

## The President's Radio Address

*August 14, 1999*

Good morning. Throughout our history, American families have spent the summer enjoying the natural beauty of our Nation's waterways. Today, more Americans than ever are spending their vacations by our beaches, our lakes, our rivers. And it's important to ensure that the water our families swim and fish in is as clean and safe as we can possibly make it.

Clean water is the most simple necessity of our lives, and we almost take it for granted. But 25 years ago, many of our waterways were so dirty they actually posed a serious threat to public health. Then Congress passed the Clean Water Act, and we began the long process of reclaiming our waterways and preserving them for the future.

For more than 6½ years now, Vice President Gore and I have worked to continue that legacy. We've strengthened the Safe Drinking Water Act, helping communities upgrade water treatment plants. We demanded more industries publicly disclose the chemicals they release into the air and water. We required water systems across the country to give customers regular reports on the safety of the water flowing from their taps. We strengthened protections for vital wetlands. And last year we launched a new clean water action plan to help finish the job the Clean Water Act started 25 years ago. We can all be proud of the progress we've made so far, but when 40 percent of our Nation's surveyed waterways are still too polluted for swimming or fishing, we know we have to do more.

Like many Americans, I was shocked to learn that several young children became gravely ill last week after swimming in a lake that may have been contaminated with *E. coli* bacteria. That is simply unacceptable. Parents have a right to expect that our recreational waters are safe for their children to swim in. All Americans have a right to expect we're doing all we can to clean up our waterways.

So today I'm pleased to announce that we're taking new action to ensure that every river, lake, and bay in America is clean and safe. The EPA will work in partnership with States to assess the state of all our waterways, to identify the most polluted waters, and to develop strong,

enforceable plans to restore them to health. These steps will chart a course to clean up 20,000 waterways and ensure that they remain safe for generations to come. But just as we're taking new action to preserve our environment for future generations, the Republican leadership in Congress is laying plans to roll back more than a quarter century of bipartisan progress in public health and environmental protection.

Without explanation or excuse, the Republicans' spending bills slash important environmental initiatives, like our lands legacy program to preserve natural treasures, farms, urban parks, wetlands, and other green spaces. They short-change vital research and development programs that address the threat of global warming, that help us to develop alternative fuels in vehicles that pollute less and to make the maximum use of available energy conservation technologies. And their spending bills are also loaded with unrelated provisions that would sacrifice crucial environmental protections for the sake of special interests. I vetoed bills before because they contain such antienvironmental riders, and if necessary, I'm prepared to do it again.

The budget of the Republican leadership isn't simply turning back the clock on environmental protection. It's also turning its back on 6 years of fiscal responsibility and prudent investment, a policy that's produced the strongest economy in a generation, the longest peacetime expansion in our history, the largest surplus in our history.

Their budget plan, because it contains such a large tax cut, would actually threaten our environment because it would require big cuts in environmental enforcement, letting toxic waste dumps fester, even shutting down national parks. In addition to that, we'd have across-the-board cuts in everything from education to medical research to defense, and they wouldn't add a day to the life of the Social Security or Medicare Trust Fund, nor would they pay off the debt.

Our budget continues to invest in the environment and education and medical research and defense. It pays off the debt in 15 years for the first time since 1835, and it lengthens the life of the Social Security and Medicare Trust

*Aug. 14 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1999*

Funds. It's a good budget, and it also provides for a modest tax cut.

We have proved time and again that we don't have to choose between growing our economy or preserving our environment. We can do both with discipline. So again I ask Congress, let's put politics aside and continue the common-sense course that is already leading us toward a cleaner environment, a stronger economy, and a stronger America for the 21st century. Let's

work together to give our children the gift of a better, healthier world.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 5:04 p.m. on August 12 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on August 14. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 13 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

## Statement on the Death of Lane Kirkland

*August 14, 1999*

Hillary and I are deeply saddened by the passing of Lane Kirkland, one of the towering figures in the American labor movement. For nearly five decades, he was a guiding force for workplace fairness, dignity, and innovation, and a catalyst for international democracy.

Lane led the AFL-CIO during 15 of the most challenging years in labor's history. With skill, determination, and unparalleled intellect, he reunited the major unions and reaffirmed labor's place at the table of American democracy. With his unflinching support of free trade unionism internationally, especially in Poland, he helped

hasten the fall of the Iron Curtain while showing America that it is possible to stand up to communism abroad while standing up for working men and women here at home. From his days as a merchant marine during World War II to his work on the Board of Directors of the Institute of Peace, he was always ready and willing to serve his country. I valued his friendship, strong support, and keen advice. He was a great American, and he will be greatly missed.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Irena, and his family in this time of mourning.

## Remarks at the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States 100th National Convention in Kansas City, Missouri

*August 16, 1999*

Thank you very much, Commander Pouliot; distinguished officers of the VFW; Congressman Skelton; Congressman Moore; Congresswoman Kaptur; Secretary West and Deputy Secretary Gober; ladies and gentlemen. It is a great honor for me to be here in Kansas City today to help to celebrate a hundred proud years for the Veterans of Foreign Wars. You should clap for yourselves. *[Applause]* That's good.

I'd like to begin with just a few reflections of what these 100 years mean for you and for the United States. We are less than 150 days now from the beginning of one century and the end of another, which many have called the American Century. Lately, there have been

a number of looks back at the people and personalities and events that made this 20th century: the leaders who led freedom's triumph over tyranny, like Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Marshall; inventors like the Wright brothers, whose ideas changed the way we lived; moral forces like Martin Luther King and Eleanor Roosevelt, whose ideas and examples changed the world; scientists like Dr. Jonas Salk, whose discoveries liberated a generation of parents from the mortal fear that their children would have polio and be crippled. But if you ask who has been most responsible for making this the American Century, one answer would be at the top of anyone's list after two World Wars and a long