

Remarks to the Southern Governors' Association in Kansas City September 10, 1996

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you for the warm welcome. Thank you, Governor Carnahan and Governor Allen, Governor Patton, Governor Caperton, Governor Miller, Governor Beasley, Governor Huckabee—nice pen, Governor Huckabee—[laughter]—I like that.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm glad to be back at the Southern Governors' Association. I'm glad to be back at a time when I feel good about the direction of our country. And I know we all feel challenged, as Governor Carnahan said, because of our new responsibility in the aftermath of the passage of the welfare reform law.

I have just come from a very moving encounter at the Full Employment Council here in Kansas City. Mayor Cleaver and Congresswoman Karen McCarthy took me over there. I thank them for going. I thank Clyde McQueen and Gayle Hobbs for being there, and I'll talk about the other people who were there in a few moments.

But let me say I am very glad to be back here and to discuss, as the Governor said, a problem that is keeping our people from becoming all that we can be. The country is clearly moving in the right direction. We have the lowest unemployment rate in 7½ years, 10½ million new jobs, the lowest combined rates of inflation, unemployment, and home mortgages in almost 30 years. The deficit has gone down 4 years in a row for the first time in a President's term since John Tyler was the President in the 1840's. I always tell everybody, the bad news is John Tyler was not reelected. [Laughter] But it was still a good thing that he did. [Laughter]

The crime rate has gone down for 4 years in a row, thanks in no small measure to efforts made by the Governors here and around the country. The welfare rolls are nearly two million smaller than they were the day I took the oath of office. The Government is the smallest it's been since President Kennedy was in office. We are working hard to help people to succeed at home and at work. The average closing costs for first-time homebuyers has been cut by about \$1,000, thanks to an initiative led by Secretary Cisneros and the FHA. The earned-income tax credit reduced taxes for 15 million of the hard-

est pressed working families on lower incomes. We're immunizing more children and trying to give more parents the power to protect their children through things like the V-chip, the television rating system, the new educational television programming that will be coming forth soon.

The family and medical leave law has allowed 12 million families to take some time off for the birth of a child or the illness of a parent without losing their job. I think it should be modestly expanded to allow parents to go to parent-teacher conferences and regular doctor appointments. It plainly isn't hurting the economy, and anything that helps us to succeed with our families and to strengthen the economy I think is a very, very good thing.

I think it's also important to note that we're trying to change the way Washington works. The thing I loved most about being a Governor was that the job was a lot more about what are we going to do than who are we going to blame. And in Washington, I think in part because it's so far from where people live and you have to pierce through all the layers between you and the folks back home, that too often it becomes more about who to blame than what to do. So I hope we have changed that.

And let me say that—

[At this point, a live local news broadcast at the back of the room interrupted the President's remarks.]

The President. Does that guy want to give a speech back there? [Laughter] We'll be glad to listen to you, but we can't both talk at the same time. [Laughter]

I do believe that this business about what to do and not who to blame is going to be brought into play more powerfully on the issue of welfare reform than any other issue in recent history. And I'd like to ask you all just to stop a few minutes and think with me about what it means.

First, let me say the States should be very proud of themselves. Our administration has now given 77 waivers to 43 States who have moved 1.8 million people from welfare to work. That's a pretty good record, and I'm proud of the States. I'm proud of the community groups

that work on this. I'm proud of the employers who have done the hiring. Of course, part of it is due to the rising tide of the economy, but an awful lot of it is due to the special efforts being made State by State, community by community.

There is a passion in this country now to liberate people from the dependency of a welfare system which has not worked, to move people from welfare to work in a way that enables them to support their children and live in greater dignity. It is sweeping the country. It is felt in every corner of the country by people from all walks of life, of all political persuasions, of all racial and ethnic groups. It is running at high tide, and a lot has happened in the last 4 years.

The new welfare reform law dramatically increases the possibilities of moving people from welfare to work and the requirements to do so. And just to basically review what the law does, it says essentially this: There will continue to be a national guarantee, funded by the Federal and State governments of health care, nutrition, and now more child care for people who move from welfare to work, but that portion of our welfare expenditures that used to go in monthly entitlement checks to welfare recipients will now go to the States in a big block of money, and they, in turn, will have to move people who are able-bodied from welfare to work within 2 years, and in no case can able-bodied people have more than 5 years total of welfare benefits unless there are extenuating circumstances in which case the States can keep a little money back to decide to deal with the odd case that always comes up, that doesn't quite fit anybody's formula.

The States, in turn, have to figure out how to work at the community level with the existing institutions, the educators, the welfare case workers, the job trainers, the job placement people, and by far most important, the private employer community, which includes not only people in free enterprise but also churches, nonprofits, people who are employers who are non-governmental employers, to figure out how to move people from welfare to work.

Now, this law isn't perfect, and I've said what I think is wrong with it, and I want to say a special thanks to at least two members of the Southern Governors, Governor George Bush and Governor Lawton Chiles, for agreeing with my position on the ill-advised nature of cutting

off all benefits to all legal immigrants, no matter what happens to them. And I hope we can change that.

But I signed this bill because it gives us an historic opportunity and, therefore, an historic responsibility to really change the culture of welfare. And I think we cannot minimize that. I just had the opportunity, as I said, to go with Mayor Cleaver and Congresswoman McCarthy over to visit with Clyde McQueen and Gayle Hobbs, who are here, and some people who have moved from welfare to work, and two employers who hired them. I want to tell their story; then I want to talk about where we go from here. But I'd like to ask them to stand up. I'll introduce them.

Clyde McQueen is the director of Kansas City's Full Employment Council. Gayle Hobbs is the executive director of the Local Investment Commission. Let me introduce them all. Shaira Burriss is a 30-year-old former welfare recipient who is now earning quite a bit above the minimum wage at Arrow Fabricare and supporting two children. Birdella Smith is a woman I met here 2 years ago when I came to announce my welfare reform program. She has three sons—the oldest is a freshman at the University of Missouri, here in Kansas City—and she's now been working for 4 years. Cathy Romero is another former recipient I met in 1994. She has a 5-year-old daughter who just started kindergarten. She dropped out of high school, was on welfare at 17, and she's now been working for several years. We also have three women that I met before here, Vicki Phelps, Arlenda Moffitt-Hayes, and Pamela Ruhnke; all of them are people who have worked very hard to make something of their lives.

And I want to introduce two employers: Tom Davidson, who is the president of Davidson Archives, a records management storage business. And he pointed out, they do some work for the Federal Government that they won on bid. He has 25 employees; 5 of them came out of this program. Five of them moved from welfare to work. We thank him. And Shaira Burriss' employer's here, Bruce Gershon, who is the president of Arrow Fabricare, an 80-year-old family dry-cleaning business and one of the first to take part in this program. Let's give them all a hand, and I'll tell you what they did. [*Applause*]

I met some of these ladies 3 years—2 years ago when I announced my welfare reform plan

in Kansas City at the Commerce Bank, which is the place where Harry Truman had his first job. A good place to honor work. And all of these people have shown remarkable, good citizenship and vision, those who have moved from welfare to work, and those who have helped them to do so.

I heard them talking again today, and I was reminded, as so many of us have been who have worked on this problem for many years, that the people who live on welfare want to change it more than anybody else. Everyone knows that it's better to work than to be trapped in dependency.

Secondly, I'm reminded that it is not as simple as it sounds. First of all, there has to be a job there. Secondly, people who very often have been isolated for virtually their entire adult lives, oftentimes isolated from mainstream education, certainly isolated from mainstream work, very often not having adequate work habits—and as some of these ladies explained to me today, they've got a group here now helping women move into the work force just to make sure they know how to do an interview and have clothes that would not disqualify them from getting a job when they show up, and other very basic things.

We see in what they have done that if you have real flexibility and a grassroots commitment that encompasses the entire community, you can do something.

Now, I want to emphasize one thing in particular to explain what they've done here and then to ask you to imagine how this can be done in every State, in every community in America, and how we can get even more business leaders involved.

Missouri asked for a welfare waiver to be able to do two things: One is to convert the welfare check into a wage supplement to private sector employers, and to say to employers—they say to employers, "If you will hire this person off welfare in a real new job, not just replacing somebody you've let go or replacing someone who has moved but a real new job, you can have the welfare check for 4 years as a wage supplement, for up to 4 years for this employer. If you'll leave the new job in place, even if this particular person goes on to do something else with her life, you can have that slot and the wage supplement for 10 years."

Now, you have to pay a lot more than the wage supplement, but you don't have to pay

what you would otherwise have to pay. And we're going to give you the wage supplement because we want to help you move someone from welfare to work, and we understand that there may be a lot of extra costs to you in training people and helping to work with them and making sure that they can balance the demands of family and work and move out of relative isolation into the world of mainstream work and be a part of your employee team. That's what they're doing. They're also saying you can have Medicaid coverage for up to 4 years here, which I think is the most exceptional health care coverage offered by any State in the country, Governor.

But it is working. In Missouri, also—and this is something that because there are a lot of single men who aren't on welfare but are not in the work force, who are eligible for food stamps but not welfare—in Missouri they also have the right to take the food stamp check going to single men and use that for a wage supplement, to do exactly the same thing. And they have had astonishing success here. But I think it is because they're all working together at the grassroots community level.

I met their board, their employees at the Full Employment Council. It's a one-stop place: If you need to get your GED, you can get it; if you need some basic job training, you can get it, in terms of how to do the interviews; if there are other sort of support services your family needs because you have certain problems, you can get them there. And the employers are heavily involved.

But I bring this out today because the Governors sought this welfare reform law, and I gladly signed it. And now—we have now moved welfare beyond the realm of political rhetoric and blame, and it's no longer a question of who to blame. It is entirely a question of what are we going to do. And if you look at the hiring goals here, the reward States get for placing more people from welfare to work, but the enormous problem States will find if you wind up having people running out of their 2-year time deadline and they've never been to work, we have all got to get it in gear. I think you can make a compelling case that if we can keep the economy strong, the most significant responsibility the Governors have shouldered in many years is the responsibility to design a system that will permit every community to succeed in doing this in the way Kansas City has suc-

ceeded because of the work these people have done. It is a huge responsibility.

And it seems to me that at least we have to begin to say every State ought to take the income supplement idea and put it at the heart of the new plan. Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, Virginia, Oregon, and at least six other States have asked to do this; it's an important part of the Wisconsin plan.

But if you think about it, there's not enough money around to create enough public jobs to solve this welfare problem. Plus which what we really want is for people on welfare to be part of the mainstream economy. So it's better if—I mean, the ideal thing would be that every private employer in the country, not just in the free enterprise system but every church of any size, every nonprofit of any size, everybody could just take one person and that person's family and say, "You will be part of our work family now," or "We're going to go forward together."

Now, that's what these employers have been willing to do. And what they got from their Governor and their local Full Employment Council was what used to be the welfare check. "Here's the welfare check, you add to it, you've got to pay them a minimum"—Congresswoman McCarthy was in the legislature at the time Missouri's plan was adopted, and I think she said they had a minimum payment of \$6 an hour at that time, because that was—and I think the Missouri check worked out to be, I don't know, 2½ or 3 dollars an hour, something like that—a substantial support system. But as the employers were telling you, most of these people, they do so well, they pretty soon are earning more money on their own merit and going forward and moving to greater independence and going beyond that.

You think about it, just think what it would mean to this country if every employer the size of these two said, "I will take one slot. I will create one new job for a decade if you will give me the income supplement for a decade. And I'll work one person for 4 years, another one for 4 years, another one for 2 years"—that's the Missouri system—"or, if I can move 10 people through this entry level slot, I'll move 10 through."

But we need to break this responsibility down to think about how we can make it a good deal for the business community, a good deal for local community life, a good deal for the

States, a good deal for America, and most importantly, a good deal for the people who are trying to move from welfare to work, so we don't wind up with a bunch of nightmares saying, "We've passed all these tough laws. We didn't create the jobs, and here are all these people in the street with no right to get any help."

We have to prove all the skeptics wrong. But one thing I know, I know that the employers of this country want to do this. I believe that every employer who has ever said a disparaging word about the welfare system, which includes every one of us, including me, should be challenged to assume the responsibility to help be a part of the solution to this problem.

I have proposed some more things that we can do at the national level to give special tax credits available only to people who are moved from welfare to work or to single, idle men moved from food stamps to work. We're going to have to move about a million people, a million more people, at least a million more people from welfare to work by the year 2000 to come anywhere close to meeting the requirements of the law, and to avoid causing either a humanitarian crisis for the States or an enormous drain on your own treasuries. So I would start with that.

I propose also to give private placement firms the kinds of things that many Americans use to find better jobs and many employers use to hire people, a bonus if they help to find permanent jobs for people who are moving from welfare to work. I want to give the communities that are hardest hit some resources, extra resources to help deal with this problem. But the most important thing, I will say again, is establishing a State and then a community-based partnership with the private sector and with others who have to fill the needs of people who are trying to move from welfare to work.

I'd like to salute two prominent business leaders in this State who heard the challenge that I issued and have expressed a willingness to step forward and take it. Because they represent larger business organizations, they are in a position to do even more. Robert Shapiro, the CEO of Monsanto, which is based in St. Louis, and Bill Esrey, the CEO of Sprint, based here in Kansas City, are with us today. They have made a commitment to fully participate through their companies in this program. I'll explain a little more about that in a minute, but I'd like to

ask them to stand up and be recognized, please. [Applause] Thank you.

The day after my speech on this in Chicago, Bob Shapiro asked all his division heads to study every aspect of the company to see what they could do to help people on welfare find jobs at Monsanto. They're coming up with a plan for their own operations, and even more, they're asking their suppliers and other business contacts to do the same. That is amazing stuff.

Bill Esrey's company has already begun hiring people off welfare. Its headquarters here in Kansas City, they're a part of this revolution that's going on here in Kansas City. He wants Sprint to be a part of meeting this challenge all around the country. So I'm proud that Sprint is announcing today that it will provide an 800 number that any employer in America can call to find out what he or she can do to help move people from welfare to work in their own employment.

Thank you both.

Here you have two CEO's of major Fortune 500 companies who believe this challenge is so important to our future that they are willing to help recruit other CEO's and other companies to take part in this effort. I have asked them to gather a small group of them who are ready to rise to this challenge to come to the White House in the next few weeks to discuss with me how we can get businesses all across America to hire people off welfare.

But the Governors will be able to do this more—more because they know personally all the heads of all of the biggest companies in their State, more because they know personally the heads of smaller and medium-sized companies and the organizations that are part of them.

And again I will say, I am convinced that there are literally hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people out there who feel that it is part of their civic responsibility to help do something about this, who really do understand, even if they don't know all of the details of the welfare reform law, that we had changed this big time. And now, we really are saying, "If you're able-bodied, there's just only so long you can draw a check without doing something for it," and we are finally going to change that, but the Government cannot create these jobs, and we want to, anyway, change the environment in which people are living. That's what Birdella said when she was talking this morning. She said, "You can't imagine what it's like when

you get in a neighborhood and a few people move from welfare to work, and the kids have pride and the crime rate goes down and everything gets better at the same time."

And I think people know this at a visceral level. So I would say that while this is the biggest challenge that Governors have faced in a very long time, it is also the biggest opportunity, and it has the potential to bring us together across party lines, racial lines, income lines, you name it—whatever that's dividing us today, we can forget about it because all of us believe that this ought to be done, that at the core of human nature is the need to be useful and productive.

At the core of the desire to be a good parent is the desire to be a good role model and to be able to prove that you can do something that matters. And one of our employers said today that work was really a part of the essence of life and that it was a great privilege to be an employer just to give somebody a chance to be an employee, to fulfill a big part of what being alive is all about. I think that feeling is out there in this country.

And so I come here today to say to the Governors: You asked for this, and now you've got it. [Laughter] I know that Tennessee is one of the States in the Southern Governors' Conference, and that very famous philosopher from Tennessee, Chet Atkins—[laughter]—who occasionally plays guitar as well, and I think is a good Republican, Governors—I once heard him say, "You know, you've got to be careful what you ask for in this old life. You might get it." [Laughter]

So we asked for it. And I wanted it. And now we have it. And so it's no longer a political issue. It's no longer occasions for finger-pointing, and none of our one-liners amount to a hill of beans anymore. We need to all throw away our welfare speech. The only thing that matters now is whether we are going to give the opportunity—not the guarantee but the opportunity—for dignity and purpose and meaning in life, to help more people live up to their God-given potential as parents and as workers.

And to do it, it is plain that we're going to have to learn from people who know what they're doing. These people in Kansas City, they know what they are doing. It is miraculous what they are doing. They know what they are doing. These business leaders, they know what they're doing; they can imagine. They get paid running

these big companies; they have to think about what this country's going to be like 10, 20, 30, 40 years from now. And nobody who's thinking about the 21st century wants America to have a big permanent under class. Nobody wants us to continue to split apart in terms of income.

Anybody that can visualize the future wants us to be coming together and celebrating our diversity and having it be a source of strength and seeing every child have a real chance and believe that he or she has a chance to live up to the fullest of their God-given abilities. That's what this is all about.

This is the best chance we've had to do that in a long time. That's all this bill does: It gives us a chance. If we fail, it will exact a higher price from us than the old system did. But the old system would never have given us a chance to succeed, and that's why I took the gamble I did. I'm glad I did, and I believe if we work together and learn from those who have done it, in about 4 or 5 years we're all going to be very proud of what each of us did to make

real welfare reform a reality, because there will be more people, like these fine women sitting here on this front row who can stand up and say, "I'm earning a living; I'm supporting my child. I live in a crime-free neighborhood. My child goes to a good school where the parents participate, and our country is coming together because our communities are coming together around people who are given a chance to succeed if they're responsible." That's my dream, and I think we can make it happen.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:20 p.m. at the Ritz Carlton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Governors Mel Carnahan of Missouri, George Allen of Virginia, Paul E. Patton of Kentucky, Gaston Caperton of West Virginia, Zell Miller of Georgia, David M. Beasley of South Carolina, Mike Huckabee of Arkansas, George W. Bush of Texas, and Lawton Chiles of Florida; Mayor Emanuel Cleaver II of Kansas City; and musician Chet Atkins.

Remarks on the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and an Exchange With Reporters in Kansas City

September 10, 1996

The President. Today in New York, the United Nations General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to adopt the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and open it for signature later this month. On behalf of the American people, I will have the honor to sign this historic treaty.

Our signature, along with that of Russia, China, France, the United Kingdom, and the vast majority of nations around the world will create an international barrier against nuclear testing as soon as we sign.

With this treaty we're on the verge of realizing a decades-old dream, that no nuclear weapons will be detonated anywhere on the face of the Earth.

This has been a dream of American leaders going back to Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy. They long worked for a safer world at home and abroad. By banning all nuclear tests for all time, the treaty will constrain any nation from improving its existing nuclear arsenal and

end the development of advanced nuclear weapons and help to stop their spread.

We're taking the next crucial step to lift the dark cloud of nuclear fear that has hung over the world for 50 years now. Over the past 4 years we have permanently extended the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, dramatically cut existing nuclear arsenals under the START treaties, persuaded Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan to give up the nuclear weapons left on their land after the USSR dissolved, frozen North Korea's dangerous nuclear program, and today no Russian missiles are pointed at our cities or our citizens.

For four decades visionary statesmen like Prime Minister Nehru of India worked tirelessly to make the comprehensive test ban a reality. More recently, Britain's John Major, France's Jacques Chirac, Russia's Boris Yeltsin, China's Jiang Zemin—all have made courageous decisions to halt their country's nuclear testing programs. I want to thank them, along with Foreign