

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release
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October 26,

TEXT OF A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT
TO THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
THE MAJORITY LEADER OF THE SENATE, AND
THE DEMOCRATIC LEADERS OF THE HOUSE AND SENATE

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

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