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Office of the White House Press Secretary

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THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I am signing S. 522, the Indian Health Care Improvement Act.

This bill is not without its faults, but after personal review I have decided that the well-documented needs for improvement in Indian health manpower, services and facilities outweigh the defects in the bill.

While spending for Indian Health Service activities has grown from \$128 million in FY 1970 to \$425 million in FY 1977, Indian people still lag behind the American people as a whole in achieving and maintaining good health. I am signing this bill because of my own conviction that our First Americans should not be last in opportunity.

Some of the authorizations in this bill are duplicative of existing authorities and there is an unfortunate proliferation of narrow categorical programs. Nevertheless, S. 522 is a statement of direction of effort which is commendable.

Title VII of this bill provides for future reports to the Congress from the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, including a review of progress under the terms of the new Act. I believe the Administration can in this way bring to the attention of the Congress any changes needed to improve the provisions of S. 522.

On balance, this bill is a positive step and I am pleased to sign it.

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