

June 4 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1999

We will continue to work in partnership with South Africa to build a world of justice and tolerance, opportunity and prosperity, democracy and security.

Statement on the National Economy *June 4, 1999*

Today, we have more good news about continuing prosperity in our economy. The unemployment rate fell to 4.2 percent, marking the 23d month in a row that the rate has been below 5 percent and the lowest rate in 29 years. Combined with the continued strong overall economic growth, low long-term inflation, and continued rising wages, we are widening the circle of opportunity for more Americans. African-

American unemployment fell to the lowest level on record. Nearly 19 million jobs have been created since 1993, and nearly one million jobs have been created in the first 5 months of this year, showing the continued strong pace of job creation. We need to continue our commitment to our proven economic strategy of fiscal discipline, opening markets abroad, and targeted investments in our people.

Statement on the Death of Zachary Fisher *June 4, 1999*

Hillary and I are saddened to hear of the death of Zachary Fisher. The brave men and women of the United States military have lost a true friend, and America has lost a true patriot.

Over the years, thousands of military families were touched by Mr. Fisher's generosity: he provided scholarships for college; built "Fisher Houses" near military and VA hospitals so that families could be close to sick or injured loved ones; and established New York's *Intrepid* Mu-

seum so that future generations could be inspired by America's military history.

Through these good works, Mr. Fisher helped all Americans repay the tremendous debt we owe to the men and women who every day risk their lives to defend our Nation and advance the cause of freedom around the world. I was proud to present him with the Presidential Medal of Freedom last fall. Mr. Fisher's memory will continue to inspire all Americans.

Hillary and I send our thoughts and prayers to his family and friends.

The President's Radio Address *June 5, 1999*

The President. Good morning. I'm here today with Tipper Gore, my adviser for mental health policy. On Monday, together with Vice President Gore and the First Lady, we will convene the first White House Conference on Mental Health. Today Tipper and I want to talk about what we must do as a nation to fight the stigma that prevents so many Americans with mental illness from making the most of their lives.

For more than 6 years now, our administration has worked hard to widen the circle of opportunity for every American. That means making sure people living with mental illness have the same chance to live up to their God-given potential as all other Americans.

But the hard truth is, in too many of our communities and in too many of our hearts, mental illness is misunderstood and feared. Too

many people with mental illness are denied the opportunity to fully participate in American life. Bias against people with mental illness is not unique in our time or our Nation. But as a nation founded on the idea of equality, we must use our time to change it.

Tipper Gore is leading our efforts, and I'd like to ask her to say a few words.

Tipper Gore. Thank you, Mr. President.

Every day, in every community in America, millions of Americans and their families face the problem of mental illness. In fact, more than one in five Americans experiences some form of mental illness every year, from depression to schizophrenia; one in four Americans has a family member with a mental illness; and virtually every American has a friend, a neighbor, or a colleague with a mental illness.

We know that mental illness is not something that happens to other people. It touches us all. Why then is mental illness met with so much misunderstanding and fear? We have come so far in the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness, but our attitudes have lagged far behind.

I have talked to many people about the impact these outdated attitudes have on their lives. Some tell me that the shame and stigma they experience are harder to bear than the illness itself. Many live in fear that they will lose their jobs, their home, or their health benefits if their condition becomes known. And so too many people with mental illness don't seek treatment that can change their lives, and the vicious cycle of silence, ignorance, and stigma continues. If we are ever going to put an end to this vicious cycle, we have to take responsibility and dispel the myths about mental illness once and for all.

One of the most widely believed and most damaging myths is that mental illness is a personal failure, not a physical disease. A recent study shows that the majority of Americans don't believe that mental illness can be accurately diagnosed or treated. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Increasingly, we are learning that many mental disorders are biological in nature and can be medically treated—in some cases, more effectively than illnesses like heart disease. New drugs and better community health services are making it possible for even those with the most severe disorders to live healthier, more productive lives.

A closely related and equally troubling myth is that young people don't suffer from real depression; they're just naturally moody, we think. Again, this is simply untrue. We recently learned that even very young children experience serious clinical depression, and it should be taken seriously.

Consider this: The majority of children who commit suicide are profoundly depressed, and the majority of parents whose children took their own lives say they didn't recognize that depression until it was too late. And senior citizens, too, often accept the notion that depression is a natural part of aging and don't reach out for help.

These myths don't just harm people with mental disorders; they hurt all of us. That is why we must all do our part to break the silence about mental illness.

The President. We must start by talking honestly about the problem, and this Monday we'll take an important step in the right direction. Tipper's own decision to discuss her struggle with depression is a testament to her courage and commitment to change attitudes and build understanding about mental illness.

I'm pleased to announce that later this year, together with the Surgeon General, Tipper will unveil a major new campaign to combat stigma and dispel myths about mental illness. With new public service announcements and strong partners in the private sector, we'll reach millions of Americans with a simple message: Mental illness is nothing to be ashamed of, but stigma and bias shame us all.

Together, we will replace stigma with acceptance, ignorance with understanding, fear with new hope for the future. Together, we will build a stronger nation for the new century, leaving no one behind.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 4:50 p.m. on June 4 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on June 5. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 4 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.