

Statement on the Passage of the Northern Ireland Peace Accord Referendum *May 23, 1998*

Today history truly joined with hope in Ireland as the people of Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic cast their ballots decisively in favor of the April 10 peace accord and a new political arrangement for Northern Ireland. I join all Americans in congratulating the people of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland for seizing this unique opportunity for a lasting peace.

I pledge that my administration will work with Northern Ireland's leaders as they seek to transform the promise of the accord into a reality, with new democratic institutions and new eco-

nomic opportunities for all of Northern Ireland's people. Working through the International Fund for Ireland and the private sector, we will help the people seize the opportunities that peace will bring to attract new investment to create new factories, workplaces, and jobs, and establish new centers of learning to prepare for the 21st century.

Today's vote is a beacon to peoples around the globe in places where strife prevails and peace seems remote. You have set an example for the world and established a strong foundation for a future of lasting peace.

Remarks at a Memorial Day Ceremony in Arlington, Virginia *May 25, 1998*

Thank you. Secretary Slater, Secretary West, Deputy Secretary Gober, National Security Adviser Berger, Congressman Skelton, Secretary Dalton, General Shelton, General McCaffrey, Superintendent Metzler, Chaplain Cooper, the leaders of our veterans organizations, veterans, members of the Armed Forces, friends and families, my fellow Americans: I would like to begin this Memorial Day service in a somewhat unusual fashion but, I think, an entirely appropriate one.

Major General Foley, who just spoke, the Commander of the Military District of Washington, is about to move on to higher responsibilities. He is, I believe, now the only person still serving in uniform to have won the Medal of Honor, which he won for repeatedly risking his life for his comrades in Vietnam, and I thank him for his service. Thank you, sir; thank you, sir.

As spring turns to summer, Americans around the Nation take this day to enjoy friends and family. But we come again to Arlington to remember how much was given so that we could enjoy this day and every day in freedom. We come to this sacred ground out of gratitude and profound respect for those who are not here but who gave all so that we might be here.

Memorial Day began with our most deadly conflict, the Civil War. To this very day, the children of Gettysburg spread flowers over the graves of those who fell there. But the debt began to run up, of course, much earlier, for our Nation emerged from a war to establish a truly revolutionary new society which enshrined life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as the birthright of all Americans and dedicated our Nation to the permanent mission of forming a more perfect Union. To preserve and advance those birthrights and that mission, our Founders pledged their lives, their fortunes, their sacred honor. Those we honor today paid the ultimate price to redeem that pledge.

From the American Revolution onward, from Concord to Khe Sanh to Kuwait, America's men and women have stood up for their country. Often we have erected monuments to them. Happily, the most recent one is the Women in Military Service for America Memorial dedicated here at Arlington last October to the 1.8 million women who have served our Nation, and we thank them.

Thanks to these heroes, our Nation, in over 220 years, has grown into something truly extraordinary. We have so much to be grateful for today: peace, prosperity, the spreading power

of our original ideas. For the first time in history, a majority of the people on this Earth live under governments of their own choosing. In 1,000 different languages, people are saying yes to democracy and to a new era of international cooperation. Around the world, people are struggling to overcome ancient animosities by embracing the idea that if we are all equal in God's eyes, then what we have in common surely must be more important than our differences of politics, race, or religion.

Today we are especially grateful for the overwhelming vote for peace in Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic to which so many of us trace our roots.

As we look toward the future, Memorial Day also invites us to remember the past and apply its lessons. Let me recall just two events from 50 years ago, at the time when democracy was imperiled by the dawn of the cold war. I was recently in Berlin, where we commemorated the airlift that supplied 2½ million people for 11 harrowing months between 1948 and 1949. Those were difficult days for freedom, but America never soared higher. I would like to salute especially today the men and women who participated in that remarkable humanitarian effort, a reminder that the will for freedom can always find a way.

And 50 years ago our Armed Forces helped to promote greater democracy at home, too. For it was in the summer of 1948 that President Truman ordered the integration of America's Armed Forces because he felt strongly that all those willing to risk their lives for our country should enjoy the full rights of citizenship. Today, United States troops set a shining example of how well different people can work together as one.

As we ask other nations to resolve their differences and as we continue to work on the business of resolving ours, we are strengthened by the powerful message of hope that comes from our own military, so strong in its diversity, giving everyone a chance, holding everyone to high standards, meeting every challenge with flying colors, a model for the world.

When you walk out of here today and look once again at all the gravestones, imagine that the story of all we have become as a nation is written in these hills, each headstone a page of our history. George Washington is a part of the history of this hallowed ground. There are

graves here from the Revolution and every conflict since.

On these stones are engraved the names of the most famous Americans and those who are familiar only to their families and loved ones. On each tablet is a name, a date of birth, a date of death, the name of a State, a religious symbol, perhaps a few details about rank and service—simple facts on simple stones, each standing for a person who believed the idea of America was worth fighting for. And all the stones standing together are the enduring monument to our greatness and eternal promise, including the stones which have no names.

Eleven days ago a Vietnam veteran was removed from the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. It was the right course of action, because science has given us a chance to restore his name and bring comfort to his family, and we had to seize it. But whatever happens, we must always remember that that stone represents the many unknown soldiers still in Vietnam and Korea, in other theaters where Americans lie far away from home, missing in action, still with us in spirit. They may be unaccounted for, but we must all be accountable for their memories as well.

We take comfort in something Chaplain Leo Joseph O'Keeffe reminded us of at the ceremony on May 14th, that if some names are unknown to us on Earth, all names are known to God in heaven. I ask Americans to join me in a moment of remembrance at 3 o'clock today, eastern daylight time, to honor the known and the unknown who gave their all for our Nation.

And ladies and gentlemen, during that moment we can give special thanks on this Memorial Day. Last December we negotiated an agreement with North Korea that entitled us to send five teams to their country to search for Americans. Early this morning at 2 o'clock, the remains of two soldiers believed to be Americans were repatriated to the UN Command Honor Guard at Panmunjom on the DMZ. They are coming home this Memorial Day.

I thank all the veterans here today from all the wars of the 20th century for giving all of us the chance to be here with you. I think of the children here today who will spend most of their lives in the next century. The youngest among them will not even remember the 20th century. It is possible, with medical advances, that they may glimpse the 22d century.

For them, we must do our duty to enhance freedom and opportunity at home, to strengthen the bonds of our own Union as we grow more diverse, to advance the causes of democracy and human rights, prosperity, and peace, around the world. We must strengthen our own freedom by maintaining America's role in leading the world. That is the central lesson of the 20th century: We abdicate responsibility at our peril. To do so now would be to renounce the sacrifice of 10 generations of Americans.

Yet often today, we hear voices urging us to abandon our obligations to the multinational organizations we did so much to create or to the causes of peace we are winning in cooperation with our allies, as in Bosnia. Too often we hear calls for actions in our foreign policy which would isolate us from our allies without achieving our objectives.

As the world grows smaller and smaller for the children here and we become more and more interconnected with our neighbors in every way, we must strengthen the ties that bind free

people, work with those who share our values and really want to share our burden. Of course, we must always be prepared to act alone when our values and our interests demand it. But whenever we can, we ought to work with our friends to make a better world together.

We can make the 21st century a century of peace. We can write a new chapter of unprecedented possibility and prosperity in our Nation's history. In so doing, we can extend the glory of the patriots who lie here, missing from our lives but eternally present in our memories. My fellow Americans, on this Memorial Day, let us commit ourselves to a future worthy of their sacrifice.

Thank you, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:30 a.m. in the Amphitheater at Arlington National Cemetery. In his remarks, he referred to John C. Metzler, Jr., superintendent, Arlington National Cemetery; and Capt. George D. Cooper, USN, chaplain, Naval District Washington.

Remarks on the Federal Budget and an Exchange With Reporters *May 26, 1998*

The President. Thank you, Jack. And let me thank the other members of the economic team.

This is of course very good news for the American people, as the chart shows. Now it's official that this year, well ahead of the most ambitious schedule, America has balanced the budget. In fact, as the chart shows, the achievement of the American people will not stop there; OMB predicts that the budget surplus will be \$39 billion this year, the largest dollar surplus in our history, the largest surplus as a share of the economy in more than 40 years. America can now turn off the deficit clock and plug in the surplus clock.

Given the speed with which our Nation has reached this remarkable milestone, it is perhaps all too easy to forget how hard it was and how far we've come. Just 6 years ago, because of the drag of deficits, our people were running in place; our Nation was falling behind. Interest rates were high, and so was unemployment. On the day I took office, the deficit was projected this year to be \$350 billion.

How did this greatest projected deficit in history turn into the greatest projected surplus? The old-fashioned way: We earned it. Our Nation earned it as a result of hard work by the American people. And as the Vice President said, we earned it here in Washington with the help of two visionary actions in Congress: first, the courageous vote by the Democrats in 1993 in the midst of withering, extreme criticism that led to a cut in the deficit of 90 percent; and then the truly historic bipartisan balanced budget agreement passed by Congress last year that finished the job.

I think it would also be wrong if I didn't mention, as Mr. Lew did, that the reinventing government efforts headed by the Vice President played a major role. We not only have the smallest Government since the Kennedy administration, with more than 300,000 fewer people, we also have savings in excess of \$130 billion during the budget period as a result of those efforts. And Mr. Vice President, I am very grateful for what you have done.