

try. And those of you who helped to bring this bill to pass can take a large share of credit not only for this bill but for the general movement and energy and involvement and determination of all of our fellow citizens. It was never right to sit on the sidelines of our democracy. And now with motor voter, there will be fewer and fewer excuses for anyone to do so.

Let us remember this in closing: Voting is an empty promise unless people vote. Now there is no longer the excuse of the difficulty of registration. It is the right of every American to vote. It is also the responsibility of every American to vote. We have taken an important step this morning to protect that right. And I want to challenge Joel and all the young people who did so much to register voters for the last election, and all of you who did so much to bring this voting rights bill to law and all the ones that preceded it, to make sure now that

we keep the rights alive by making sure that the responsibility to exercise it is exercised by every eligible American.

When we leave here today, we ought to say: This voting rights bill and the others will not be in vain. Every year from now on, we're going to have more registered voters and more people voting. We're going to make the system work. The law empowers us to do it. It's now up to us to assume the responsibility to see that it gets done.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:32 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. He was introduced by Joel Shulkin, University of New Hampshire junior who was instrumental in achieving reform of that State's voter registration laws. H.R. 2, approved May 20, was assigned Public Law No. 103-31.

## Exchange With Reporters on the Economic Program

May 20, 1993

Q. Mr. President, can you talk to us?

Q. Can you accept Senator Boren's entitlement cuts?

Q. What's your reaction to Senator Boren's compromise with Danforth?

*The President.* Well, my first reaction was that it was a huge shift in lowering taxes on people with incomes above \$100,000 and hurting people, both elderly people and working people just barely above the poverty line. It's basically a \$40 billion shift away from wealthy Americans right onto people just above the poverty line, the elderly and the working poor. So I don't support that. I think that's a mistake.

Q. Would you rule out that kind of compromise to get rid of the energy tax?

*The President.* I think that that is not a good thing to do if you read the details of it. Obviously, the main purpose of some of them is to do away with the Btu tax, but the mechanics shift over \$40 billion away from people with incomes above \$135,000 down to elderly and working people just barely above the poverty line. I don't think that's good. There is also another provision which, if it's implemented in

the way they propose, would continue to shift health care costs onto private citizens and private employers, which would hurt the economy and hurt jobs. So those are the two things which concern me.

Otherwise, I'm glad to have people talking and coming up with new ideas. But those are bad things.

Q. [*Inaudible*—have you essentially heard enough—

*The President.* I can just tell you what—I've given you my answer. Look, we had 12 years where we made this economy more unequal and unfair. And to move \$40 billion off of upper income people to people barely above the poverty line, it seems to me, is not a good way to go.

NOTE: The exchange began at 12:50 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.