

## Statement on the Death of Mike Synar January 9, 1996

Hillary and I were deeply saddened to learn this morning of the death of former Oklahoma Congressman Mike Synar. Mike Synar was a brave and unflinching public servant who in tough political times remained true to his principles. He did not always do what was popular, but he always did what he thought was right—

for Oklahoma and for America. Throughout his life, and especially during the past 6 months, Mike Synar was a true profile in courage.

Hillary and I will miss him. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his family and friends at this difficult time.

## Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval Legislation on the Welfare System January 9, 1996

*To the House of Representatives:*

I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 4, the “Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1995.” In disapproving H.R. 4, I am nevertheless determined to keep working with the Congress to enact real, bipartisan welfare reform. The current welfare system is broken and must be replaced, for the sake of the taxpayers who pay for it and the people who are trapped by it. But H.R. 4 does too little to move people from welfare to work. It is burdened with deep budget cuts and structural changes that fall short of real reform. I urge the Congress to work with me in good faith to produce a bipartisan welfare reform agreement that is tough on work and responsibility, but not tough on children and on parents who are responsible and who want to work.

The Congress and the Administration are engaged in serious negotiations toward a balanced budget that is consistent with our priorities—one of which is to “reform welfare,” as November’s agreement between Republicans and Democrats made clear. Welfare reform must be considered in the context of other critical and related issues such as Medicaid and the Earned Income Tax Credit. Americans know we have to reform the broken welfare system, but they also know that welfare reform is about moving people from welfare to work, not playing budget politics.

The Administration has and will continue to set forth in detail our goals for reform and our objections to this legislation. The Administration

strongly supported the Senate Democratic and House Democratic welfare reform bills, which ensured that States would have the resources and incentives to move people from welfare to work and that children would be protected. I strongly support time limits, work requirements, the toughest possible child support enforcement, and requiring minor mothers to live at home as a condition of assistance, and I am pleased that these central elements of my approach have been addressed in H.R. 4.

We remain ready at any moment to sit down in good faith with Republicans and Democrats in the Congress to work out an acceptable welfare reform plan that is motivated by the urgency of reform rather than by a budget plan that is contrary to America’s values. There is a bipartisan consensus around the country on the fundamental elements of real welfare reform, and it would be a tragedy for this Congress to squander this historic opportunity to achieve it. It is essential for the Congress to address shortcomings in the legislation in the following areas:

- *Work and Child Care:* Welfare reform is first and foremost about work. H.R. 4 weakens several important work provisions that are vital to welfare reform’s success. The final welfare reform legislation should provide sufficient child care to enable recipients to leave welfare for work; reward States for placing people in jobs; restore the guarantee of health coverage for poor families; require States to maintain their

stake in moving people from welfare to work; and protect States and families in the event of economic downturn and population growth. In addition, the Congress should abandon efforts included in the budget reconciliation bill that would gut the Earned Income Tax Credit, a powerful work incentive that is enabling hundreds of thousands of families to choose work over welfare.

- *Deep Budget Cuts and Damaging Structural Changes:* H.R. 4 was designed to meet an arbitrary budget target rather than to achieve serious reform. The legislation makes damaging structural changes and deep budget cuts that would fall hardest on children and undermine States' ability to move people from welfare to work. We should work together to balance the budget and reform welfare, but the Congress should not use the words "welfare reform" as a cover to violate the Nation's values. Making \$60 billion in budget cuts and massive structural changes in a variety

of programs, including foster care and adoption assistance, help for disabled children, legal immigrants, food stamps, and school lunch is not welfare reform. The final welfare reform legislation should reduce the magnitude of these budget cuts and the sweep of structural changes that have little connection to the central goal of work-based reform. We must demand responsibility from young mothers and young fathers, not penalize children for their parents' mistakes.

I am deeply committed to working with the Congress to reach bipartisan agreement on an acceptable welfare reform bill that addresses these and other concerns. We owe it to the people who sent us here not to let this opportunity slip away by doing the wrong thing or failing to act at all.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,  
January 9, 1996.

## Excerpts of Remarks on Nickelodeon's "Clearing the Air: Kids Talk to the President About Smoking"

January 9, 1996

*Linda Ellerbee.* How can a kid ask a grownup to stop smoking?

*The President.* Oh, I think directly. I think children should not be self-conscious about that. I can tell you, you know, Chelsea did some very blunt things to her grandmother. She said, "You ever seen a picture of a lung where people have smoked for years, as against the picture of a lung where people haven't?" I mean, very straightforward stuff.

*Ms. Ellerbee.* Did it work?

*The President.* It worked. It took a few years, but it worked finally. On my daughter's 8th birthday, her grandmother's present was that she quit smoking.

*Ms. Ellerbee.* Mr. President, do you have any final thoughts for kids on this issue?

*The President.* You young people cannot believe the potential influence you can have. You can ask adults the kind of hard questions you asked me. You can encourage every adult you

care about and love to stop smoking. You can make it so that the cool thing to do is not to smoke instead of to smoke.

And you know, none of us are going to live forever, but you have the choice to maximize, to increase the chances of your living a long and full life. This is a choice you can make. The smoking choice is a choice you can make. It's totally within your control.

And I just want to encourage you. I'll do what I can, but I want to encourage you to do everything you can to get everybody you know to remain smoke free. I think that is—that's the answer. And you can do it. We can change this country if we do it together.

NOTE: The President's remarks were recorded at 12:10 p.m. on December 12, 1995, for broadcast at 8 p.m. on January 9. Linda Ellerbee hosted Nickelodeon cable television's "Nick News" program.