

## Disaster Relief for Oklahoma

### *Announcement of Allocation of Additional Funds for Repair of Damage Caused by Heavy Rains and Flooding. August 12, 1968*

An additional \$25,000 in Federal disaster relief funds was allocated to Oklahoma by President Johnson today, following a May 29 disaster declaration and an initial allocation of \$150,000.

The funds, now totaling \$175,000, supplement local and State resources for the emergency repair of flood-damaged roads, bridges, and other public property. The damage was caused by heavy rains and flooding that struck the State May 13 and 14.

Federal assistance in major natural disasters is authorized under the Federal Disaster Act, Public Law 81-875. The Office of Emergency Planning regional office in Denton, Texas, is administering the program in Oklahoma. The funds are to be used for flood recovery work in Choctaw, Haskell, Latimer, La Flore, and Pushmataha Counties.

NOTE: The announcement was released at Austin, Texas.

## Volunteer Physicians for Vietnam

### *Statement by the President on the Arrival of the 500th Physician Volunteer in South Vietnam. August 12, 1968*

Three years ago South Vietnam welcomed the first American physician to volunteer for service in a Vietnamese civilian hospital. He was Dr. Richard E. Perry of St. Petersburg, Fla. This program was designed to relieve the suffering of civilians in a country suffering from a severe shortage of medical manpower.

Today, the 500th physician volunteer arrives in South Vietnam as a member of the American Medical Association's Volunteer Physicians for Vietnam program. Dr. Philip A. Pritel of Vancouver, Wash., is one of seven American doctors arriving today at Saigon's Tan Son Nhut Airport almost on the third anniversary of Dr. Perry's arrival in 1965.

Volunteer Physicians for Vietnam is a response to a plea from the South Vietnamese Government and people for medical aid. Supported by funds from the U.S. Agency for International Development, it is administered by the American Medical Association.

Physician volunteers serve 2 months without pay in Vietnamese civilian hospitals. This is an example of true American ideals.

Physician volunteers have come from 49 States, the District of Columbia, the Canal Zone, and seven overseas posts. Fourteen women have served. Twenty-five doctors

have served two tours, and five have served three times in this program. Twelve volunteers have returned to Vietnam as long-term employees to support the U.S. Medical Mission. Two former volunteers are preparing to return to Vietnam as medical missionaries.

Recruitment continues as the need in Vietnam continues; 32 physicians are needed every 60 days to maintain the program at its current strength.

The unselfish example demonstrated by these doctors makes us all proud of our American heritage of aiding the oppressed.

NOTE: The statement was released at Austin, Texas.

## Extra Long Staple Cotton

### *Statement by the President Upon Withholding His Approval of Bill Prohibiting Certain Imports and Signing Bill Revising the Price Support and Acreage Allotment Program. Dated August 11, 1968. Released August 12, 1968*

I am withholding my approval from H.R. 10915 so that this bill will not become law.

This bill would have prohibited imports of extra long staple cotton from countries that have failed to maintain diplomatic relations with the United States. It would reduce the global import quota by the amount that these countries have been exporting to the United States; and it would allow domestic growers to increase their production by a corresponding amount.

The bill is clearly contrary to the national interest. It ties the hands of the President in the conduct of foreign affairs. It deprives him of needed flexibility by forcing an automatic suspension of trade when diplomatic relations are severed. It could seriously inhibit the future resumption of both diplomatic relations and trade.

The need to maintain Presidential discretion in this vital area has been the reason for the traditional U.S. policy of refusing to make trade dependent on continued diplomatic relations.

The bill is a protectionist measure. It is detrimental to the textile industry, the consumer, and even, in the long run, to those cotton farmers—relatively few in number—whom it is intended to help.

The bill would deprive domestic textile mills of certain kinds of extra long staple cotton not produced domestically. These uncertainties of supply resulting, could accelerate the inroads of manmade fibers in the textile fiber market.

The bill would materially increase the cost to the Government and, therefore, to the taxpayer of supporting the price of domestic extra long staple cotton. It would encourage farmers to increase their plantings of extra long staple cotton, only to deprive them of this new sales opportunity once diplomatic relations had been restored.

The bill establishes an undesirable precedent for U.S. trade policy. It bypasses criteria, procedures, and safeguards—first established by the Congress 33 years ago—for setting import quotas on extra long staple cotton and other agricultural commodities. It violates our international obligations under the GATT, and it invites retaliation.

The bill is as unnecessary as it is unwise. There are far better means to help domestic producers of extra long staple cotton. I am taking action this day to furnish that assistance.

Today, I have signed H.R. 10864. One portion of that bill revises the price support and acreage allotment program for extra long staple cotton. It gives them the same program presently available to other cotton producers.

The bill terminates the present price support system which has resulted in pricing extra long staple cotton out of the market. It is replaced with a support price which will enable that cotton to sell at competitive prices. The difference will be made up in direct payments to the producers.

I am happy to sign into law H.R. 10864 so that these cotton producers may have this vital assistance. But I am equally determined that our foreign policy and trade interests shall not be sacrificed for legislation for dubious value. It is for that reason that I cannot approve H.R. 10915.

NOTE: The statement was released at Austin, Texas. As enacted, H.R. 10864 is Public Law 90-475, approved August 11, 1968.

## Elimination of Architectural Barriers to the Handicapped

*Statement by the President Upon Signing Bill Providing That Buildings Financed by Federal Funds Are so Designed and Constructed as To Be Accessible to the Physically Disabled. August 13, 1968*

When an old and infirm citizen cannot use the post office in his community because he is unable to climb its steps, his government has failed him.

When a poor man who also bears the burden of being crippled cannot move his family into decent public housing because his physical handicaps bar him from the project's stairway and elevators, his government has failed him and his children as well.

These tragic conditions are realities. Today, 20 million Americans—because of their physical difficulties—are limited in their access to public buildings.

The bill I sign now will end this needless and cruel discrimination.

It will assure that architectural barriers to the handicapped are eliminated in all buildings constructed with public funds from this day on—and will correct many of the errors of the past. It will put that extra handrail, that ramp, that specially operated door where they are needed most.

This is not legislation that costs a lot of money. Providing accommodations in federally financed buildings for those with physical disabilities will increase construction costs less than one percent.

But it is humane legislation—which had the unanimous support of both houses of Congress.

I am pleased and proud to sign it into law.

NOTE: As enacted, the bill (S. 222) is Public Law 90-480, approved August 12, 1968.

The statement was released at Austin, Texas.

## Natural Gas Pipeline Safety Act of 1968

*Statement by the President Upon Signing Bill To Insure Safe Transportation of Gases by Pipeline. August 13, 1968*

I have today signed the Natural Gas Pipeline Safety Act of 1968. Once again, the interest of the American consumer has been served.

This bill creates—for the first time—comprehensive, complete, and enforceable safety procedures regulating the pipeline transportation of flammable, toxic, and corrosive gases.

It is a bill whose impact will be almost immediate. But most important, it is a bill that looks to the future; that will prevent a serious problem from becoming a disastrous problem in the years ahead.

The use of gas in households and industry has increased sharply in recent years.

—Today, natural gas accounts for about one-third of the nation's total energy consumption.

—Over 800,000 miles of gas pipeline are in operation, nearly triple the mileage of 1945.

—This mileage will increase by 50 percent—to 1.2 million miles—by 1980.

There is an operational failure in this network somewhere in the United States about every 5 days. Fortunately, most of the pipeline runs through sparsely populated, rural areas, and fatalities due to explosions have been relatively low.

And yet a 1965 explosion in Natchitoches, La., gutted a 13-acre area, killed 17 people, burned five houses, and melted cars and rocks in the vicinity.

Clearly, the danger of such disasters increases with each passing year: