

education. Then, together, we can budget for the kind of tax cuts we need and can afford while we pay off the debt and guarantee a strong America in the 21st century.

This is a very good time for our country. We're on the right path; let's stay on it, use our surplus wisely, think about our children's future. Then the 21st century will be America's best days.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 3:30 p.m. on July 16 in Room 136 at Amos Hiatt Middle School in Des Moines, IA, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on July 17. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 16 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

## Statement on Representative Michael P. Forbes' Decision To Join the Democratic Party *July 17, 1999*

Politics at its best is about ideas, ideas that lead to real advances for the American people. That is why I welcome Congressman Michael Forbes' decision to join the Democratic Party, a decision based on our shared commitment to a vigorous, innovative agenda for America's future.

Our party is inclusive and committed to a new direction for the 21st century. Today, we are fighting for the Patients' Bill of Rights, for using the surplus first to save Social Security and Medicare and provide seniors access to prescription drugs, for paying off our national debt and investing more in quality education for all

our children, and for a responsible middle class tax cut. Michael Forbes has embraced these ideas. The congressional Republicans have rejected them. We welcome him to the Democratic Party and to the fight for America's future.

Michael Forbes has changed parties because he believes it is best for his constituents, for the people of New York, and for our country. He is joining a party that welcomes independent thinking and the courage to change. I know he made a hard choice, but it is the right choice for his constituents, for his own children, and for our Nation.

## Remarks on the Search for John F. Kennedy, Jr., Carolyn Bessette Kennedy, and Lauren Bessette *July 18, 1999*

As the search continues, I want to express our family's support, and offer our prayers and those of all Americans for John Kennedy, Jr.; his wife, Carolyn; her sister Lauren; and to their fine families.

I also want to thank the Coast Guard and all those who have worked so hard in this endeavor.

For more than 40 years now, the Kennedy family has inspired Americans to public service, strengthened our faith in the future, and moved our Nation forward. Through it all they have suffered much, and given more.

In recent years, in particular, John Kennedy, Jr., and Carolyn have captured our imagination and won our affection. I will always be grateful for their kindnesses to Hillary and Chelsea and me.

At this difficult moment, we hope the families of these three fine young people will feel the strength of God, the love of their friends, and the prayers of their fellow citizens.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:13 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to the search and rescue efforts off

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the coast of Martha's Vineyard, MA, to locate the aircraft that carried Mr. Kennedy, his wife, and her sister, who were reported missing on July 17.

## Statement on Crime Rate Statistics

*July 18, 1999*

Today's Justice Department statistics confirm that our strategy of more police on the street and fewer guns in the hands of criminals is working. Violent crime has now dropped by 27 percent since 1993, and overall crime has fallen to an unprecedented low. We should stick to this commonsense strategy.

Unfortunately, some in Congress are willing to play politics with our public safety and threaten all of our progress. They want to shut down

our successful community policing efforts and riddle our gun laws with dangerous new loopholes. To keep driving down the crime rates, Congress should support more police on the street and fewer guns, not more guns on the street and fewer police.

NOTE: This statement was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 16 but was embargoed for release until 4:30 p.m., July 18.

## Remarks at a Dinner for Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel

*July 18, 1999*

I want to, first of all, welcome you all and thank you for braving the rather lengthy receiving line. Prime Minister Barak has asked me to announce that you can relax, because our speeches will only be half as long as the receiving line. *[Laughter]*

It's a great pleasure and an honor for Hillary and I to welcome the Baraks to the White House. This is a good day. This is a good day for affirming the eternal friendship between Israel and the United States. It is also a hard day for those of us who are Americans, and we offer our prayers for John Kennedy, Carolyn Bessette, and Lauren Bessette and for their families. We are reminded again that life and its possibilities are fleeting, that we mortals are obliged to be humble and grateful for every day, and to make the most of every day, and that the obligation we bear for the search for peace in the Middle East should be assumed with that clear knowledge.

Mr. Prime Minister, 12 days ago you spoke to the *Knesset*, announcing your new government. Now, I read your speech with great interest, particularly your vow that you will, quote, "not sleep a wink" until peace is achieved.

Shortly after you gave that speech you came here; we went to Camp David; you kept me up until 1:45 in the morning. *[Laughter]* This is a man who keeps his commitments. *[Laughter]*

In that speech, you proclaimed that this moment is, quote, "a landmark and a turning point, a time of reconciliation, a time of unity, a time of peace." Many years of hard work have brought this day closer—some of it done on this very ground. Here Prime Minister Begin and President Sadat, with President Carter's assistance, made peace. Here Prime Minister Rabin, Chairman Arafat, and King Hussein committed to peace. Here last year, Prime Minister Netanyahu and Chairman Arafat agreed to build on that commitment.

Now the challenge is to make the promise of those days a reality every day from now on, to implement the Wye accords, to reach a permanent status agreement between Israel and the Palestinian people, to build a comprehensive peace for the region, including Syria and Lebanon. Mr. Prime Minister, you have made it very clear that Israel will keep its commitments. I want to make it equally clear that America