

*Oct. 25 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1998*

Buell; J. Richard Fredericks, senior managing director, NationsBanc Montgomery Securities, Inc.; former Senator Alan Cranston; gubernatorial candidate Lt. Gov. Gray Davis of California; Art Torres, State Democratic chair; murder victim

Matthew Shepard's parents, Dennis and Judy, and his brother, Logan; Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; and Matt Fong, Republican senatorial candidate.

## Statement on the Student Loan Default Rate

*October 26, 1998*

When I came into office, there was a student loan default crisis in this Nation. Nearly one out of every four students was failing to pay back his loan.

Today I am proud to announce that we have brought the default rate down below 10 percent, the lowest rate since these data have been collected. The student loan program is now a shining example of Government providing opportunity with accountability.

Some of those failing to pay back their loans were victims of fly-by-night schools that never followed through on their promises. I am proud that over the past 6 years, we have eliminated 1,065 schools from the student loan program, protecting students and taxpayers from fraud and abuse.

Other students had difficulty affording their loan payments, because they were just getting on their feet, or they had decided to take low-paying jobs serving their communities. I am

pleased that the reforms for which I fought have given those borrowers a wide variety of options, including paying off their loans as a percentage of their income over time. And because of our economic strategy of reducing the deficit while investing in people's skills, there are jobs for those who finish college, so they can pay off their loans.

Unfortunately, there will always be some who just do not take their responsibilities seriously and then expect taxpayers to cover for them. Fortunately for the taxpayers, this Government has expanded the tools that it has to find these defaulters and arrange for payment. That has taught others that a student loan is not a free ride.

This success comes from the hard work of Government. It is a testament to the commitment of our Secretary of Education, to the policies that we have implemented, and to the people who have put them into practice.

## Statement on the Ecuador-Peru Border Settlement Agreement

*October 26, 1998*

I want to congratulate Presidents Mahuad of Ecuador and Fujimori of Peru on the historic signing today in Brasilia of a border settlement agreement between Ecuador and Peru. This signing marks the end of the last and longest running source of armed international conflict in the Western Hemisphere.

I am proud of the role the United States has played, alongside the other Guarantors, Brazil, Argentina, and Chile, in bringing about the settlement. Mack McLarty, my former Special Envoy for the Americas, and Ambassador

Luigi Einaudi, our Special Envoy for the Ecuador/Peru Process, have worked tirelessly over the past 3 years in cooperation with the parties and the other Guarantors to bring about this historic peace settlement. On October 9, I met with Presidents Mahuad and Fujimori at the White House to accept their joint request for the four Guarantors of the Rio Protocol to help them reach a final settlement.

U.S. military personnel, along with those of Brazil, Argentina, and Chile, have also made

a vital contribution in manning the international observation force, which has monitored the cease-fire and helped maintain peace in the disputed area.

## Remarks in a Roundtable Discussion on Women and Retirement Security *October 27, 1998*

*The President.* Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the White House. I want to thank the Vice President, the members of the administration, Congressman Cardin, all the panelists who are here, the satellite audience at the 12 other sites across our country. I'd like to say a special word of appreciation and welcome to Betty Freidan, who has written with such insight and appreciation for the challenges women face as they grow older.

We're here to talk about the special impact of the challenge to Social Security on the women of the United States. I would like to put it in, if I might, a larger context. Six years ago, when the Vice President and I came here, we brought a new vision of Government against a backdrop of a \$290 billion deficit and the kind of problem we're here to talk about today that we knew was looming in the future. We believed that we could give the American people a Government that would live within its means but at the same time invest in and empower our people.

It led to an array of new policies in education and the economy, the budget, the environment, in health care, in crime, in welfare reform. Indeed, it led to the very effort to reinvent Government, to use the Vice President's phrase, and the great effort that he made in that regard. But over the last 6 years, we have been more active, among other things, in family matters and health matters and a whole range of domestic areas, while giving the American people the smallest Federal establishment since President Kennedy was here.

And the results, I think, have been quite good for our people, in terms of prosperity. Opportunity is abundant; communities are stronger; families are more secure. This year, all year long, I have told the American people and done my best to persuade the Congress that it is terribly important to build on this prosperity and its newfound confidence to meet the remaining challenges this country faces on the

edge of a new century, particularly, and perhaps most important, the need to save Social Security and to prepare for the retirement of the baby boomers.

On December 8th and 9th we will hold the first-ever White House Conference on Social Security, with a goal of paving the way toward a truly bipartisan national solution early next year. Social Security, as many of you know from your own experience and as all our panelists will be able to discuss in one way or the other, is more than a monthly check or an ID number. It represents a sacred trust among the generations. It represents a trust not only between grandparents, parents, and children, those in retirement and those that work, but also the able-bodied and those who are disabled. It is our obligation to one another, and it reflects our deepest values as Americans. And it must maintain a rock-solid guarantee.

We have a great opportunity to save Social Security. As all of you know, just this month we closed the books on our first balanced budget and surplus in 29 years. It is the product of hardworking Americans who drive the most powerful economic engine our country has had in a generation, the product of hard choices by lawmakers who put our Nation's long-term economic interest very often above their own short-term political interest. It is an achievement that all Americans can be proud of.

But we have to ask ourselves, to what end has this been done? Of course, balancing the budget is essential for our own prosperity in this time of intense global competition. But it also gives us a chance to do something meaningful for future generations by strengthening Social Security. And doing that will help to keep our economy sound and help to keep our budget balanced as we honor our duty to our parents and our children.

As the Vice President said, soon there will be many more older Americans. I hope that he and I will be among them—[laughter]—2