

revenue source gives the Department of Veterans Affairs the incentive to improve its collections while ensuring more control over its future viability as a health-care provider.

Unfortunately, the Act also eliminates funding for the U.S. Office of Consumer Affairs, which has served Presidents of both parties over three decades. I will work to ensure that a consumer voice is maintained from existing agency resources.

**William J. Clinton**

The White House,  
October 27, 1997.

NOTE: H.R. 2158, approved October 27, was assigned Public Law No. 105-65.

**Statement on Signing the  
Department of Transportation and  
Related Agencies Appropriations  
Act, 1998**

*October 27, 1997*

I am pleased to sign into law today H.R. 2169, the "Department of Transportation and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1998."

This legislation provides funds to improve safety on our highways, airways, and waterways. It would also permit the highest level of Federal infrastructure investment in history—investment to improve our Nation's highways, transit systems, Amtrak, and airports and, as a result, improve personal mobility and make America a better global competitor.

Unfortunately the Congress has done only half the job in passing this legislation. Authorization of the Federal grant programs for highways, transit, and highway safety expired on September 30, 1997. Until the Congress reauthorizes those programs within the constraints of the Balanced Budget Act, we have only the promise of record-high investment levels, not the reality.

I submitted my proposal to reauthorize those programs, called "The National Economic Crossroads Transportation Efficiency Act" (NEXTEA), last March. The Congress has held hearings and begun work on this legislation. But, as we near the end of the first month of fiscal 1998, the Congress has

not presented me with legislation that would reauthorize these programs.

I call on the Congress to act—before it adjourns for the year—on a multi-year reauthorization bill that will give transportation planners and decision-makers the assurance of multi-year funding levels that they can use to continue to improve America's vital transportation network. My Administration stands ready to assist the Congress to resolve the issues and agree on a multi-year bill.

**William J. Clinton**

The White House,  
October 27, 1997.

NOTE: H.R. 2169, approved October 27, was assigned Public Law No. 105-66.

**Remarks at a Birthday Party for the  
First Lady in Chicago, Illinois**

*October 27, 1997*

**The President.** Thank you very much. You can hear I'm a little hoarse tonight, but I'll do my best to be heard over the din. Let me say to all of you, first of all, thank you, Mr. Mayor, thank you Mrs. Daley; thank you, Lois Weisberg. I thank all the committee, everybody who had anything to do with this day today. You have made Hillary and, I might say, her mother and her brothers who came with her today—you've made their whole family very happy. This has been an unforgettable day in her life, and I am profoundly grateful to all of you, and I thank you very much.

You know, before I met Hillary, you could put what I knew about Chicago in a thimble and have space left over. [Laughter] About a week after I met Hillary, I thought there was no other city on the face of the Earth. [Laughter] I'll never forget the first time I came here to visit Hillary. I remember only two things: her father would not come outside to say hello to me—[laughter]—which I thought showed good judgment on his part—[laughter]—and she took me to Chicago and showed me the city. And I fell in love with it then—that was a long time ago now—and I have been ever since.

This is a magnificent place. You have done unbelievable things. You're in the process of