

Nov. 19 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1995

Department of Transportation. All told, these actions bring back to work over 200,000 of the 800,000 Federal employees who were furloughed last week.

These bipartisan bills mark real progress in our efforts to fully reopen the Government so

it can serve the American people. I am determined that we should fully reopen the Government. Then we can openly and fairly decide the best way to balance the Federal budget while protecting Medicare, Medicaid, education, and the environment.

Statement on the Decline in the National Crime Rate

November 19, 1995

The continued decline in our national crime rate shows that the efforts by citizens and their police are making a difference. My 1994 crime bill's putting 100,000 cops on the street, taking assault weapons off the street, and cracking down on violent drug crimes. Today, all Ameri-

cans must double their efforts to eliminate the scourge of juvenile violence from our communities. This will only be accomplished by more parents teaching their children right from wrong.

Remarks Announcing an Agreement To Reopen the Federal Government and an Exchange With Reporters

November 19, 1995

The President. Good evening. As you know, an agreement has been reached to reopen our Government beginning tomorrow. The bill I have agreed to sign will allow our Government to once again begin to serve the American people while broader discussions about how best to balance the budget take place.

I have made clear from the beginning my principles in this budget debate. We must balance the budget, but we must do it in a way that is good for our economy and that maintains our values. That means we have to do it without devastating cuts in Medicare and Medicaid, in education and the environment. And we have to do it without raising taxes on working families.

This agreement reflects my principles. And for the first time, the Republican leaders in Congress have acknowledged the importance of those principles. As I have said throughout this debate, I could only agree to move forward if that occurred.

Tonight represents the first sign of their willingness to move forward without forcing unacceptable cuts in health care, education, and the environment on the American people. The Re-

publican budget which was passed just yesterday clearly does not come close to meeting that test, as I have said repeatedly. Therefore, I will veto that budget.

As you know, I have expressed strong doubts that the budget can be balanced in 7 years if we use the current Republican congressional budget assumptions. But I am nevertheless committed to working in the coming weeks to see if we can reach common ground on balancing the budget. The key is that nothing will be agreed to unless all elements are agreed to. I simply cannot sign a budget that devastates Medicare to the elderly or Medicaid to senior citizens and disabled people and poor children, that robs educational opportunity or educational standards from our children in the future, or that hurts our environment. And I can't support a tax increase on working families.

Well, tomorrow the Government will go back to work. And now the debate will begin in earnest on how to balance the budget in a way that is consistent with the interests and the values of the American people.

I appreciate the work that was done by both Democrats and Republicans tonight. I applaud

the leadership. I applaud the leaders of the budget committee. I applaud all of them for the work that they did. This is the way our Government ought to work. We ought to be able to find common ground, and we ought to be able to do it and permit the day-to-day work of the United States and the American people to go forward.

So from my point of view this is a very good thing, and a good and somewhat unexpected development on this Sunday evening.

Budget Compromise

Q. Are there any winners or losers in this, Mr. President—

The President. Yes.

Q. —in the sense that you—you may be interpreted as a loser to the extent on the binding 7 years?

The President. But nothing is binding unless everything is binding. And if you read the whole agreement, both paragraphs and the way it's written, essentially we agree to do something that I said we ought to agree to a long time ago. We ought to both say, we'll try to balance the budget. There's no magic to the timetable,

but if we can do it, you know, as quickly—we ought to do it as quickly as we can, consistent with economic growth and the values of the American people that hold us together.

So I would say that the real winners tonight are the American people. The American people have won in two ways: Number one, the Government will go back to work tomorrow, and the good Federal employees are real winners, too. And the real winners tonight are the American people because now we can have an open, honest, straightforward discussion about how best to balance the budget. So the victors tonight are the people that sent us all up here and that pay our salaries.

Q. Mr. President, how optimistic are you you can reach a compromise by December 15th?

The President. I don't know. All I know is that I can go to work. But you know what my—you know what my standards are, and you know what I'll do if we meet them and what I'll do if we won't. So we'll just go to work tomorrow and see if we can do it.

NOTE: This President spoke at 7:33 p.m. in the Briefing Room at the White House.

Statement on Signing the Treasury, Postal Service, and General Government Appropriations Act, 1996 *November 20, 1995*

Last night I signed into law H.R. 2020, the "Treasury, Postal Service, and General Government Appropriations Act, 1996."

The Act provides a total of \$11.3 billion in discretionary budget authority for various programs in the Department of the Treasury, the U.S. Postal Service, the General Services Administration, the Office of Personnel Management, the Executive Office of the President, and several smaller agencies. With this legislation enacted into law, over 140,000 furloughed employees were able to go back to work.

I am pleased that a provision contained in an earlier version of the bill, which would have limited the political advocacy rights of non-profit organizations that receive Federal funding, was removed from the bill. This unacceptable provision would have presented a broad attack on

the exercise of fundamental rights protected by the First Amendment.

Regrettably, the Congress has not funded the Internal Revenue Service at a sufficient level to ensure the kind of service that the taxpayers deserve. I am disappointed that the Congress eliminated the FY 1995 funding of \$405 million for the compliance initiative as it creates serious risks to the levels of tax compliance. At the very least, this action is expected to result in the loss of additional revenue over the next five years. Major compliance cuts send the wrong signal and reward tax cheats. The Internal Revenue Service's FY 1996 funding level is not consistent with the efforts of the Administration and the Congress to balance the Federal budget.