

The President. I just want to say this one more time. This farm bill is not written. And there's two issues. One is how much we're going to cut spending. We're all going to cut spending, I'm telling you. And we'll probably wind up cutting it a little more than you want, but I hope we're going to cut it substantially less than they want right now. But the issue is not only how much are we going to spend but how are we going to spend it.

And Montana is a place where the family farm is alive and well. I think that's an important value in America. So I would just implore you, through all your organizations, to look at this and give us some guidance about how it ought to be spent: How should the support programs be structured? How should we maintain the Conservation Reserve? Should there be an

entry-level program for new farmers? These are things that are terribly important. It's not just the amount of money; it is how we spend it.

And as I—I'm having a different argument up there in Washington now, but the more you cut, the more important it is how you spend what's left. It's more important now how we spend what's left. So I want to ask everybody here to be active in how this thing is structured, because we've got an opportunity, I believe, to preserve the structure of our agriculture we've got in America today and see it grow economically if we don't blow it.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:25 p.m. at the Leslie Auer farm.

Remarks at a Town Meeting in Billings, Montana

June 1, 1995

Gus Koernig. Anything you'd like to say, Mr. President, or you just want to jump in?

The President. I think we ought to jump in. I had a wonderful stay in Montana. I had a great opportunity to speak to a large number of Montanans at Montana State University last night. I've had a great day today, as you know. And these folks have brought their questions; I think we should begin.

Gun Control Legislation

Mr. Koernig. Okay. I'm told I get to start. So, as you're probably aware, sport hunting is very popular in Montana. More than 60 percent of the men in this State, more than 30 percent of the women purchase game hunting licenses every year. There is a lot of concern here on the parts of people that legislation such as the Brady law and the assault weapons ban are a sign of more things to come, and there is a lot of concern and more than a little fear and uneasiness about this. What can you say to these folks here in our audience to address that?

The President. Well, first of all, let me tell you where I'm coming from on this. For 12 years, before I became President, I was the Governor of Arkansas, a State where more than half the people have a hunting or a fishing license or both. I would never knowingly do any-

thing to undermine the ability of people to hunt, to engage in recreational shooting, to do anything else that is legal with appropriate firearms.

I strongly supported the Brady bill for a clear reason: We knew it would work to keep a significant number of people from getting guns who either had past criminal records or had mental health histories that made them unfit to be gun owners. And it has, in fact, done that.

I supported the assault weapons ban for a simple reason: because the death rate from gunshot wounds in a lot of our cities where the crime rate is high has gone up. I went to emergency rooms where hospital personnel pleaded with me to do something about this problem, because the average gunshot wound victim they were seeing had more bullets in them than just a few years ago because of the widespread use of these assault weapons by gang members. I saw a lot of children who were innocently caught in crossfires in this kind of thing. All the law enforcement agencies in the country asked for help on the assault weapons ban. So I supported it. But the bill that I passed also contained a list of 650 sporting weapons that could not be in any way infringed by Federal action, that were protected. There were 19 as-

sault weapons and their copycats that were prohibited. I still believe it was the right thing to do. I strongly believe it was the right thing to do.

Now, we can differ about that, but I just want to make two points in closing. As President, I have to make laws that fit not only my folks back home in Arkansas and the people in Montana but the whole of this country. And the great thing about this country is its diversity, its differences, and trying to harmonize those is our great challenge.

I did this because I thought it would give our law enforcement officers a better chance to stay alive and to keep other people alive. That's why I did it. I did it because it has clear protections for hunting and sporting weapons. And I think, frankly, that the NRA has done the country a disservice by trying to raise members and raise money by making extremist claims for this. I mean, they put out a letter in which they called Federal officials "jack-booted thugs," as you know, but the other part of the letter accused me of encouraging Federal officials to commit murder. And I just think that's wrong.

You know, one of the problems we've got in this country is, everybody wants simple answers to complicated questions, and so we all start screaming at each other before we listen and talk. That's one reason I'm here tonight.

So I did it; I think it's the right thing to do. But I do not plan to do anything which would undermine the ability of people in Montana or any other State in this country to lawfully use their weapons.

Mr. Koernig. We promise not to scream tonight. Our first question.

The President. You can if you want.

Bosnia

[A 14-year-old exchange student from Serbian-occupied territory asked about efforts to bring peace to her country and to encourage more student exchanges in the meantime.]

The President. Thank you very much. Let me answer the second question first, because it's an easier answer. The answer to your second question is yes, I want to see young people come over here and live in America and have the experiences you're having. And I think it would be very beneficial for Americans to have people from your country who have been

through what you have been through and your family has been through come here and talk about it. So, yes.

The first question is, can I do anything to bring an easier end to the fighting, or a quicker end to the fighting? We are doing what we can. Let me tell you what we're doing. First of all, we are leading the largest humanitarian airlift in human history now into Bosnia, trying to make sure we get as much food and medicine in there. Secondly, I have, near where you're from in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, stationed some American troops to try to make sure that the conflict can't spread beyond Bosnia and that no one believes they can in—sort of start a whole regional war. The third thing we've tried to do through NATO is to support the British, the French, the Canadian, and the other European troops that are in Bosnia in their peacekeeping efforts. We have tried to make sure that we created safe areas in the eastern enclaves and around Sarajevo, that we tried to collect all the heavy weapons that the Serbs have which give them such an enormous advantage on the battlefield. And that's what caused this latest trouble we had over there, because they broke the agreement they made and they put 1,400 shells into Sarajevo.

Now, I have to tell you, though, I think in the end this war will only end when the parties are willing to negotiate a peace, in peace, just the way we're bringing an end to the war in the Middle East, the way we're bringing an end to the conflicts in Northern Ireland. I do not believe there is a military settlement that the United States can enforce. And I do not favor sending our troops into combat there to try to assure victory or to force through military means an end to the fighting. All it would do is get a lot of Americans killed and not achieve the objective. So I don't think we should do that. But we should do everything we can short of that.

Welfare, Regulations, and Taxes

[A participant asked about combating the negativity expressed by coworkers leaning toward a militia mentality.]

The President. Well, first of all, I think one of the things that has happened is that increasingly in this information age, with all this explosion of access to information, one of the things

that's happening that's not good is that people are more and more and more listening to people who tell them just what they want to hear or play on their own fears. And that's isolating us. One reason I like this is that there are a lot of people here of different points of view. So I think—I would urge you to urge them to open their ears and eyes to different points of view. Now, let me just deal with the three issues you mentioned. You mentioned welfare; you mentioned Government regulation; you mentioned taxes.

On the welfare issue, most Americans believe, I learned from a recent poll, that we're spending 45 percent of your money on foreign aid and welfare. In fact, we're spending about a nickel of your money on foreign aid and welfare, your tax money. For the last 2 years, 2½ years, I have done everything I could to convince the Congress to pass a welfare reform bill which would invest more in work and require people on welfare to move to work and would give people who are parents of small children the ability to work and still see that their kids are taken care of. When that has not happened, I have given 29 States now the permission to get out from under all these Federal rules and regulations and adopt their own plans to move people from welfare to work.

On the regulation issue, we have reduced more regulations than the two previous administrations. We're going to cut enough paperwork this year to stretch page by page from New York to San Francisco. So if you want me to defend Government regulation, you're talking to the wrong person. I can't even defend everything that's been done since I've been here, because I believe we do have to change the way the Government works. But the final thing I would tell you is, I do not believe that we should abandon our commitment to a clean environment and to the quality of life that makes everybody in the world want to live in a place like Montana. But I think we have to change the way we regulate and do it better.

On the tax issue, the American tax burden is about the same as it is in Japan and, on average, about 50 percent lower than it is in the European countries. And I have done what I could to bring it down for middle class people who are overtaxed. Today, families of four with incomes of \$28,000 a year or less this year paid \$1,000 less than they would have before I became President, because of taxes we cut in '93.

And I want to provide further tax relief to middle class Americans to educate their children, to raise their children, and to help to save to pay for health insurance or care for their parents.

So we're working on all these things. The answer is not to join the militia and opt out. The answer is to come in here and opt in and be a vigorous voice of citizen responsibility.

Federal Employee Safety

[The daughter of a Bureau of Land Management employee expressed concern for her father's safety.]

The President. First of all, I want to thank your father for serving his country by working for the Federal Government. Maybe the most important thing I can do is to remind the American people that the people who work for the Federal Government are citizens and human beings too. And I think the one thing that happened in Oklahoma City is a lot of people realized all of a sudden that all of these people we deride all the time for working for the Federal Government are people that go to church with us, that send their kids to our schools and show up at the softball parks and the bowling alleys and contribute to the United Way.

And I think that if you want to disagree with the policy of the Government, disagree with it. If there is a single Federal official—there's nobody, including me, who has never felt that they were mistreated by somebody working for the Government. So if somebody believes someone who is working for the Government has mistreated them, take it to the appropriate authority, make it public if you want to, but be specific. But do not condemn people who work for the Government. That's the kind of mentality that produced Oklahoma City.

And all these people out here in these various groups that are sending faxes around trying to tell people, you know, how they can get ready to assault Federal officials who are doing their jobs, trying to justify taking violent action, I don't think they understand how many people there are out there that are in an unstable frame of mind that might take them seriously and actually kill or take other violent action against Federal authorities. It is awful. Just a couple of days ago, we lost another FBI agent in Washington, DC, and I talked to that man's widow today. He has four children; he has a grandchild.

He was a human being. He was an American. And apparently, the person who shot him had a vendetta against all law enforcement officials. Now, we cannot have that kind of climate in this country.

And I think the most important thing we can do to make your father safer is to have everybody in this room, whatever their political party or their view, stand up and say it is wrong to condemn people who are out there doing their job and wrong to threaten them. And when you hear somebody doing it, you ought to stand up and double up your fist and stick it in the sky and shout them down. That is wrong. It is wrong.

And I hope everybody in this State heard what you said today. And I hope you feel better in school next week—although I guess you're out for the summer. [Laughter] Thank you.

The Environment

[A participant asked about enforcement of air quality standards in Billings.]

The President. All I can tell you is, I'll be glad to look into it. I tried to prepare for this, and I tried to think of every issue I might be asked about. I don't know the answer to it, but I will get back to you with an answer. I will look into it, and I'll get back to you with an answer.

Let me just make a general comment, and you may have other questions about this. There are problems in the application of all of our environmental laws because people are applying them and because we have followed a regulatory model that might have made sense 20 years ago that I don't think makes as much sense anymore. So nearly everybody maybe could cite his case where we have—you don't think we've gone far enough; somebody else thinks we've gone way too far with it, whether it's clean air, clean water, the Endangered Species Act, you name it.

But I would remind you, just running through the question you asked me, the thing we have to do for Montana is to permit people to make a living and preserve the quality of life, because that's why people want to live here and that's why people pour in here by the millions every year, to see what you've got they don't have. And that's why we have to try to do that for everybody in America, and we've got to try to find the right way to do it. But you made the

point. I'll look into it. I can't answer the question specifically.

[A participant asked about protection of Yellowstone National Park in view of a proposed gold mine 2½ miles from the park.]

The President. Well, first of all, let me thank you for the question. I'm very worried about it because of the site. I know it's on private land, but it's only a couple of miles from Yellowstone and from Clark Fork. I spoke with Senator Baucus today at some length about this. I asked him to take a car ride with me for about 15 minutes so he could walk me through this and all of his concerns.

What I believe we have to do now is, you know, they—there has to be an environmental impact statement filed on this. And Senator Baucus has set out five very specific extra high standards he thinks ought to have to be met before they get approval under any environmental impact statement. And I guess I would have to tell you that's the way I feel.

I think that the people of Montana are entitled to know that we have gone the extra mile because of the unique place where this site is. And I don't want to prejudge the environmental impact statement; I believe most of these decisions should be made on the merits. But it just stands to reason, given the tailings and the other dimensions of the mining project, that it's going to have to meet a very high standard before you can be absolutely certain you're not doing anything to Clark Fork or to Yellowstone. And no amount of gain that could come from it could possibly offset any permanent damage to Yellowstone.

So you just need to be sure and you need to watch this, and I will watch it. I assure you I will, and I know that Senator Baucus and others will.

Agriculture Policy

[A farmer asked about the 1995 farm bill and farm loan rates.]

The President. First of all, since I've been President we've raised the loan rate once, as you probably know. I have also tried to do two other things for farmers, particularly farmers in this part of our country. One is to find more markets to sell products and to use things like the Export Enhancement Program, the EEP program, to help to facilitate those sales. The

other is to try to give you some protection from unfair competition. You know, our administration moved to get that moratorium on increased imports from Canada, and we set up that commission to work on that problem, on the wheat issue. So I have tried to be responsive to the problems here. It is going to be difficult to get a big increase in the loan rate because of the budgetary situation we're in.

I don't agree that the trade deals are necessarily bad. There are some—the Senators from North Dakota think that the agreement the United States made with Canada before NAFTA and before I became President had something to do with what you're dealing with, with the wheat now. I wasn't there. I can't comment on it; I don't know. But our agricultural exports this year will be the largest they've ever been. We'll have a trade surplus of over \$20 billion in agriculture.

What I am worried about is the last point you made. It used to be when agricultural exports went up, farm income went up. It doesn't necessarily happen anymore. It used to be if you could get more jobs into the American economy, people's wages would rise. If you'd told me 2½ years ago that I could get the Congress to lower the deficit 3 years in a row for the first time since Mr. Truman was President and increase investment in education and technology and expand trade for American products and create 6.3 million new jobs, but the incomes of most working Americans wouldn't go up, I wouldn't have believed that. That's what the global economy has done, and that's our big problem.

Now, here's what's going to happen in agriculture in this farm debate, and I'll tell you what I'm going to try to do. The Congress has said we ought to cut another \$8 billion or \$9 billion out of farm supports. Farm supports were cut in '85; they were cut in '90; they were cut modestly in '93. They've been cut modestly in '95 by me because the Europeans are having to cut more under the GATT deal we made. If we cut \$8 billion or \$9 billion in farm supports, in my opinion, two things are going to happen. Number one, we're going to produce less and lose markets overseas, and number two, more family farmers will go out and corporate farmers will come in.

There are two reasons for the farm price supports. One is to enable us to compete with people around the world. The other is to enable

efficient family farmers to ride through the hard years. Corporations don't need that; they can either borrow the money or have cash reserves to ride through the hard years. So I'm going to be pushing for changes in this farm bill which help preserve family farmers instead of changes which undermine them. And I told a bunch of farmers I met with today near here at the Les Auer's farm, I said, you know, what we need to do is not only look at how much this budget's going to be cut but how this farm program is going to be structured, because if we don't do it, family farmers, without regard to their politics, are going to be in trouble.

Racism and Native Americans

[After the station took a commercial break, a consultant and lobbyist for Native American organizations asked about efforts to combat racism.]

The President. Well, let me tell you one thing I'm doing specifically. Late next month—this month, it's June 1st, isn't it—this month, I'm going to have a meeting in Washington, bringing in people from all sectors of our society to talk about what we can do to recreate a sense of good citizenship in America and of respecting our diversity. That doesn't mean we ought to agree. We're always going to have disagreements. We ought to have disagreements. That's why we've got a first amendment, so we can all disagree and fight like cats and dogs. But we've reached a point in this country now when too many of us are looking at each other as enemies.

And I cannot tell you—you know, I've had the privilege of representing you around the world and trying to end the nuclear threat and expand opportunities for Americans and make peace elsewhere. This country's meal ticket to the 21st century is our diversity. But it's a headache, right? Look at—even in Montana, with the relatively small population you have, you have a lot of people with different views on every issue. But I'm telling you, it's our meal ticket to the global economy. And we have got to find a way, in a community setting like this, to stop looking at each other as enemies and start looking at each other as friends and neighbors even when we have differences and try to find a way to resolve the differences, instead of drive wedges into the differences, make them bigger, so we can belong to organizations that

will hate each other more than we did before and we give all our money to keep driving ourselves apart instead of spending our money to bring ourselves together. I believe that's very important.

And for the Native Americans, it's terribly important. You know, I have supported legislation to give Native American tribes more autonomy, to respect their religious and other cultural traditions. And I am now doing things to try to build economic development opportunities in all rural areas of the country, including for American Indians who live on reservations. None of this is going to work unless all of us figure we got a vested interest in everybody else doing well.

So, you know, most Americans get up every day and go to work and pay their taxes and obey the law and raise their kids the best they can, and they're pretty fine people. And we don't deserve to be wasting our energy hating each other. And it's a bad mistake. And to go back to what that lady said, part of it is the flip side of the technology and information revolution. You can talk to people on the Internet now who have all the same fears you do, and you never have to fool with anybody, or even look them in the face, that disagrees with you.

But what's—our bread and butter is that we're different. So anyway, starting at the end of this month we're going to see if there's some disciplined, organized way we can take this message across America and involve people of different parties, different perspectives, radically different political views on issues in the idea of recreating a sense that we're all neighbors. [Applause] Thanks.

Social Security

[A participant suggested that the Social Security Trust Fund be removed from congressional control and put into a private trust with a private board of directors.]

The President. Well, first of all, yes, it would be possible to do that. Let me say with regard to your assertion about mismanagement, I don't necessarily agree with that. It is true that the Congress raised the Social Security tax back in 1983 because the Social Security Trust Fund was in trouble, because the American people kept demanding opportunities for people to retire at younger ages while we were living to be older and older. So they decided to gradually,

a month a year, over a period of several years, raise the retirement age to 67. They funded the thing better, and then they essentially used the Social Security tax to downplay the deficit, which meant that most of the Social Security money was being invested in Government bonds.

Now, they are good. That's money in the bank; that money will go back there. And there are those who argue that, well, if it were invested in other things it could have earned a higher rate of return, and therefore, we wouldn't—we'd have a more stable Social Security System for a longer term. That may be true, but we'd have to be willing to assume a higher rate of risk as well. And that's one of the things we're debating now.

But I can tell you right now the Social Security Trust Fund is solvent, and it's solid. There will be financial problems in the Social Security Trust Fund in the second decade of the next century because my crowd will reach retirement age. I'm the oldest of the baby boomers, and the people born between 1946 and 1964 are the largest single group of Americans ever born. So when we start to work less and play more golf and go hunting and fishing, it's going to be a real burden on everybody still working unless we have some reforms. And I think we ought to—that's one of the things we ought to look at.

We did take one step last year: We made the Social Security program and agency totally independent of any other arm of the Federal Government. And there is a report coming out sometime in the next couple of weeks about what else we ought to do to make it stable into the next century. We have a solemn obligation to do it, and as long as I'm there, I'm going to do everything I can to make sure that the money is there for you and everybody else who paid into it.

AIDS

[A participant questioned administration policy and efforts regarding AIDS.]

The President. First of all, it's not true that I have made no major speeches about AIDS. I appointed the first AIDS czar the country ever had. I got the Ryan White Act fully funded. We increased funding for AIDS research and AIDS care by 3 times or more the amount that the rest of the budget was going up, and then

we did it—when we were cutting almost everything else, we were spending much more money on AIDS. This administration has done far more on research and care and raising the visibility of the issue than anyone ever has.

I don't mind you being frustrated, because it's frustrating until we find a cure. We are finding ways, by the way, to keep people alive more and more, and we're also finding ways that children who are born HIV-positive can get through it in a hurry and maybe even have totally normal life expectancy.

All I can tell you is what my commitment is. My commitment is, during these budget wars, to see that medical research in general and AIDS research in particular are continued to be increased—it's a very small part of the overall budget, but it's a big part of our future—and to try to make sure that we have adequate levels of care.

Now, let me say one final thing. The health care reforms that I proposed last year did not pass. But there are two things that I think we ought to do that would make a huge difference to people with HIV and all of their family members and friends. The most important is to try to provide some alternatives to either no care or nursing home care in the home or in boarding homes, some other options for long-term care for families. That's also a big deal for people with disabled relatives and people with parents that maybe don't need to be in a nursing home but need some help. I believe that that ought to be part of all these arguments about cutting Medicare and Medicaid. It ought to be done in the context of health care reform, and we ought to push for that again. And I will do that. The other thing I think we have to do is to make it possible for more Americans to buy into health insurance pools that they can afford.

So I am going to work on that with this Congress and, believe it or not, in spite of all the things you hear now, I think we've got a reasonable chance to achieve both of those goals. And I think if you and people like you will lobby on the care issue, the Ryan White issue, I think we have a chance to get that carved out from the cuts. And I hope you will do that.

I can tell you, too—I've said this elsewhere—it would be a lot easier if they didn't have just an arbitrary date for balancing the budget and then have to churn everything else in there. If you'd say, "What do we have to do? How

much does it cost to do it? How are we going to cut? How long will it take to do it?" it would lead you to a conclusion that you could do it but you'd have to take a few more years.

Prisons

[A participant questioned increased spending for prisons and suggested changes in the Federal sentencing guidelines for nonviolent offenders.]

The President. The Attorney General is reviewing that, and there is a commission, you know, that's supposed to make recommendations on it. I have to tell you, all of you folks, that the Federal Government adopted these sentencing guidelines to get out of the feeling a lot of Americans had that the sentence a person got and the time a person did was totally arbitrary, that it varied so dramatically from judge to judge and State to State that it was hard to believe that justice was ever being done. And some people, it would seem, would do something terrible and not do any time at all. So we went to the sentencing guidelines.

Most people who practice law and who deal with the sentencing guidelines now believe just what this gentleman said, that it requires people to serve too much time in prison for relevantly minor offenses and lets serious offenders off for doing too little time, costing the Federal taxpayers more.

I don't think you should assume that nothing's going to be done on that. I'll be honest with you, the Members of Congress and the people in the Justice Department and everybody else is reluctant to touch them for fear that if you change anything, they will be excoriated by somebody saying, "Well, here's one case, and this guy is doing one day less," and how terrible it is. Again, we live in an age where there are a lot of complicated problems that don't have simple answers, but those 30-second bullets that come screaming over the air waves like—seem to have a simple answer. But I think that we need to have a careful review of them and see if we can't reach a sense in the country that they could be modified in ways that would actually make the American people safer.

We can't totally jail our way out of this crime problem, folks. Russia is the only country in the world with the same percentage of people behind bars as America has. South Africa has—is the only country in the world that has about half the percentage of people behind bars. No-

body else is above 20 percent of percentage of people in prison that we have.

So, I know a lot of people think that the courts are lenient and the prisons are weak. But the truth is, we send more people to jail and keep them longer there than any other country does. And I'm all for it if they're the right people, if they're the dangerous people that shouldn't be let out, that ought to be kept behind bars. But right now, prison expansion is normally the biggest item in every State government's budget today. In California, they're building more prisons and spending less on education, thereby ensuring they'll have to build more prisons and spend less on education—you see what I mean.

So I agree it ought to be looked at. But to do it, we need people who are out here in the country who would foster a non-demagoguing debate about it, because every time the Justice Department even seeks to raise it, you have all of the things you can imagine being said about it.

Health Care Reform

[A participant praised Hillary Clinton's efforts on health care reform and asked if the President would continue to pursue it.]

The President. I'm trying to think of all of the things I want to say to you. When I was a boy, I lived on a farm in Arkansas that had sheep and goats and cattle, and I nearly got killed by a ram; so I'm glad that your sheep are well-behaved. I don't have that—I've still got a scar up here that I got when I was 6 years old.

Two things happened on the health care reform. Somewhere between \$200 and \$300 million was spent to advertise to convince the American people we were trying to have the Government take over health care. And the American people basically wound up believing it, so that Congress could get off by just walking away from it. That's essentially what happened. I don't think it was true.

On the other hand, the second thing that happened was, I have to take responsibility—not my wife, not anybody else, me, because I've been in this business a long time—for biting off more than we could chew at once. Health care is one-seventh of our economy. It's the number one concern for a lot of people when they get sick. And there is only so much change

you can accommodate at one time. I think that I have to take responsibility for making our plan vulnerable to being both distorted but also to failing, and I regret that very much.

So what are we going to do now? Because every year, more and more working people don't have health insurance. Every year, more and more people who are self-employed or farmers or people in small businesses can't afford to buy insurance or have to pay more for less coverage. And every year, more and more cost gets either put off onto the Government or onto people that do have good insurance policies. Now, if we cut Medicare and Medicaid and take that money away from hospitals in Montana and Arkansas and other places and New York City, that will put even more pressure on either closing hospitals or raising insurance rates for people that have good insurance. So this is a very complicated thing.

My answer to you is twofold. Number one, if it is appropriate, that is, depending on what we do this year, I'll certainly intend to discuss the health care in the context of the campaign in 1996. But, number two, remember I have said to the American people all along Medicare and Medicaid are going up too fast; I agree with the Republican majority in Congress on that. We won't have any money for anything else if we continue to have to spend 10 percent, 11 percent more every year for Medicare and Medicaid. That's the only—look, under my budgets, everything else is virtually flat or declining. On the other hand, you can't just cut it without trying to reform the system. And I believe there are some important medical reforms that can be done this year that would make health care more available and more affordable to people and would reduce some of the disruption that's otherwise going to come if you just have huge cuts in Medicare and Medicaid.

So I'm not giving up on getting something done this year. And there are a lot of people in both parties in Congress who are prepared to talk about some step-by-step reforms that would make a difference.

Cooperation With Congress

[A participant asked why the President had not cooperated with the Republicans after their election victory.]

The President. I think the American people do want it. And I have tried to cooperate. Let me just give you three—a couple of examples and remind you that cooperation means just that. It requires two people to cooperate, two sides.

Example number one: I signed and strongly supported a bill, the first bill the Republican Congress passed, to apply to Congress all the laws they put on the private sector, because I figure that'll make them think twice before they ask private employers to go out and do a lot of things that they don't have to do—the first thing we did.

The second bill we did was a bill sponsored by Senator Kempthorne in Idaho to limit the ability of Federal Government to impose unfunded mandates on State and local government. I was strongly for that. I signed it.

The third thing I did was to help them break a filibuster and get strong support among Democrats in the Senate for the line-item veto, which they all said they wanted. You remember the House passed a line-item veto on President Reagan's birthday as a present for him; that was weeks ago, right? The line-item veto—one of the things the Republican Congress said that was essential to cut spending—I said, "Give it to me. I'll cut it." Do you know—so we had a line-item veto pass the House, a line-item veto pass the Senate, and I am still waiting for a conference committee to be appointed. And one of the Republican Senators said last week, "Oh, we're not going to give President Clinton the line-item veto. We may not like the cuts he makes in spending." So here I am, all dressed up and ready to cooperate. [*Laughter*]

Now, on the—let me give you one other example. They wanted to cut some money out of this year's budget to make a downpayment on balancing the budget. That's what this so-called rescission bill is. They wanted to do it so they would raise money to pay for Oklahoma City, the California earthquake, and the floods that are now going on in the Middle West and still have some money to bring the deficit down starting this year even more. And I said, fine. They said \$16 billion; I said, fine. I met with the Republican Senators, and we worked out an agreement. And then all the Democratic Senators, just about, voted for it. It was a great deal, right? So then they go behind closed doors, and they take a billion four that we agreed on

spending on education and health care and veterans and a bunch of other stuff out and put in a billion four worth of courthouses and special street and road projects and some other things.

Now—and so I said, "Look, I want to sign this bill; I want to cooperate. But I made a deal. Then you guys went behind closed doors. You took people out; you took pork in." We've got to raise incomes of Americans. We shouldn't be cutting education. We shouldn't be cutting those opportunities. I do not want to have a pile of vetoes, but I am not going to sign a bill that gets changed behind closed doors after the cooperation we had agreed on produced this bill.

So, I still want to cooperate with them. I'll help them balance the budget, too, but not if it collapses the American economy or wrecks Medicare or closes every country hospital in Montana and my home State. I want to cooperate, but it takes two to tango.

Power Marketing Administrations

[*After the station took a commercial break, a participant questioned the proposed sale of Energy Department power marketing administrations to private interests.*]

The President. Well, the argument is, let me just say—let me put it in a larger context. The Office of Management and Budget, under my administration and under the previous Republican administrations, has always routinely tried to put something on this in the budget. The Congress now has voted to do it at least one time, but it has to go through another committee, so it might be able to be headed off.

When they brought it to me, I said I don't necessarily believe this is going to save money. This is a one-time savings, all right, and you can argue that the power is subsidized, but I will approve this only if you do two things, in our proposal. One is you have to put a lid on how much rates can go up, and two—which makes it less attractive, obviously, to private utilities. And two is there has to be an extraordinary effort to let public power authorities buy the capacity first, which would, in effect—since they're getting it, since the power marketing authorities primarily sell to public power authorities, as you know—which would essentially be a change of assets; you could take it off the government's books, it would look like you

lowered the deficit, but it wouldn't lead to a rate increase because you'd have the same integrated network.

So that is what I am trying to do with this proposal. That's what I believe should be done. I do not believe we should sell it and get a one-time gain out of it if it's going to explode electric rates in Montana or in any other State.

There may be a way to do it that would increase the cash flow of the Government and help the Congress and the President to bring the deficit down, but it should only be done if it can be managed without a big hit on the electric rate payers. And I think the way I suggested is a possible way to do it. And if it doesn't work out, then, in my opinion, it shouldn't pass at all.

Government Response to Protest

[A participant asked about the contrast between antigovernment protest in the 1960's and 1970's and in the present.]

The President. Well, first of all, there were some people in the '60s and '70s who went beyond their first amendment rights and advocated violence. And they were wrong then, and this crowd is wrong now.

And it's very interesting to me to see that there are some public officials in our country who are only too happy to criticize the culture of violence being promoted by the media in our country or the rap lyrics that are coming out in some of our recordings—which I have also criticized before they did, by and large—but are stone-cold silent when these other folks are talking and making violence seem like it's okay.

And I believe, again, if we're going to create an American community where we can disagree, vote differently, work through our differences, but all think we're friends and neighbors and get closer together, we have to have a uniform standard that says violence is wrong, illegal conduct is wrong, and people that are out there encouraging people and explicitly tell them when it's okay for them to take the law into their own hands and be violent, they're wrong.

And people who are out there demeaning and dehumanizing people just because they work for the Federal Government are wrong. I am not defending every person who ever did anything for the Federal Government, including me. I make mistakes. Everybody who works for the Government makes mistakes. They're human.

When somebody does something wrong, it ought to be zeroed in on, targeted, and talked about. You can do that without dehumanizing people.

I'll tell you, I've been guilty of it. Every politician I've ever known, including me, will sometimes give a speech to people like you and talk about Federal bureaucrats. We've reduced the number of Federal bureaucrats, by the way, by over 100,000, and we're going down to 270,000 in the budgets we've already adopted, to the smallest Government since President Kennedy came here in 1963.

But I realized after Oklahoma City that every time I did that, I did that to try to make those of you who are taxpayers think that I was identifying with you more than them. And that is wrong. That is dehumanizing. That young girl's father is an American citizen who made a deliberate decision that he would never be a rich person because he wanted to serve the United States in a Federal agency. And I've been guilty of it, too.

We all have to realize that we have to change the way we talk and the way we think about this. We don't have to quit disagreeing. We don't have to quit arguing. But this whole climate is bad. It's good for their politics. It helps them raise a lot of money and generate—you know, if you keep people torn up and upset, fear may be a stronger force than hope. But it's not good for America. And we're better than that, all of us are.

Canada-U.S. Trade

[A participant asked about the trade imbalance with Canada in regard to cattle and grain.]

The President. Well, first of all, we were the first administration that ever did anything. We got—we had a one-year agreement to limit Canadian imports of wheat, to set up a joint commission to try to deal with this and to try to work it out, because the Canadian wheat problem is somewhat analogous to the Japanese automobile problem that you know I'm also involved with now. And that is that they have a system which does not fall into the category of tariff—right?—which is a tax on imports, or protectionism, which is a legally explicit barrier to imports. It is the way their economic system is organized, works de facto to give them an unfair advantage, in both cases. And these things are not—they're very difficult to take care of in trade laws, which

is why you have to take them one by one and take a lot of heat when you're doing it.

So all I can tell you, sir, is that I am doing my best to deal with the situation I found when I became President 2½ years ago. And we have not solved the problem but at least we've put it on hold, and we've done more than has been done in the past. And I will continue to do my best to work on it.

Town Meetings

Mr. Koernig. We are unfortunately, Mr. President, and everybody here, just about out of time. I have one final question.

The President. It seems like we just got here.

Mr. Koernig. I know, it does. I have one final question for you. This is the first townhall meeting you've done in over a year. You did quite a few of them, and then you stopped. Why did you stop, and why are you starting again?

The President. I don't really know why I stopped. One of the things that frustrates me—the young gentleman was asking me about cooperating with Congress, and during the break I said, you know, when we do things, it's not news; it's only news when we're fighting. And one of the things that I noticed is I'd go out and do these townhall meetings, and we'd have, you know, 30, 40 questions, and there would be one where there would be a little—sparks would fly, and that would be the only thing that would get any kind of real legs out of it, so that if the American people drew any conclusion, they would think that I was here making the problem I'm trying to combat worse.

And that may be a reason we kind of stopped doing them, but I think it was a mistake. I think these things are good, because first of all, it's easy for the President to become isolated, particularly in this security environment we live in today. And I think people who have questions should be able to confront their elected officials face to face, personally. And I think it's good to create this.

I look kind of hypocritical going around saying we ought to all start treating each other like friends and neighbors if I'm holed up someplace or I only talk when I'm giving a speech to people who can't respond. So I'm glad to be here.

Mr. Koernig. We're glad you're here too. We're glad that you chose Billings as the place to start doing townhall meetings again. I know that I speak for everyone in Montana and peo-

ple of northern Wyoming in thanking you very much for being with us tonight, sir.

The President. Thank all of you very much. I can't believe it's 8 o'clock.

Mr. Koernig. I'm Gus Koernig at KTVQ in Billings. I'm told you have some closing comments to make.

The President. No, I'm fine. I'll tell you what I'll do. Does anybody have a question that could be answered yes or no? [Laughter] Yes, no, maybe—what—quick.

Anticrime Efforts

Q. Mr. President, as the costs of incarcerating criminals continues to rise, will you take actions to support early intervention and educational programs that will help children not to become criminals but to become successful members of our society?

The President. Absolutely. It was a big part of the crime bill last year. The crime bill had money for prisons, money for police, and money for prevention, and money for punishment. Some in Congress want to take the prevention money out; I want to keep it in.

Anybody else—yes, quick.

Education Funding

Q. Mr. President, will you veto the rescission bill if they do not put education back into the proposed cuts?

The President. Yes, I will. But I want to sign a rescission bill. They're right, the Congress is right to cut that spending, but they shouldn't have done what was done in the conference committee. If they will fix the education, I'll sign it. We ought to have one. It's the right thing to do, but we've got to establish some standards. When you cut spending, what you do spend becomes even more important.

The Environment

Q. Mr. President, if the Republicans rewrite the Endangered Species Act or the Clean Air and Water Acts, will you veto that revision?

The President. Well, it depends on what they do. If this bill the House passed on clean water passes, I'll veto that. But I do believe that there are Republicans and Democrats in the Senate who will try to work together to give us some responsible revisions. And we're trying to revise the way the Endangered Species Act is administered, and all these things trying to push more down to the local level. But we can't abandon

them. There is a reason that we have an Endangered Species Act. We brought the eagle back, we're bringing the grizzly bear back, and if we can preserve diversity, it will be good for the environment. But we've got to do it with common sense, and we can do that.

Native American Issues

Q. I want to know if you'd fully fund the tribally controlled community colleges?

The President. Well, we've got some—you know, we did some things for the tribal community colleges that had not done before and made them eligible for certain streams of Federal money. I can't promise to fully fund anything in this budgetary environment; I wish I could, but I can't.

Q. Dave Henry, a Federal whistle-blower of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, formerly. The Indian trust accounts are short between \$1 billion and \$2 billion—that's with a "b," not an "m"—billion dollars Federal—Indian personal money gone. Could you please ask the Bureau of Indian Affairs to reform the system accounting for Indian trust funds?

The President. I will look into that. That's the second question I don't know the answer to tonight, but I'll look into it.

Any real quick yes or no's?

Campaign Finance Reform

Q. Will you support any change in procedures which would eliminate the soft money in political campaigns which is allowing wealthy individuals in corporations to give very large amounts to the political campaigns?

The President. Yes, I will. I think that the Democratic majority in Congress last time made a mistake not to pass campaign finance reform. I think the lobby reform bill ought to pass as well, which would ban the giving of gifts and

require disclosure of lobbying activities. Those two things would do a lot to straighten up politics in Washington. Yes, I will—both of them, strongly.

Mr. Koernig. Mr. President, this is absolutely the last question.

The President. Okay.

The Environment

Q. Can we do anything to save the endangered species that are out there that people are killing and that we can try to set laws so they will be free to roam and so their population can grow?

The President. That's what the Endangered Species Act is supposed to do. And the people who don't like it believe that we try to save endangered species that aren't important and hurt people a lot economically. And here's what we've got to do. What we've got to do is to find a way to make sure that we don't hurt people so much economically but we do save the species. And in a way, they're all important because it's the whole web of our country, all the biological species, that give us what we know of as Montana or my home State. So I'm going to do what I can to save the Endangered Species Act and to implement it in a way that makes good sense, so all the people who don't like it will dislike it less and we'll save the species.

Mr. Koernig. Mr. President, thank you again. That was a terrific encore.

The President. Thank you.

Mr. Koernig. Thank you folks, and good night.

The President. They were good, weren't they? Thank you.

NOTE: The town meeting began at 7 p.m. in the KTVQ television studio.

Remarks on the Downing of a United States Aircraft in Bosnia

June 2, 1995

Good afternoon. I am very concerned about the loss of our F-16 over Bosnia and the fate of the American pilot, and we are following that situation closely.

I have spoken today with President Chirac about the situation in Bosnia and about the

meetings that Secretary Perry and General Shalikashvili will be attending. I've spoken with Secretary Perry and will meet with him and General Shali later today. We've also been in touch with the NATO commanders and with other governments.