

[President Flores said he was optimistic about Honduras' recuperation from Hurricane Mitch but expressed concern that the difficulties it presented could undermine the democracy his nation had fought so hard to attain. He said the challenge would be to show the Honduran people that the system would work for them. He concluded by thanking the President for coming.]

President Clinton. Thank you. Let me just say one thing as we break up. I have heard this—and one of the reasons I am grateful that we have Members of our Congress here is that we have these bills up there; they can be addressed now. I think there is an overwhelming understanding in both parties in the Congress that we have to pass the aid bill. And I think

the only thing that we have to do is to make sure that political considerations in America that have nothing to do with Central America, things that are back home don't in any way hold up the consideration of either piece of legislation, and so we will work hard on it.

Thank you.

Oh, I have to get my key to the city. If I wear this to dinner tonight, I'll get a discount. *[Laughter]*

Thank you.

NOTE: The discussion began at 2:52 p.m. in the conference room at the Central Bank. In his remarks, the President referred to Pope John Paul II. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Statement on the Kennedy-Murray Amendment to Proposed Education Flexibility Partnership Legislation

March 9, 1999

For the second day in a row, the Republican leadership has continued its efforts to stand in the way of voting on an amendment to finish the job of hiring 100,000 teachers to reduce class size. Communities across the country need to know that Congress will live up to the bipartisan commitment we made last fall to fund this effort. The American people expect us to

work together to improve the education of our students. I call on the Republican leadership to allow an up-or-down vote on more teachers and smaller classes, and I call on every Senator to support the Murray-Kennedy measure to reduce class size and hire well-prepared teachers across the Nation.

Message to the Congress Transmitting the Report of the National Endowment for the Arts

March 9, 1999

To the Congress of the United States:

It is my pleasure to transmit herewith the Annual Report of the National Endowment for the Arts for Fiscal Year 1997.

The Arts Endowment awards more than one thousand grants each year to nonprofit arts organizations for projects that bring the arts to millions of Americans. Once again, this year's grants reflect the diversity of our Nation's culture and the creativity of our artists. Whether seeing a classic theatrical production in Connecticut or

an art exhibition in Arizona, whether listening to a symphony in Iowa or participating in a fine arts training program for inner-city students in Louisiana, Americans who benefit from Arts Endowment grants have experienced the power and joy of the arts in their lives.

Arts Endowment grants in 1997 supported:

- projects in theater, dance, music, visual arts, and the other artistic disciplines, demonstrating that our diversity is an asset—