

Statement on the White House Initiative on Welfare Reform December 8, 1994

Today, after meeting with a group of Governors from both parties, I am announcing that the White House will convene a national bipartisan working session on welfare reform next month.

Welfare reform is a top priority for my administration, for the Governors, for the new Congress, and above all, for the American people. Americans have asked their elected officials to put aside politics as usual and begin earnest work to solve our Nation's problems, and welfare reform is at the very top of our agenda.

I have called for this session as a first step in an honest dialog about our country's broken welfare system and what we must do to fix it. Washington doesn't have all the answers, and Government doesn't, either. Every one of us in this country has to begin taking individual responsibility for turning this country around.

I have worked on this issue for my whole career in public life. When I was a Governor,

I worked closely with President Reagan and Senator Moynihan to develop the bipartisan consensus that led to passage of important legislation to strengthen families and move people from welfare to work.

I believe we must end welfare as we know it, because the current welfare system is a bad deal for the taxpayers who pay the bills and for the families who are trapped on it. The American people deserve a Government that honors their values and spends their money judiciously and a country that rewards people who work hard and play by the rules.

People want their leaders to stop the partisan bickering, come together, and roll up their sleeves and get to work. This meeting will be the beginning of a new day, not just for the welfare system but for how our Government works.

Remarks to Summit of the Americas Volunteers in Miami, Florida December 8, 1994

The President. Thank you. Thank you. Well, ladies and gentlemen, the first thing I want to say is a hearty thank-you for letting the "he-coon" stay in the tree in Tallahassee for 4 more years.

I am delighted to be here and Hillary is delighted to be here with Lawton and Rhea, with Buddy and Anne, and with Bob and Adele Graham and so many of our friends here in Florida.

You know, I was trying to remember just exactly how I got talked into having this summit in Miami, and it—

Audience member. The weather!

The President. Yeah—[laughter]—when I got out of the airplane tonight I remembered why I was smart enough to want to come here in December. Actually, I have very vivid memories of this sort of one-two punch that I got not all that long ago. We decided to have this summit after NAFTA was successfully concluded,

and it wasn't long before I started hearing from all my friends from Florida. And it wasn't long before Lawton and Buddy said that they had to see me about a matter of dire importance—[laughter]—reminding me not once but 500 times of all the things they had done for me—[laughter]—and for Al Gore and for our administration. And then when they got through, I got a call from Bob Graham, who reminded me about how many years we sat together in the Governors Conference when he taught me how to be a Governor. [Laughter] And by the time they got through with me, I couldn't see anyplace else on the map. [Laughter]

I want to thank you all for the magnificent job you have done. The leaders have all been recognized, and I thank all of them all over again. I thank our team who's worked so hard on this, the Secretary of the Treasury and our Trade Ambassador, Secretary Bentsen and Ambassador Kantor. I want to say a special word