

May 22 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1996

Message to the Congress Transmitting the Report of the Commodity Credit Corporation May 22, 1996

To the Congress of the United States:

In accordance with the provisions of section 13, Public Law 806, 80th Congress (15 U.S.C. 714k), I transmit herewith the report of the

Commodity Credit Corporation for fiscal year 1994.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
May 22, 1996.

Statement on the Minimum Wage May 22, 1996

An increase in the minimum wage would honor our values: work, family, responsibility, and opportunity. You cannot raise a family on \$4.25 an hour. Over the years, both parties have worked together to ensure that the minimum wage keeps up with the cost of living. To continue that commitment to working families, I have challenged Congress to raise the minimum wage by 90 cents. It is clear that a bipartisan majority of the House of Representatives stands ready to pass this increase.

But the House leadership is today proposing a giant fraud on the American people. Their legislation will eliminate the minimum wage for

all workers hired by fully two-thirds of American businesses. I hope Senator Dole will join me in opposing this extreme measure. We must not tolerate sweatshops and a repeal of wage protections for millions of Americans as a condition of assuring a living wage for some workers.

Let me be clear: Eliminating the minimum wage is no way to raise it. If Congress sends me a bill to eliminate the minimum wage and wage protection for millions of workers, I will veto it. Speaker Gingrich and Majority Leader Dole should allow an honest up-or-down vote on the minimum wage.

Remarks at a Democratic Dinner in Stamford, Connecticut May 22, 1996

Thank you very much. Well, ladies and gentlemen, now that all these other fine people have spoken and told you every good thing about our record, I ought to quit while I'm ahead. *[Laughter]* But I won't. And besides that, we can't.

I want to thank Senator Dodd for his remarks and his remarkable leadership and his personal friendship and his willingness to take a leap into the unknown when I asked him to do this job after our setback in the campaign of 1994. It looked like a job with a lot of downside and not much upside. It could cause him grief at home and not help him abroad. And he did

it anyway, because he believed it was the right thing to do. He's done it superbly, and every person in Connecticut should be very, very proud of him.

I also want to assure you that that little riff he went through about, "You can always move the capital to Hartford and make the Seawolf the national fish and the Comanche the national bird," and all that, you know, believe it or not, he does that in private when nobody is looking. *[Laughter]* The first time he did it in private, I didn't think it was very funny; it's a lot more funny in a crowd. *[Laughter]* I think if things get any tighter he'll just buy me a couple of

pets and call them Seawolf and Comanche so I'll never be able to forget it. *[Laughter]*

I want to thank Senator Lieberman, who's been my friend for more than 25 years now, for his leadership in Connecticut and leadership in the Democratic Leadership Council and for being a source—a constant source of new ideas for me about how we can move this country forward and bring it together. And I want to thank Don Fowler for his incredibly indefatigable work.

I thank my friend Marvin Rosen—now that Chris Dodd has grounded on him tonight about how Connecticut raised more money than Florida, Marvin might not get any sleep for the next month—*[laughter]*—he'll be thinking about how to get even or get ahead.

I have a lot to be grateful to Connecticut for, as has been said, not the least of which are the people who were up here before me. I thought Harvey and Paul looked pretty good up here when they were doing their one-two act. You ought to give him a better part, Harvey. He'll do a movie if you do that. But give them a hand; they were great. *[Applause]*

And I understand that Mr. Newman introduced me about 15 minutes before I came out. *[Laughter]* That may be because in my old age I'm getting hard of hearing. Or it may be because now that he's become a grandfather he's just preoccupied and he's gotten his lines all mixed up. *[Laughter]*

I thank Governor O'Neill, my former colleague, for being here; and my friend and law school classmate, your attorney general, Dick Blumenthal; your secretary of state, your controller, and all the other officials. I want to say a special word of thank you to Bill Curry, who came down from Connecticut to Washington to work in the White House. And I thank Michael Bolton for both those wonderful, wonderful songs.

You know, when I first met Michael Bolton, I tried to figure out what his ethnic heritage was, and I figured he was Polish. Then he said, "This is a song I sang with Pavarotti." I figured he was Italian. Then he sang "Georgia on My Mind." The only other person I ever heard sing that in public—this will show you how much I like the song—on June 24, 1967, in Constitution Hall, I heard Ray Charles sing that song. I remember that. I carried the ticket stub with me for 10 years. *[Laughter]* I was so excited, I couldn't go to bed. At 5 o'clock in the morning

I went out and ran 3 miles just so I'd get tired enough to go to bed.

So I thought you were Polish; then I thought you were Italian; now I know you're African-American. *[Laughter]* Most of all, you're a good person and a good friend, and I thank you for bringing your talents to bear for the benefit of your country. Thank you very much.

I couldn't believe Chris made that joke—I guess it was Chris—about that Peruvian mummy. *[Laughter]* But I want you to know that Hillary went to welcome that mummy to the National Geographic building yesterday, she and President Fujimori of Peru. And then he came over to see me and kind of hurt my feelings that I didn't get to go. He brought me two pictures of that mummy. I don't know if you've seen that mummy. But you know, if I were a single man, I might ask that mummy out. *[Laughter]* That's a good-looking mummy. That mummy looks better than I do on my worst days. I'm telling you, you need to go see her. *[Laughter]* If there was ever an argument against ageism, it's that mummy. I mean, really, you need to go see her. Let me say—I can't believe—I'll hear about that before it's over, but anyway—*[laughter]*—it's been a long day.

I want to say that I wish Hillary were with me tonight. She's coming back from Colorado. But I did something today that she and our daughter did 2 years ago. I went to the Coast Guard Academy to give the commencement address, and it was a wonderful experience. And I want to tell you about just some of the other things that have happened today because I think they are appropriate. It reminded me of many of the times I have been in Connecticut and the various places I have been.

When I got off the helicopter today the first time, I met the people who are active in the Big Brother and Big Sister program who are cadets at the Coast Guard Academy. And they told me that the—you know, the students at the Academy have to work very hard. It's a very rigorous program, both physically and intellectually. They still do 1,100 hours of community service a month at the Coast Guard Academy. That's pretty remarkable.

And then I met a representative of our Department of Education who coincidentally has been a friend of mine for almost 30 years, introducing me to children from Guilford, Connecticut, and children from New Haven, Connecticut. And most of the kids from New Haven

were African-American or Hispanic, and most of the kids from Guilford looked like they live in those beautiful houses in Guilford that I remember so well from law school. And these kids worked together through E-mail. And they sent E-mail messages to each other, and they're trying to help each other learn about their different lives and trying to help broaden their horizons and improve their performance in school. And these kids, they've got a little team jacket they wear to show they're part of the same group. It was an astonishing thing. And they were very excited about what they're doing.

And the reason I mention those two things is it seems to me that that really is a big part of what this election is all about, because the Coast Guard folks, they're doing the best they can with their own lives, and they're doing superbly well. They're very impressive. But they're still taking a little time to help people who are less fortunate, partly because they believe it's part of their responsibility and partly because they know their country will be better if those kids do better. The kids from Guilford and the kids from New Haven are like all children, they're preoccupied with their own lives, but they know if they care about each other their country will be stronger and we'll all be better off.

And that really is the central question before the American people. I'm very gratified about what's been said. It is true that when I ran for President I said that if you vote for me we'll put in a program, we'll cut the deficit in half and create 8 million jobs in 4 years. And we've more than cut the deficit in half, and we've got more than 8½ million jobs now. I'm glad about that; the economy is stronger than it was before.

One of the things that has especially benefited Connecticut is that we have had the biggest expansion of trade in the history of this country, with GATT and NAFTA and 200 separate agreements, 21 with Japan alone. Our exports to Japan in the 21 areas we've made agreements with them are up 85 percent in 3 years. It's really a record without precedent. And it's mostly due to the vigilance and aggression of American companies and their workers and the productivity of their workers. But the fact that we changed the rules had a little something to do with it, I think. And I'm proud of that. And you should be, too.

And I am—they talked about the crime issue—I'm proud of the fact that all the serious crimes are down in America. And it did have something to do with the fact that we passed the crime bill and began to put 100,000 police on the street and banned 19 kinds of assault weapons and passed the Brady bill.

And a lot of Members of Congress underwent unbelievable withering criticism. And we lost a lot of House Members and maybe a couple of Senators because we banned assault weapons and passed the Brady bill, because there were a lot of people that were told they were going to lose their weapons. Well, we've now had a couple of hunting seasons; there hasn't been a single hunter, man or a woman, in any State in this country lose their rifle. But 60,000 people did lose their weapons; they were people with criminal records who got found out and couldn't get their handguns under the Brady bill. It was the right thing to do.

I am proud of the advances we've made with the leadership of the Vice President in improving the environment and finding ways to grow the economy and protect the environment, which I think is a central commitment this country has got to make to itself. I had a fascinating conversation a few months ago with the President of China, Jiang Zemin, in which we were having the kind of discussion we often have in public, and you can imagine what it was like. And I looked at him, and I said, "Mr. President, I do not want to contain China. I want to engage China. I want us to have a good partnership. But," I said, "there's only one way that you really present a threat to our security, and I'm sure it's never occurred to you." And he said, "Well, what are you talking about?" I said, "If everybody in China decides to get rich in exactly the same way people in America got rich and you all insist on buying cars that don't get any better mileage than the ones we've got now, we're going to burn up the atmosphere together. That is a threat to our security. We have to find a way for the Chinese to grow their economy and preserve the global environment, not tear it up." And I believe that, and I think it's a great opportunity for us. So I'm glad we've done that.

I'm glad that we proved that the Democratic Party is not the party of big Government. We've reduced the size of the Government. We've eliminated thousands of pages of regulations. We've gotten rid of a lot of specific, stupid

things. When I became President, the SBA loan form was 78 pages long; now it's a page long. It took months and months to get an answer; now you can get an answer in 3 days. I'm proud of that. I'm glad we—we cut the budget by 25 percent and doubled the loan volume for small businesses. I'm proud of that.

But in spite of all that, that's really not what this election is about. This election, like all elections, is about the future. And I just want you to take just a few minutes, because every one of you will leave here—and the election is still a long way away, and an enormous number of things can happen and there's more than enough time for it to change.

The American people will vote in November based on what they think this election is about and what they imagine their future will be like. And therefore, every one of you, if you can afford to be here and you have the ability to get other people to be here, you also should take a little time to be an influential citizen, to have arguments and discussions and debates about this election that have nothing to do with raising funds but everything to do with delivering voters to the polls in November.

And so I ask you to think about it. Ask yourself, we're 4 years away from a new century that happens to be the beginning of a new millennium; what would you like it to be like? How do you imagine your country in 2010? What kind of country do you imagine your grandchildren living in when they are your age? If you could make it the way you would like it to be, what would you have to do to do that? Does that bear any reasonable relationship to the kind of issues we debate today? And every one of you just think about it.

Before I entered the Presidential campaign in 1992, I decided that more than anything else I had to be able to ask myself those questions and give an answer and then be prepared to update and modify that answer as I learned more about the American people and our circumstances and the world that's unfolding. And I have a very simple answer, even though it's obvious that the road ahead is not simple.

I want this to be a country in which every single person, without regard to their race, their gender, or how much they start out with or without in life, has a chance to live up to their dreams if they're willing to work for it and be responsible. I want this to be a country in which we relish the diversity that we have, all of it.

As long as we adhere to the same set of laws and the constitutional values that have kept us around for more than 200 years, we should see our diversity as an asset of unimaginable proportions as we move into a global society. So I want this country to be coming together instead of coming apart.

And that's very important. That's what all of you try to do in your families, in your businesses, in your community activities, in your religious organization. It's only in politics that we try to see how quickly we can divide people. And it doesn't make any sense at all; it is a dumb way to build a future. And I think we should reject the politics of division in this election.

And finally, I want this to be a country which, 20 years from now, 30 years from now, is still the strongest force in the world for peace and freedom and democracy and prosperity. And that means for me I've had to take some fairly unpopular decisions to keep that possibility alive. Not many people thought it was right to go into Haiti, but we don't have all those refugees at our shore, and they've got freedom now. And I'm proud that we did it, and I'm proud of our people who did it.

I was even criticized for becoming the first American President to try to take a hand in affairs in Northern Ireland, but it helped to lead to a cease-fire, and I think we're going to get a resolution to that.

There was literally no support for the steps I took to try to help Mexico when our neighbor to the south was about to collapse, but it didn't collapse. And if it had it would have been a disaster for us and for our efforts to control our own borders. And there were more than half the people against the action we took in Bosnia, but there are people alive today, and that country has a chance for peace and Europe has a chance for peace because of the action that was taken.

So the same thing is true on the trade front with GATT and NAFTA and all the other things we have done. I know that a lot of trade issues have caused some disruption, but this country has come out ahead on the efforts we have made in trade. And we cannot run away from the world, we have to lead it, we have to compete in it, we have to reach out to others and give them a chance to make the most of their own lives as well.

That is what I believe we ought to have. And when you imagine that, you can have—well, my vision is not quite the same. But if you have a vision, then you can say, well, how are you going to get there? Well, the first thing you have to have is a structure of opportunity. And this is a big difference between the two different visions of the future, and I'll come back to that. But I want a structure of opportunity.

We spent now nearly 4 years trying to get the deficit down and all of that. We need to look to the future and say, we're going to have to provide a system that gives people education for a lifetime and access to health care and retirement for a lifetime. Education is the most important thing, and that's why I made the proposals that I've made. If you look at that, that is terribly important.

Then I believe we need a structure for defining our community, or at least a roadmap. What are our obligations to each other? That's really what the welfare reform debate is all about. That's why I tried to say about affirmative action, we should change it, but we shouldn't get rid of it until we get rid of discrimination. That's why I tried to say, as Senator Lieberman said, this is a deeply religious country, but we ought to stop using religion to divide it; we ought to find ways that we can come together around religious values we all share.

That's why we had this meeting the other day that some people in this room came to, where corporate executives came and met with labor leaders and others and said, what are our obligations to our employees in the 21st century in the global economy? Because I believe we have to find a way to say this is what we owe to one another so we can come together around it.

And as you look ahead, it means we need more young people in national service. It means we need more people asking themselves, how can we make it economically attractive to invest in our inner cities so that we can create jobs and free enterprise where Government can't pick up the slack? It means that Bridgeport and Hartford and Newark, New Jersey, and poor rural areas in my part of the country ought to be able to reap the benefits of the global economy if we can find ways to make it attractive for people to invest there.

It means that we have to recognize that in the rest of the world we can never solve all the problems, but we must have, we must have,

a system for working with others to fight terrorism and organized crime and drug running and the proliferation of dangerous weapons. And that's why I am working with all these other countries, so we'll at least have a system to give our kids and our grandkids a chance to live in the most peaceful world human history has ever known. Those are the things that I think about and dream about.

Why do we want to fight crime? Because you can't have any sense of community if people are scared to death. Why do we want to preserve the environment? Because you cannot have an organized civilized society without clean air and clean water and natural resources.

Let me tell you, I have concluded a long time ago that what we do in public life is in and of itself not the most important thing, by a long shot, that goes on in this world. But if you think about it, what you do in your worklife is not in and of itself the most important thing that goes on in this world. Why do we work? Why do we have political life? Why do we do these things? Because if we do it right, we give more and more and more people a chance to live out their dreams. That's why.

And if you look at what's going on in this election today, if you look at every single issue being debated and you listen very closely through all the rhetoric for the differences, you see two very different world views about how we should move into the future. And let me give you a charitable description, I think, of the other world view—but essentially accurate, but charitable.

The other folks believe, as I do, that we're living in an era of enormous possibility because of technology and information revolutions and the globalization of the economy; that unlike the great industrial age that we've left, the future will probably not be dominated by big, top-down organizations, either governmental organizations or private ones; that entrepreneurialism, that creativity and rapid change will dominate the future. And therefore, they say, all big, outdated, centralized organizations are the enemy, and especially Government, and therefore we're always better off without Government unless we need it for national defense and one or two other things that we can't get any other way.

But there aren't many things on that list. That's why when they come up with a budget that cuts education, they say, "It's okay; the

Government would mess up a one-car parade; you can't do anything good in education." Or they come up with a budget that says we don't need 100,000 police anymore. Or "Why don't we repeal the assault weapons ban or the Brady bill?" Or "Why do we oppose the Family and Medical Leave Act that Chris Dodd labored for? Oh, because the Government can't do anything good. Get the Government out of it and let a thousand flowers bloom."

Well, I believe that we have to reform the Government. But I don't believe any country ever became great by deciding to give educational opportunity to just a few or deciding to pollute the environment to advance the economy or deciding we don't have common responsibilities to make safe streets for our children. So that is the difference. What do we owe each other? What do we have to do together to create opportunity and to grow together and to build a better country?

And let me just say this in closing, and remember this. I've said this a lot of times, and a lot of people think it's a strange thing for a person in public life to say. If God gives you the gift to know when the last time you put your head on a pillow before you end your life on this Earth, 5 will get you 10, you won't say, "I wish I'd spent more time at the office." You won't be thinking about the last political campaign you worked in. You'll be thinking about who you loved, who you liked, what happened to you that made you feel more alive and more like a human being. The purpose of politics is to give more people the chance to

live out those dreams, so when they lay down for the last time, they feel good about what they've done. That is what this whole thing is about. That is what this whole thing is about.

So I ask you to remember this. I thank you for this money. We will invest it wisely in taking this country into the next century in the right way. But you have to be willing to stand up and let your voice be heard. You have to be willing to keep talking and keep working all the way between now and November. You can't let the American people be diverted. You can't let us be divided.

If this election is about how we're going to get to the next century with opportunity for everybody, with a country that's coming together instead of being driven apart and a country that's leading the world to a brighter tomorrow, I don't have any doubt about how it's going to come out. And more importantly, we'll have more people living out their dreams in a better and more decent world.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9 p.m. in the Grand Ballroom at the Stamford Marriott Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Christopher J. Dodd, general chairman, Donald L. Fowler, national chairman, and Marvin Rosen, national finance chairman, Democratic National Committee; movie producer Harvey Weinstein; actor Paul Newman; William O'Neill, former Governor of Connecticut; Miles Rapoport, Connecticut Secretary of the State; Nancy Wyman, Connecticut Controller; and singer Michael Bolton.

Remarks to the President's Committee on Employment of People With Disabilities Conference

May 23, 1996

Thank you very much, Tony, for your remarks, your support, your friendship, and your leadership of the Committee. I want to say hello to the others who are there, to John Sweeney and to Al Checchi. I want to say a special word of thanks to my good friend Justin Dart, who I know had to leave but who has been a real champion for Americans with disabilities, indeed, for the rights and interests of all Americans. I want to say a special word of greeting

to the cochairs of the Committee, the vice chairs: Norm Miller, I. King Jordan, Karen Meyer, Neil Jacobson, Dr. Sylvia Walker, and Ron Drach.

Thank you, all of you who are there for your very warm welcome. I'm sorry I couldn't join you in person today, I have to be in Milwaukee with the German Chancellor. But I didn't want to miss this opportunity to talk with you about what we must do together to ensure the full