

May 7 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1998

showcase and support women's role in the economic and political life of their society. The women of Northern Ireland—wives, mothers, and daughters—have borne an enormous share of the trauma of the Troubles. Now, their participation will be essential to build a future of peace and reconciliation. I've asked the First Lady to travel to Belfast to take part in this important conference.

We have seen around the world how Americans have rallied to help the lands of their ancestors. I hope the Irish-American community will continue to support the voices of peace in Northern Ireland. My administration will continue to do all we can to foster hope and healing in Northern Ireland and to help its people build a new age of peace for their families and future generations.

Statement on Senate Action on Internal Revenue Service Reform Legislation *May 7, 1998*

I am very pleased that IRS reform took a major step forward today with bipartisan passage of the Senate bill. We've worked hard to give the American people an IRS that is fairer and more responsive to their needs and to support the many dedicated IRS employees who do want to serve them well. We've made progress, and final passage of this reform bill will help our efforts to give Americans the modern, customer-friendly IRS they deserve.

Vice President Gore and Treasury Secretary Bob Rubin last year completed a top-to-bottom review of customer service at the IRS. This effort has launched a complete revamping of customer service at the IRS. IRS offices and phones are open longer, problemsolving days have been instituted, and independent citizen advocacy panels are being launched. I've also appointed a new kind of IRS Commissioner. Charles Rossotti is an experienced businessman who understands technology and understands customer service. Certainly, not every problem

will be solved overnight, but our new Commissioner is committed to ongoing reform and to correcting problems when they arise.

The Senate bill, like the House bill, will provide Commissioner Rossotti the tools he needs to succeed, and it will expand taxpayer rights. The new personnel flexibility provisions will allow the IRS to bring in talent and expertise from the private sector. The bill provides taxpayers with a stronger Taxpayer Advocate. It also advances the important goal of expanding electronic filing of tax returns to make it easier for taxpayers.

I urge the House and Senate to act quickly and send me a bill to sign that expands taxpayer rights and moves us forward towards delivering an IRS the American people deserve. We will continue to work with the Congress on a bipartisan basis on a final bill that advances our shared goals, that avoids unintended benefits for noncompliant taxpayers, and that is consistent with our commitment to fiscal discipline.

Remarks to the Arab American Institute Conference *May 7, 1998*

Thank you, Jim. To Elie Abboud and Fuad Ateyeh, all the members of the Arab American Institute, the National Arab American Business Association, Palestinian American Congress; to Prince Bandar and the members of the diplomatic corps—all of you, thank you for coming. My fellow Americans: I like getting advice from

Jim Zogby's mother. [*Laughter*] And she has a remarkable read on the world. Her son John, a renowned pollster, has nothing on her. In fact, I think her numbers are better than his for me sometimes. [*Laughter*] I also want to say a special word of appreciation to Jim for his advice over the years. He is a remarkable voice

for calm and clarity, no matter how heated the issues. But I can tell you, he is one of the most forceful, intense, and brutally honest people who ever come to the White House to see me. And you should be proud of that.

I understand that I am the first sitting President to address an Arab-American conference. [Applause] Thank you. I see Congressman Moran in the audience; he came here so the Irish would not be alone at the podium. And I thank him for that. [Laughter]

I'm honored to be the first President, but I'm surprised, frankly, and also a little disappointed, because the Arab-American community has made an enormous contribution to this country with basic values that made us great: love of family, and belief in hard work and personal responsibility, and a passionate devotion to education, which I hope we will see engulf every single ethnic group in America today.

I congratulate you on the way you have found your voice, on speaking out on a wide range of domestic issues and not just on the questions involving the Middle East. A record number of Arab-Americans are now running for and serving in public office, including the United States Congress. But even the newest Yemeni immigrants, once poor farmers, are now small-business owners, achieving their rightful share of the American dream.

I wanted to talk with you very briefly tonight about how we can work together at home and around the world at the end of this century to prepare for the challenges and the staggering opportunities of the one about to dawn.

First, we must help all Americans see our diversity as our greatest strength. People ask me from time to time why I feel so passionately about this, and they assume rightly it's partly, maybe largely, because I'm a southerner and I grew up with the old and still unfinished business between black and white Americans. But I also grew up in a very unusual town for the South. My hometown had only 35,000 people, but it was a national park and a place with healing hot waters, and we had all kinds of people coming there to retire. So here I was a little boy growing up in the South in a town that had two synagogues—35,000 people—we had two synagogues, a Greek Orthodox Church, a huge Czech community, a Lithuanian community, and just about somebody from everywhere.

But my attitudes about Arab-Americans were first formed because I was good friends with

a young immigrant named David Zorab who came to my home State after he was orphaned and grew up to become the valedictorian of my high school class. And he went on to become a brilliant physician in Pennsylvania. And I suppose that I always wanted all Americans to enjoy the kind of life I had as a child. And yet, a lot of people around me didn't have that life, because they were imprisoned by their own prejudices. We have to free this country of all those prejudices.

I know it is true that Arab-Americans still feel the sting of being stereotyped in false ways. I have done what I could to warn against that. The saddest encounter, I suppose, was when we went through the heartbreaking experience of Oklahoma City, and many people were quick to rush to judgment. And I remember that terrible day when I urged the American people not to do so.

I am very grateful not only to Jim but to others among you who have been an active part of my race initiative. And I'm very pleased that you're now working with Jewish-Americans and members of several European ethnic groups to organize, I think, six regional forums on race and diversity around our Nation over the coming year.

These sorts of things don't often make headlines in the news today because they work; therefore, they are not sufficiently contentious. And when there is no blood on the floor at the end of the meeting, they are often considered not newsworthy. They are profoundly important. And I believe that there is a deeper hunger among Americans of all kinds to discuss these matters in an honest and open way than even most of us appreciate.

I was amazed, I just got a letter from ESPN. They sponsored sort of a townhall on race the other night with athletes and coaches and others. And I think they were truly astonished because they had about the same viewership as they do for a pro basketball game. And moreover, the viewership picked up as the program went on, so the channel surfers saw it and decided they ought to hang on for a while. So I would encourage you to continue that. Don't let any American have the misfortune of never having known an Arab-American. You can do that if you try.

The second thing we have to do is keep working until we bring the spark of enterprise and opportunity to every corner of the Nation. It

may be hard to believe, since we have the lowest unemployment rate in 28 years and the lowest inflation rate in over 30 years and the highest homeownership in the history of the country and a record number of small business starts in the last 5 years, including those started by many Arab-Americans, but not every American has had the chance to reap the rewards of this remarkable prosperity. You understand clearly the power and the dignity that comes from being able to earn a living to support a family. We have to bring this kind of opportunity throughout America. I have put before the Congress several proposals to close the opportunity gaps: empowerment zones, community development financial institutions, housing and other development initiatives. I hope they will be positively acted upon this year, and I ask you for your support.

The third thing we have to do is to build the world's finest education system. We have done so with our universities, and we are blessed to have people not only of all different races and ethnic groups in America attend them but people from all over the world. But no one would seriously assert that we had today the finest system of elementary and secondary education, and yet it is more important than ever before.

A couple of days ago, I had a fascinating conversation with the head of the Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan, and we were talking about the phenomenal prosperity our country is enjoying and the number of the developments around the world. And he said, "You know, we really are completely now engulfed by an economy based on ideas." He said that there is an interesting measure of the total physical output of a country compared to its wealth. And he said our total physical output in terms of mass is hardly increased at all, while the stock market and our national wealth has exploded because we have an economy based on ideas. In such an economy, it is unforgivable neglect to permit children to grow up and go through the school system and not be able to participate in that economy because their minds have not developed to the point where they can. And it is not necessary.

Again, I have laid before the Congress a number of proposals that will make education our number one priority and result in dramatic improvements of our schools: smaller classes, bet-

ter teaching, higher standards, expanded choice, more discipline, greater accountability.

Today I met with a group of mayors who endorsed my proposal to end social promotion but to increase the amount of help we're giving to children who are having trouble in school, more after-school help, more summer schools, more support. In Chicago, where they are now requiring children who don't make the grade to go to summer school, they're seeing children in summer school gain as much as 2 years in reading and mathematics capacity, just in one intense summer effort.

So again I say to you—so many of you know you are the living proof that education is the key to opportunity. Just across the river from here, in Fairfax County, we have a school district with children from 180 different national and ethnic groups whose native languages number in excess of 100. Now, I think that's a good thing. I think that is a great thing for America in a global society. But you can only imagine what will happen if they're all well-educated, and unfortunately, you can only imagine what will happen if vast numbers of them are not well-educated.

So think about what brought you all here tonight and how you came to be here. And we have to do this. We have to do it. The Federal Government, the President, can only do so much. Parents have to do a lot; teachers have to do a lot; the kids have to do the most. But we owe it to them, as a society, to provide educational opportunity second to none and to make sure that every child's mind has a chance to be developed.

Now, the fourth thing that we have to do is to continue as Americans to lead the world toward peace and freedom. If we can set an example and live together across all the lines that divide us, not simply respecting but actually celebrating our differences and honoring them—not tolerating them but honoring them—we clearly have a responsibility to do that elsewhere.

Now that the cold war is over and people are not being drawn like magnets to two different economic and political systems, it is natural that people would reexamine the premises on which they are organized and on which they govern themselves. It is, I suppose, natural—at least it is predictable—that we would even have a resurgence of destructive ethnic impulses, as we have seen in Bosnia, as we see

in Kosovo even tonight, in other parts of the world; as we saw in the tragedy where somewhere between 700,000 and a million people were killed in Rwanda in the short space of 100 days, and without weapons of mass destruction, so that it had to be done in the grizzliest, most inhumane way.

But we can do better. In Northern Ireland, representatives of all the major parties have reached an historic agreement that I hope and pray will be ratified by the voters of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in just a few days. I think all of us, and especially all of you, should take a special measure of pride that those talks in Northern Ireland were chaired by George Mitchell, the former majority leader, who is, of course, also of Lebanese descent.

Today I met with members of a group of Irish people who had all lost sons or husbands or brothers in the Troubles. They are now working to help each other and others like them work for peace, both inner peace and peace among the Irish. And I suppose, in every part of the world, you can hardly have one without the other.

We are now also, as all of you know, working very hard to regain the momentum for peace in the Middle East. The last year has been so frustrating for the people of the Middle East, so frustrating for the peace-loving people in the Palestinian areas and in Israel, that it's easy to forget how far we have come in the last few years. We've had the Oslo accords, the Washington peace signing in September of '93, the Hebron agreement, unprecedented security cooperation, the open dialog that had been established; all these things were quite important. They have brought the possibility of peace closer than ever before. All I'm trying to do is to regain that momentum. We have an opportunity to get this process moving again and to move forward.

It has been my experience in life—and I've lived long enough now to see it—that in almost every area of human endeavor, opportunities do not last forever; they must be seized. And I hope this one will be seized. Difficult choices have been made—will have to be made—by Palestinians and Israelis alike. And we cannot impose a solution because we—even you—will not have to live out the consequences. But we must—we must—try to help find enough common ground to return to the dialog. Keep in

mind, what we are trying to do is to get the parties over a hurdle so they can get into these final status talks, so we can stay on the timetable established a few years ago by both the Palestinians and the Israelis to finish the whole thing by this month next year. Now, I am sending Ambassador Dennis Ross back to Israel tonight to go the extra mile to help the parties seize this opportunity.

All of you know what invaluable benefits peace can bring to the people of the region. All of you know how much suffering has been undergone by people because of the absence of peace. All of you know how much extra suffering has been borne every time there is an interruption of normalcy. We have got to get this done. I am doing the very best I can, and I know you are, too.

I have given a lot of thought to what makes people get into downward spirals. We see it in horrible terms when violence occurs and life is lost, not just in the Middle East but anywhere—in Bosnia, where we were able to end a war, in other places. We see it in less violent ways when people in positions of public responsibility get into a downward spiral of destructive attempts to hurt each other for political reasons that have no larger public purpose.

We all have to struggle every day. I used to tell my daughter when she was at home that it's almost like all of us get up every day with an inner scale inside, with lightness and constructive, positive behavior on one side and all our darkest fears on the other. And the scales are always shifting in balance, and every day you have to get up and push the scale down on the right side. We all have to fight it. And when I get very discouraged about it, and I think, well, we're all just going to run up against a dead end, I try to remember the examples of people who have overcome more than I can imagine. I'll never forget the first time I talked to Nelson Mandela about how he actually made himself overcome his hatred of his oppressors so that he could wait and endure 27 long years until he could bring it all together. And he said, "You know, they took a lot from me when I was in prison. I never saw my children grow up. I lost my personal life. I was brutalized. I was humiliated. Finally, it occurred to me they could take everything away from me but my mind and my heart. Those things I would have to give away. I decided not to give them away."

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I ask you to remain resolute and to remain passionate, but always to be large. Do not give away the best part of your own lives. Do not give away the best part of your hopes. We will prevail.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:35 p.m. at the Grand Hyatt Hotel. In his remarks, he referred

to Elie Abboud, president, National Arab American Business Association; Fuad Ateyeh, president, Arab American Congress; Prince Bandar bin Sultan bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud, Saudi Arabian Ambassador to the United States; James J. Zogby, president, Arab American Institute, and John J. Zogby, president, Zogby International, and their mother, Celia Zogby; and President Nelson Mandela of South Africa.

Remarks to the Delaware State Legislature in Dover May 8, 1998

Thank you, Governor. I took good notes: No children on a child care waiting list; all poor 4-year-olds in Head Start; every classroom wired. I'll be saying that now every time I go to another city or another State; I'll be saying, if Delaware can do it, why can't you. And I thank you.

I want to thank the Governor, and Senator Sharp, Speaker Spence, Lieutenant Governor Minner, the members of the legislature, the judiciary, the State officials who are here; former Governors Peterson and Tribbitt, and other distinguished citizens of this State; Mr. Mayor. I'm delighted to be joined today by the Secretary of Defense, who is going with me to Dover Air Base when we finish here to thank our air men and women there for their distinguished service, and who has also been a leader in education, because the Department of Defense runs schools all over the world for American children; by our wonderful Secretary of Education, Dick Riley; by Mickey Ibarra, the Director of our Office of Intergovernmental Affairs; and others. We are all delighted to be here.

And I'd like to say a special word of appreciation to Congressman Castle for coming up here with me. He's an old friend of mine. We worked together on welfare reform more than a decade ago now. I have been trying to decide, when Mike and Tom changed jobs, which one really got the promotion. *[Laughter]*

I am delighted to be the first President ever to speak here. The others did not know what they were missing. I love your capitol building. I like the feel of your legislature. I like the size of your legislature. *[Laughter]* I wonder if it would take a constitutional amendment to re-

duce Congress to this size. *[Laughter]* It's a wonderful idea.

And I like the fact that the first State in the Nation is leading in doing the Nation's first business of educating our children. I've come here to talk about that work, why it is, in the States and in many communities around the country, and must be in Washington, the work of both Republicans and Democrats—why it must be a national crusade to give our children the world's best education.

We have a history of putting nation above party when the Nation's security and future are at issue. We did it for 50 years, which is why the cold war turned out the way it did. The tradition was deeply honored by Secretary Cohen, who left a distinguished career in the United States Senate as a Republican Senator from Maine to join our administration, and he is performing well for the American people as Secretary of Defense.

It is a tradition embodied by your Senators, Bill Roth and Joe Biden, who led the recent stunningly successful effort to expand NATO to include Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic. And you should be very proud of both of them.

And I have seen it, having had the opportunity to work for years now with Mike Castle and Tom Carper when they were in both jobs in succession, on welfare reform, on child care, on the education of our children. And you can be very proud of both of them.

And Delaware, maybe because it's a small State and maybe because I came from a small State and was often ridiculed for it in national politics—my experience is that maybe because