

political and so that it would be competent, professional, and highly personal. And we've dealt with everything from a 500-year flood along the Mississippi River to a massive earthquake in California and all kinds of other natural disasters. This is a trip, I'm sure—I know I, and I'm sure both James Lee and Rodney, never wanted to have to make.

I'd like to give a word of personal encouragement to my former neighbors up here in the Quapaw Quarter not to give up on it. I hope everyone who possibly can will rebuild those homes—will rebuild the homes, fix the roofs, replant the trees, and keep the spirit of the place alive.

And I want to say to the folks in all the counties in the State—and I've got a list that includes not only Pulaski but also Independence, St. Francis, Saline, and White Counties; we've already declared individual and local governments eligible for assistance there. The State has been declared a disaster area as more counties may become specifically eligible. I want to encourage all of them, as well.

These things happen, as Governor Huckabee reminded me, that Arkansas had the largest number of tornadoes in one day, moving through here the other day, that have ever been recorded. And we grieve for the loss of life.

I'd like to say especially that this is a landmark for me, this store here. And I'm so glad that the people who own it are going to rebuild it, because it used to be our family store. And Hillary and Chelsea and I used to come down here. We think of the fine pharmacist here who lost his life, and the others here in Arkansas. And when we survey the scope of the devastation, I think we can all be grateful to God that the loss has not been greater.

And so this is a day when the Sun is out, and a lot of people have offered their helping hands. I want to thank these young people from the AmeriCorps program, our national service program, for being here. They've come in to help. We're glad to see them.

And so I ask you to redouble your resolve and help your neighbors. And we'll do everything we can to be good neighbors.

Thank you, and God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:10 p.m. in the parking lot of a Harvest Foods store. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Mike Huckabee, Lt. Gov. Winthrop P. Rockefeller, Attorney General Mark L. Pryor, Secretary of State Sharon Priest, and State Treasurer Jimmie Lou Fisher of Arkansas; Governor Huckabee's wife, Janet; Mayor Patrick Henry Hays of North Little Rock; and Harvard Foods pharmacist Robert E. Howard.

Remarks to the Community in Beebe, Arkansas

January 24, 1999

Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. Good afternoon. Thank you for making me feel welcome. Let me say, first of all, that I brought my "Arkansas Cabinet"—Secretary Slater and Mr. Witt—down here today along with a number of Arkansans from the White House staff, including Missy Kincaid, who is from this community. I have been here many times. I have a lot of friends here, and I was very sad when I flew over Beebe and McRae today and I saw how much damage had been done. And I saw a lot of pain in a lot of faces up on the road there, but I also saw a lot of determination.

I want to thank your mayor for being—even with his bad foot, walking around with me in

some pretty lumpy places. He must think he has impeccable timing. He got himself installed just in time for the tornado. But he's a young man and a teacher, so he ought to be about rebuilding the schools—and that's a good thing.

And I thank your county judge. I thank your superintendent, Mr. Williams. I thank my good friend Senator Beebe and Mrs. Beebe and Representative Hinton. I'd also like to compliment your fire chief, Mr. Kennedy, and the National Guard people. I know they've worked very, very hard the last few days, and I know that we're all appreciative of them.

And you've had some young AmeriCorps volunteers who came down from St. Louis, and that's a program that was started after I became

President. I'm proud of these young people; they volunteer a year or 2 years of their lives to work in communities just doing what needs to be done. And I'm very grateful for that.

Let me say on the points that I've heard people talk about, as all of you know, we've got a relationship here with the State emergency folks. We are going to set up programs to provide whatever help we can to this community. I think the most immediate public need, obviously, is for some place for the children to go to school. And we've talked about how quickly we could get some of the portable classrooms in here in large numbers and with the best possible quality. And I assure you that we will—I will personally be involved in that, and so will Mr. Witt and Secretary Slater. We'll get on it, and we'll get the job done as quickly as it can physically be done.

We also want to make sure that both the community and individual families are clear about what the Federal Government can and cannot do and what kind of support is there. We don't want anybody to leave something on the table that we could contribute to rebuilding the lives of the families and the community.

And again, I just want to encourage you. You probably know, right before I came here I was walking through my old neighborhood in Little Rock, the Quapaw Quarter, where the Governor's Mansion is and where I lived for 12 years. I saw a lot of people whom Hillary and Chelsea and I spent a lot of time with, with their homes down around their ears today too. They'll have to decide how to go forward, and many of you will. But I just want to encourage you. I want to tell you that as awful as it is,

I just thank God there weren't more people killed. And I hope we can all keep the right attitude, and I hope all the neighbors will keep helping their neighbors. And in the end, I think it will come out all right.

And again, let me thank you, Mayor; thank you, Judge; and I thank all the other local leaders, and thank you for giving a chance to be here—giving us a chance to be with you today.

God bless you. Thank you very much.

I also wanted to say just one other thing, just because I—there's one part of Arkansas I am not visiting today. In addition to Congressman Snyder, who has Pulaski and White County—Independence and St. Francis County and I think one other county have been declared disasters, and the east Arkansas counties are in Representative Marion Berry's district, and Congressman Berry is here with us today, too. And so our thoughts are with the people east of here who are suffering as well. And some of those folks lost everything they have, and I just wanted to mention them and say our thoughts and our prayers and our support are with them, too.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:47 p.m. in front of the Beebe School District Building. In his remarks, he referred to Katherine (Missy) Kincaid, Special Assistant to the First Lady; Mayor Donald Ward of Beebe; Judge Bob Parish of White County; Kieth Williams, Beebe superintendent of schools; State Senator Mike Beebe and his wife, Ginger; State Representative Randy Minton; and Doug Kennedy, chief, Beebe Fire Department.

Remarks on the Welfare to Work Initiative *January 25, 1999*

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. This is a good way to start the day, isn't it? [*Laughter*] We're all going to feel better when we leave here.

Let me thank the previous speakers. First, I want to thank Robert Higgins and his entire organization for setting an example for corporations throughout America. And I thank his employees for coming here today and for being

a vivid human illustration of how welfare reform can work at its best.

I thank my good friend of many years Governor Mel Carnahan, and Mrs. Carnahan, who is here with him. We made two of our major welfare reform announcements over the last several years in Missouri because no State has worked harder to do this right, in a both humane and effective way.