

Remarks on the Legislative Agenda and an Exchange With Reporters November 5, 1998

The President. Good morning. The Vice President and I have just finished a good meeting with Senator Daschle and Congressman Gephardt. We all agree that the message from the American people in the last election is clear—that they want us to pursue progress over partisanship and to find unity over division.

And we talked about how best to start that process. We believe the best way to start is by taking up the Patients' Bill of Rights, the legislation that would guarantee quality health care to Americans without regard to whether they are in managed care plans or not and would assure that medical decisions are made by doctors, not by accountants.

In the last session of Congress, that bill lost by only five votes in the House, and we now have five more Democrats coming to the House. It came very close to passing in the United States Senate. It need not be a partisan issue. Indeed, a cosponsor of the Patients' Bill of Rights in the House is Congressman Greg Ganske from Iowa, a Republican physician who has spoken very eloquently about the need for this legislation.

So what we want to do is to reach out to like-minded people in the other party to try to heed the admonition of the American people and the direction that we certainly agree we ought to take and get to work together. We're looking forward to it, and this is where we think we should begin.

1998 Election Results and Impeachment Inquiry

Q. Congressman Gephardt, what do you think this does to the impeachment hearings? Does it wipe them out, diminish them, slow them down, or what?

Representative Richard A. Gephardt. First, I want to agree with the President on the Patients' Bill of Rights. I feel very strongly that we can get this done. If you have a sick family member, you want it done now, so we're going to work very hard to see if we can get it done in the early part of this next year.

I don't know what is happening on Mr. Hyde's statement—if they are moving in our direction—we wanted them to some weeks ago,

and they're going to get this over with in a fair and expeditious way. That's good.

Q. Mr. President, do you anticipate that your lawyers will vigorously attack the Starr report in the committee? And is there any testimony in that report, sir, that you dispute?

The President. I have nothing to say about that. I want these hearings to be constitutional, fair, and expeditious. At the appropriate time in the appropriate way, we will say whatever we intend to say. But I have nothing to say about it.

I think the important thing is that we've got to go back to doing the people's business. The American people sent us a message that would break the eardrums of anyone who was listening. They want their business tended to. They are tired of seeing Washington focused on politics and personalities. They want the people and their issues and their future taken care of, and that's what we're here to do.

The Vice President. If I could say a brief word. Before you all came in here, we had a long meeting. This subject never even came up. We heard what the American people said, and what they said was turn to the people's business. And that's what this whole meeting has been about.

Q. Mr. President, are you still in jeopardy, sir? Do you believe you're still in jeopardy?

The President. That's out of my hands. That's up to the American people and the Congress. All I know is I've got a day here, and I want to make the most of it.

Iraq

Q. Mr. President, are you concerned at all about the apparent lack of support among the Persian Gulf allies for a tougher action against Iraq at this point?

The President. Well, actually, my information is that Secretary Cohen had a good trip, and we believe we'll have the support that we need for whatever decisions we ultimately make.

Q. Including military action?

The President. We believe we'll have the support we need, and all options are on the table.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:47 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House, following a meeting with congressional leaders. A tape was not

available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on Presenting the Arts and Humanities Awards

November 5, 1998

The President. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for the wonderful welcome. I just realized that at the moment of greatest unity for my political party in many years, my wife has told the president of the AFL-CIO that I crossed a picket line. [Laughter] But it's true. [Laughter]

Let me join Hillary in thanking the representatives of the NEA, the NEH, the Museum and Library Services for all they have done. I thank Senator Baucus, Senator Durbin, Congressman and Mrs. Engel, Congresswoman Morella for being here and for their support for the arts and humanities. There are many, many other supporters in both parties of the arts and humanities in the Congress who wanted to be here today, but in light of Tuesday's election results in Minnesota, they're in the gym working out. [Laughter]

I'd like to thank our USIA Director, Joe Duffey, for being here, and a special thanks to our wonderful Secretary of Education, Dick Riley, and his wife, Tunky. Thank you for being here. Secretary Riley's going to persuade them to try to work out their minds as well as their bodies. [Laughter]

Paul Klee once said, "Art does not reproduce the visible, rather it makes it visible." Today we honor an extraordinary group of Americans whose daring vision and indelible contributions to arts and humanities have opened all our eyes to the richness, diversity, and miracles of the human experience.

We are blessed to live in an era of breathtaking change and unlimited possibility: an economy that is the strongest in a generation; hopeful reductions in many of our social problems; around the world, a surging tide of democracy in lands where creativity and freedom once were viciously suppressed; an emerging global community united increasingly by the technological revolution, commercial ties, and greater interaction.

But we know that change also, always, brings new challenges and, perhaps even as important, can obstruct old, unresolved difficulties. Now more than ever, therefore, we need our artists and patrons, our historians and educators to help us make sense of the world in which we live, to remind us about what really matters in life, to embody the values we Americans hold most dear: freedom of expression, and tolerance and respect for diversity.

For more than 200 years, through dance and songs, in paint or on paper, Americans have expressed their individuality and their common humanity. This tradition of our shared culture is one we must nurture and take with us into the new millennium.

Today we proudly honor 19 men and women, a theater troupe, and one organization, all of whom have laid the foundation for a new century of greater American creativity.

First, the National Medal of the Arts. More than 50 years ago, a New York City mother, looking for a way to keep her 7-year-old son off the streets, decided to send him with his sister to her ballet class. From there, Jacques d'Amboise leapt to the pinnacle of the dance, thrilling audiences as principal dancers for the New York City Ballet, landing roles in Hollywood musicals, creating timeless ballets of his own. With his National Dance Institute, he has given thousands of children, like those we saw today, the same opportunity he had, to strive for excellence and expression through dance.

Those who know him know he would walk 1,000 miles for his kids. And this spring he will be doing just that, hiking the length of the Appalachian Trail to raise money for his institute.

Ladies and gentlemen, Jacques d'Amboise.

[The President and the First Lady presented the medal and congratulated Mr. d'Amboise.]

The President. From "Blueberry Hill" to Capitol Hill, and countless concert halls and honky-