

Every day brings with it the promise of a new blossom: the prospect of progress and growing friendship between our two peoples.

Your Majesties, our commitment to common ideals is firm. Our determination to work with you is strong. Our welcome to you today is

sincere and heartfelt. We are privileged to receive you in the United States.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:14 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Teleconference With the U.S. Conference of Mayors *June 13, 1994*

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mayor Abramson, for what you said and for the outstanding leadership that you've given this year. I want to say hello to you and to Mayor Ashe and to your host mayor, Mayor Katz, my good friend. I wish I were there to be with all of you in the U.S. Conference of Mayors. I know you've had a wonderful stay, and I wish that I could have come out there and seen you, especially in Portland, the city I always love to visit.

I appreciate what you said, Mayor Abramson, about the work we've done together. And I appreciate the leadership that you gave and the initiative and the energy that you put into making sure that I followed through on our common ambitious goals for our country. Both of us want the same things. We want to bring our people back together. We want to move our country forward. We want to restore the importance of work and responsibility. We want to strengthen our families and our communities. We want to provide opportunity. We want to promote values, but when we do, we know we are strengthening the fiber of American life in ways that will take this country into the 21st century, will make our cities and our communities work again but will also ensure that our country will go into the next century still the greatest country in the world.

That's why our administration has sought to strengthen families by rewarding parents who work. Tomorrow I will continue that effort when I present our blueprint for welfare reform in Kansas City, Missouri. I'll be there with one of your number, Mayor Emanuel Cleaver, who, along with others in the U.S. Conference of Mayors, has been a terrific help to the White House on this welfare reform issue.

If our people are willing to work hard and to hold their families together, then it seems to me the rest of us have a shared responsibility to help them hold their lives and their communities together. That's also one reason why the crime bill is important to me.

I want to just thank all of you for helping to move that crime bill through both Houses of Congress. But I also want to remind you that the bill is not yet law. This week, Members of the House and the Senate will sit down together and start to hammer out a conference report that both Chambers can pass and that all of us can support, that I can sign into law this year, and begin to move this year. We have now waited 6 long years for a national comprehensive crime bill, and we shouldn't have to wait much longer. So while you're out there in Portland, I hope you'll give your delegation in Congress a call. Take advantage of the boiler room that Mayor Abramson and the conference staff has set up to make it easier for you to send this message. And tell the Congress that our communities do need more police, more punishment, more prevention, and they need it now. Tell them you need that crime bill so we can hire 100,000 new police officers and put them to work in communities that need them most, that we need more certain punishment of criminal behavior and smarter and more comprehensive prevention efforts.

Too many of our young people have grown up without appreciating that there are consequences to their behavior. The crime bill must change that. You and I both know that punishment, however, can only be part of the solution. We've got to give our children something to say yes to. We've got to reinforce the fact that responsible behavior will ultimately bring rewards. That's why we've got to have a crime

bill with a youth employment and a skills program to create opportunities for kids in places where very few now exist; why I want a crime bill with an Ounce of Prevention Council, to keep kids off the street by keeping schools open after hours and expanding boys and girls clubs; why I want to promote more partnerships between our police officers and our young people, and things like midnight basketball leagues that cost so little but make a very big difference in communities like yours.

Investing in our young people through activities and summer jobs builds self-esteem, respect for others, a healthy work ethic at an early age. It's an investment worth making, especially when you consider how we pay for it, not through any new taxes but by cutting spending elsewhere in the Federal budget. What we do here in Washington, however, can only work if we give the people in your communities back home the tools they need to get the things done that have to be done.

As a former Governor who faced the burdens of Federal mandates for 12 long years, I know how questions over funding concern everything else you do, from putting more police on the street to providing clean water for people in your cities. That's why our people have been working with Members of Congress who are focused on this mandates issue. I can report to you that we're getting closer to a workable bill. And although there are still a few issues that remain to be resolved, I think we can see legislation acceptable to the Nation's mayors soon. And let me also assure you that resolving the issue of unfunded mandates does not mean abandoning our responsibilities to govern. I do believe that we must proceed in a more realistic way, providing greater flexibility about the constraints facing our State and local governments.

I know we share the same desire to see that every American has a chance to succeed. That's why we've worked to pass the lifetime learning agenda, from Head Start reauthorization to our education reforms to our school-to-work initiative to train America's high school students before they enter the work force. We've already seen more than 3 million new private-sector jobs created in this administration. But we still have to change our outmoded unemployment system to a reemployment system.

The reemployment act will enable cities to modernize their training and job placement systems. They'll set up one-stop centers where a

worker can walk in, apply for unemployment benefits, find a new job, and arrange for long-term training. The reemployment act helps working families, and we should pass it this year, too. Working families, after all, are the building blocks of healthy cities and our healthy society.

They also shouldn't have to worry about the danger of losing their health care. That's why, last week, for the first time in the history of our Republic, believe it or not, a Senate committee finally approved a bill that guarantees private health insurance for every American family. Now other congressional committees are moving forward to achieve coverage for all Americans on health care.

I think the momentum is swinging to our side, and it's time to give every American a rock-solid guarantee that their health care can never be taken away. So I want to ask you to work with me to push aside half-measures, half-measures which are exploding the health care budgets of cities and States and the Federal Government, to make sure that every American will have the health care they need when they need it.

Let's be clear about what we should have. I want private insurance for everyone. I do not want a Government-run system. I do not want to take any part of the private system away from the private sector. But I do want to make sure private insurance is available for every American family.

Finally, let me just say that over the last year and a half, we've done a lot to make our national economy, our working families, and the American community more healthy, more safe, and more secure. A great deal has been accomplished already. But I know we can do a lot more, and you know we have a lot more to do.

So let's keep working together; let's keep working hard. Let's not be diverted or distracted or divided. Let's stay with our minds focused on the people we were elected to represent. Together we can do what we have to do for this great country to make sure that, as we near the end of this decade and this century, America will still be the greatest and the best place in the world to live.

Thank you very much.

Mayor Jerry Abramson. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I wonder if we might ask a couple of questions so that we can have a little bit of dialog before you have to go.

The President. I'd be disappointed if you didn't. It wouldn't be you. [Laughter]

[*Mayor Abramson of Louisville, KY, asked about Federal mandate legislation.*]

The President. Well, we're very close, I think, to resolving all the outstanding questions. And I think they will be resolved soon. I have nothing but the highest compliments for Senator Kempthorne and Senator Glenn, Congressman Condit. They've been very good to work with us just to try to deal with some of the practical issues involved. And I expect that we will get a bill out this year that all of us can support. And I'm looking forward to it. And we've devoted a lot of time and energy to it. And I recognize that we have to have legislation. We cannot do everything we need to do with Executive orders. I believe we'll get that bill out.

There are just a couple of outstanding issues; they are not really big ones. And I think we'll get them resolved. And I believe that there's a good chance since a majority have signed on in both Houses that we can roll out an agreed-upon bill before the end of the year.

Mayor Abramson. Excellent. So Chairman Glenn, who will be, I guess, carrying the responsibility for the majority party as well as the White House, is in there presently negotiating those few remaining issues so that we can ultimately join together.

The President. But this has really been a pretty good bipartisan effort. I mean, Senator Kempthorne has also worked with us directly, along with John Glenn, who's a very good friend of mine and of the Nation's mayors. I feel very good about the spirit and the atmosphere and openness on this.

[*Mayor Abramson introduced Mayor Victor Ashe of Knoxville, TN, who asked about funding for crime prevention in the proposed crime bill and also suggested an increase in funding for youth service projects.*]

The President. On the first question, let me say I will work very hard to keep that prevention money in there. I think it is very important. Good prevention programs work. They are far less expensive, and more importantly, they save more lives and better futures.

On the other issue, I will see what I can do. I am generally very sympathetic to what you've said, but you've asked me a question that may have budgetary implications that I

don't know the answer to. So I will double-check it. I will get back to you.

I think that it's important that the cities have as much flexibility as possible to hire young people, to give them things to do, to engage them in positive things. And I think that, clearly, there's lots of evidence that that helps to prevent crime.

Let me also just get in one more plug while I'm at it. I hope that all of you, as we increase the scope of our national service program, will see that in at least one instance in every city of any size in the country there will be an approved national service program so we can channel some of that funding in to help your young people work on the problems of your community.

I am very excited about it. We are going to have 20,000 people this fall, but by year after next we'll have 100,000 young Americans earning credit against education by serving in their communities. And I hope all of you will take full advantage of that.

[*Mayor Abramson introduced Mayor Norman Rice of Seattle, WA, who asked about financing for welfare reform.*]

The President. Well, let me say, I don't necessarily agree that there are better options available because I've looked with a fine-tooth comb through the Federal budget for them. But I'm certainly willing to work with you on other alternatives. If you have some alternatives, I'm willing to work with you on it.

Let me say that if you look at what we did with our bill as compared with, let's say, the Republican alternative, which has a lot in common with our bill and has some very good things in it, but they were funding it by essentially cutting off benefits to nonresident—or to resident but not legal—immigrants. And if you do that, that's really going to throw a big cost on local governments and State governments.

What we did with deeming rules were designed to—it was designed to keep costs from coming on to the Government that should be borne by families of immigrants who actually have good incomes and can afford to pay. So that's what we were attempting to do. I understand what the concerns are, I believe, of the mayors, and I'm more than willing to work with you if you can find any other ideas. But I have to say, we had to find money for the GATT round this year. And we had to find money

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for our reemployment bill, and we have to find money for welfare reform. And under the budgeting rules of the Federal Government, we have to follow very strict procedures. We can't, for example, assume what I think is a reasonable reduction in welfare caseloads by the success of this reform. We can't assume what I think is a reasonable growth in the economy as a result of GATT. So we have very tough rules in terms of dedicating funds to this program.

And I had, myself, I had at least three long meetings on welfare reform, which major portions of the meeting were going over funding options as a result of the work Mr. Panetta did. So if you can find something better, I'll be glad to talk to you about it. But I can't say that I agree that there's a better way, because if I thought there was, I would have it there. I have, myself, been unsuccessful. But there are a lot of you who have proved over time that you're as creative and innovative as anybody in this country. So have at it, and see what you can come up with.

[Mayor Abramson discussed the Department of Commerce's involvement in defense conversion and thanked the President for making the process easier in many cities.]

The President. Thank you very much, Mayor. You know, we had tried very hard to do a couple of things with this base closing, based on the experiences I had as a Governor and what mayors and Governors all over the country talked to me about.

First is to bring Commerce in and to bring this whole notion of business development in. And the second is to change the rules by which the facilities are turned over to local communities to try to accelerate the process, to not let the environmental cleanup obligations delay it too long, to make the best financial deal we could to the mayors, and to make sure that we focused on creating jobs and opportunities to replace those that were lost.

I think the dramatic change in priorities that we've made is really going to make a difference. I was out in the Inland Empire area of California not very long ago, celebrating the successes that the communities are having there with one of their bases that they're now redeveloping.

We can do this all over America. These resources can be put to use to develop the economy of the 21st century. But the Federal Government is going to have to be much more aggressive and flexible and responsive in working with you. I think we're on the way, and I think the Commerce Department has a lot to do with that. But I also have to say that in the last year and a half, I have seen a dramatic change in the attitude of the Defense Department as well. So we're going to work hard and do our best to be there for you.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The teleconference began at 12:05 p.m. The President spoke from Room 459 in the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Vera Katz of Portland, OR.

Remarks at the State Dinner for Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko of Japan

June 13, 1994

Ladies and gentlemen, Your Majesties, our other distinguished guests from Japan, ladies and gentlemen. We are honored and privileged to welcome this evening the Emperor and Empress of Japan.

You are no strangers to the United States, but it gives me particular pleasure to host you here at the White House on this, the occasion of your first visit to America since you ascended to the Chrysanthemum Throne.

As citizens of a relatively young nation, we Americans are honored by your presence, and we deeply value the rich culture and history you represent. You embody a tradition that stretches back century after century and a people who have brought the world a civilization of great elegance.

At a time when the call of tradition so often clashes with the demands of the modern world, Your Majesties revere your ancestors and your