

the fireplace and get the fire started. You can imagine how it was. And when they finished it—they'd worked themselves to death—they looked around; it was so cold all the Members of Congress were filing out. So at least you haven't left yet. I feel I'm ahead. [Laughter]

I'd like to say a special word about two groups of people here tonight. First of all, all of you who brought your families, I thank you for doing that. I love seeing the children here. There's one child here I especially like to see, Senator Boxer's grandson, because he's also my nephew, and there he is. I'm glad to see him. I'm glad all the children are here.

The second thing I'd like to do is to say—I haven't got a list here, so I'll get myself in trouble—but I want to mention especially with appreciation Lee Hamilton, Elizabeth Furse, and every other Member of Congress of either party who is retiring at the end of this session. Thank you for your service to the United States of America, and thank you for being here tonight. We're very grateful to you.

Finally let me say, as Tipper said, Hillary wanted to be here tonight, but she's going to Mother Teresa's funeral, and I think it very im-

portant that we send a delegation there. I know there's also a congressional delegation going, and I think that is a very appropriate thing to do.

I hope we'll go on, have a little fun tonight. We'll hear more from the Floating Opera—what a great name. I feel like that's what we are, half the time. [Laughter] Then we're going to go in the room over here and shake hands with anybody that wants to come by. But I stood in the hall for awhile and tried to visit with as many of you as I could—do not feel that you have to. This is not an obligatory receiving line. There is no obligation here tonight except to try to have a good time.

Let's give the band a big hand and listen to them. [Applause]

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:14 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Marianne Gingrich, wife of House Speaker Newt Gingrich, and Tricia Lott, wife of Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott. Originally planned as the congressional barbecue, the reception was moved to the East Room due to inclement weather.

Remarks Announcing the Nomination of David Satcher To Be Assistant Secretary for Health and Surgeon General and an Exchange With Reporters

September 12, 1997

The President. Thank you very much. Madam Secretary, our distinguished guests representing the health professions, to the Satcher family, and ladies and gentlemen.

Just yesterday, we learned of the strong public health progress our Nation has been making in recent years. We learned that last year, infant mortality declined to a record low, prenatal care reached a record high, the teen birth rate declined for the fifth straight year, and death from HIV and AIDS declined more than 25 percent. These are huge gains for public health, and much of the credit goes to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and their gifted leader, Dr. David Satcher.

As you heard from the Vice President, Dr. Satcher's many accomplishments are built on a deep foundation of personal experience. On the

small corn and peanut farm where he grew up, he relied on a dedicated country doctor, the only African-American doctor in the area, to come to his family's side in times of need. That man, named Dr. Jackson, helped save David Satcher's life, and then he and other mentors and family members inspired him to dedicate his life to caring for the health of other people's families.

They inspired a man whose parents didn't have the opportunity to finish elementary school to himself become the first black M.D., Ph.D. in the history of Case Western Reserve University, then go on to become president of Meharry Medical College and the Director of the world-renowned Centers for Disease Control.

In part, because of the inspiration of his family doctor, David Satcher is uniquely qualified

to be America's family doctor. He's a mainstream physician with a talent for leadership. And I'm proud to announce that I intend to nominate him to be both Assistant Secretary for Health and the Surgeon General of the United States.

Only once before has the President asked one person to fill two of the Nation's most prominent public health offices. I do so today because in his role as Director of the CDC, the agency that is the world's best defense against disease, David Satcher has demonstrated his profound medical expertise and eloquent advocacy for the Nation's public health. He's helped to lead our fight to improve the safety of our food, to wipe out the scourge of emerging infectious diseases, to expand access to vital cancer screening.

I particularly want to thank him for guiding our childhood immunization initiative. Child immunization levels have now reached an all-time high, and cases of childhood diseases that can be prevented by vaccines are at an all-time low.

Now I look forward to working with Dr. Satcher on our most important public health mission, to free our children from the grip of tobacco. Every year, more Americans die from smoking-related diseases than from AIDS, car accidents, murders, and suicides combined. And we all know if people don't begin to smoke in their teens, it's unlikely they will ever begin to do so. We have to make the most of this historic opportunity to protect our children against the dangers of tobacco by passing sweeping legislation that focuses first and foremost on reducing smoking among our young people. And he will lead our Nation's efforts on many other health issues, as well.

Over the past three decades of serving the health needs of our Nation, David Satcher has earned the highest respect of public health officials around the Nation and, indeed, all around the world. No one is better qualified to be America's doctor. No one is better qualified to be the Nation's leading voice for health for all of us. And I am grateful that he is willing to serve.

Before I call on Dr. Satcher to speak, let me make one more comment about another nomination. I'm very disappointed that my nominee for United States Ambassador to Mexico, Governor Weld, did not receive a hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee today.

Because our relationship with Mexico is so very important to our security and to our economy, I want an Ambassador who can represent all Americans. In a spirit of bipartisanship, I selected a highly qualified individual in the Republican Governor of Massachusetts. I believe the full Senate should find a way to move forward on this nomination. And I am encouraged by suggestions that Senators are seeking a way within the rules of the Senate to do so. After all, a majority of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee wants him to have a hearing, a majority of the United States Senate wants him to have a hearing, and all I have asked for is a fair hearing and an up-or-down vote on a man I believe to be highly qualified.

Now, I hope I'll receive a quick hearing and up-or-down vote, which will doubtless be up, on Dr. David Satcher.

Dr. Satcher.

Q. Mr. President—

The President. Please, let me finish.

[At this point, Dr. Satcher thanked the President and made brief remarks.]

Nomination of Governor William Weld

Q. Mr. President, Senator Lugar says that it's now up to you to prevail on Senator Lott to get the Weld nomination to the Senate floor. And, while I'm at it, will you go for a recess appointment if that doesn't work?

The President. Well, I certainly intend to talk to Senator Lott about it, although I would hope that Senator Lugar would do the same thing, and the other Republicans who want the fair and decent thing done. And my position is that this man should have a hearing. He's been a good Governor. He was a distinguished member of the Justice Department under President Reagan, and he's entitled to a hearing. And I believe if he gets a hearing, he'll be confirmed and he'll be able to go to Mexico. And that's what I'm working for.

Police Brutality

Q. Mr. President, the Congressional Black Caucus is in town, and they're calling on you today to address the problem of police brutality—[inaudible]—to the Justice Department. What do you have to say to the Caucus about the issue of brutality, and what should be done about it?

The President. Well, I believe that—first of all, I think that when any kind of State action

risers to the level of a constitutional violation, the Justice Department ought to be on top of it. And I look forward to meeting with—I'm going to be with the Black Caucus, and I look forward to hearing from them and to seeing what else they think we should do. This administration, I think, has done more for law enforcement than any administration in modern history, and we've been very supportive of it. And I think those of us who believe in law enforcement and support it should also hold it to the highest standards of conduct.

Proposed Tobacco Settlement

Q. Mr. President, you're meeting with your tobacco advisers this afternoon on the proposed settlement. Can you tell us what direction you're leaning in, and do you think that the penalties that are proposed on the tobacco industry are severe enough?

The President. Well, let me say the direction I will lean in is, I'm going to do whatever I think will best further public health and will best increase the chances that we can dramatically reduce smoking among young people. And I will do that—not only what, but when I do that. There are questions of substance and timing here, and it's a highly complex issue.

I want to thank Secretary Shalala and Bruce Reed for heading the process for our administration to review all aspects of this and also to hear from all people involved, including the tobacco farmers, which Secretary Glickman worked on. And I will be—at least I'll begin my review of that later this afternoon, and then I'll do whatever I think is best. But I can't—I don't want to make any specific comments until I have a chance to hear from my folks. They've been working on this very hard.

Nomination of Governor William Weld

Q. President Clinton, on the—back on the Weld nomination, what do you make of Senator Helms' implied threat that this could have fall-out in your relationship with him on other foreign policy matters?

The President. Oh, I don't think it was implied. I thought it was explicit. [Laughter] I like that about Senator Helms; he always tells you where he is and what he's doing. This is just a—we've had a very cordial relationship, partly because we've been very candid and honest with each other, and this is just an area where we have disagreement.

I think Governor Weld would be a good ambassador; he doesn't. I think whether you believe he'd be good or not, he's entitled to a hearing, especially when a majority of the members of the committee and a majority of the Members of the Senate want him to have it. And so that's where I am, and we're at loggerheads. Now, as—Senator Lott operates the Senate under the Senate rules, and they may well have the ability to prevent this from ever happening, and they may prevail, but the battle is not over yet.

Q. Mr. President, Mr. Weld used the term “despotic” to describe today's proceedings. Would you go that far?

The President. Well, you know, I think that there are a lot of things about the Senate that when they operate properly may be good—the Senate was designed to slow things down in America by the Founding Fathers—but when they're abused can be bad. I think, among other things, that filibuster has been grossly overused in the last 5 years, and I know of no precedent for this action. But we'll just have to see.

I didn't answer that question on purpose. That's right, I didn't answer—let me remind you of what the situation was in the last recess. We just finished a recess, and Senator Lott told me in no uncertain terms that if I intended to recess-appoint Governor Weld, the Senate would not go into recess, and that he would do whatever was necessary to make sure the Senate did not go into recess. And again, I value my relationship with—we got a balanced budget out of this Congress in part because we trusted each other to tell the truth. So I have to be careful how I handle this. I would never mislead Senator Lott, and he might have the same position this time he had last time.

So I think it's premature to talk about that. We should do this the right way. This man has been a distinguished public servant, and he ought to get a hearing. Let's do this the right way and not talk about—there are circumstances under which recess appointments are appropriate, but the appropriate thing to do here is to give this man a hearing.

Thank you.

Surgeon General Nomination

Q. Mr. President, there has been some criticism on why you waited so long on appointing

a Surgeon General. Can you address those criticisms and also the other criticism that there doesn't even need to be a Surgeon General?

The President. Well, first of all, I—we had this ready to go. We thought the appropriate thing to do was to wait until right after the break instead of doing it right before the break. So we've been ready for some time. But I thought to do it after the August recess would give it greater national visibility and greater impetus going into the congressional hearing process.

And secondly, you could make an argument that we don't need a lot of folks, I guess, but my view is that the country is better off with a Surgeon General than without one. And I think of the contributions that Dr. Koop has made. I think of contributions many of our other Surgeons General have made. I think the idea of having a person who can be looked to by

ordinary Americans for good advice and for strong advocacy on what they can personally do, on what the public policy of the country ought to be, and who can advise us about what we should be doing in policy and research and things of that kind, is very, very important.

I think the country kind of likes the idea that there ought to be a doctor that they can trust, that they can turn to for old homespun advice and for also keeping them on the cutting edge of whatever modern medical developments are. And I know that I certainly feel that way, and I'll feel a lot better when Dr. Satcher has been confirmed.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:30 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop.

The President's Radio Address *September 13, 1997*

Good morning. America has had a summer of significant achievement, as we are working to protect our values and prepare our people for the 21st century. The balanced budget shows what we can do when we put aside partisanship and work for the public interest and our children's future. But America can't rest. One of the most important things we can do in the next phase of our progress is to pass long-overdue campaign finance reform.

Since I became President, I've worked hard to reform the political system to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. I've acted within my executive authority to limit the ability of important executive branch appointees to work for foreign governments when they leave office. I've worked with Congress to reduce the size of Government to its lowest level since President Kennedy was here and to pass sweeping lobby reform, limiting gifts from lobbyists to lawmakers. We've also gotten the line item veto so the President can cancel wasteful spending, but we haven't succeeded in reforming the campaign finance laws, though we've been trying for nearly 5 years.

The campaign finance system we have now, which is over 20 years old, has simply been overwhelmed by the rising cost of campaigns, largely advertising and other communication costs, and the flood of campaign cash required to meet those costs. The amount of money raised by both political parties now doubles every 4 years. And the candidates themselves are caught up in a fundraising arms race, spending more and more time raising more and more money, which is bound to raise more questions in the public's mind. The campaign system is broken, and every one of us must take responsibility for fixing it.

I'm doing what I can within the executive branch. I've asked our Federal Communications Commission to require media outlets to provide candidates with free air time, especially TV air time, which will reduce the need for more campaign money. I've also asked the Federal Election Commission to ban the large soft-money contributions to political parties from corporations, unions, and wealthy individuals. And the Justice Department has indicated it will go to court, when appropriate, to defend the constitutionality of limited campaign spending.