

Memorandum on the Interim Report of the Presidential Advisory
Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses
February 15, 1996

*Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, the
Secretary of Health and Human Services, the
Secretary of Veterans Affairs*

Subject: Interim Report of the Presidential
Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans'
Illnesses

On May 26, 1995, I established the Presidential Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses to review and provide recommendations on the full range of government activities relating to Gulf War veterans' illnesses. The Committee has now released its interim report, which you have reviewed and forwarded for my attention.

I am pleased that the Committee's interim report recognizes the serious efforts underway

in the Administration to respond to the health concerns of Desert Storm veterans, and I thank you for your close cooperation with the Committee as it fulfills its charge. I trust that you will continue to work closely with the Committee as it prepares its final report.

I also request that you carefully review the recommendations and report back to me promptly with your plans for implementing the recommendations. As I said last March when announcing my intention to establish the Advisory Committee, we will leave no stone unturned in our efforts to determine the causes of the illnesses experienced by Gulf War veterans and to provide the best possible medical care to those who are ill.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Remarks at a Democratic Dinner in New York City
February 15, 1996

Thank you so very much. I told the Vice President when we were outside and James Earl Jones was speaking that we ought to go out here and smile and quit while we're ahead. [Laughter] And I did tell him, I confess, that I thought it was kind of a bad deal that he got to be introduced by James Earl Jones and he introduces me all the time. But James Earl Jones fails the first test of Presidential introductions that the Vice President passes with flying colors, which is, whenever possible, always, always be introduced by someone you have appointed to high office. [Laughter]

Don't you think it's wonderful what a sense of humor the Vice President has developed? I think—I actually resent it myself. [Laughter] I used to have a sense of humor, but they told me it wasn't Presidential. So, like everything else that's really enjoyable, in this administration the Vice President gets to do it. [Laughter]

Let me say to all of you who are here, to the people who cochaired this dinner and all those who sold tickets and all of you who have

come out on this third-time's-the charm—[laughter]—to the leaders of the Democratic Party who are here; to James Earl Jones, who I admire so very much, I thank you for being here and for your wonderful words and for your support. To Lesley Gore and to the orchestra, all the musicians, I thought they were terrific. And I think it's okay if Lesley Gore tells people she's kin to Al. After I became President, I found out I had all kinds of relatives I didn't know that I had. And it makes for interesting reading. [Laughter]

I want to thank Mayor Dinkins and the members of the New York City government, the Members of Congress who are here, the borough presidents who are here, and all of you who have come to be a part of this evening.

You know, I guess that because this is in all probability my last campaign, unless someday I run for the school board—[laughter]—I'm a little bit nostalgic. And I was in this hotel at a fundraiser almost 4 years ago to this week. Some of you were here that night. And I'm

thinking tonight—and I ask all of you to give your prayers to our wonderful friend Paul Carey, who is battling an illness but is doing better. And he can't be here, but I want to think about him because he was here with me in that campaign. And so I'm kind of counting my blessings tonight and remembering that.

The Vice President has graciously bragged on me because it's unseemly to do it for yourself, even in an election year. What I would like to talk about tonight is the—kind of the time in which we're living and why the things that we have done commend us for reelection, but why we don't deserve to be reelected just based on our record because there is so much more to be done.

What are the fundamental facts of this time? A democratic system can only work if it preserves the freedom and liberty of all citizens and is flexible enough to adjust to the challenges of every time. It is no accident that we're the longest lasting democracy in human history. It isn't easy to keep meeting the challenges. It's no accident that Haiti, which the Vice President mentioned, after being a nation, an independent nation for almost 200 years, just had its very first transfer of power from one democratically elected President to another.

This is a wonderful system of government, but it's not always easy to get a majority of the people, first, to zealously guard their own freedoms and those of their neighbors and to respect those who are different from them, and secondly, to make the decisions necessary or to let their leaders make the decisions necessary to keep meeting the challenges of each moment.

I believe, as I have said on many occasions, that we are living through the period of greatest change in the way we work and live and relate to each other in a hundred years; that this moment represents the most fundamental change since we moved from being primarily a rural people to being primarily a people who lived in towns and cities, since we moved from being primarily an agricultural economy to an economy primarily based on industry.

This information age represents dramatic changes in the nature of work. There's more muscle—excuse me—more mind and less muscle in work. And as people in New York read every week, it represents dramatic changes in the nature of work organizations. There are more small businesses, and big businesses keep getting smaller. There are fewer levels between

the people at the top and the people actually implementing decisions. There has been an enormous growth in small business, as the Vice President said, but an enormous downsizing of bigger companies.

This era represents an enormous, dramatic change in the way information is communicated. Bill Gates in his recent book said that the information age, based on the digital chip, represents the most profound revolution in communications since Gutenberg printed the first Bible 500 years ago. And, obviously, when you're dealing with changes this profound, which also include the change in markets—money markets, markets in goods, and markets in services—to global markets, it is clear that there must be changes in Government. It is also clear that there will be changes in the patterns of people's lives.

And whenever in our history and, I believe, whenever in any society in human history there has been a great uprooting, you always see enormous opportunity for the gifted, the clever, the understanding, the lucky, and the well-prepared. But you also see a lot of people feeling insecure and disoriented because they feel that they're working hard and playing by the rules and their future seems to be drifting away. And that represents the remarkable paradox of the present moment.

Overwhelmingly, this is an age of possibility. The Vice President recited the economic statistics; I need not repeat them. But what we know is that this is an unusual time because in these 3 years we've seen our economy produce 8 million jobs, a record number of new small businesses, a record number of self-made millionaires—a remarkable and very good thing, not people who inherited their wealth but people who went out and made it with the opportunities that this country provided. And yet, still, about half our people have not gotten a raise in terms of real purchasing power in a decade or more.

We know that these entrepreneurs are exploding. We know, for example, that businesses owned by women alone, just businesses owned by women, have created more new jobs than the Fortune 500 have laid off in the last 3 years. But that's not very helpful if you're one of the people my age who is, you know, 49 or 50 years old and your kids are ready to go to college and you're one of the ones that got laid off, and all you've ever been is a middle manager in a very big company, and you can't

imagine how you can ever find another job making what you made doing roughly what you used to do. What are you to do now? So that is the paradox we're trying to come to grips with.

If you look at the other great challenge I think we face, which is to live up to our values and to come together as a country instead of being driven apart by this change, you see the same sort of thing. We should be ecstatic. The crime rate is down; the welfare rolls are down; the food stamp rolls are down; the poverty rolls are down; the teen pregnancy rate is down. This country is coming together. The commissioner of police of the city of New York was on the front page, the cover of one of our major news magazines with a serious question implying we may have turned the corner in our efforts to whip violent crime. That is something to be celebrating about. And yet, we all know that all those things that are going down are still too high. So our work is not yet done.

If you look at the role America has played in the world, we should be rejoicing for the reasons the Vice President has said and for others. There are no more nuclear missiles pointed at any children in the United States. I'm proud of that. If the Russians follow the lead of the United States Senate and adopt a START II treaty, we will reduce by two-thirds the nuclear arsenals of both countries. We have gotten almost 180 countries to agree to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty and promise never, never to develop nuclear missiles. This year I believe we will get a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty for the whole world. This is a remarkable thing.

And I am profoundly grateful for what this Nation has been able to do, to work with other countries, to fight terrorism, and to fight organized crime, and to fight drugs. I am profoundly grateful for the role we played in the liberation of South Africa, and the role we played in Haiti, in the Middle East, in Northern Ireland, and Bosnia. But you know as well as I do that this work is ongoing; that even though the nuclear cloud is not hanging over us as it once did, we still face serious, serious obstacles to doing everything we need to do.

There's a lot out there to do when one fanatic can break open a vial of sarin gas in a subway station in Tokyo and kill hundreds of people; when one fanatic in the United States can get on the Internet and find through high-tech means the very low-tech way of making a bomb,

like the bomb that destroyed the Federal Building in Oklahoma City. When our open borders can lead terrorists into our country and allow them to come here, and they do their mischief and then leave and go to countries from which we cannot have them returned, we still have security challenges.

Now, I would say to you, on balance, you should be pleased with where this country is and where we're going. The economic direction is right. The social direction is right. The national security direction is right. We are opening the American dream to more people. We are coming together around our basic values. We are still the world's leading force for peace and freedom, but we have a very challenging agenda for the future. And it is that agenda on which I hope this election campaign will be waged, not the cheap, silly, divisive, distractive issues that will undermine our ability to unleash the potential of every American and do right by this great country.

In my State of the Union I said there were seven great challenges facing this country. I don't want to talk about all of them tonight; I want to emphasize one or two. But I want to talk about one or two and remind you of all of them. We must—we must continue to fight for stronger families and better childhoods for all of our children. We must open up the opportunities of the 21st century to every American by giving everybody a world-class educational opportunity, based on high standards and high expectations and high technology and high opportunity. We must find a way to capture and maintain and even accelerate the dynamism of this wonderful new economy and at the same time provide a higher measure of economic security for every American family willing to work for it.

We must continue the fight against crime until we meet the real test of any civilized society, which is not a zero crime rate—there will never be a time when we won't have crime and violence—but there is a test that you can apply in your own home, to your own personal experience. We will have done what we should do in crime when you feel in your bones that it is the exception, not the rule; when you turn on the evening news and you read about the latest murder, the latest rape, the latest madness, you think it is the exception and you're surprised, not numb to it. And until we reach

that point, we have to keep working on it as one of our highest national priorities.

We must continue the fight to preserve, maintain, and even enhance our natural environment. We must reject once and for all the totally destructive notion that we can only grow this economy if we continue to destroy the environment. That is a terrible idea. It won't work. It will undermine our economy. It will destroy our quality of life. And it's nice to have the Vice President at work every day reminding me of that ultimate truth.

We must maintain our leadership for peace and freedom. In New York, we have a lot of people who deal with the rest of the world. You have a lot of wonderful Jewish-Americans and Americans of Arabic descent who want me to continue to fight for peace in the Middle East. You have a lot of people involved in world trade who want me to continue to reach out to Latin America and to Asia. But many of our fellow Americans are so burdened by the moment that I get the feeling when they see me on television talking about Ireland or Bosnia or whatever, they look and they say, "Well, you're doing all right and as long as you don't mess up I'll let you do that, but I really kind of wish we didn't have to fool with that." But let me remind you, we do have to fool with that.

If you want those countries in Latin America to cooperate with us in breaking the drug gangs—and remember, in the last 3 years, 7 of the 8 leaders of the Cali drug cartel have been put behind bars, thanks to that kind of cooperation—if you want that to happen, we have to be good neighbors with the Latin Americans. They, after all, are risking their lives. At least we have to have good trade partnerships and other partnerships.

If you want Europe to grow as an open community instead of a closed community, if you want Americans to have a fair shake at selling our goods, our services, and growing our economy in partnership with the Europeans, we have to be partners in the common security of democracy and freedom there. And that's part of what Bosnia is all about, apart from the fact that it is the right thing to do. So I ask you all to support that, to support your country when we stand up for peace and freedom.

And finally, our last challenge is we have got to give the American people again a Government that does more, costs less, and most im-

portant, is worthy of their trust. But we also have to have a group of Americans who understand what their responsibilities are at this time. People can't be looking down their nose at the Government if they don't do their part to raise their kids, if they don't do their part to educate their kids, if they're not willing to do their part to work with their local police officers or their part to demand grassroots environmental reform or their part to show up and vote. So we have to have this kind of balance.

In this new era, we will change the way the Government works. You heard the Vice President say it. I heard our friends in the other party for years lambast and rail against big Government. All I know is, it was still pretty big when we showed up, and now it's the smallest it's been since 1965. I heard them rail against Government regulation. All I know is, when we showed up there were 86,000 pages of Government regulations, and we're getting rid of 16,000 pages of them. I heard these things, but I never saw anything done. We are trying to give the American people a Government that's not so big, that's not antiquated, that's not some dinosaur of the age we used to live in instead of the one we're moving toward. But that does not mean we need a weak Government. It does not mean we can go back to the time when people were left to fend for themselves.

If you were to ask me, "What is the one lesson you have learned in the last 3 years, Mr. President?" I would say to you, I have learned that when this country is together, America never loses. And we have to solve our problems together. That means the Government has a role. That means citizens, that means families, that means community institutions, that means the private sector, that means the churches and synagogues, that means all of us have to do something together. And we all have a role to play. And to pretend otherwise is ridiculous.

And let me just give you a couple of examples of what I think we ought to be doing and one example that affects New York that shows you what is still wrong with things in Washington. And I believe there are laws we ought to change. I still—I can't understand why Congress won't pass a campaign finance reform bill. They all say they're for it, but they won't do it. [Applause] And actually, most of you in this room should be clapping louder. It would save you a lot of money if we passed it. [Laughter]

I can't understand why they won't pass the line item veto. They said they thought it was the greatest thing since sliced bread until they took over the Congress. I'd like to have it. I'll use it, and it will help to bring the deficit down.

But the way we operate is fundamentally important, and let me just give you one example. This telecommunications bill reflects the way our country ought to work. It will create tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands of high-wage jobs. It will dramatically increase Americans' access to information, to education, to entertainment. And it will be done in a way that brings us together because it protects the ability of all the players in telecommunications to have their fair chance to compete, the small as well as the large. It protects the ability of people to know that there will be a diversity of opinions still available to them. And it gives a preference to our schools and to our libraries and to our hospitals, so they can be on the information superhighway no matter where they are and all our children have a chance to go into the 21st century.

Let me say this: We did an event in Union City, New Jersey, today which the Vice President talked about, which is the antithesis of what everybody worries about in the economy. All this anxiety in the economy really is rooted in the fact that people are afraid that there's something about this technological revolution that mandates inequality in wages and stagnant wages and people being permanently dislocated. But if you saw these kids today—kids that came from immigrant families, kids that were poor, kids that never would have been able to dream of this before—all of them fluent in the use of their computers, all of them being able to go home and have access to computers at home, all of them having taught their parents how to use computers so that their parents are E-mailing the principal and finding out back and forth how the kids are doing, you would see that the answer is not to go back or put up walls around this country, the answer is to see this technological revolution through until it benefits every single American and gives us the future that we need.

And that is an example of how we ought to do it. We fought very hard for those public interest provisions of the telecommunications bill. But in the end, the bill passed almost unanimously. And it is a good thing for America,

and it hooks us into the future. Now, that's an example of what should be done.

An example of what should not be done, that most people in this room are familiar with, was the outrageous political treatment of my intention to nominate Felix Rohatyn to be the Vice Chairman of the Federal Reserve. And he is here tonight. I think we all ought to give him a hand. Felix, where are you? Stand up there. Let's give him a hand. *[Applause]*

If you believe that we should give everybody a raise when the economy does better and you don't want to engage in class warfare; if you believe all these people that are inevitably downsized when big corporations become smaller should have the opportunity to go on with their lives and you don't want to engage in class warfare; if you are perplexed by how we can generate 8 million new jobs and record numbers of new businesses and still have half the Americans not get a raise, one clear area where we ought to debate is whether the conventional wisdom about how fast this economy can grow is right. That ought to be debated. It ought to be debated within the commitment to deficit reduction and a balanced budget. I think we've established our commitment to that. It ought to be debated within a commitment not to let inflation get out of hand.

But the truth is, nobody but nobody knows for sure that this economy can't grow any faster in the information age than it did between 1970 and 1995. The truth is, if you want to get jobs into Brooklyn, into the Bronx, into the Mississippi Delta, into the rural areas of America; if you want to see people who work hard and work harder today than they did 25 years ago, on the average, get the rewards, one of the most obvious things you have to do is to see whether or not this economy can grow a little faster. I'm telling you, if this economy grew at an average of 2.7 percent instead of 2.5 percent, all the arguments we are now having in Washington over balancing the budget would be gone like that—two-tenths of a percent—over, history, out.

I believed, based on repeated conversations I have had with business leaders, both Republicans and Democrats, in this country over the last 3 years, talking about the very rapid growth and productivity in our manufacturing sector, the increasing growth in productivity in our service sector, and the fact that we have such an open economy, that competition is an incredible

pressure against inflation, far more than ever before—and I'll just give you one example. When we put out our deficit reduction plan in '93 and the interest rates dropped, there was a housing boom. And what always happens when there's a housing boom happened; lumber prices went up because they got tight. Except lumber prices this time did not lead to a new inflation. Why? Because we got flooded with lumber from other countries because we have an open economy. So we had our housing boom and no inflation.

Now, it seems to me a good thing for the President to do to say, wouldn't it be nice to have a debate within a controlled framework, with serious people with a lifetime of achievement, to see if we can't give Americans a raise who are working hard; to see if we can't minimize inequality as we move to this new economy; and to see if we can't do it the old-fashioned American way, with opportunity and not class warfare?

That's what I wanted to see done. And that's why I wanted to put Felix Rohatyn on the Federal Reserve. But the politics of Washington said, no, we insist on the conventional wisdom; we insist on holding people down; we don't even think it's worth debating. Over and out. That is wrong, and we must end that kind of thinking if we want this country to grow and prosper and become what it ought to be.

The last thing I want to say is this: The most important thing about this election is that you and everybody like you in this whole country remembers that it's not about me or whoever the Republicans decide to nominate when they get through with their business. This election is about you and people like you. It's about all those people that served your food tonight. It's about everybody in between. And this country is still here after all this time, still doing well, still the envy of the world because most of the time most of us do the right thing.

And one of the things that I have a hard time dealing with is this alleged cynicism and skepticism among our people. Now, skepticism is a healthy thing at one level. But you tell me why the American people should be cynical when we have the lowest unemployment rate, the highest growth rate, the lowest deficit, and the brightest prospects of any advanced country in the world?

People from other countries ask me all the time. They would give anything to have our

problems. Of course we've got problems; problems are endemic to the human condition. But we see them as challenges and opportunities. And cynicism is a cheap, bogus, inadequate excuse for the inaction of our fellow citizens. And we've got to get rid of it.

The other thing we have got to stop doing as a people—and I want you to pledge to me that as our supporters you will carry through this whole year doing this—we have got to stop using these elections to divide the American people in ways that benefit some politician at election time but cripple the ability of the United States to come together as one country. We have got to stop doing that.

Tonight I looked up at my table and when the gentleman came to ask if we wanted any wine, and I saw a man serving me that I met in this kitchen 4 years ago last week. And some of you may remember the circumstances I faced 4 years ago last week. We were dropping like a rock in New Hampshire. My obituary had been written by every elated editorial writer in the country who always wanted one hide in every election. Everybody said we were going to single digits in New Hampshire and the whole thing was over. And Alan and Susan Patricof and I were laughing around the table. We had 700 people here; I thought we'd be lucky to have 70 people here after what I had been through the last few days.

And I walked through the kitchen coming here, and I was feeling pretty sorry for myself, I'm ashamed to say. I was feeling pretty sorry for myself. And the man that came to my table tonight to serve us stopped me. And some of you heard this story, but I want to tell you—he's still here, he's still working for his family and for this hotel. And he said, "Governor, my 10-year-old son is studying the Presidential elections. He has studied all the candidates, and he says I should vote for you." Well, that made me feel better. I didn't know there was a 10-year-old in all the State of New York who knew who I was. [*Laughter*]

He said, "But let me tell you something." He said, "I'm an immigrant, and where I came from, we were very poor. And we're much better off here economically. But where we lived before, we were free." He said, "Here we have a park across the street from our apartment, but my boy can't play in that park unless I go with him. We have a school down the street from our apartment; my boy can't walk to school

unless I go with him. So if I do what my boy wants me to do and I vote for you, will you make my boy free?" And I thought to myself, "What have you been thinking about? This election is not about you. It's about him and people like him."

And let me tell you something: When we passed that crime bill and we put another 100,000 police on the street, and I see the crime rate going down in city after city after city in this country because we did that; when we passed the Brady bill and the assault weapons ban, and the Democrats lost the House of Representatives probably because so many of them sat up and voted for that one bill—but I could go to New Hampshire and say, we just had a great deer season in New Hampshire, and the air was full of ducks in Arkansas and every hunter I know shot them with the same gun they had last year, so the people who told you we were going to take your gun away were not telling you the truth. But I'll tell you something, there's over 40,000 crooks that couldn't get a gun because we passed the Brady bill.

And I saw him tonight, I saw Dimitrios standing there, and I said, "Your son is about 14 now?" "Yes." "How's he doing?" "Fine." And I said, "You got a message for me?" He said, "Yes. Keep fighting for the working people; it's still pretty tough out here."

This election is about you. It's about him. It's about our country. And yes, we have some challenges. But I'm telling you, these are high-class problems because this country is moving in the right direction. And don't let anybody tell you that your Government is inherently bad.

James Carville's new book, which I commend to all of you, points out in the last 30 years we spent half of your tax money on three things: defense, Social Security, and Medicare. What did you get for it? We won the cold war. We cut the poverty rate among elderly citizens in half. And if you get to be old enough to be on Medicare, seniors in the United States have the highest life expectancy of any group of elderly people in the world.

This is a very great country. If you do your part and we do ours, we're going to be just fine. Let's do that in 1996.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:45 p.m. at the Sheraton New York Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to actor James Earl Jones; entertainer Lesley Gore; David Dinkins, former New York City mayor; Alan Patricof, former Chair, White House Conference on Small Business Commission, and his wife, Susan; and waiter Dimitrios Theofanis.

Message on the Observance of the Chinese New Year *February 8, 1996*

Warm greetings to everyone observing the Chinese New Year as you welcome 4694, the Year of the Rat.

This ancient annual festival unites people of Chinese heritage across America and around the globe in a joyous celebration of hope and new beginnings. Family and friends gather to renew the bonds of love and to rejoice in the rich cultural traditions of the Chinese people. The sorrows and mistakes of the past year dissolve in a flurry of fireworks, dancing, feasting, and the exchange of gifts.

The Chinese New Year is a fitting occasion for us to reflect on the many contributions that Chinese Americans have brought to our national life—among them a respect for family, a rev-

erence for knowledge, and an unwavering determination to make tomorrow better than today. Let us rejoice together in this season of renewal and resolve to work for a future of harmony and prosperity for us all.

Best wishes for a new year of happiness, health, freedom, and peace.

BILL CLINTON

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 16.