

dorsed it. More than half the 100 biggest companies in the United States have endorsed it along with the largest labor organizations in America. This is a program that's good for jobs. The Congressional Black Caucus voted for it unanimously because of the empowerment zones in the program which gives the private sector incentives to invest in putting people back to work in the most depressed areas in America. The business community is pleased because of the incentives for starting new business and for helping small businesses.

If you will look at this program you will see it is no accident why the interest rates are down, the jobs are up, and investment is coming back into America. If we can keep interest rates down, then all this debt that has piled up in the last 12 years at least can be refinanced in terms of home mortgages, business loans, college loans, consumer loans, car loans. And all that lower interest rate will then free up money to invest. That is what is creating these jobs now, and we cannot turn our backs on it.

So I say, let's move on to the Senate. Let's pass the economic program; then let's move on to health care. And let's never forget that it will all work better over the long run if we pass campaign finance reform and lobbying reform and continue to fight to open this system to the American people.

Thank you very much.

Supreme Court Nomination

Q. Mr. President, how close are you to a Supreme Court nomination?

The President. Pretty close. I have not made a decision yet, but I'm working on it, talking to people. I expect a decision very soon.

Q. [*Inaudible*—spoken to anyone about the decision—

Q. Why are you backing off of Babbitt?

Q. —any of the potential nominees?

The President. Stay tuned.

Q. Why are you backing off of Babbitt?

The President. I'm not. I've never—

Q. Babbitt's in the race?

The President. I'm not backing off or on anybody. I haven't made a decision yet.

Q. Is he in the race?

The President. I haven't made a decision yet. When I do, I'll tell you. Thanks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:23 p.m. in the Rose Garden. In his remarks, he referred to Becky Cain and Gracia Hillman, president and executive director, League of Women Voters of the United States; Karen Stevens and Linda Polk, member and president, Arkansas League of Women Voters; and Bobbie Hill, member of the boards of directors of both the national and Arkansas leagues. The exchange portion of this item could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With Senate Leaders

June 7, 1993

Economic Program

Q. How far are you on a compromise on the economics program?

The President. Well, we just started. I have asked Secretary Bentsen to work with Mr. Pannetta, to work with the Senate, to basically embody the principles that I think are important. We have to have \$500 billion in deficit reduction. We have to have the spending cuts. And no tax increases without the spending cuts. The deficit trust fund is important. The tax burden has to be progressive.

Right now, over 60 percent of this money is coming from people with incomes above \$200,000, over 74 percent from people with in-

comes above \$100,000. That has to be kept. And then we have to keep the pro-work, pro-jobs portions of this intact. This plan gives the best incentives to small business, to new businesses, and for working poor people to work their way out of poverty, of any tax program we have ever had. And it's not just a tax program. It's an investment program, and it's a spending-cut program. And the whole thing has to be put together. Now, within those principles, these people are going to work out a bill that can pass the Senate, pass the Congress, and can keep the economic growth going.

Keep in mind the main objective is to keep interest rates down, keep the growth going.

We've got 755,000 new jobs since January, a 7-year high in housing starts, first time in 18 months unemployment below 7 percent. This thing is working. We've got to keep it going. That's my concern.

Q. How far are you on a Btu tax? Would you give a little on that?

The President. I want an energy component that promotes energy conservation in clean fuels. That's what I want. I believe that's an important part of our future. Everybody knows that if we're going to have high productivity growth and be a rich country, we have to promote that. That's an important principle to me, too.

Q. [Inaudible]—on Senator Boren to get that passed?

The President. I'm promoting the principles. These guys are going to work it out. My job is to advocate for the kinds of product—I want the results. I want jobs and incomes and growth. That's what we're producing now. That's my job. I'm confident they'll produce a plan that will give us that.

NOTE: The exchange began at 5:35 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House, prior to a meeting with Senators George J. Mitchell and Daniel Patrick Moynihan. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders June 8, 1993

Economic Program

Q. Mr. President, the Republicans have said they won't accept a plan with any taxes. How are you going to bridge that gap with Bob Dole?

The President. I don't know what the bridge will be. Let me just say this, I think it's very important that we move this promptly as possible to pass the economic plan. After the House acted, long-term interest rates dropped again. We now have a 7-year high in housing sales, unemployment below 7 percent—it's the first time in a year and a half—755,000 new jobs since January. And that's because there's a serious attempt to reduce this deficit through a combination of cuts and tax increases, almost all of which come on wealthier individuals. So I think we just need to move forward.

There will be some changes in the Senate, and that is fine. Then we just need to hold to the principles: there ought to be \$500 billion in deficit reduction; it ought to be in a trust fund so that neither the taxes nor the spending cuts can be diverted; and the tax burden ought to be progressive, falling largely on the wealthiest Americans; and we ought to keep the incentives for private sector growth in there. We're moving from welfare to work for investing in the depressed areas of the country for starting small businesses. Those are the principles that I have. And the energy tax ought to encourage conservation and the use of cleaner fuels. Those

are the things that I think ought to be done. We'll just see what happens.

Q. Does it have to include—does it have to be a Btu tax, or can you find another energy—

The President. I have delegated to—I don't want to get into the name game here. I'm interested in the principles of the program: deficit reduction, lower interest rates, job growth. We've got job growth coming back into this economy now, and I think we have to continue to do what produces it, which is lower interest rates. The lower interest rates are causing people to refinance all their debt and putting it back into the economy. And that's the thing I'm interested in.

We'll just see. Secretary Bentsen and Mr. Panetta are representing the administration in the conversations with the Senate. And we'll just see what comes out of it.

Q. Do you think you can start over with Bob Dole, after all the bad blood?

The President. I like Senator Dole. I always have. Besides that, he knows more jokes than I do, and I resent it. Get him to share some with you.

NOTE: The exchange began at 9:35 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.