

The President. I'm going to give a speech to the joint session February 17th, and we'll lay out my program then. But I've not made any decisions yet. This is the first opportunity I've had to meet with the economic leadership of Congress.

Q. [Inaudible]—you decide, or announce what you've decided on a consumption tax in your—a joint address—

The President. [Inaudible]

Q. Is this gay-in-the-military issue distracting you at all, sir, from the—

The President. No, it's distracting you, it's not distracting—[laughter].

Q. Can you reach \$145 billion in deficit reductions without a consumption tax?

The President. I don't know the answer to that. We're working on it.

NOTE: The exchange began at 2:10 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan

January 28, 1993

Q. Mr. President, what's the principle you're fighting for in sticking with your plan not to ban gays in the military? What's the principle that you believe in that makes you want to stick with that?

The President. I came here to talk about the economy today with Mr. Greenspan. If he wants to express his opinion on that subject, I'll be glad to hear it. Most people with whom I talk, except you folks, never discuss that. We have other things we're trying to deal with.

Q. Sir, there was good news about the economy—[inaudible]

The President. I think that there's a lot of response to the efforts we're making now, but there's also a lot of troubling news about lost jobs. And we've got a lot of work to do, a lot of work to do.

NOTE: The exchange began at 9:37 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks Honoring the School Principal of the Year and an Exchange With Reporters

January 28, 1993

The President. This is Janie Hatton from Milwaukee, and she is the School Principal of the Year. You can tell she's from Wisconsin because Senator Kohl is here, but I have to tell you she also grew up in my hometown of Hot Springs, Arkansas. We grew up in the same town. She's younger than I am. [Laughter]

That's her husband, Isaac, who also comes from Arkansas. And these other three gentlemen are with the National Association of School Principals.

Janie Hatton. And MetLife.

The President. And MetLife, which sponsors this award. She gave me two paperweights for

my wife and daughter, and now you're going to give me something, right?

Mrs. Hatton. Right. This is a hat for you to jog in, as well as, when the days are cold, the long jogging pants, "Tech has style." And the mornings when it's kind of warm, you can wear the short ones that says "Tech, Milwaukee." This is the one that we're most proud of because '93 Tech and when you have said Milwaukee Tech, you've said it all. And we invite you to Tech at all times, any time. We're building a referendum issue February 16. We want you to think thumbs up because that style is really good. So wear it with pride. And Tech

is an important——

The President. I think it's going to fit, don't you? That's great.

Mrs. Hatton. Thank you so much, Mr. President.

The President. I'm proud of you.

Mrs. Hatton. And I'm proud of you. Great things happen to great people.

The President. Thank you.

Meetings With Members of Congress

Q. Mr. President, are you building incentives to help the economy and working with Congress? Are you getting momentum having all these meetings with the Hill, with Chairman Greenspan?

The President. Well, I think so. You know, we've got a lot more meetings ahead. I'm going to have a huge number of meetings, I hope, next week with Members. I needed this first week just to kind of get our feet on the ground here and get organized and get ready. But I have held a lot of meetings with Congress, and I'll do many more next week. I'll do as many as I can leading up to the February 17 address to the joint session. And after that I'll do as many more as I can.

Homosexuals in the Military

Q. Mr. President, are you confident that you'll ever get the ban on gays in the military lifted?

The President. Well, we're working on the resolution in the Senate, as you know. And I've been working mostly on economic issues today, so I just heard from my staff. But they seem to think we're pretty close to——

Q. Are you satisfied with 6 months down the road?

The President. I'm satisfied with what I hope the resolution will be. You'll have to come back to me when there's final language there.

I think the Joint Chiefs should have 6 months to deal with the practical issues involved. This is not free of difficulty. There are certain factual problems involved.

But the principle—let me answer the question Mark [Mark Halperin, ABC News] asked me this morning about the principle. The principle behind this for me is that Americans who are willing to conform to the requirements of conduct within the military services, in my judgment, should be able to serve in the military and that people should be disqualified from serving in the military based on something they do, not based on who they are. That is the elemental principle.

There is actually an enormous amount of agreement on this. The Joint Chiefs agree, for example, that we should not anymore ask people about their sexual orientation when they enlist. And I believe that any sort of improper conduct should result in severance. The narrow issue on which there is disagreement is whether people should be able to say that they're homosexual—and do nothing else—without being severed. But there are a whole lot of very complicated practical questions that flow from that very narrow issue. And that's what I want to have 6 months to give them a chance to work on. So, I hope we can.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:50 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With Representatives of the Close-Up Foundation

January 29, 1993

Homosexuals in the Military

Q. Mr. President, when are you going to announce your policy on gays in the military? What time today?

The President. Well, we're waiting for an analysis of the court decision now and how it affects what we would have to do anyway. So, that sort of—we were here, as you know, last night

with Senator Nunn, and I thought it was quite close to an agreement that would give the military what I think ought to be done without anybody agreeing to change their position now—give them a chance to look into what the practical problems are. But this court decision may change that, and we are looking at it. And I will probably have something to say later today.