

Message on the Observance of Presidents' Day *February 14, 1997*

I am pleased to join all Americans in celebrating Presidents' Day, 1997.

Each year at this time, we reflect with pride and gratitude on the achievements of our former Presidents; and we pay special tribute to George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, two extraordinary leaders whose clarity of vision and strength of character did so much to shape our country's destiny.

Presidents Washington and Lincoln led America at pivotal moments in our history, moments that profoundly affected our nation's character and course for decades to follow. George Washington helped to win our liberty and give us a democracy strong enough to endure through the centuries and flexible enough to survive the fresh challenges that face each generation of Americans. During the dark days of the Civil

War, Abraham Lincoln held together the frayed fabric of our Union and reaffirmed our founders' commitment to the self-evident truths of liberty and equality.

Today we stand at another defining moment in our national journey. We must chart a course for America into a new century and a new millennium. Inspired by the wisdom of Washington and strengthened by the determination of Lincoln, we will build a new American community, based on responsible citizenship and a resolve to realize the full potential of all our citizens. In this way, we can best keep faith with the remarkable leaders whose memory we honor today.

Best wishes for a wonderful observance.

BILL CLINTON

Statement on the Establishment of an Emergency Board in the Dispute Between American Airlines and the Allied Pilots Association *February 14, 1997*

As you know, I have been closely following the labor negotiations between American Airlines and its pilots represented by the Allied Pilots Association. I want to compliment the parties, the National Mediation Board, its chairman Kenneth Hipp, and mediator Harry Bickford for their hard work to date. Progress has been made over the last several days and especially in the last few hours. Despite these good-faith efforts, however, the parties have been unable to reach a tentative agreement by the 12:01 a.m. strike deadline.

To facilitate an agreement, and because I believe that a strike would have an immediate and adverse impact on the traveling public, I am creating a Presidential emergency board to work with the parties and to make recommendations regarding a resolution. No strike will occur while the Presidential emergency board is in place.

A strike would cause a severe disruption to both domestic and international air transportation. American Airlines is the Nation's second

largest airline; it carries over 220,000 passengers every day. It would be extremely difficult for other carriers to fill the void. The Department of Transportation has estimated that approximately 43,000 passengers per day would not be accommodated by other airlines. The disruption would be particularly felt in Dallas, Miami, Chicago, New York, and Puerto Rico where American provides a large percentage of existing flights. It would also affect the nations of the Caribbean, many of whom rely heavily on American Airlines for air service to and from their shores.

In the event of a strike, most of the 90,000 American and American Eagle employees would be placed on leave. The majority of these employees are based in Texas, Illinois, New York, California, Florida, and Oklahoma. Many of the elected officials from the States led by Senators Graham and Hutchison and Representative Martin Frost and Governor Chiles have made clear to my administration that a strike would severely affect their economies.