

Mar. 30 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1999

Nothing in this report lessens the need to devote 15 percent of the surplus to strengthening Medicare. But nothing in this report lessens the need to make tough but achievable reforms either. And nothing in this report lessens the need to help seniors with a prescription drug benefit. If we wait, we will be condemning ourselves to future changes that will be much more costly and wrenching and much less satisfying in the end.

Today, we face a choice that is a test of our wisdom as a self-governing people and a test of our vision of 21st century America. Will we seize this moment of prosperity? Will we devote these surpluses to strengthening Medicare, to strengthening our future? Or will we rush and do the most appealing prospect of the moment, a tax cut that will explode in later years and avoid our generation's responsibility and put the future of Medicare at risk?

The trustees' report is welcome news, but it also contains a clear lesson: Tough, disciplined action is good economics. It's good for Social Security; it's good for Medicare; it's good for America. It's very good for our children's future and for the future of our families across the generations.

We can extend the life of Social Security and Medicare and have an appropriate, affordable amount of tax relief specially targeted to the neediest working families and middle class families. But we have to apply the lessons we have learned in the last 6 years to the first years of the 21st century. I am determined to see that we do so this year. And the trustees' report should make it easier for us to fulfill our responsibilities.

Thank you very much.

Serbian Proposal To Settle Situation in Kosovo

Q. Sir, what do you think of Milosevic's offer to withdraw some troops if NATO stops bombing?

The President. I agree with Chancellor Schroeder.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:57 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany. A reporter referred to President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). The exchange portion of this item could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Statement on a Serbian Proposal To Settle the Situation in Kosovo

March 30, 1999

I share the view of Chancellor Schroeder that President Milosevic's proposal is unacceptable. President Milosevic began this brutal campaign. It is his responsibility to bring it to an imme-

diate end and embrace a just peace. There is a strong consensus in NATO that we must press forward with our military action.

Statement on the Death of Joe Williams

March 30, 1999

Hillary and I were deeply saddened to learn of the death of jazz and blues great Joe Williams. He was a national treasure. For the better part of this century, America was blessed with Joe Williams' smooth baritone voice and peerless interpretations of our favorite ballads. Hearing Joe Williams sing at the White House in 1993 remains one of my favorite memories. Hillary

and I are grateful for the opportunity to have welcomed him back for the Kennedy Center Honors every year since. We send our prayers and deepest sympathies to his family and friends.