

pass, and it will get better, and we'll do everything we can to help.

God bless you, and thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:40 a.m. in a residential neighborhood. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Jim Graham of Woodland and Gov. Mike Lowry of Washington.

Remarks in a Roundtable Discussion on the Flooding in Woodland February 14, 1996

The President. Is everybody here? Mark, do you want to start?

[Mark Anderson, Woodland deputy fire chief, thanked the President and other roundtable participants, summarized the efforts to control the flooding, and asked the President to comment.]

The President. Well, first of all, I want to thank you and the fire chief and the mayor and everybody in this community who worked so hard. You deserve to be a little emotional, and I bet you haven't had much sleep in the last several days.

[Mr. Anderson reported that although he got little sleep during the first 4 days of flooding, the last few nights were more restful.]

The President. When the mayor and I were coming in here—we went out and toured one of the neighborhoods, and we met with some people who had lost their homes, along with Governor Lowry and Senator Gorton, Senator Murray, and Congresswoman Smith and Secretary Pena and the FEMA Director, James Lee Witt, who is to my left there. It was interesting—he introduced me to one man who was standing on the side of the street. He said, "That man ran a jackhammer for 8 hours with a cracked rib." And I think that's sort of symbolic of what this community has done in the last few days.

And I just wanted to say the whole country has been touched by the pictures we've seen, moved by the losses that you've endured but also moved by the way that you have rallied in this crisis. And I thank you very much for what you have done.

I understand that you evacuated 1,000 people in 40 minutes. If that's true you could probably become police chief of Washington, DC, or fire chief of New York City—*[laughter]*—or Denver or some big place.

Mr. Anderson. I came here from a larger fire department, and I really like the size of Woodland. *[Laughter]*

The President. Let me say that—what I want to do today is mostly hear from all these folks that are here with us, but I would like to just—and both your elected officials and the citizens that are here. One of the things that we have really worked hard on since I've been President is trying to help make sure the Federal Government did its part whenever there's a natural disaster.

When I appointed James Lee Witt to head FEMA, he had headed the Emergency Management Agency of our home State of Arkansas for several years before that. And we had been inundated with floods; we had the highest per capita rate of tornadoes in America; we have picked up after every known disaster. And we really tried to work hard with people.

We know that the State and local community groups and people like the Salvation Army and all the folks that have worked here are terrific. We just want to do everything we legally can as quickly as we can to be helpful. And that's what I want to hear about today: Where are you now? How are you going to rebuild? What can we do?

Today we can announce that we will be able to provide over \$26 million to the communities to help rebuild the community facilities, \$10 million in emergency relief funds for Federal highway damage, and \$2 million to meet other emergency needs. But there will be more that has to be done, a lot more.

We believe that—Mr. Panetta, my Chief and Staff, and I were coming out here, and we were just trying to assess what we know is the damage in Washington and Oregon and over in Idaho. We think we'll have to do a lot more, and we're prepared to do it. And I basically want to spend the rest of this time that we have here listening

to the citizens and the elected officials that are here, so that when we leave here we've got a very good idea of where we are and what we need to do.

[Mr. Anderson introduced a Woodland resident who had worked for 4 days on a jackhammer without going home. He then invited roundtable participants to comment.]

The President. Do you want to start?

Hans Johnston. I'm a terrible public speaker, as you soon will learn. [Laughter]

Mr. Anderson. Go ahead, Mr. Johnston.

The President. Just pretend you're not talking to the public; just pretend you're talking to us.

Mr. Johnston. No, we'll survive; with the proper help that you're talking about, we'll survive. And we'll go back and we'll move back in sometime this summer, I hope, if everything goes as planned—according to plan.

The President. Did you lose everything in your house?

[Mr. Johnston said that he had lost 75 percent of his household effects, including photographs, furniture, and bedding.]

The President. Mayor?

[Woodland Mayor Jim Graham praised the community's response to the disaster. A participant then asked FEMA Director James Lee Witt how long it would take to assess damage to homes and provide financial assistance. Mr. Witt asked if the participant had called the 800 number and indicated that checks were being issued that day. He said that residents could get temporary housing assistance or emergency home repair assistance or an individual family grant and that they should hear in just a few days. Governor Mike Lowry then thanked the President for his presence and for the speed with which Federal funding was provided during the current and previous floods.]

The President. That's a poor way to get Federal money, having these floods. [Laughter]

[Governor Lowry said the flood would be the most expensive natural disaster in the history of the State of Washington, with estimates running to \$300 million, including 2,600 residences and over 50 bridges lost.]

The President. Thank you. Anyone else like to talk?

[A participant thanked the President for his concern and then said that 1,000 families couldn't get from their homes to the cities because of damaged bridges and that the Tri Cities were running out of heating oil.]

The President. Thank you. Let me say, first of all, on things like the heating oil issue—these big, specific issues come up—it's very important that we know about them if there's something we can do to help, and there may be.

Governor Lowry talked about the dimensions of the losses, and I think that that's probably a conservative estimate, depending on—you know, just based on what we've seen. We may have to come back to you, to Senator Gorton and Congresswoman Smith and to the Congress for some sort of supplemental appropriation on this, and if so, we want to do it as quickly as possible because I don't want all of these folks out here hanging by their fingernails, full of anxiety about whether we are or are not going to be there when they need us.

Ms. Howell, do you want to say anything? They tell me you're great. I expected you to be able to talk all over us. [Laughter] The guys with the best seat in the house up there were clapping for you. [Laughter]

[Candice Howell, who covered the volunteer fire department telephones during the emergency, thanked the President for coming to the little town of Woodland to represent the support of the Government as a whole.]

Mr. Anderson. With that kind of support, the community of Woodland can accomplish anything.

The President. Don't forget, folks, this country is made up of Woodlands. And most of us who live in bigger towns now once came from places like Woodland. So you should never—don't feel insignificant just because you're small. In some ways—I was just telling the mayor, I said, "It must be immensely rewarding to be the mayor of a place where you can know people, you see them, when they commit these acts of heroism and generosity you know who they are." There are a lot of places that are so big now, it would be impossible to know whether the guy that worked a jackhammer for 8 hours had a cracked rib, or not. In a place like this you know that. And that really counts for something.

Senator Gorton?

Senator Slade Gorton. Mr. President, it is said that a picture is worth a thousand words, and Lord knows, the people who follow you around certainly live by that.

The President. A thousand pictures is worth one word. *[Laughter]*

[Senator Gorton said that for the people of the community, the President's presence was very important.]

The President. Thank you.

Congresswoman Smith?

Representative Linda Smith. Thank you. We're honored you are here. I saw kids do what I did when I remember seeing President Kennedy—now you know how old I am, about the same age as you are. *[Laughter]*

The President. Looks better on you. *[Laughter]*

[Representative Smith said that the President's visit gave people reassurance. She also asked for a direct assistance site, saying people were stunned by the destruction and would appreciate having someone to talk to directly for assistance. Mr. Witt then introduced Linda Burton-Ramsey, director, Washington Department of Emergency Management, and said her agency was willing to put a disaster coverage center in Woodland to put all the Federal and State agencies in the same building. He added that State and FEMA outreach teams had been going door-to-door in the community as well. Representative Smith then commended the FEMA effort in her district.]

The President. May I say—she made a point here, the Congresswoman made a point that I think is, in some ways, for all of you, not just for us, one of the most important things that's been said here today. A lot of the people who have been hurt by this flood are, frankly, still in shock. They have not really come—they're still trying to come to grips with what's happened to them and grieving over the loss of family pictures and things that seem small until you lose them and then they become big.

And I know that it's true; whenever we go into a rural area or a set of small towns, people do feel awkward even asking for things from the Government; they don't quite know how to do it. And I appreciate the response James Lee gave to you.

But I just want to remind you that I met a couple on the street that told me they'd been

married 64 years this year, and I could tell they were just trying to come to grips with this. I just ask you all to be sensitive to this. Sometimes when the flood waters go down and there's nothing for a neighbor to do that's real visible like stack the sandbags up, we forget that there's going to be a lot of scars inside. A lot of these folks are going to be hurt for a very long time, and they're going to have to try to come to grips with it. And all of us, from the Federal Government on down, need to be very sensitive to this. It's going to be—there's a lot of tough things that people are going to have to deal with. The churches will have to help; everybody will.

But I really appreciate you saying that, because sometimes I think we forget that in the moment. A lot of times it comes up a week or so later, sometimes 2 weeks later when it's really difficult.

I want to hear from our last panelists, but before I do I want to say again—I want to thank Secretary Pena for coming with us. And I want to recognize in the audience, as we're going back to Oregon as soon as we leave here, the presence of Senator Hatfield, Mark Hatfield, and Senator Ron Wyden, the new Senator from Oregon. Thank you both for being here with us.

[On behalf of other local emergency managers, Trudy Winterfeld, emergency management supervisor for Cowlitz County, thanked the President, the Governor, and the FEMA Director for their response to the series of disasters in the area. Another participant praised Ms. Winterfeld's office.]

The President. Thank you, Trudy.

Let me just say, you made a point which provoked another thought in my mind. We went down Gun Club Road today, and we saw the houses on the right side of the road that were wiped out. And the houses on the left side of the road had been built recently, consistent with the Federal flood standards. And as they all said, they all developed lakefront property overnight because behind all their houses is a big lake, but all those houses survived.

And I just think it's worth pointing out that we've had several places in America that within the last 5 or 6 years have had two floods that went into their 100-year flood plain. And no one quite knows—there's a lot of speculation—one of the major news magazines had a cover

story on the extreme winter weather, speculating that it was related to the phenomenon of global warming. No one really knows. But we do know that both in the winter and the summer now, we're having our weather in more extreme bursts, so that more of our precipitation is coming in more extreme bursts. And we're having also really long, hot spells that are quite extreme. Last year was the hottest year ever recorded.

So these are things that we have to be sensitive to, and I think that it's just worth remembering, as we all start the rebuilding effort, that there's something to be said for honoring the building standards in the flood plain; that it may be that these aren't 100-year flood plains anymore, they may be 10-year flood plains for all we know. There may be something rather fundamental going on, and there's nothing to be harmed by at least playing it safe.

Mark, anybody else want to speak?

Participant. Yes, sir. This will be the best, famous—whatever adjective you can think of, sir, for a Valentine's Day that we'll never forget. [Laughter]

The President. I received a note from a young lady from this community whose middle name is Valentine because she was born on Valentine's Day, and she asked me to come by and have a piece of cake at her house. [Laughter] The mayor said we were too busy; I'm going to blame it on him. [Laughter]

Mayor Graham. Thanks.

The President. I appreciate that.

Mayor Graham. Actually, we couldn't get the driver to turn the steering wheel in the right direction. [Laughter]

The President. Thank you.

Mayor Graham. Did we have some time for questions from the audience, Mr. President?

The President. Does anybody have any questions about the whole operation here? Yes, sir.

[A participant asked if a project to deepen the Columbia River would go forward, given Government cutbacks.]

The President. I don't know that I'm familiar enough with the project to answer. Does anyone want to comment on it? Slade or Patty or anybody?

[A participant said that Senator Hatfield, Senator Wyden, and the two Senators from Washington were working on the issue and making

progress, but that it was a long-term project. Another participant concurred and then related an elderly gentleman's comment that there was so much negative talk about the Government, but when something like this happened, people remembered why they had neighbors and Government.]

The President. Thank you. But I think it's important to remember he said it right, too; it's neighbors and Government—if you had one without the other, it wouldn't work.

[A participant expressed concern about the integrity of the dikes. Mr. Witt said that the President had signed legislation in 1993 making more money available for such mitigation projects to prevent disasters from recurring.]

The President. Yes, I might say in the Middle West, there has already been another flood in one of those areas where hundreds of people were saved from losing their homes a second time, but there are other ways to mitigate; you don't have to—it's just that—that was the Mississippi and the other big rivers there, and they were way down in the flood plain, and there was no practical way for them to do something like the people did on the lefthand side of Gun Club Road when I was walking down there.

So they decided that they wanted to do that, and they saved it. There are other less drastic mitigation strategies that you can follow here, and you need to just decide whether—how you want to do with the dike or your flood wall or whatever you want to do here, and come up with a plan through the State, and you will be eligible for funds to try to implement it.

There was a question back there?

[A participant asked if the Corps of Engineers could take some action with regard to 2 or 3 miles of identifiable problem dikes.]

The President. Can they use any of their public infrastructure money to fix that?

Participant. The Corps of Engineers has—

The President. Oh, they're Corps dikes?

[Mr. Witt indicated that the Corps of Engineers would make many such repairs. A participant pointed out the need for an early warning system on the river in addition to repairing the dikes.]

The President. Sir, let me follow up on what you said. It is true that the Corps of Engineers can do that. It's also true they're probably out

of money because we've had a lot of floods this year, including back in—you probably saw the floods we had in Pennsylvania and West Virginia and Maryland back on the East Coast, so we will probably have to include some more money for the Corps of Engineers in whatever supplemental budget we do. But if we do it, they can immediately, if they have the personnel, go back and fix the dikes.

Yes, sir?

Participant. I live on Gun Club Road that you drove down. We can replace our stuff; you know, you can't replace lives. As long as nobody got hurt, that's what matters.

The President. Thank you.

Participant. We had no loss of life, and we had no injuries.

The President. Thank you for saying that.

Mr. Anderson. Do we have a question over here?

The President. These are, I think, the legislators from the local area. We thank them for coming out as well.

[A State representative said that it was vitally important that people register with the 800 number as soon as possible and asked FEMA to do more to publicize it. Mr. Witt said that FEMA was trying to get information out to the public via the Recovery TV channel and the Recovery Times publication.]

The President. Senator, you—well, let's do this gentleman, and then we'll come back to you.

[A State senator asked for a reappraisal of height limitations for Corps of Engineers revetments on the Cowlitz River and also asked for work on flood warning systems for area rivers.]

The President. Do you want to say anything about that, James Lee?

[Mr. Witt said that local emergency management officials would soon be able to prioritize 5 percent of mitigation funds toward early warning systems.]

The President. Mr. Panetta says—drawing on his experience as former chairman of the House Budget Committee, so he knows this stuff—[laughter]—he says if we get the money to the Corps, he believes they have some flexibility to build on the revetments as a part of the mitigation plan. So we need the—I would think that you all should work with the Governor and try to make that a part of the mitigation plan, be-

cause obviously that's what we're trying to do, to go back to his question. We're trying to minimize the chance of this occurring again. So I would urge you to make sure that you make that a priority, and then we'll try to make sure whatever we can do whatever is necessary to give the Corps the legal authority to do it.

Yes, sir. There's a gentleman in the back there. We're bringing you a microphone.

[Participants praised the inmates of the Larch Mountain Corrections Facility and all the Hispanics in the farm communities for their sandbagging efforts.]

The President. There's another question back there.

[A participant said that the work done by high school students was impressive and then offered the President a tape of the high school jazz band.]

The President. Send it up here.

The gentleman here in the blue jacket there.

[Participants praised local restaurants for feeding the flood workers around the clock.]

The President. Is there a question back here? There's someone with a hand up over here to the right. And then there's a lady over here. I'm running you guys crazy. [Laughter] This guy's a—he's with us, and he needs the exercise. [Laughter] This is part of my, you know, get-my-staff-fit campaign. [Laughter]

Participant. Happy Valentine's Day, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you, sir.

[A participant described how the community responded within the hour to television requests for replacement workers on the sandbagging crews.]

The President. Thank you. Now, there are two over there. Two people over here. There are two over there. You can stay now. [Laughter]

Participant. Thank you for coming to Woodland, Mr. President. I'm one of your supporters that writes you letters from Woodland, although you probably never see them.

The President. Keep them coming.

Participant. One of my concerns is the possibility that Congress could close down the Government in March; will that interfere with the help needed for this area?

The President. Well, first of all, I don't think that's going to happen. And I believe that the leaders have made it pretty clear that we don't think that's going to happen. And I believe that we will pass the legislation necessary to—the Congress can't act on it until we draw it up. We have to get up the supplemental appropriation necessary to provide the funds here. But as soon as we know it, what they are, we have—you know, it's going to take us a while because we can't keep—we want to do it all at once. But I believe that as soon as we know, the Congress will act appropriately. I wouldn't worry about that. I think they'll take care of it.

I thought there was somebody else. Nobody else? Okay.

Do you have a question, young lady? You want to ask a question? She had her hand up.

Do you want to ask a question? Do you want to say something? I don't blame you, that's the right thing to do.

Participant. Mr. President, she wants to wish you a Happy Valentine's Day.

The President. See, I had to have valentines with my little girl last night. So I need a valentine today.

Thank you very much.

[*Mr. Anderson concluded the discussion by thanking all the participants.*]

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The roundtable began at 11:20 a.m. in the bay of the Woodland city hall/fire station.

Remarks to Workers and Volunteers at the Flood Wall in Portland, Oregon February 14, 1996

Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Jim McKune, for your fine words and, even more, for your fine work.

I want to say on behalf of all Americans, having had the opportunity now to fly over the areas of Oregon and Washington which were damaged by the flood and many of which are still under water, our country has been watching you and pulling for you and praying for you. We have a lot of admiration for the incredible work that has been done, and we're proud of the contributions made by all the groups and all the individuals who have worked so hard.

I want to thank especially, on behalf of the Federal Government, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and its Director, James Lee Witt, who is here with me today; the Corps of Engineers, who used their night scopes to make sure the dikes along the Columbia were holding strong; the Secretary of Transportation Federico Pena, who is also here today. I want to thank the National Guard, which has done about everything it could to help, and I understand they even air-dropped hay to cattle cut off by water on Sauvie Island.

I want to congratulate and thank Bill Long and Steve Barrett for the tour I just got of the wall and the work they did to build it and

all those who did it so well. And let me say a special word of appreciation also to Governor Kitzhaber and my good friend Mayor Katz, Senator Hatfield and Senator Wyden, and Congressman DeFazio and Congressman Bunn. We're going to need them all in the next few weeks because we don't have enough money right now in the Treasury to meet all the demands for the problems that Oregon and Washington and your neighbors in Idaho have gone through, and we're going to have to go back to Congress and ask for a little help. But I'm sure it will be there. And I thank them for their support.

I want to say a special word of thanks, too, to the United States Marine Corps members who worked on this wall. I understand some of them worked all night long.

I won't keep you here long. I just wanted to come here and listen, and in a few moments we'll be going to kind of a roundtable where I'll be hearing about where you are now in the flood recovery efforts and getting some suggestions about what else needs to be done. But I do want to point out something. If you look at this wall behind us, it seems to me that it is a symbol of what our country does when everybody pulls together and works together and