

*Apr. 30 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1997*

euthanasia, or mercy killing through Medicaid, Medicare, military and Federal employee health plans, the veterans health care system, and other Federally funded programs.

Section 5(a)(3) of the Act also assures that taxpayer funds will not be used to subsidize legal assistance or other forms of advocacy in support of legal protection for assisted suicide, euthanasia, or mercy killing. The restrictions on the use of funds contained in this section, properly construed, will allow the Federal Government to speak with a clear voice in opposing these practices. The Department of Justice has advised, however, that a broad construction of this section would raise serious First Amendment concerns. I am therefore instructing the Federal agencies that they should construe sec-

tion 5(a)(3) only to prohibit Federal funding for activities and services that provide legal assistance for the purpose of advocating a right to assisted suicide, or that have as their purpose the advocacy of assisted suicide, and not to restrict Federal funding for other activities, such as those that provide forums for the free exchange of ideas. In addition, I emphasize that section 5(a)(3) imposes no restriction on the use of nonfederal funds.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,  
April 30, 1997.

NOTE: H.R. 1003, approved April 30, was assigned Public Law No. 105-12.

## Memorandum on Excused Absence for Employees Affected by the Flooding of the Red River and Its Aftermath

*April 30, 1997*

*Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies*

*Subject:* Excused Absence for Employees Affected by the Flooding of the Red River and its Aftermath

I am deeply concerned about the devastating losses caused by the flooding of the Red River and the impact on the well-being and livelihood of our fellow Americans who have been affected by this disaster. Elements of the Federal Government have been mobilized to respond to this disaster.

As part of this effort, I request the heads of executive departments and agencies, who

have Federal civilian employees in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota in areas designated as disaster areas because of the flooding of the Red River and its aftermath, to use their discretion to excuse from duty, without charge to leave or loss of pay, any such employee who is faced with a personal emergency because of this flood and who can be spared from his or her usual responsibilities. This policy should also be applied to any employee who is needed for emergency law enforcement, relief, or clean-up efforts authorized by Federal, State, or local officials having jurisdiction.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

## Remarks Commemorating the Centennial of the Thomas Jefferson Building at the Library of Congress

*April 30, 1997*

I ask you tonight to listen to these words as if you had never heard them before and try to imagine what it was like when they broke across the landscape of America and the world, arguably the most important words ever written

by an American because out of them all the rest flowed:

“When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have connected them

to another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.—We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed . . . . But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. . . . We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by the Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; . . . And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.”

Mr. Chief Justice, Mr. Speaker, Senator Daschle, Congressman Thomas, and other Members of Congress, the Joint Commission on the Library, Mr. Kluge, and the James Madison Council. Mr. Allaire, thank you all for what you have done to make this night come to pass. I thank Michael Ryan for singing the national anthem and making us feel so patriotic. He has served our country, as many of you know, for many years. I thank Jim Billington for his brilliant job and all the staff here for what they have done.

Those words were Thomas Jefferson's words, with edits by John Adams and Benjamin Franklin. I learned something tonight looking at the Thomas Jefferson draft: Ben Franklin gets credit for saying that these truths are self-evident. And that's a pretty good edit. *[Laughter]* Would that we all had such an editor.

As the Speaker said, now every American will be able to have access to these treasures, not only in this magnificent building with its glorious

reading room and its American treasures exhibition but also through the Internet. Think of it, everything from the rough draft of the Declaration of Independence, from which I just read, to George Washington's letter on the importance of religious freedom, to the first known autobiography of a slave, to the first kiss captured in a movie, to Groucho Marx talking to Johnny Carson, to the magical music of Washington's Duke Ellington.

But it is fitting that the books from Mr. Jefferson's library are at the core of the American Treasures Collection, for he above all understood that democracy and liberty depend upon the free flow of ideas and the expansion of knowledge, upon the remembrance of history and the imagining of the future.

To pursue those objectives, our young Nation, at great cost, established this Library. From those first volumes, the Library of Congress has become the world's largest library, visited by 2 million people every year in person and millions more every week on the Internet Web site, with more to come as we work together to enable every school and library in the United States to connect to the Internet. In the most modern way, children in the most isolated rural districts, the poorest inner-city districts, the most comfortable suburbs, now will be able to share that rough draft of the Declaration of Independence and all the other wonderful resources of the Library.

Mr. Jefferson, who looked to the future more than the past, even at the end of his days, would surely be very proud, Mr. Billington, of what his library has become.

As we walk through these beautifully restored rooms and hallways on this 100th anniversary, you can almost feel the exuberance and optimism of the United States at the turn of the century. And now, at the dawn of a new century, we face yet a new age of possibilities, full of new challenge and hope. Yet in a sense, we are back where we were in the beginning. For of all our challenges, ignorance is the most threatening, and of all our riches, knowledge is the most enduring, except this will be even more true in the years ahead.

That is why the opening of this exhibit and the restoration of this building is so significant. By renewing the Founders' commitment to the Library of Congress, we ensure that future generations will continue to be inspired and guided by the ideals, the values, and the thirst for

knowledge that are at our beginning core. We are giving all of our people, especially our children, what they will need to realize their dreams and our ever-unfolding destiny as a nation.

As these exhibits show, we are, and have ever been, a nation of creators and innovators. We are all Jefferson's heirs, and we are doomed sometimes to succeed and sometimes to fail. I was amused at the picture of the massive double circular kite that Alexander Graham Bell thought might compete with the Wright brothers. He would do very well on the Frisbee circuit today, I think, but it wasn't much of an airplane. But if he hadn't had the courage to try that, well, we might not have had the telephone. We must always maintain that spirit, and we must remember the words of Jefferson.

President Lincoln invoked the Jeffersonian ideal to heal a wounded nation as he stood at Gettysburg. President Roosevelt looked toward the world that would follow World War II, and he too called upon Jefferson for inspiration and courage. The words that he wrote then are as relevant today as they were in 1945, and I would like to close with them.

"We must do all in our power to conquer the doubts and the fear, the ignorance and the greed, for today science has brought all the different quarters of the globe so close together that it is impossible to isolate them one from another. Today we are faced with the pre-eminent fact that if civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships, the ability of all peoples of all kinds to live together and work together in the same world at peace. And to you and to all Americans who dedicate themselves with us to the making of an abiding peace, I say the only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today. Let us move forward with strong and active faith."

That was the speech Franklin Roosevelt was working on in this month, 52 years ago, when he died in Warm Springs. Though unspoken, his words, like those of Jefferson, come down to us today with a freshness, a vitality, and a fundamental truth that must forever guide us as a nation.

On Friday, we will gather to dedicate the memorial to President Roosevelt, the very first Presidential memorial since President Roosevelt dedicated the one to Thomas Jefferson in 1943. Together we will renew our commitment to fight tyranny with liberty, ignorance with knowledge, fear with hope and confidence.

Thomas Jefferson and Franklin Roosevelt, I believe, would be quite proud of America today—still eager to right its wrongs and seize its new opportunities. And I might say, I think they'd be a little impatient with those among us who, finding America at the pinnacle of its power, influence, and success, and therefore at the pinnacle of the responsibility outlined by President Roosevelt so long ago, would seek to walk away from what are our plain obligations to engage the rest of the world. For in the course of human events, it has fallen to us, for our own benefit and because it is right, to extend to a waiting world the ideals to which Thomas Jefferson and his friends pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor.

Thank you, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:10 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to John Kluge, chairman, James Madison Council; Paul Allaire, chairman and chief executive officer, Xerox Corp.; MGySgt. Michael Ryan, USMC, United States Marine Band; and James H. Billington, Librarian of Congress.

## Interview With the San Antonio Express News, the Los Angeles Times, and the Dallas Morning News

May 1, 1997

*The President.* Hello?

*Elizabeth Shogren.* Mr. President, good morning. This is Elizabeth Shogren with the L.A. Times.

*The President.* Hi, Elizabeth.

*Ms. Shogren.* How's it going?

*The President.* Fine, thank you.