

The President. Well, I asked Mr. Bowles to—once we got a budget agreement and it passed—to institute an intensive process to review both the spending and the tax bills to see if there were any items that would be appropriate for the line item veto. And I have not yet received the results of that review.

I support the line item veto; I did all along. And I think if we have it, it ought to be used—I believe that it ought to be used somewhat sparingly. And my experience as Governor was that once I used it a few times, I didn't have to—I didn't need to use it very much anymore. And that's what I would hope would happen.

We'll just see—you probably know more about the likely targets for it than I do at this point. I was interested in the big-picture items in the budget. We got virtually 100 percent of what I sought, and I'm elated with the budget. I think it's good for America. I think it will keep the economy growing, and I think it's a responsible thing to do. So whatever I do on

that shouldn't be in any way detracting from the terrific job that the Congress did on it.

United Parcel Service Strike

Q. Mr. President, one question on UPS. The standards for Presidential intervention are relatively high. Are you considering doing anything else to intervene to bring an end to the strike?

The President. On UPS?

Q. Yes, UPS.

The President. Well, first we urged the Federal mediator, and we got that. And we got—obviously, it didn't work. I still think the parties ought to go back to the table. UPS is a very important company to our country, and there are a lot of employees there and I hope they go back to the table. But at this time, I don't think any further action by me is appropriate.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to the National Urban League

August 4, 1997

Thank you very much. Chairman Linen and members of the board, Hugh Price. Hugh, I want to thank you for that introduction. I hope somebody got that on tape. *[Laughter]* I was embarrassed there for a while, it was so nice. *[Laughter]*

Let me say to all of you what you already know, which is that Hugh Price has been a breath of fresh air on the Washington scene. He has been a brilliant leader for the Urban League, and I look forward to his leadership for many years to come. He's not as term-limited as I am, I don't think, so we ought to keep him around for a while. I think he's been great.

Congressman Payne and ladies and gentlemen, I have many things for which to be grateful to the Urban League. The two that come most immediately to mind are Vernon Jordan and Ron Brown, and I thank you for that. And I'm delighted to see Alma here—thank you. She's already heard her quota of speeches by me, so this is great forbearance I think.

When I was Governor of Arkansas, I had the privilege of working with your local chapters. I saw firsthand how the Urban League could change the lives and the minds of people. And I want to say a special word of thanks for the support that you have given the work that we are now engaged in here for at least a year with regard to our initiative on racial reconciliation. It means a lot to me, but it also sends a strong signal to Americans that we can no longer afford to ignore the continuing racial divisions that undermine our greatness.

I might just say parenthetically what many of you already know, that this year we're spending—and with a distinguished advisory board headed by Dr. John Hope Franklin—is a year that will deal with the unfinished business of the work of reconciling and moving forward on an equal basis African-Americans and white Americans. But it also must look forward to what America is becoming. Today, we have only one State, Hawaii, which has no racial majority.

But in just a few years, within a decade, California will have no racial majority. That's over 13 percent of our population. And within 30 to 40 years, unless there is a dramatic change in our population, there will be no single race in the majority in America. We have always said our country is about ideas and ideals and principles. We're about to find out. [Laughter] We're about to find out. And we had best be ready for it.

In this global society of ours, it is an incredible advantage if we can not only get along and tolerate each other but actually celebrate our differences and be united as one America. And I would say in that regard, I would like to thank all the business people and others who are supporters and members of and active in the Urban League who have reached across racial lines to try to build that one America. I am grateful to you as well, and I thank you very much.

Whitney Young once said, "It's better to be prepared for an opportunity and not have one than to have an opportunity and not be prepared." Unfortunately, a lot of Americans for too long knew about being prepared for an opportunity and not having one. I come here today to say we have an opportunity, and we must be prepared.

Tomorrow I will sign the balanced budget legislation into law. We have already reduced the size of the Government's deficit by 80 percent from the time I took office, but we have done it while investing more, not less, in the education of our children and in the revitalization of our urban areas and in our preparation for tomorrow through research and development.

Tomorrow's budget I want to talk about a minute because it represents unprecedented opportunities and the means for all Americans to seize them. Already unemployment and inflation are at their lowest points in a generation. Our neighborhoods are freeing themselves from the fearful grasp of crime and violence, more than in years. Last year the drop in violent crime in the United States was the largest in 35 years. The African-American unemployment rate is the lowest in more than 20 years. We've had a historic drop in the number of people dependent upon public assistance for their livelihoods. But now we are going to try to finish the job.

Our historic balanced budget is an empowerment budget preparing Americans for the 21st

century. I saw what Hugh Price said here yesterday about economic power being the last frontier, and I have seen Mr. Brack's new magazine cover, which I understand is sold out already, but I agree, we have to be about the business of giving people the power to make the most of their own lives and their families and their neighborhoods and their communities. That is the last frontier.

This budget will give every American willing to work hard and take responsibility that kind of opportunity. It honors our values by strengthening our families, investing in the education and health care of our children, moving more people from welfare to work, continuing to make our communities more livable. It is the strongest budget for our cities in over a generation. It keeps America firmly on the course of bringing new businesses, good jobs, and hopes back to our most distressed urban areas. It will help us to ensure that the blighted downtowns of the late 20th century do not follow us into the 21st. It will instead give them the chance to buzz again with energy and optimism, generated by Americans working hard, teaching children, raising families, and preparing for the future.

Beyond the right kinds of investments in this budget, we've fought for and won the kinds of tax cuts and credits that will truly benefit working families and communities. This balanced budget will keep interest rates down and investment up. Already what we have been able to do has produced 13 million jobs in 4½ years. And I am proud of that, but we have more to do.

In this budget, we fought for and won \$24 billion to bring health care to as many as 5 million children who don't have health insurance today. This is the single largest investment by the National Government in health care since the passage of the Medicaid program in 1965.

Today, there are about 10 million children who don't have health insurance. Interestingly enough, if the 3 million kids who are out there today who are eligible for Medicaid could simply be identified and enrolled and then we could use this money to reach 5 million more—the children of working parents who don't have health insurance on the job—we would be almost 80 percent of the way home to providing health insurance for all American children. I hope you will help us to identify those children. And we'll do our best to make sure that the programs work. They'll be administered State

by State. And the Urban League is organized State by State; we need you out there working State by State to make sure this program reaches children.

But we can make a profound difference in the lives not only of these children but their families, by simply guaranteeing that they will have the health insurance that they ought to have for the hearing test, the vision test, to go to the dentist, to see the doctor, and if, God forbid, they needed to go to the hospital. It's a big deal, as my daughter used to say.

We fought for and won a \$500-per-child tax credit to help families, millions of them, and especially those struggling to lift themselves beyond poverty and raise their children well on modest salaries. That includes firefighters, police officers, nurses, teachers, technicians, people who deserve all the help they can get to raise their children as they work hard to serve us and make America a better place.

We fought for and won the most significant new investment in education in over 30 years and the largest increase in investment in helping people to go on to college since the GI bill passed 50 years ago. Through expanded Pell grants, the biggest expansion in two decades; tuition tax deductions for the cost of all 4 years of college and graduate school and going back to school for adults; education IRA's and our HOPE scholarship, which will open the doors of college to all Americans for at least 2 years after high school, we are establishing a system in which every American who is willing to study hard will be able to go on to college and to thrive in our new economy. It is very important.

And I might emphasize that this will be especially important as we try to bring America together in this new knowledge-based economy. The African-American high school graduation rate is now, thankfully, almost as high as the high school graduation rate for white Americans. But the rate of college graduation still shows a great differential, and you can see it in the unemployment rates; you can see it in the income rates. We owe it to the young people coming up to make sure that everybody, including people already out there in the work force, who is willing to go back to school and able to go back to school should not be barred from going back to school for financial means. This budget will make sure that they will not be.

We have fought to more than triple the number of empowerment zones from 9 to 31 across

America, to bring businesses and jobs back to downtown areas with a combination of tax credits that will leverage billions of dollars in new private investment over the next 5 years. I have seen this working in communities all across America. I have seen what happened in Detroit. I have watched the unemployment rate be cut in half in 4 years when the private sector works with vigorous community leaders and takes maximum advantage of the incentives in the empowerment zones. And we have to keep going until that kind of investment is present everywhere. And I might say, there are even more generous incentives to invest in the Nation's Capital, to bring it back and bring it back to where it ought to be, where people want to live here, want to go to school here, and feel safe on the streets, and we know we've got a functioning economy. And I want to assure you that I'm going to keep working until Washington, DC, is what the people of Washington and the people of the United States deserve for it to be.

We worked to provide tax incentives to businesses who agree to clean up and redevelop some 14,000 brownfields. Now, that's a term of art. Those are environmentally contaminated but otherwise attractive business sites in urban areas. Most business people simply cannot afford the risk or the cost on their own. This budget will give them the incentives necessary to do it. Our cities are full of places which would be good for new investments were it not for the environmental liability staring investors in the face. This will help to lift that burden and bring investment back to our inner cities.

Finally, we're working to more than double our investments in this budget in community development financial institutions, the community banks that make loans to individual entrepreneurs to start businesses in areas where they wouldn't be started otherwise, often the loans being made to people who couldn't get the loans otherwise.

When I became President, I found that our country through our foreign aid programs had been setting up these banks for small entrepreneurs in poor countries for years, but we weren't doing the same things for the American people who had something to contribute to their own economies in the neighborhoods of America. We're going to keep going until we've got a vigorous community development bank in every neighborhood in America. I might say,

in deference to one of your board members, I especially appreciate the support we have received from NationsBank in the community bank effort. They have made a huge difference to the acceptability and the viability of this in this country.

This budget will continue our efforts to fund 100,000 community police officers walking the beat, making our communities safe, helping our kids to stay out of trouble. Crime has dropped for 5 years in a row. And mayor after mayor after mayor tells me the more people want to live in our cities and feel good about living in our cities, the more they will invest in our cities and put people to work there.

Finally, let me say that last summer, when I signed the welfare bill into law, I promised to work to fix the severe shortcomings of the bill, to eliminate aspects of the law that had nothing whatever to do with welfare reform, and to find ways to encourage more employers to hire people from welfare rolls. This budget makes good on those promises. It restores both Medicaid and SSI benefits to the legal immigrants who work hard and pay taxes in our country. They should not be punished if they get hurt through no fault of their own. They ought to be entitled to benefits they pay taxes for like everybody else. It makes sure that disabled children who are now no longer defined as disabled under the supplemental security income law will not lose their Medicaid coverage. And it expands food stamp benefits for unemployed citizens trying as hard as they can to keep jobs and find jobs. And let me say why this is important.

It's easy in the welfare debate, it's easy in the poverty debate, to forget about the younger single men, because they do not get welfare. But we need them very badly to be educated, to be trained, to be in the work force, to be of strong families, to be a constructive role in our future. Sometimes the only public benefits they get are from food stamps. That may be the only incentive we have to involve them in education, in training, in job placement programs. So restoring these benefits is very important.

And for all of you who care a lot about the condition of poor people and helping them to become more independent and go to work, I say, yes, by all means, we have to move every able-bodied person off welfare. But let's not forget about all those young single men out there

who need to be a part of America's positive future, who cannot be on welfare but can be standing on the street, and ought to be at school or at work and building good families and contributing to our future.

This budget also provides \$3 billion to the cities to help welfare recipients find and keep good-paying jobs—even more money to go with child care and job training and job placement—3 billion more dollars, and it will help.

And finally, it offers tax credits for employers that hire people from the welfare rolls. We also made sure that these welfare recipients will be paid an honest wage, nothing less than the Federal minimum wage for the jobs that they do. And I think that is the right thing to do.

Finally, let me say that we know the best thing we can do to empower our children to succeed in this new global economy is to make sure they have a world-class education. You have often said education is the great equalizer. And I read in the newspaper today, so I know it's so—[laughter]—that you said yesterday that we had to make sure our young people discarded their second-class expectations, that none of us should impose second-class expectations on young people. I say amen to that.

One of the things that we know now, folks, is that all of our children can learn. When I started—[applause]—thank you. Many years ago, almost 15 years ago now, when I started in earnest the work in my State on national education reforms and national standards of what children should take and what courses should be offered, it was really commonplace to hear people say, “Well, you cannot expect America to measure up to the highest international standards from kindergarten through high school. Oh, yes, we've got the best college system in the world, but you just can't expect us to measure up.” And I'd always ask, “Why?” And they said, “Well, because we have too many children whose first language is not English. We have too many children who live in poor and difficult circumstances. We have too many children who live in violent circumstances. We have too much difference in the level of funding in our schools. Our school year is not as long as it is some other places.” I heard all these reasons.

You know, I remember the first time I left my home State; some people thought I was dumb just because I talked the way I did. [Laughter] Might have been right, for all I know. [Laughter] But I've heard all this, you

know, and I must say it was frustrating. Year-in and year-out, you'd see these international test scores, and America would always be below the international average. And we'd say, "Yes, but their populations are more homogenous than ours. Their education systems are more homogenous." There was always some reason that sounded pretty good.

Well, this sure—for the first time on the international math and science test scores, which several thousand American students, representative by race, by region, by income, take that test every year—this year our fourth graders scored way above the international average for the first time. So we don't have to listen to that anymore. We don't have to listen to that anymore.

Now, the bad news is our eighth graders did not score above the international average, but we do know there are some reasons for that. We know that all the social problems that our kids live with get more intense around the time of adolescence. We know that a lot of our middle schools or our junior high schools are organized for the Ozzie and Harriet days of the fifties and the sixties, when the world was different than it is now. And they're often too big and not as functional as they need to be, and we need to rethink that. We know there are a lot of reasons, but I'll tell you something: One thing we know is that we can't blame it on the kids anymore, because the fourth-grade test proves that the children can do it. The fourth-grade test proves that the children can do it.

And that's why I'm trying so hard to get America, finally, on the eve of the 21st century, to establish national standards and to test all of our kids at the fourth grade in reading and all of our kids at the eighth grade in math, because I know we can meet those standards. And I know you don't do any child a favor, in the world we're going to send them into, by holding them to lower expectations. If they're poor, if they have a difficult neighborhood, if they have a difficult home environment, you

know what, they need good education even more than the rest of the kids. They need it even more. They need it even more, and they deserve it even more. They deserve it.

So I ask you to help me. And if we implement this budget—children's health care, child and education tax credits, new businesses and jobs for our cities, welfare-to-work, high academic standards, these things will help our people to make the most of their own lives. But empowerment is a concept which, by definition, implies a response from every individual. Empowerment means, here are the tools, what are you going to do with it? And believe me, we still have not done everything we should for all of our cities, for our Nation's Capital, for all of our people. There will still be more work to be done. You will be doing a lot of it one on one, as mentors helping people, but at least the tools will be there.

Now, our people must do what Whitney Young said, and every one of them has to be prepared to take advantage of these opportunities. So I hope you'll go back to your communities and enlist more people in the Urban League's mission, more people who will make sure that this budget will come alive, hiring someone off welfare, helping a child find his or her way, building partnerships with businesses to strengthen schools and create jobs, and reaching out across the lines of race and class and gender to find common ground and build our common bridges to that bright new century.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:40 p.m. at the Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Jonathan Linen, chairman, board of trustees, Hugh Price, president and chief executive officer, and Vernon E. Jordan, Jr., former president, National Urban League; former Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown and his widow, Alma; John Hope Franklin, Chair, President's Advisory Board on Race; and Reginald K. Brack, former chairman, Time Inc.