

American law enforcement an even stronger arsenal.

Working together, I believe we can and we will take all these important steps to increase the security of the American people.

Remarks to the National Association of Hispanic Publications January 26, 1996

The President. Thank you very much. I feel a lot better than I did when I got here. [*Laughter*] Thank you so much. Thank you, Andres Tobar. Thank you, Louis Rossi. Thank you, Federico Pena.

Secretary Pena gave me a beautiful introduction, and it illustrates Clinton's first law of politics: Whenever possible, be introduced by someone you have appointed to high office. [*Laughter*] I thank him for the outstanding job he has done at the Transportation Department and for being our friend and leader.

I want to congratulate you on your 10th annual convention, on the opening of your office here in Washington under Executive Director Marlene Romero. There are so many Hispanic-Americans I want to thank, but I want to say a special word of thanks to Raul Yzaguirre for his leadership and his guidance and his advice. I know that you have leaders of several Hispanic organizations here with you tonight, Commander Jake Alarid and the members of the G.I. Forum. I think the Chairman of the EEOC is here, Gil Casellas; he's done a terrific job.

I wanted to tell you that—I know Secretary Cisneros spoke yesterday, and he was to be here tonight, but his son is having a Cub Scout meeting, and Henry is the den leader. So we are trying to practice family values in our administration, and he's doing what he should be doing.

Let me also tell you before I get into the remarks that I was going to make tonight—you know, when I gave the State of the Union Address I said, and I believe, the major choice before America is not whether we're going to have big or smaller Government but whether we're going to work together to solve the problems and meet the challenges and seize the opportunities that we have as a people. The choice is whether we're going forward together or whether we think Americans can really do their best out there on their own. And I believe we

need to work together, and I asked the Congress to work with me.

I want you to know that just a few minutes ago the Congress passed a continuing resolution so that there's no question now of the Government shutting down, and we'll be able to go on. And now I hope very much we can go back to work and pass all the remaining budgets for this year and pass that 7-year balanced budget in a way that is fair to all Americans.

I also want you to know that the United States Senate has just voted overwhelmingly to ratify the START II treaty with Russia. And let me tell you what that means. That means that when the Russians follow suit—and I talked to President Yeltsin today and I told him that I thought the Senate would ratify it tonight. He said he would do his best to see that the Russian parliamentary body, the Duma, would do the same. When START II is ratified, between START I and START II we will have reduced nuclear weapons two-thirds below their cold-war high. Two-thirds of the nuclear weapons threatening the world will be gone. So I want to thank the United States Senate and the United States Congress for working together with us on this. And as I said, I very much hope that this is a sign of even more of that kind of work to come.

I wanted to say just one other thing, too, about the appointments issue. When I came here to Washington, I found that in strange corners I was criticized for trying to develop an administration that looked like America, that I had this idea that you could have diversity and excellence and we didn't have to sacrifice one for the other. You heard Secretary Pena say that we have appointed a record number of Hispanics—and I might add, and African-Americans and women—to the Federal bench. And just this week, I nominated a distinguished judge, Richard Paez from California, to the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth

Circuit—a very important court, and he'll do very well.

And what I wanted to say, that what I'm very proud of is that this batch of judges together have the highest ratings from the American Bar Association in terms of their qualifications of any President's appointments since the ABA has been rating them in over 20 years now. So you don't have to sacrifice excellence to get diversity, to give everybody a chance to serve. And that is very important.

I would like to talk just a few moments tonight—I know you're all here and you're having a good time and I want to get down here and shake hands, and I only have about one speech a week in me like the State of the Union—[laughter]—but I would like to talk about the things that I discussed in the State of the Union in terms of what they mean for Hispanics in America.

I do believe that as we move from the industrial age and the cold war into the information technology age and the global village that we are going into an age of possibility where, for Americans who can take advantage of it, there will be more possibilities for people to live out their dreams than in any time in the history of our country.

I also know that we face some stiff challenges. An awful lot of Americans, including an awful lot of Hispanic-Americans, because of all these changes, are having to work harder and harder and harder just to keep up and are worried about the security of their families: Will they be able to provide health care; will they have a pension when they retire; will they be able to educate their children; will they be able to get education if they need it in their middle years? These are serious challenges.

I am encouraged that the family values that the Hispanic community has always embodied are reasserting themselves. It's a good thing that the crime rate and the welfare rolls and the poverty rolls and the teen pregnancy rate are all down and that overall drug use in America is down. That's all good, but it is troubling that random violence among adolescents under 18 and random drug use and even cigarette use is now up among young people under 18.

So that's a challenge. We have to find a way to reach these children and get them back into the mainstream of American life and give them the dreams that so many of us grew up with.

And that's really what I was trying to talk about in the State of the Union.

You can see all the progress that's been made by Hispanic-Americans in the corporate sector, in the classrooms. We see more Hispanic TV news anchors, reporters, publishers, authors, doctors, lawyers, lawmakers. But every child deserves to have a dream and to have a chance to live out that dream. And I think this community has a special role to play in seeing that America meets the challenges of today and tomorrow, because you know all about hard work and personal responsibility and family values but you also know that we will do better if we work together than if we just leave everybody out there to fend for themselves. And that is the central message of this time.

I said at the State of the Union, and I repeat, I think this country faces seven great challenges: the challenge to strengthen our families; the challenge to renew our education for the next century; the challenge to provide economic security for every family that's out there working for it; the challenge to break the back of crime and violence so that crime becomes the exception, not the rule in America again; the challenge to protect our environment; the challenge to guard our world leadership for peace and freedom; and the challenge to make our Government work for all the people again.

Think what this means, all these challenges, to the Hispanic community. Strong families are the foundation of your culture. But every child is vulnerable to the lure of television that no child should watch, to the temptation of cigarettes that shorten our lives—1,000 kids a day will have their lives shortened because they're starting to smoke at an age when it is illegal—to the draw of the gangs and the drugs and all these things. We all have to set better examples. But we deserve help, too. We deserve help.

That's why I fought so hard on the telecommunications bill, for example, to have a requirement that all cable television stations have a V-chip in them so that parents can decide whether their young children shouldn't watch certain programs. That's not censorship, that's parental responsibility.

That's why I fought so hard for a welfare reform bill that would be both pro-work and pro-family. I have no problem with requiring people who can work to work; they should work. The welfare system was never meant to be a system which essentially said to people you can

move out of your house and have children out of wedlock and the Government will support you. But if we're going to require people to work, we have to remember that the responsibilities of parenthood are still the most important responsibilities in our society. So people must be able to succeed as parents as well as workers. That is my test for welfare reform.

Education has been the key to advancement of virtually everybody standing in this room tonight, and our education system in many ways is getting better and better. But it's not quite hooked up to the future as it should be. The Vice President and I are determined to see that every classroom and every library in every school in America is hooked up to the information superhighway by the year 2000. And it will help open the doors of the future for Hispanic children as never before. You're going to have children in isolated rural areas in south Texas within 4 or 5 years able to do research out of a library in Australia or China or India and learn things they never could have learned before. Because we have to bring the miracles of technology to the poor as well as the rich, to the rural as well as the urban, to all Americans. That is a vision worth achieving in our schools.

I would also point out to you that even though the college-going rate is going up, among poor Americans the college-going rate has flattened out—in some cases it's declining—because of the cost of a college education. No young American should ever not go to college because of the cost. That is my goal. Never. Never.

And we are working to increase the scholarships, to have everyone able to get a college loan—is a college loan that you would only pay back as a percentage of your income so that no matter how much you borrow, you can never be bankrupt after you got out of school. You would have to pay it back, but there would be a limit as a percentage of your income. Now, I am proud of the fact that we have given more loans, but we have cut the college default rate in half. If you make it possible for people to repay and then you require them to do so, you can educate more people and cut the college default rate. That's what we ought to be doing in this country.

And let me also say, I know that it's popular today to bash bilingual education and to get into all this language business. Everybody knows that English is the language of the United States, but we do well by encouraging people

to take other languages. My daughter just finished her Spanish exam, and I'm glad she's taking Spanish. And I wish more people would. And when children come to this country, whatever their native language, we want them to begin to learn immediately. We want them to develop a facility in English. We want them to keep their native tongue, and we want them to learn while they're doing it. That is all we have ever said. That is all anyone has ever asked. We don't need to make this issue a divisive issue for the American people.

If you think of the question of economic security, this affects the Hispanic community more than anyone else. The minimum wage is going to be at a 40-year low within a year if we don't—in terms of what it will purchase—if we don't raise it. It is unconscionable. For 2 years, I have been trying to get a raise in the minimum wage. It is time to do it. If we say people ought to work, how can we let people work and live in abject poverty? It is wrong, it is not necessary, and we should not do it.

Let me say, we're also trying to make sure that people get the wages they're entitled to. Between 1993 and 1995, the Wage and Hour Division of the Labor Department, headed by Maria Echaveste, restored more than \$77 million in illegally withheld wages to workers in the garment industry, restaurants, hotels, motels, and agriculture, many of them Hispanic. I believe America needs a raise, and we ought to start with a minimum wage. And we ought to do that because it is the right thing to do. I believe it very strongly.

I also believe very, very strongly that we can give people greater security when they know that their jobs have the capacity to get a pension system that they can take then from job to job, when at least they ought to be able to have access to health insurance that they can't lose when they change jobs or if someone in the family gets sick. That's why you have insurance, because someone might get sick. But you have people all over America who are losing their health insurance because somebody got sick; that's why you have it in the first place. Surely, at least, even though we could not agree on comprehensive health care reform last year, surely, surely we can agree to at least protect people who are in hard-working families when they change jobs or when one of their children get sick from losing health insurance.

Let me just say one other thing about security. I think if we're going to have security we have to have very firm, firm laws that protect the workplace in America. Federico said I opposed Proposition 187; I did. I thought it was a bad policy. I didn't want to see children thrown out of schools, sick people thrown out of hospitals. But I do not believe that people who are not here legally should be in the workplace, and a lot of them are being exploited today, exploited in unconscionable ways because we do not enforce laws that are on the books for legal immigration. I am for legal immigration. I am not for punishing children. But I think we have to take a strong stand against people who are not in the workplace legally, because they are being abused, and the whole American wage and hour system and the integrity of work is being abused by the people who do that. And we ought to stand against it. And those of you who believe in immigration, who believe we are a nation of immigrants, I ask you to help me do that, so that we can preserve the support of the United States for a good, strong, legal immigration system that continues to bring us together across our diverse cultures.

I want to say just one thing about the crime problem. I was in Louisville, Kentucky, the day after the State of the Union. And I went into a poor neighborhood where we had put a community-policing program into effect, the city did with some help from the Federal Government. And I saw poor people who never before had any feeling of rapport with the police department actually working on a daily basis with the police, not to catch criminals so much as to prevent crime.

We now know that the way to drive the crime rate down is for neighbors to work with neighbors, to work with police departments. They even set up a citizens police academy in Louisville, where people in the poorest neighborhoods could go down and learn how the police department is organized, how much money was being spent on what, how many police officers there were, how long it took them to get to the neighborhood, how they could be deployed. And it was a beautiful thing to see. All these people who lived in very difficult circumstances felt empowered as citizens because they were literally helping to run the law enforcement program of their community. The policeman was not some outsider who was a source of fear, he

was a friend and a partner. And they were driving the crime rate down.

But as long as children can be shot dead on the street from drive-by shootings, as long as children can be enlisted into gangs, and because they're young, taught by cruel older people to use weapons on the theory that they wouldn't be punished or hurt as badly, this country is never going to be what it ought to be. We must go back to the days when crime is the exception, not the rule. That ought to be our goal and our standard, and we should work until we get there.

I thank the Hispanic community for the support we received for NAFTA, for the support we received for the Summit of the Americas, for the support I received in probably the most controversial—perhaps one of the two or three most controversial decisions of my administration, to try and reach out and give some support to the reformers in Mexico to keep the economy from collapse so that we could continue to be good partners and good friends.

Secretary Pena is about to go to Chile to try to implement some of the agreements we made at the Summit of the Americas. These are important things. I ask you—this is something I want to ask you to do. I think Hispanic-Americans just instinctively know that we cannot go into the future as an isolated country; that a part of our community has to be not only American families and communities, people in the private sector and the charities and the churches and the synagogues and the Government working together, we also have to have relations with other countries. I think you know that. And I ask you to remind our fellow Americans when they say, "Well, why would they spend any money on any of that foreign stuff," that foreign aid is only one percent of our budget, only one percent, that our engagement with other countries is a very small percent of all of our tax dollars.

But I will just give you a few examples. One of the reasons that seven members of the Cali cartel were arrested is because the United States and Colombia were partners, because they trusted us, we trusted them, we worked together. Those people had to put their lives on the line—we don't have to do that—to get that done. If we had no NAFTA, if we had no Summit of the Americas, if there were no larger vision about how to relate to the United States, why

should anybody cooperate with us in other areas?

If I bring a terrorist, suspected terrorist back from South Asia, and a poor country in South Asia goes out and arrests somebody out of a neighborhood and sends that terrorist back here to stand trial in America, why should they do that unless they feel that we share the same values and the same interests and the same future? If I ask the Russians to work with me and to absolutely end the threat of nuclear annihilation, which is where we're going, why would they do that unless they feel we have a shared future? I think Hispanics know that kind of instinctively.

This is a big deal for America. We have to be reaching out to the rest of the world because people still trust us. Why in the world were we asked to go to Bosnia, after we, through NATO, had actually bombed there to enforce the previous agreements? Because people know if we give our word, we'll keep it. Because they know we don't want any territory, we don't want to control any people. All we want is for people to live by certain rules of decency and to treat their people with decency and to be freedom loving.

And finally, let me say we're trying to give you the Government up here you deserve, one that costs less and works better. And I said in the State of the Union and I'll say again, the era of big Government is over. Your Government today is the smallest it's been since Lyndon Johnson was President. By the end of next year—this year, '96—it will be the smallest it's been since John Kennedy was President. We are downsizing the Government.

But having a small Government is not the same thing as having a weak Government. It can be smaller; it can be less bureaucratic. We can be giving more power to State and local governments, more power to people in the private sector, more power to groups that can solve social problems better at the grassroots level. But we don't need to walk away from America's challenges.

We still have an obligation, I believe, through the Medicaid program, to help poor children and families with children with disabilities and elderly people who need to be in nursing homes. I believe that's our obligation. We still have an obligation to help people make the most of their own lives through education. We have to do more on that. We're going to have—you

know, the average person in a 4-year school today is 26 years old. That's the average age. In the community colleges of this country, it's older. The average person who's 18 years old today will have to go back and get a better education even if they go on to college and get a degree. This will become the work of a lifetime. We have to stay together.

If this is going to be the age of possibility for every American, for every Hispanic child to live out his or her dreams, we have got to say, all right, the era of big Government is over, but we are not about to go back to the time when everybody was fending for themselves and everybody was on their own.

Families work because people work together. People move to cities and towns because they could do more together than they could if they were living apart. And the same is true of our country. I think you know that. Impart your wisdom, your feeling, your conviction to the rest of America so that we can go forward together.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

Audience member. Say hi to Hillary! [Applause]

The President. Thank you. Thank you.

Sonja Hillgren. Wait one minute. And now I understand that he noticed his picture was not up there, and now your picture will go up because you are now a member.

The President. I just have one question. Does this mean I get to ask questions, instead of answer them? Because if it does, I've got a wonderful backlog built up. [Laughter]

Thank you very much. And let me say I want to come down and shake hands, and then I know you've got a busy evening and I thank you for letting me leave early. But I've got a little family values to tend to. This has been a long day in my family, and I'm going to take care of my wonderful wife and my daughter. So I'll see you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:35 p.m. at the National Press Club. In his remarks, he referred to Andres Tobar, convention chair, and Louis Rossi, president, National Association of Hispanic Publications; Raul Yzaguirre, president, National Council of La Raza; and Jake Alarid, national commander, American G.I. Forum of the United States. Sonja Hillgren was president of the National Press Club.