

Apr. 30 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1994

constitutional problems, I will interpret the statute as providing me discretion to make the determinations provided for in this section.

Finally, section 134 provides that whenever the Department of State enters into a lease-purchase agreement involving foreign countries, the Department shall account for such transactions "in accordance with fiscal year obligations." The Administration's interpretation is that this provision does not waive the scoring

rules governing lease-purchases under the Budget Enforcement Act of 1990.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
April 30, 1994.

NOTE: H.R. 2333, approved April 30, was assigned Public Law No. 103-236.

Statement on the Agreement To Withdraw Russian Military Forces From Latvia

April 30, 1994

I applaud today's agreement signed by Latvian President Guntis Ulmanis and Russian President Boris Yeltsin that will lead to the withdrawal of Russian military forces from the territory of the Republic of Latvia by August 31, 1994. I have contacted both leaders to offer my personal congratulations for their vision and statesmanship in concluding this historic accord.

Since the early days of my administration, among my highest foreign policy priorities has been promoting agreement on an orderly withdrawal of Russian forces from the Baltic countries. I discussed this frequently with President Yeltsin and President Ulmanis. The United States has played an active role with both parties during the course of the Latvian-Russian negotiations. I believe that our engagement with both sides, along with the support provided by other countries, in particular Sweden, has played a constructive role in bringing this agreement to a successful conclusion.

Over the course of their negotiations, both the Latvian and Russian Governments displayed a pragmatic approach to resolving their differences. The understandings that this document embodies, including the continued operation of the radar installation at Skrunda as a civilian facility, are testimony to the determination of both sides to conclude an agreement that responds to Russian concerns while affirming Latvia's full and unrestricted sovereignty and promoting its integration into the world community.

The agreement between Latvia and Russia now opens the door to a more normal relationship between the two countries. It constitutes an important contribution to overall stability in the Baltic region and to European security as a whole. I hope that this agreement also will help stimulate a speedy conclusion of the troop withdrawal negotiations between Estonia and Russia.

Remarks to Americans With Disabilities

May 2, 1994

Well, thank you, Stephanie and Denise, and thank you all for being here. I want to thank ADAPT; the National Council for Independent Living; the Consortium of Citizens With Disabilities; recognize my good friend Tony Coelho; Marca Bristo, the Chair of the National Council on Disabilities, pending confirmation. I'm honored to be given this book of signatures of gen-

uine American heroes who are fighting every day for their own rights and for genuine health care reform for all Americans. I want to say a special word of thanks to Justin Dart, who has risen above partisanship to provide an example for all of us about what it really means to keep

fighting the good fight—not only for Americans with disabilities. This is a fight for all Americans who are touched by these problems. And I want to say a special word of thanks to Kate Miles and her family for being here today, for her determination, her courage, her love, and for her ability to get up here and tell their very moving personal story.

I say this to make a special point. The issues affecting Americans with disabilities—they say, “Well, there are 49 million Americans with some sort of disability, and there are 255 million of us total.” But if you consider all the family members of all of the Americans with disabilities, you’re getting very close to a majority of us who would be affected in a positive way by the provisions of the health security act that help Americans with disabilities, just those provisions. And in a very, moving and human way, Kate Miles and Robert and their children—husbands, all the families they stand for all across America, they have reminded us what this is all about.

The theme of your rally today is “Bridge to Freedom,” and I want to talk a little about that. The Americans with disability law was a bridge to freedom. But it’s only part of the equation. It’s only part of the equation. What about economic freedom? How many Americans with disabilities are denied the chance to do work they are able to do not because of discrimination per se but because of the way the health care system works. This is not just a health care issue, it’s a work issue. How much better off would the rest of us be if every American with a disability who was willing to work, could work because of changes in the health care system? It’s self-defeating to say to the Americans with disabilities, “You can have health benefits, but only if you spend yourself into poverty, and above all, you must not work.”

Forty-nine million Americans with disabilities, 24 million with severe disabilities, half with no private health insurance—the health care system is failing Americans with disabilities, but in so doing is failing us all, is making us less productive than we would otherwise be, less strong than we would otherwise be. It is costing more tax dollars and robbing us of taxes that would come to America’s treasury, not from higher tax rates but from more Americans working and paying taxes in the ordinary course of their lives. We had better fix it now.

After all of the incredible debates, after all of the amazing ads where—and Justin just referred to one of them—you know, these ads where they say—somebody calls up and says, “Well, we’ll have to call the Government and see if you can get your doctor,” all these incredibly bogus ads. We had better do this now. We had better do this now. Otherwise, the forces of disinformation, organized disinformation, will think that the American people actually prefer to have the most expensive, wasteful, bureaucratically cumbersome health care insurance financing system on the entire face of the Earth, that they prefer that as opposed to giving a decent break to this fine family and to all of you. I don’t believe the American people prefer that, and we had better make sure that no one draws that historic lesson from this health care debate.

There’s a lot of talk today about the whole term “empowerment.” It risks becoming a buzzword. There is an empowerment television network. But frankly, I like it. It encapsulates something that is uniquely American: the idea that people ought to be able to live up to the fullest of their God-given abilities and that the Government should facilitate people fulfilling themselves, not just be a paternalistic Government doing things for people. I have believed in that for years. Long before I ever became President, I worked on things that I thought would promote empowerment: more choices for parents and children in education, tax breaks for lower income working people, some of the things that we’ve also promoted here in Washington. The Family and Medical Leave Act here in my Presidency was an empowerment bill that enables people to be good parents and good workers at the same time, the empowerment zone concept that we passed through the economic program last time, lower student loans—lower interest rates for student loans and better paybacks—is an empowerment notion. National service is an empowerment notion: Let people have the strength at the grassroots level to solve their own problems.

Empowerment involves work and family and self-fulfillment in a responsible way. How can we empower the American people when 81 million of us live in families with preexisting conditions; when the average American, in the normal course of an economic lifetime, now will change jobs eight times; when this fine man cannot change a job, even if he gets a better job offer,

because he can't insure his child? Is that empowerment? No, it is the very reverse. So when we try to fix it, what do our adversaries say? "They're trying to have the Government take over the health care system." False. Private insurance, private providers, empowerment for this man, this woman, these children, their families, and their futures. [Applause] Can you stay around here until this is over? [Laughter] You're great.

Now, they say—let's not kid ourselves, if this were easy, it would have been done already, right? Somebody would have been—people have been trying to do it for 60 years. What is the nub of this? The nub is the question of how to cover everybody and then how to give small businesses the same market power in buying insurance that big business and Government have. Because all across America, Government and big business are downsizing, and small businesses are growing. I might say, that means we better fix this now, because 10 years from now you'll have a smaller percentage of people working for Government and big business and a larger percentage of people working for small business. And if we do not fix this now, this is going to get worse, not better.

We already have about 100,000 Americans a month losing their insurance permanently. In the future, if we're going to be caught up in the kind of a world that I want, where we have open borders and we trade and we have these churning, fascinating, ever-changing economies, we had better fix it now, because people will change jobs more often, not less often.

This is a profoundly important issue. But we cannot do it unless we find a way for everyone to have access and actually be covered by insurance. Nine out of 10 Americans who have private insurance today have it at work. Eight out of 10 Americans who don't have insurance, like this fine young man here, are in families where there is at least one working person. Therefore, it makes logical sense to say that people who do work should be covered through work with a combination of responsibility, just as this family has, from employers and the employee. And then people who are not working should be covered from a public fund. That is our plan; hardly a Government takeover of health care.

And it makes sense for the Government to empower small business to be able to afford this by providing the opportunity to be in buyers' co-ops so that small businesses, self-em-

ployed people, and farmers can buy insurance on the same term big business and Government can, and thereby can afford to hire persons with disabilities. Because they will be insured in big pools so that if there is one big bill for this young man here, the insurer does not go broke.

And furthermore, it makes sense to give small businesses a discount because a lot of them have financial burdens and lower profit margins, and so we do that. That is the role of the Government in this: require people who don't provide insurance to their employees to do it in partnership with their employees; let small businesses go into big buyers' co-ops so they can buy insurance on the same terms that the President and the Congress can and people who work for big companies can; eliminate discrimination so that people can move from job to job by removing the problems of preexisting conditions; and finally, face the fact that if you look at the aging population and the disabled population, we must do something to support long-term care that is community-based and home-based.

This is empowerment. This plan helps a person with a disability to be able to take a job by including a tax credit for personal assistance services worth 50 percent of what he or she earns. That's empowerment. But home and community-based long-term care is also empowerment. And it also, over the long run, will be less expensive. Does it cost more in the short run? Yes, it costs some extra money. But if you look at the population trends in this country, if you look at the people with disabilities who are surviving and having lives that are meaningful, if you look at the fastest growing group of Americans being people over 65, and within that group the fastest growing being people over 80, this is something we have to face as a people. We will either do it now in a rational way, or we will be dragged kicking and screaming into it piecemeal, Band-Aid-like, over the next 10 years. But, make no mistake about it, we cannot run away from this, because we cannot afford either to have everybody in the world forced into a nursing home or living in abject neglect. We can't do one of the two things.

So I say to you, all of you know that there is no perfect solution, no easy solution. All of you know that our bill, in order to pay for it, phases some of these services in. But it recognizes the reality of who we are as a people and what we need. We need the work of every

American who can work. We need the respect, the dignity of every American. And we need to provide the opportunity for every American to live up to his or her capacity in the least restrictive environment that that person might choose. We need to secure for the American economy the services of every person who wishes to be and is capable of being a successful worker. We need to stop seeing Government health care expenditures go up 2 and 3 times the rate of inflation every year to pay more for the same health care. We need to stop spending more money on paperwork and administrative costs, because of the health care financing system in this country, than any other country in the world.

We can do all of that and keep the doctors, the nurses, the health care system we have. That's why there are so many thousands and thousands, indeed millions now, of nurses, health care providers, and physicians who have supported our cause.

And so I ask you, the real problem with this, I am convinced, is that there is no way, to use the political vernacular, to "kiss" it, to "keep it simple, stupid." That's what people always tell me, you know. *[Laughter]* The real problem here is that we bear the burden of every move, those of us who want change, because we live in a system that is complicated. So it is not simple to fix it.

So I plead with you: A lot of you will contact Members of Congress who voted for the Americans with Disabilities Act who are not yet prepared to vote to make sure every American has health insurance and who do not understand yet that you cannot eliminate preexisting conditions and you cannot eliminate other discriminatory practices and you cannot afford to begin to provide long-term care that is community-based and home-based unless you set up a system where everybody has health care insurance, where small businesses can buy on the same

terms big business and Government can and where insurers insure in big enough pools so that nobody goes broke when they do insure a family where a member has a disability and where small businesses get a discount. Those are the things we try to do with the power of Government. It is a legitimate thing to do. But when you strip it all away, what we're really trying to do is to empower the families of this country to live in dignity, to work in dignity, and to fulfill themselves. And in a strange way, this is a battle that the disability community, known so well to the Members of Congress, being so successful in the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, this is a battle that you may be able to lead for the rest of America that they do not understand.

So I ask you to do that, be an agent of change, an agent of empowerment. Never forget that you are carrying on your shoulders now not only your own cause but ours as well. We cannot, in the end, fully unleash the forces of all human Americans until we do this. And we cannot do this with all the resistance and all the organized opposition, with the sheer intellectual difficulty of the tasks unless people like you can break through. You can break through to those Members of Congress. You can do it. You can do it. And we need you, all the rest of America, we need you to do it.

Good luck, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:55 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Stephanie Thomas, co-operator of the Austin, TX, chapter, American Disabled for Attendant Programs Today; Denise Figueroa, president, National Council on Independent Living; Tony Coelho, Chair, and Justin Dart, former Chair, President's Committee on the Employment of People With Disabilities; and Kate Miles, mother of a disabled son and advocate for long-term care and health care reform.

Remarks on Legislation To Ban Assault Weapons *May 2, 1994*

Thank you very much, Chief. He's come a long way from Wisconsin to bring a little Middle Western common sense to the Nation's Capital.

When the House of Representatives votes this week on Thursday, they shouldn't forget the tragedy that the chief just talked about. Think