

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:45 p.m. at Port Douglas Park. In his remarks, he referred to Queensland Premier Robert Borbidge and his wife, Jennifer; Mayor Mike Berwick of Port Douglas; Senator Robert Hill, Minister for the Environ-

ment, and his wife, Diana; John Moore, Minister for Industry, Science, and Tourism, and his wife, Jacqueline; and Alicia Stevens, Port Douglas student who introduced the President.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Locality-Based Comparability Payments November 22, 1996

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

I am transmitting an alternative plan for Federal employee locality-based comparability payments ("locality pay") for 1997.

Under title 5, United States Code, Federal civilian employees would receive a two-part pay raise in January 1997: (1) a 2.3 percent base salary raise linked to the change in the wage and salary, private industry worker, part of the Employment Cost Index (ECI); and (2) a locality pay raise, based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics' salary surveys of non-Federal employers in local pay areas, costing about 5.2 percent of payroll.

But, for each part of the two-part pay increase, title 5 gives me the authority to implement an alternative pay adjustment plan if I view the pay adjustment that would otherwise take effect as inappropriate due to "national emergency or serious economic conditions affecting the general welfare." Over the past 20 years, Presidents have used this or similar authority for most annual Federal pay raises.

In evaluating "an economic condition affecting the general welfare," the law directs me to consider such economic measures as the Index of Leading Economic Indicators, the Gross National Product, the unemployment rate, the budget deficit, the Consumer Price Index, the Producer Price Index, the Employment Cost Index, and the Implicit Price Deflator for Personal Consumption Expenditures.

Earlier this year, I decided that I would implement—effective in January 1997—the full 2.3 percent base salary adjustment. As a result, it was not necessary to transmit an alternative pay plan by the legal deadline of August 31.

In assessing the appropriate locality pay increase for 1997, I reviewed the indicators cited above and other pertinent measures of our economy. Permitting the full locality pay increases

to take effect would, when combined with the 2.3 percent base salary increase, produce a total Federal civilian payroll increase of about 7.5 percent. This increase would cost about \$5.9 billion in 1997, \$3.6 billion more than the total 3.0 percent increase I proposed in the fiscal 1997 Budget. Such an increase is inconsistent with the budget discipline that my Administration has put in place and that has contributed to sustained economic growth, low inflation and unemployment, and a continuous decline in the budget deficit.

To maintain this discipline and its favorable impact on economic conditions, I have determined that the total civilian raise of 3.0 percent that I proposed in my 1997 Budget remains appropriate. This raise matches the 3.0 percent basic pay increase that I proposed for military members in my 1997 Budget, and that was enacted in the FY 1997 Defense Authorization Act. Given the 2.3 percent base salary increase, the total increase of 3.0 percent allows an amount equal to 0.7 percent of payroll for locality pay.

Accordingly, I have determined that:

Under the authority of section 5304a of title 5, United States Code, locality-based comparability payments in the amounts set forth on the attached table shall be effective on the first day of the first applicable pay period beginning on or after January 1, 1997. When compared with the payments currently in effect, these comparability payments will increase the General Schedule payroll by about 0.7 percent.

Finally, the law requires that I include in this report an assessment of how my decisions will affect the Government's ability to recruit and retain well-qualified employees. While I regret that our fiscal situation does not permit granting Federal employees a higher locality pay increase, I do not believe this will have any

material impact on the quality of our workforce. Under the Federal Workforce Restructuring Act of 1994, and our efforts to reinvent Federal programs, the number of Federal employees is falling substantially. As a result, hiring and attrition are very low. In addition, as the need arises, the Government can use many pay tools—such as recruitment bonuses, retention allowances, and special salary rates—to maintain the high

quality workforce that serves our Nation so very well.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Albert Gore, Jr., President of the Senate.

The President's Radio Address *November 23, 1996*

Good morning. As you know, I'm traveling across the Pacific visiting Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand. Hillary and I and our delegation are enjoying the great natural beauty and the warmth and hospitality of the people of this diverse region.

America's involvement and influence here helps to provide the stability, to promote the economic progress, to encourage the cooperation on many fronts, including preserving our natural environment, that benefits all Americans. With partners and friends like the nations I'm visiting, we're going to enter the 21st century stronger than ever.

This is a good trip, but I'm looking forward to returning home in time for Thanksgiving. More than any other holiday, Thanksgiving reminds us of the importance of family and community and the ties that bind us together. As we gather with our families this year to give thanks, we must never forget the duty we owe to those in our American community who are less fortunate than we are.

The Bible tells us that when we harvest, we must not take everything for ourselves but remember to leave something for the poor to glean. Today, those gleanings are the gifts of food we give to those who need them. Across our Nation, in food banks and houses of worship and community groups, thousands of Americans are taking the initiative to fight hunger and feed their neighbors. We must all do our part and support these efforts because not all the needs are met and we plainly can do more. For example, we know that too much food goes to waste. In restaurants, cafeterias, and grocery stores across our country, thousands of pounds of per-

fectly good, healthy food is thrown out every day, enough to feed 49 million people a year. Recovering that surplus food can make a real difference in the fight against hunger in America.

Our administration has tried to help. This past summer, hundreds of young people from our national service program, AmeriCorps, joined private volunteers to get food to the poor. They worked with farmers in the fields, teaching them how to save excess produce. They worked with the Atlanta Community Food Bank and the Congressional Hunger Center to help recover 174 tons of excess food. All told, this past summer they recovered over a thousand tons of food, providing over a million meals. And every week the U.S. Department of Agriculture's cafeteria in Washington sends another 150 pounds of food to a soup kitchen.

Last October I signed into law the good Samaritan food donation act. This law encourages private businesses, local governments, and ordinary citizens to donate food by protecting them from lawsuits. This can make a real difference. Second Harvest, a national food bank network, estimates that the good Samaritan law will result in approximately 25 million pounds of food next year.

Today we're taking two more steps to help fight hunger. First, I'm directing every department and agency in our administration to actively work to promote food recovery and distribution. From now on, all Federal agencies will recover surplus food from their cafeterias, public events, and other food-service facilities. And they'll work with Government contractors,