

forward. I regret that the IRA did not give the de Chastelain Commission a more timely commitment on arms decommissioning to maintain the momentum toward full implementation of the accord—a commitment which reflects the wishes of the vast majority of people both in Ireland and in Northern Ireland.

At the same time, we have seen real progress in the past few days. This progress is reflected in the most recent report from the de Chastelain

Commission, which states that the commitment made by the IRA's representative "holds out the real prospect of an agreement which would enable [the Commission] to fulfill the substance of its mandate." I urge all the parties to build on that progress, remain engaged, and carry through on their responsibilities to work together to achieve the full implementation of the Good Friday accord.

## **The President's Radio Address** *February 12, 2000*

Good morning. Today I want to speak with you about the important steps we're taking to reach one of our Nation's highest goals, helping all our people to succeed at work and in the most important work of all, caring for their children.

For 7 years now, this administration has taken action to give families more of the tools they need to balance the difficult demands of work and home. We've helped to make child care better, safer, and more affordable for millions of families. We've greatly expanded preschool and after-school programs. We've fought to give generous tax credits to help the growing numbers of families who provide care for aging or ailing loved ones at home.

This month we're celebrating the seventh anniversary of the Family and Medical Leave Act, the very first bill I was privileged to sign as President. That bill was the product of years of hard work by a large coalition of caring leaders, many of whom have joined me here today. They should be very proud of their efforts.

The family and medical leave law has now given more than 20 million Americans the opportunity to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave to care for a newborn child or a sick relative or attend to their own serious health needs without fear of losing their jobs. Everywhere I go, people come up to me and tell me how much this law has meant to their lives. I've heard people say that the time they were able to take off to be by their dad's side in the hospital or bond with a new daughter at home was the most important time they've ever spent.

Not only has the law been a godsend for families, it's also been good for business. Nearly 85 percent of businesses reported that complying with the law required no extra cost. In fact, in many cases it has actually helped save them money by cutting down on turnover and reducing the expense of training new workers.

But for all the success of this law, we know we can and should do more. Today, there are still large numbers of families who need to take leave from work but can't afford to give up the income. That's why, 3 months ago, Labor Secretary Alexis Herman and I proposed a new rule to give States flexibility to use their existing unemployment insurance programs to offer paid leave to new parents. Participation is purely voluntary, but we hope States will take advantage of this. Before they do, they must determine how it will affect the soundness of their unemployment system.

Today I am pleased to announce a new way we can make it easier for States to take up this challenge. I'm proposing \$20 million in new competitive grants to help develop and evaluate creative new approaches for providing paid family leave to workers, whether it's through unemployment insurance, temporary disability programs, or any other source. Many States have already recognized the great need for paid leave and have begun drafting their own proposals to provide it. We hope and believe our grants will help to speed the way.

There are two more steps I believe we should take right away. Once again, I asked Congress to expand family and medical leave to give parents time off when they have to go to see their

children's teachers or take them to the doctor. And I asked Congress to extend the benefits of the law to employees of smaller companies, so that we can reach another 10 million American families. I want to thank Senator Dodd, who is here with me today, and Senator Kennedy and Representatives Clay, Woolsey, and Maloney for their tireless work on behalf of these proposals. With their leadership, I believe we will succeed in expanding family and medical leave this year.

I've often wondered how my own mother, when she was a young widow, would have been able to go away to train as a nurse if my grandparents hadn't been there to take care of me. My mother and I were lucky. So were many

other American families. But none of our families should have to rely on luck alone, and no American should ever have to choose between the job they need and the parent or child they love. If we use this moment wisely, we can help to ensure that they'll never have to make that choice again.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 4:52 p.m. on February 11 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on February 12. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 11 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

## Statement on the Death of Charles M. Schulz, Jr.

*February 13, 2000*

Hillary and I were deeply saddened to learn of the death of Charles M. Schulz, Jr. On the day that our newspapers print his very last "Peanuts" strip, it is especially poignant that we mourn the passing of Charles Schulz himself. For 50 years, his keen eye, his good and generous heart, and his active brush and pen have given life to the most memorable cast of characters ever to enliven our daily papers. The hopeful and hapless Charlie Brown, the joyful

Snoopy, the soulful Linus—even the "crabby" Lucy—give voice, day after day, to what makes us human.

Today, in his final strip, Charles Schulz writes, "Charlie Brown, Snoopy, Linus, Lucy . . . how can I ever forget them. . . ." We can say with certainty that we will never forget them, or their creator, or the many gifts he has given us all.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Jeannie, and their children.

## Remarks on Receiving the League of United Latin American Citizens Lifetime Achievement Award

*February 14, 2000*

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. Well, thank you, President Rick Dovalina. Elvia Morales, thank you very much for reminding us of why we're all here working every day. She did a fine job, didn't she? I was very proud of her. Thank you.

I thank the students from Cesar Chavez Public Charter High School for Public Policy for joining us, and their teachers and principal. Thank you all again for being here, and good luck to you.

I'd like to thank Senator Chuck Robb from Virginia and Congressman Silvestre Reyes from Texas for joining us today. Thank you very much, gentlemen. I want to thank our Secretary of Energy, and my dear friend, Bill Richardson, for the wonderful statement that he made in opening this meeting today.

I thank all the people of our administration who are here, but I would like to especially acknowledge my Deputy Chief of Staff, Maria Echaveste; my Assistant to the President who deals with all the Governors, mayors, and half