

Week Ending Friday, November 19, 1999

**Message on the Observance of
International Day of Prayer for
the Persecuted Church, 1999**

November 10, 1999

Warm greetings to all those observing the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church.

Throughout my Presidency, I have strived to promote the cause of international religious freedom. I am proud that my Administration has completed the first phase outlined in the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. In September, we published the first annual report on the status of religious freedom worldwide; and in October, we publicly designated the most severe violators of religious freedom.

On this special occasion, we pause to reflect on the importance of religious freedom and the profound role that religion continues to play in the lives of citizens around the world. Throughout human history, religion has helped countless individuals address profound questions about life and the universe. Across the globe, in places large and small, we have seen the resilience and depth of the human desire to worship freely.

We have also seen in our communities and in other nations around the world the violence and human tragedy spawned by hatred, intolerance, and fear born of ignorance—even ignorance of one another's religion. But religion encourages us to recognize our capacity for forgiveness and love. On this sacred day, we pray most fervently to Almighty God to change the hearts of those who persecute others and to help us in building just communities united in understanding, compassion, and mutual respect.

Best wishes to all for a blessed observance.

Bill Clinton

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 12. This item

was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

**Statement on the Proposed
“Southeast Europe Trade
Preference Act”**

November 12, 1999

Today I instructed the Office of the United States Trade Representative to transmit to Congress the “Southeast Europe Trade Preference Act” (“SETPA”), which would authorize expansion of duty-free treatment to a much broader range of imports from the region for 5 years. This legislation implements in part a trade expansion initiative that I launched at the Sarajevo Summit in July. This initiative is an important part of the broader Stability Pact developed by the United States, our European allies and partners, and others to speed the economic development and democratization of southeast Europe and advance its integration into an undivided Europe. Along with trade benefits provided by European nations, these efforts can help the countries of the region achieve long-term economic growth. This, in turn, will strengthen the region's stability and reduce the risk of another destructive conflict.

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

**Statement on Signing the District of
Columbia College Access Act of 1999**

November 12, 1999

Today I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 974, the “District of Columbia College Access Act of 1999.” This Act helps to level the playing field for the young people of the District of Columbia by expanding opportunities for affordable higher education. My FY 2000 Budget requested \$17 million to improve access to higher education for D.C.

residents by enabling them to attend public colleges and universities in Maryland and Virginia at in-State tuition rates. I am grateful for the bipartisan effort in the Congress to work with my Administration to build on that proposal and develop this Act.

The District of Columbia College Access Act of 1999 will allow the Federal Government, through a program run by the Mayor of the District of Columbia, to pay the difference between in-State and out-of-State tuition at public colleges and universities in Maryland, Virginia, and other States, under certain circumstances, on behalf of qualified D.C. residents. District of Columbia residents could receive up to \$10,000 per year, with a \$50,000 maximum overall, in tuition subsidies under this Act. This tuition subsidy is critical, because it will provide an opportunity for D.C. residents, like the residents of all 50 States, to attend a variety of affordable public colleges and universities. A lack of financial resources can be a roadblock to entering college, as well as a major reason why many students who enroll in college do not complete their degree programs. By providing this tuition subsidy, we are providing D.C. residents more opportunities to attend college, and encouraging families with college-bound children to remain in, or move to, the District. By assisting individual D.C. residents through these tuition subsidies, we will also be contributing to the continued revitalization of the District of Columbia.

In addition, the Act would authorize grants of up to \$2,500 per year, with a \$12,500 per student maximum, to D.C. residents who choose to attend private colleges and universities in the Washington, D.C. area, including private historically Black colleges and universities in Maryland or Virginia. Together with the tuition subsidy for public colleges and universities, these grants would greatly expand both public and private post-secondary opportunities for D.C. residents.

Throughout the legislative development of this bill, my Administration stated its preference for ensuring that Federal resources are provided to those students with greater need for financial assistance. The Act goes a long way toward reaching that goal by providing the Mayor of the District of Columbia with the authority, in the event of insufficient

appropriations, to establish priorities regarding the making or amount of tuition and fee payments on the basis of the income and need of eligible students.

The Act would also authorize financial support to the University of the District of Columbia (UDC), if it does not receive funds under the Higher Education Act of 1965 on the basis of its status as a historically Black college and university. In order to provide a range of high quality higher education opportunities to D.C. residents, this Act will ensure that Federal funds are available to support the only public institution of higher education in the District of Columbia and to help ensure that D.C. residents who choose to attend UDC will receive a solid education.

Finally, I must point out that this Act is only part of the efforts currently underway to improve higher education opportunities for D.C. students. I congratulate the private sector's outstanding efforts to prepare D.C. students to attend college, and to provide additional tuition assistance beyond that provided in this Act. The commitment of both the private and public sectors to broaden postsecondary education opportunities available to D.C. residents will have a significant impact on the education, economic well-being, and lives of many D.C. students and their families for years to come. I look forward to working with D.C. Mayor Anthony Williams as he implements this groundbreaking new program.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
November 12, 1999.

NOTE: H.R. 974, approved November 12, was assigned Public Law No. 106-98. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

November 13, 1999

Good morning. In recent weeks, Congress and our administration have been engaged in final budget negotiations that will set the direction our Nation takes as we enter the new millennium. This week we made good progress. Today I want to talk to you about