

But the main thing I want you to keep in mind is the big picture. If you want more opportunity for people who show responsibility, if you want us to come together around our shared values instead of being divided in the old ways, if you want your country to lead the world, then we need a Government that is smaller and less bureaucratic, yes, but one that is still strong enough and committed to a central goal, not giving things to people but giving them a chance to make the most of their own lives as citizens, as workers, as members of families, as members of communities, as citizens of this great country. That's what we need. And that's what we're working on. And that's what's at stake.

So when you go home tonight, think about that. Yes, I have worked hard for the economy because I think people need to have a chance to make a decent living and because I think that when people work hard they ought to believe they can do a little better every year. But this is about much more than economics. As I have said many times, if we're fortunate enough, any of us, to know in advance, as a gift from God, when the last time we ever put our head on the pillow is, before we end our life on this Earth, I'll bet you anything we won't be thinking about finances. We'll be thinking about what we really loved, our families, our friends, our children, what we cared about, what we did that made us proud. I want this to be a country where everybody can feel those things are within their grasp. That's what I want. And we can achieve it. But in our system, the President doesn't do that alone. In our system, it requires people in the United States Congress

who share a vision and share a strategy for achieving it.

And I can tell you that I have worked with Dick Gephardt for years now, and what you see is what you get. We spent 50 hours together in budget negotiations in the quiet of the Oval Office with the Republican leaders of Congress. He never raised his voice. He never lost his temper. He never did anything that you wouldn't have been very proud of. But he was always, always sticking up for the idea that we had to balance the budget, but we had to do it in a way that would grow the economy, enhance opportunity, bring this country together, and leave us all stronger. You would have been proud of that. There was never a reporter, never a camera, never anything public about it. But his quiet, determined strength impressed me more even than I had been in the past.

So you think about that when you go home tonight. I hope you'll be proud you came here. I hope you'll think your investment was worth it. And I hope, for the rest of this year, for the rest of this decade, which is the rest of this century, you'll be asking this question of yourself and answering it, because America, in all probability, will wind up looking like your vision of it, especially if you work to realize it.

Thank you, God bless you, and goodnight.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:25 p.m. at the Trans World Dome. In his remarks, he referred to August Busch IV, chairman of the board, Anheuser-Busch Co.

## **The President's Radio Address** *May 18, 1996*

Good morning. Four years ago, I challenged America to end welfare as we know it, to require work, promote responsible parenting, shift the system from dependence to independence. Just a few days after I took office, I met with the Nation's 50 Governors, and I urged every one of them to send me a welfare reform plan that would help to meet that challenge. In return, I pledged to waive outmoded or counter-

productive Federal rules that get in the way of reform.

Most of the Governors took me up on that deal. So in the last 3 years, my administration has granted 38 States welfare reform waivers, clearing away Federal rules and regulations to permit States to build effective welfare reforms of their own. The State-based reform we've encouraged has brought work and responsibility

back to the lives of 75 percent of the Americans on welfare.

We're doing a lot more than signing waivers. We've also pressed ahead on fundamental reforms to make the welfare system reflect the basic values that have stood up so well for so long, that if you bring a child into this world, you must take responsibility for that child; that Government will not subsidize irresponsible or reckless behavior; that welfare is a second chance, not a way of life.

That's why I signed a Presidential order to require Federal employees to pay child support and increased Federal efforts to enforce child support orders across State lines. I toughened sanctions on welfare and food stamp recipients who refuse to work. I took action earlier this month to require teen mothers to stay in school and sign personal responsibility contracts if they are to receive welfare benefits. That's also why I sent Congress a sweeping welfare reform plan that would do all this and more.

Our hard work is paying off. America is in the midst of what the New York Times has called a quiet revolution in welfare reform under our administration. The number of Americans on welfare has dropped by 1.3 million since I took office in January 1993. Food stamp rolls are down by even more, and so are teen pregnancy rates. What numbers are up? Well, child support collections have jumped 40 percent, and the number of people who are required to work as a condition for receiving welfare is also way up.

Today I'm pleased to report that two States, Wisconsin and Maryland, are adding momentum to this quiet revolution. Last week, Wisconsin submitted to me for approval the outlines of a sweeping welfare reform plan, one of the boldest yet attempted in America, and I'm encouraged by what I've seen so far.

Under the Wisconsin plan, people on welfare who can work must work immediately. The State will see to it that the work is there, in private sector jobs that can be subsidized if necessary or in community service jobs if there are no private jobs available. The State says it will also see to it that families have health care and child care, so that parents can go to work without worrying about what will happen to their children. But then they must go to work, or they won't get paid. If they do work, of course, they'll have the dignity of earning a paycheck, not a welfare check. The plan would send a clear mes-

sage to teen parents as well. If you're a minor with a baby, you'll receive benefits only if you stay in school, live at home, and turn your life around.

All in all, Wisconsin has the makings of a solid, bold welfare reform plan. We should get it done. I pledge that my administration will work with Wisconsin to make an effective transition to a new vision of welfare based on work, that protects children and does right by working people and their families.

Maryland also has come up with its own innovative welfare reform plan. It cracks down on welfare fraud, comes down hard on parents who turn their backs on child support, and helps working parents with child care so they won't be driven onto welfare in the first place.

The reforms in Wisconsin, Maryland, and other States are very encouraging for two reasons: First, they give us hope that we can break the vicious cycle of welfare dependency and, second, because they make it clear that there is now a widespread national consensus shared by people without regard to their political party on what welfare reform should look like. It should be pro-work, pro-family, pro-independence, responsible. Welfare should be a second chance, not a way of life.

So the States can keep on sending me strong welfare reform proposals, and I'll keep on signing them. I'll keep doing everything I can as President to reform welfare State by State, if that's what it takes.

But there's a faster way to bring this welfare reform to the entire Nation. There are bipartisan welfare reform plans sitting in the House and the Senate right now that do what the American people agree welfare reform must do: They require welfare recipients to work; they limit the time people can stay on welfare; they toughen child support enforcement; and they protect our children.

So I say to Congress: Send me a bill that honors these fundamental principles. I'll sign it right away. Let's get the job done. Let's do it now. Let's bring welfare reform to all 50 States. Then we'll move on to the other challenges we face as we stand at the dawn of a new century.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 3:40 p.m. on May 17 at the Italia America Bocce Club in St. Louis for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on May 18.