Tonight, on this first Christmas of the new millennium, we celebrate an America blessed with unprecedented peace and prosperity and a nation that through more than 220 years and even the toughest times has held together by the enduring values enshrined in our Constitution.

This is a time for us to reflect, too, on that good fortune and a time to rededicate ourselves to the lessons of love and reconciliation taught by a child born in Bethlehem 2000 years ago. As we gather to decorate our trees and light our menorahs, let us remember the true meaning of the holidays by taking some time to give to those who need it most. And let us be thankful for the sacrifices of all those who serve us, especially those who serve us in the military who won't be home this year for Christmas.

Let me say that when I leave you tonight, I'm going to Northern Ireland, to a small island where people were born that eventually came to America and gave us over 40 million of our citizens; a place where Saint Patrick brought the spirit of Christmas almost 1,500 years ago. I hope that we can finish the business of peace there and help, again, America to give a gift to the rest of the world.

To all of you, again I say, this has been a humbling and wondrous gift. We thank you, all of us in our family, for the chance to serve yours. God bless you; merry Christmas, and let's light the tree.

Thank you very much. Ready, set, go!

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:55 p.m. on the Ellipse during the annual Christmas Pageant of Peace. In his remarks, he referred to musicians Kathy Mattea, Charlotte Church, and Billy Gilman; television weatherman Al Roker, master of ceremonies, and Peter Nostrand, chairman,

Christmas Pageant of Peace; and artist Thomas Kinkade.

Statement on the Termination of Irish Deportation Proceedings

December 11, 2000

I strongly support the Attorney General's decision, at the request of the Secretary of State, to take action to terminate deportation proceedings against six individuals and to refrain from initiating proceedings against three others. All nine individuals had served sentences in the United Kingdom for activity connected with the IRA but are physically present in the United States. While in no way approving or condoning their past criminal acts, I believe that removing the threat of deportation for these individuals will contribute to the peace process in Northern Ireland. The Attorney General's decision is consistent with steps taken by the British Government under the Good Friday accord to release prisoners in Northern Ireland and reintegrate them into normal society as part of a process of reconciliation. Her decision will also reinforce efforts by the Governments and the parties in Northern Ireland to implement in full all aspects of the Good Friday accord.

Statement on Signing the Water Resources Development Act of 2000

December 11, 2000

Today I have signed into law S. 2796, the "Water Resources Development Act of 2000," a multibillion dollar omnibus bill to authorize water projects and programs of the United States Army Corps of Engineers.

I am very pleased that this bill authorizes the Administration's plan to restore an unprecedented natural resource—America's Everglades. Thanks to an historic partnership among Federal, State, tribal, and local leaders, we can begin in earnest an over 30-year journey to complete the largest and most ambitious ecosystem restoration project in the world.

Since the beginning of our first term, the Vice President and I have made Everglades restoration a priority. We have provided the