

last steps. I am confident we will, and I intend to do everything I can—everything I can over the next few months to see that we achieve this goal.

Now, I'd like to ask the Vice President to say a few words, and then we'll follow with

Secretary Rubin, Mr. Raines, and however else they want to elucidate the budget.

Mr. Vice President.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:58 a.m. in Room 450 of the Old Executive Office Building.

## Message to Federal Workers *February 6, 1997*

As I begin my second term as President, I want all of you to know how proud I am of your hard work and accomplishments during the past four years. I came to Washington with a high regard for civil servants, and you have only confirmed that opinion.

And I'm not the only one who has been impressed. Four years ago, public confidence in the federal government was at an all-time low. But you have begun to change that attitude. Even in a time of leaner budgets and smaller staffs, you have improved service to the public, forged effective partnerships with communities and private businesses, and discarded old-fashioned management systems. Now, for the first time in decades, public opinion of federal agencies is markedly on the rise. Congratulations—

the credit for this stunning turnaround goes to you.

Vice President Gore and I are excited and optimistic about the prospects for America in the next four years. We are on the right track to the twenty-first century and are picking up speed as we continue to work with you to reinvent government. I believe that our nation will enter that new century stronger, more confident, and more capable than ever before. And I believe that a large part of that success will be achieved because of the energy and talent of each of you—the men and women of the federal government.

Thank you for all you do on behalf of your fellow Americans.

BILL CLINTON

## Remarks Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin of Russia and an Exchange With Reporters *February 7, 1997*

*President Clinton.* I want to welcome Prime Minister Chernomyrdin to the White House and thank him for the work that he and the Vice President have done over the last couple of days dealing with the issues involving the relationships of Russia and the United States and NATO and Russia and a number of other issues. And I want to thank them for the work they've done to prepare the way for my meeting with President Yeltsin in Helsinki on March 20th and 21st.

And I also want to thank President Ahtisaari of Finland for hosting us at that meeting. I'm looking forward to it. It will be very important,

and I feel quite optimistic about it because of the good relationships I've always had with President Yeltsin and because of the work that the Prime Minister and the Vice President have done.

### *Helsinki Summit and NATO Expansion*

*Q.* Two questions, Mr. President. Number one, was Helsinki chosen to accommodate the health of President Yeltsin? And two, how do you convince the President and Mr. Chernomyrdin that NATO expansion is not the threat that they seem to think it is?

*President Clinton.* Well, first of all, Helsinki was decided upon for a number of reasons, but