

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 11 a.m. in Gaston Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Michael Bonsignore, chairman and chief execu-

tive officer, Honeywell, Inc.; Mason Willrich, chairman of the board, EnergyWorks, L.L.C.; and President Jiang Zemin of China.

## Remarks on Signing Line Item Vetoes of the Military Construction Appropriations Act, 1998, and an Exchange With Reporters *October 6, 1997*

*The President.* Good afternoon. Today we take another step on the long journey to bring fiscal discipline to Washington. Over the past 4½ years, we've worked hard to cut the deficit and to ensure that our tax dollars are used wisely, carefully and effectively. We have reduced the deficit by 85 percent even before the balanced budget legislation passed. The balanced budget I signed into law this summer will extend our fiscal discipline well into the next century, keeping our economy strong.

But to follow through on the balanced budget, Government must continue to live within its means, within the framework established in the agreement. The line item veto, which all Presidents of both parties had sought for more than a century, gives the President a vital new tool to ensure that our tax dollars are well spent, to stand up for the national interests over narrow interests.

Six days ago, I signed into law the Military Construction Appropriations Act, a \$9.2 billion measure that is vital to our national defense. Today I'm using the line item veto to cancel 38 projects inserted into that bill by the Congress that were not requested by the military, cannot make a contribution to our national defense in the coming year, and will not immediately benefit the quality of life and well-being of our men and women in uniform. The use of the line item veto saves the taxpayers nearly \$290 million and makes clear that the old rules have, in fact, changed.

I want to stress that I have retained most of the projects that were added by Congress to my own spending request. Congress plays a vital role in this process, and its judgment is entitled to respect and deference. Many of the projects I have chosen to cancel have merit, but should be considered in the future. This is simply the wrong time.

The projects I have canceled are all over the country, in the districts of lawmakers of both parties. These are tough calls involving real money and hard choices. I canceled the projects that met three neutral and objective criteria:

First, the Department of Defense concluded that these projects were not a priority at this time, after conducting its own rigorous, massive planning process. Judgments about our defense needs made by military professionals must continue to be the basis of our national defense budgeting.

Second, the projects I am canceling do not make an immediate contribution to the housing, education, recreation, child care, health, or religious life of our men and women in uniform. Our fighting forces and their families make extraordinary sacrifices for us, and I have a long-standing commitment to improve their living conditions. I have, therefore, left untouched a number of extra projects not requested this year because they fulfill that commitment in enhancing the quality of life of our men and women in the service.

Third, I am canceling projects that would not have been built in fiscal year 1998 in any event, projects where the Department of Defense has not yet even done design work. In short, whether they're meritorious or not, they will not be built in the coming year in any event.

In canceling these projects, I was determined to do nothing that would undercut our national security. Every penny of our defense dollars should be used to maintain and improve the world's strongest system of national defense.

Also, under the balanced budget, however, we have the added obligation, again I say, to ensure that taxpayer funds are expended wisely. The use of the line item veto here will ensure that we focus on those projects that will best secure our strength in the years to come.

Let me say finally that the work of protecting taxpayers in reforming the Government must continue. I will scrutinize the other appropriation bills, using appropriate criteria in each instance, and will exercise the line item veto when warranted. And I will continue to fight for bipartisan campaign finance reform.

Tomorrow the Members of the Senate must decide: Will they move forward with a bipartisan campaign finance reform bill, or be derailed by a partisan poison pill? The American people will be watching. If they make the right choice, this can, indeed, be a banner week for reform in our Government.

Thank you.

Q. Mr. President—

*The President.* John, [John Donovan, ABC News] let me just sign this, and then I'll come back to answer questions.

[At this point, the President signed the message transmitting the line item vetoes.]

#### *Videotapes of White House Coffees*

Q. My question is about the videotapes that were released and your staff telling us that they really did not know about the existence of these tapes until this week. How could your staff not know about the existence of these tapes?

*The President.* Oh, I think that probably they never discussed it with anybody in the White House Communications Agency. You'd have to ask them. But I can tell you, as soon as I became aware of it, I instructed them to be turned over to the appropriate committees as soon as possible.

We have fully cooperated with these committees. We've given over 100,000 pages of documents to the Senate committee alone, I believe. And we'll continue to do so. But I think you could just ask the people involved what happened, but my guess is that the White House Communications Agency just took some footage and that the rest of the staff was unaware of it or didn't think of it, and they didn't think about it either.

So now you have it, and people can view it and draw their own conclusions.

Q. Mr. President, are you disturbed by this belated discovery? Are you concerned? Have you asked what—

*The President.* No, because I don't think there's any—I don't believe for a moment that any of the career military people in WHCA in

any way deliberately didn't say anything about this. I think it was just an accident. And so I think that that would be my guess. And all I can tell you is, as soon as I found out about it late last week, I said, "Get this out and let's go on." And you can view the tapes and draw your own conclusions.

Q. The question isn't really whether the WHCA people tried to withhold them, but whether people like your Counsel and other officials involved who realized these videotapes existed didn't turn them over.

*The President.* Oh, I'm sure that Mr. Ruff didn't do that. I talked to him—he called me as soon as he knew about it—or one of the assistant counsels came down—

Q. When was that?

*The President.* I think it was Thursday afternoon—came down and told me, and that's the first I knew about it. And I don't think they had known about it for very long. And I'm sure they took a little time to figure out exactly what was covered, how much they needed to do, and reviewed the materials, and then turned them over, which is what should have been done.

#### *Stand-Clark-Squillacote Espionage Case*

Q. Sir, are you concerned about the Soviet espionage arrests that happened in Virginia today, that date back to the cold war? And just how widespread is this problem, sir?

*The President.* Well, let me say I have been briefed about it, and it appears to me that the law enforcement authorities have done their job in trying to uncover a problem. We'll have to wait and see. We can't presume people's guilt. But I think that the only responsible thing is for me to refer you to the Justice Department because they made those judgments.

#### *Assassination Attempt on Khaled Meshal*

Q. Mr. President, one other matter. On this apparently failed assassination attempt by Israeli agents in Jordan, what was your reaction to that? And are these not precisely the kinds of actions that serve to undermine confidence in the peace process?

*The President.* Well, since the Government of Israel and the Government of Jordan have made no comment about this, I think it is inappropriate for me to make any comment. I will say this—you know the policy of the United States for our own conduct is, and has been

I believe for more than 20 years under Presidents of both parties, that we do not engage in assassinations. But I can make no comment on what others did or did not do when it has not been confirmed by either of the governments in question.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:25 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks,

he referred to Kurt Alan Stand, James Michael Clark, and Theresa Marie Squillacote, who were accused of spying for East Germany in the 1970's and 1980's; and Hamas leader Khaled Meshal, who was attacked in Amman, Jordan, on September 25. The Military Construction Appropriations Act, 1998, H.R. 2016, approved September 30, was assigned Public Law No. 105-45.

## Message to the Congress Transmitting Line Item Vetoes of the Military Construction Appropriations Act, 1998

*October 6, 1997*

*To the Congress of the United States:*

In accordance with the Line Item Veto Act, I hereby cancel the dollar amounts of discretionary budget authority, as specified in the attached reports, contained in the "Military Construction Appropriations Act, 1998" (Public Law 105-45; H.R. 2016). I have determined that the cancellation of these amounts will reduce the Federal budget deficit, will not impair any es-

sential Government functions, and will not harm the national interest.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,  
October 6, 1997.

NOTE: The reports detailing the cancellations were published in the *Federal Register* on October 7.

## Statement on Signing Legislation Designating the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington Field Office Memorial Building

*October 6, 1997*

Today I am pleased to have signed into law H.R. 2443, a bill that would designate the new Washington, D.C., field office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation as the "Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington Field Office Memorial Building." The new building is so named in honor of the five FBI agents who have been killed in the line of duty while assigned to the FBI's Washington field office: William H. Christian, Jr., Martha Dixon Martinez, Michael J. Miller, Anthony Palmisano, and Edwin R. Woodruffe.

Naming the FBI's new field office in honor of these brave and courageous FBI employees is a reminder to us all of the difficult and dangerous job that FBI agents do—day in and day out.

In establishing this permanent memorial, we do well to remember—and be grateful for—the lives of all Federal, State, and local law enforcement personnel who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the performance of their duties.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,  
October 6, 1997.

NOTE: H.R. 2443, approved October 6, was assigned Public Law No. 105-52.