

(J.P.) Tucker, who introduced Chancellor Helmut Kohl; Gov. Tommy Thompson of Wisconsin; Thomas Ament, Milwaukee County executive; Mayor John O. Norquist of Milwaukee; Attorney General James Doyle of Wisconsin.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on Minimum Wage Legislation *May 23, 1996*

I commend the House for responding to my challenge and voting to give millions of America's hardest workers a raise.

A bipartisan majority rejected the efforts of the Republican leadership and recognized that raising the minimum wage is the right thing to do. You can't raise a family on \$4.25 an hour.

I am also pleased that the House rejected an effort to defraud the American people with a provision that would have eliminated the min-

imum wage altogether, as well as overtime protections, for workers hired at fully two-thirds of American businesses. For millions of American workers, this hoax would actually have meant lower wages and even a return to sweatshop conditions.

Senator Dole should bring the minimum wage to the Senate floor for a clean up-or-down vote before he leaves office. That is the way to honor our values of work, family, opportunity, and responsibility.

Statement on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Report on Adolescent Tobacco Use *May 23, 1996*

Regarding the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Report: "Tobacco Use and Usual Source of Cigarettes Among High School Students—United States, 1995."

Today's report is disturbing proof that more and more young teenagers are becoming lifelong smokers and too little is being done to prevent illegal tobacco sales to them. The significant increase in smoking among young African-American men is of particular concern.

Parents and communities need tough and enforceable measures to combat the easy access and appeal of cigarettes to children. My administration remains committed to preventing adolescent decisions from becoming lifelong addictions. I ask all Americans to support strong measures that will effectively address the growing problem of tobacco use by our children.

Message to the Congress Transmitting Proposed Retirement Savings Legislation *May 23, 1996*

To the Congress of the United States:

I am pleased to transmit today for the consideration of the Congress the "Retirement Savings and Security Act." This legislation is designed

to empower all Americans to save for their retirement by expanding pension coverage, increasing portability, and enhancing security. By using both employer and individual tax-advan-

tagged retirement savings programs, Americans can benefit from the opportunities of our changing economy while assuring themselves and their families greater security for the future. A general explanation of the Act accompanies this transmittal.

Today, over 58 million American public and private sector workers are covered by employer-sponsored pension or retirement savings plans. Millions more have been able to save through Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs). The Retirement Savings and Security Act would help expand pensions to the over 51 million American private-sector workers—including over three-quarters of the workers in small businesses—who are not covered by an employer-sponsored pension or retirement savings program and need both the opportunity and encouragement to start saving. Women particularly need this expanded coverage: fewer than one-third of all women retirees who are 55 or older receive pension benefits, compared with 55 percent of male retirees.

The Act would also help the many workers who participate in pension plans to continue to save when they change jobs. It would reassure all workers who save through employer-sponsored plans that the money they have saved, as well as that put aside by employers on their behalf, will be there when they need it.

The Retirement Savings and Security Act would:

- Establish a simple new small business 401(k)-type plan—the National Employee Savings Trust (NEST)—and simplify complex pension laws. The NEST is specifically designed to ensure participation by low- and moderate-wage workers, who will be able to save up to \$5,000 per year tax-deferred, plus receive employer contributions toward retirement. The Act would encourage employers of all sizes to cover employees under retirement plans, and it would enable employers to put more money into benefits and less into paying lawyers, accountants, consultants, and actuaries.
- Increase the ability of workers to save for retirement from their first day on the job by removing barriers to pension portability. In particular, employers would be encouraged no longer to require a 1-year wait before employees can contribute to their

pension plans. The Federal Government would set the example for other employers by allowing its new employees to begin saving through the Thrift Savings Plan when they are hired, rather than having to wait up to a year. In addition, the Act would reduce from 10 to 5 years the time those participating in multiemployer plans—union plans where workers move from job to job—must work to receive vested benefits. It would also help ensure that returning veterans retain pension benefits and that workers receive their retirement savings even when a previous employer is no longer in existence.

- Expand eligibility for tax-deductible IRAs to 20 million more families. In addition, the Act would encourage savings by making the use of IRAs more flexible by allowing penalty-free withdrawals for education and training, purchase of a first home, catastrophic medical expenses, and long-term unemployment. It would also provide an additional IRA option that provides tax-free distributions instead of tax-deductible contributions.
- Enhance pension security by protecting the savings of millions of State and local workers from their employer's bankruptcy, as happened in Orange County, California. The Act would (1) require prompt reporting by plan administrators and accountants of any serious and egregious misuse of funds; (2) double the guaranteed benefit for participants in multiemployer plans in the unlikely event such a plan becomes insolvent; and (3) enhance benefits of a surviving spouse and dependents under the Civil Service Retirement System and the Railroad Retirement System.
- Ensure that pension raiding, such as that which drained \$20 billion out of retirement funds in the 1980s, never happens again—by retaining the strong current laws preventing such abuses and by requiring periodic reports on reversions by the Secretary of Labor.

Many of the provisions of the Retirement Savings and Security Act are new. In particular, provisions facilitating saving from the first day on the job, in both the private sector and the Federal Government; the doubling of the multiemployer guarantee; and improving benefits for

surviving spouses and dependents of participants in the Civil Service Retirement System and the Railroad Retirement System deserve special consideration by the Congress. In addition, many of the provisions and concepts in this Act have been previously proposed by this Administration and have broad bipartisan support.

American workers deserve pension security—as well as a decent wage, lifelong access to high

quality education and training, and health security—to take advantage of the opportunities of our growing economy.

I urge the prompt and favorable consideration of this legislative proposal by the Congress.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
May 23, 1996.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on the Deployment of United States Forces in the Central African Republic May 23, 1996

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

On May 19, 1996, heavy fighting broke out between government forces and mutinous troops in the capital city of Bangui, Central African Republic. Early reports suggested that some 200–500 renegade soldiers were firing weapons, including rockets and artillery, and that they had called for troops from outside the capital to join them in the mutiny. During the fighting, prison guards reportedly abandoned their posts and prisoners were observed loitering around the prison. Although neither the American Embassy nor American citizens have been directly targeted, heavy fighting has been reported around the American Embassy, which has sustained some damage from stray rounds. At one point, government forces indicated an intention to assault a rebel stronghold very near the Embassy, but were dissuaded by the Ambassador.

On May 20, due to the rapidly deteriorating security situation and the resultant threat to American citizens and the Embassy, I ordered the deployment of U.S. military personnel to provide enhanced security for the American Embassy in Bangui and to conduct the evacuation from the Central African Republic of private U.S. citizens and certain U.S. Government employees. Approximately 32 U.S. Marines entered the capital city in the early morning hours on May 21 and immediately took up positions in and around the American Embassy compound. They also deployed to the international airport in order to assist in processing evacuees and act as liaison with French military forces already positioned there. Evacuation operations began later that day, involving a U.S. KC-130

cargo aircraft operating into Yaounde, Cameroon. Further evacuation flights are planned. Additional U.S. forces may also be deployed in order to provide a means of safe passage for evacuees to the airport and to provide additional security at the American Embassy if required.

The marines involved in this operation are from the Marine Expeditionary Unit currently operating off Liberia. Although U.S. forces are equipped and prepared to defend American lives and property, I do not anticipate that they will become involved in hostilities. U.S. forces will redeploy as soon as evacuation operations are complete and enhanced security at the American Embassy is no longer required.

I have taken this action pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct the foreign relations of the United States and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive.

I am providing this report as part of my efforts to keep the Congress fully informed, consistent with the War Powers Resolution. I appreciate the support of the Congress in this action to protect American citizens and the American Embassy in Bangui.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
May 23, 1996.

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Strom Thurmond, President pro tempore of the Senate.