

meal supplements at no charge. In addition, it continues to allow children in the Even Start Family Literacy Program to be eligible for free school meals.

The Act makes a number of changes to improve the administration, efficiency, and integrity of the child nutrition programs while protecting health and safety standards. It removes barriers to the participation of private, nonprofit organizations in the Summer Food Service Program, especially in rural areas, and streamlines many National School Lunch Program procedures. In addition, it revises program licensing requirements to allow more child care providers to provide Federally funded snacks to needy children. Furthermore, it ensures health and safety inspections of school food service operations where they are currently not required.

The Act is tough on fraud and abuse. It allows the Department of Agriculture to permanently disqualify from the WIC program vendors convicted of trafficking food instruments—such as WIC vouchers or electronic benefit transfer

cards—or selling firearms, ammunition, explosives, or controlled substances in exchange for them. In addition, it requires WIC applicants to appear in person to apply for benefits and document their income as a condition of receiving benefits.

It is well known that a strong relationship exists between children's nutritional status and their ability to learn, and I remain vitally concerned that all school children have what they need to succeed in school. In joining together to support H.R. 3874, my Administration and the Congress have forged a bipartisan opportunity to improve the nutrition, health, and well-being of our Nation's children. I am pleased to sign this legislation into law.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
October 31, 1998.

NOTE: H.R. 3874, approved October 31, was assigned Public Law No. 105-336.

Statement on Signing the Haskell Indian Nations University and Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute Administrative Systems Act of 1998

October 31, 1998

Today I am signing into law H.R. 4259, the "Haskell Indian Nations University and Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute Administrative Systems Act of 1998." Haskell Indian Nations University (Haskell) and Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) are the only Federally owned and operated schools in the United States dedicated to higher education for American Indians. Together they have provided thousands of American Indians valuable educational opportunities. This Act will broaden and increase those opportunities by assisting both institutions in their ongoing efforts to attract and retain highly qualified administrators, faculty, and staff.

The Act authorizes Haskell and SIPI each to conduct a 5-year demonstration project to test the feasibility and desirability of alternative personnel management systems designed to meet the special staffing circumstances in a college and university setting. Currently, Haskell

and SIPI operate under the same civil service personnel system as most other Federal agencies. The demonstration projects authorized by H.R. 4259 will provide these schools flexibility to test personnel reforms in areas such as recruitment, hiring, compensation, training, discipline, promotion, and benefits. At the same time, the Act maintains continued adherence to applicable laws and regulations on matters such as equal employment opportunity, Indian preference, and veterans' preference. My expectation is that, at the conclusion of these demonstration projects, these schools will have tested alternative personnel systems that maintain important employee benefits and protections while promoting the flexibility necessary in a college and university setting.

In signing H.R. 4259, I recognize that the legislation raises several concerns. It allows Haskell and SIPI to conduct demonstration projects involving leave and other employee benefits,

such as retirement, health benefits, and life insurance—something no other Federal agency has been permitted to do. We must be mindful that altering employees' benefits for even a brief portion of their careers can have a serious long-term effect. Should such modifications be applied to a large number of Federal employees through other demonstration projects they could have a damaging effect on the Federal retirement and insurance trust funds, which depend on spreading risk of loss over the largest possible group of individuals. These concerns are compounded by the fact that H.R. 4259 does not provide for the level of oversight by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) that is typically required for personnel-related demonstration projects.

Because of these concerns, I am directing the Secretary of the Interior and the presidents of Haskell and SIPI to involve the OPM fully in the development and evaluation of the schools' demonstration projects. This involvement is only

appropriate given the OPM's important role in managing and safeguarding Federal employee benefits programs and overseeing demonstration projects. Further, I strongly urge the Congress to await the outcome of the OPM's ongoing comprehensive review of the Government-wide benefits package for Federal employees before authorizing other demonstration projects outside the OPM's current statutory authority.

With these caveats, I trust that H.R. 4259 will prove helpful to Haskell and SIPI in attracting and retaining highly qualified employees, thereby enabling them to continue to fulfill their important mission of providing quality higher education opportunities to American Indians.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
October 31, 1998.

NOTE: H.R. 4259, approved October 31, was assigned Public Law No. 105-337.

Statement on Signing the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998

October 31, 1998

Today I am signing into law H.R. 4655, the "Iraq Liberation Act of 1998." This Act makes clear that it is the sense of the Congress that the United States should support those elements of the Iraqi opposition that advocate a very different future for Iraq than the bitter reality of internal repression and external aggression that the current regime in Baghdad now offers.

Let me be clear on what the U.S. objectives are:

The United States wants Iraq to rejoin the family of nations as a freedom-loving and law-abiding member. This is in our interest and that of our allies within the region.

The United States favors an Iraq that offers its people freedom at home. I categorically reject arguments that this is unattainable due to Iraq's history or its ethnic or sectarian makeup. Iraqis deserve and desire freedom like everyone else.

The United States looks forward to a democratically supported regime that would permit us to enter into a dialogue leading to the reintegration of Iraq into normal international life.

My Administration has pursued, and will continue to pursue, these objectives through active application of all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. The evidence is overwhelming that such changes will not happen under the current Iraq leadership.

In the meantime, while the United States continues to look to the Security Council's efforts to keep the current regime's behavior in check, we look forward to new leadership in Iraq that has the support of the Iraqi people. The United States is providing support to opposition groups from all sectors of the Iraqi community that could lead to a popularly supported government.

On October 21, 1998, I signed into law the Omnibus Consolidated and Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act, 1999, which made \$8 million available for assistance to the Iraqi democratic opposition. This assistance is intended to help the democratic opposition unify, work together more effectively, and articulate the aspirations of the Iraqi people for a pluralistic, participatory political system that will include all of Iraq's diverse ethnic and religious