

we say, “Hey, we do remember. We’ve not taking this for granted. We’re not being arrogant; we’re not being self-satisfied. We know we’ve got a second chance, and we’re going to make the most of it.”

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:19 p.m. in the Salon B Room at the Four Seasons Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Representative Waters’ husband, Ambassador to the Bahamas Sidney Williams; and former Representative Ronald V. Delums. Representative Waters was a candidate for reelection in California’s 35th Congressional District.

Remarks at the Welcoming Ceremony for King Juan Carlos I of Spain *February 23, 2000*

Your Majesties, members of the Spanish delegation, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the people of the United States, I am delighted to welcome the King and Queen of Spain back to America.

A quarter century ago, the very first trip King Juan Carlos made overseas after his proclamation as King was to the United States. Your Majesty, we are honored that you have decided to celebrate the anniversary of that journey and the friendship between our nations by making America your first stop overseas in the new century.

In the life of every democracy there are defining moments that stand above the rest—Abraham Lincoln at Gettysburg; Lech Walesa raising a fist in a Polish shipyard; students standing with sledgehammers atop the Berlin Wall; Nelson Mandela taking the oath of office as President of South Africa. Nineteen years ago, on this very day, Spain had one of those moments. In the early evening hours of February 23, 1981, 200 armed militia in Madrid stormed the Parliament in a coup. They fired automatic weapons. They took every major elected figure in Spain hostage. Many feared Spain’s 2-year-old experiment with democracy was over. But when angry generals urged King Juan Carlos to join their rebellion, he replied defiantly, “Your coup will succeed over my dead body.” He rallied the people of Spain. He appealed to the military sense of honor. He stood strong, and less than 24 hours after it began, the coup was over.

Freedom was secure in Spain. And less than a decade later, when freedom was reborn in Eastern Europe, the newest democracies could look to Spain as their example. When the task of building an undivided, democratic, peaceful

Europe is completed, all friends of freedom will owe a very great debt to King Juan Carlos.

Your Majesty, for more than five centuries now, our two nations have been united by a common history. Today, we also are united by common values and common responsibilities. In Kosovo, Spanish pilots, soldiers, and police have performed with great bravery, and in April, a Spanish commander will assume the command of KFOR. In Latin America, we have stood together, supporting hurricane victims in Honduras and Guatemala and flood victims in Venezuela, promoting a better life for the people of Colombia, advancing the cause of human rights in Cuba.

Your Majesty, on this lawn almost a quarter century ago, you said that your greatest wish then was that your visit, and I quote, “would contribute to reinforcing the bonds of friendship between us, for the good of our two countries and all those who aspire to attain the same ideals of faith, freedom, and justice.” Your Majesty, your visit then and all your work since have strengthened our bonds of friendship. As you continue to lead your nation and to stand against the forces of terror and the enemies of peace and freedom, may your words be our hope and our guide as we walk together in this new century.

Again, we thank you for the honor of your visit, and we welcome you warmly—your friends in the United States.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:22 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House, where King Juan Carlos I and Queen Sofia were accorded a formal welcome with full military honors. The transcript

released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the King.

Remarks Announcing Budget Initiatives on Transportation for Working Families

February 23, 2000

Thank you very much. Let's give him a hand. [Applause] There you go. Wasn't he great? Thank you very much, Michael. We all know you don't do this public speaking for a living, and you did a terrific job. You may have a few more job interviews after the day is over. [Laughter] For those of you who don't know, Brocton, New York, is near Buffalo. So if this message goes out there to western New York, Michael is looking for a good job. [Laughter] And if he takes one, there are a lot of other people who are, too, out there.

I want to thank Secretary Glickman for being here and for his support of this endeavor. I want to thank our Deputy Secretary of the Department of Transportation, Mort Downey, for their work, he and Secretary Slater. And I want to say a special word of welcome to Senator Arlen Specter from Pennsylvania, who has kept our welfare-to-work policy completely bipartisan, and I thank you, sir, for what you've done, and I'm glad you're here.

I grew up with and served as a Governor for a lot of people like Michael Alexander. In my term of service in Arkansas we had, depending on what census it was, somewhere between 5 and 10 of the poorest counties in America. Some were in the Mississippi Delta, and they were predominantly African-American. Some were in the Arkansas Ozarks; they were overwhelmingly white. They were all full—they were all rural counties, and they were all full of people who lived in little places and had to go to bigger places to work. They all wanted to work, and they all wanted to do right by their kids.

And I saw this young man up here speaking, and I'm thinking about what it must be like to be his age with his whole life still before him, two little kids under foot, trying to figure out how to do right by them. Somebody like that shouldn't have to worry about whether they can go out and get in the car, whether the

car will start, and if they get in a car, whether they won't be able to get food for their children. That's what this is all about.

And what I want you to know is, there are lots of Michael Alexanders out there in America. They're from all backgrounds, all races, all faiths. And for those of us who grew up in places where a lot of Michael Alexanders live, we know that but for a bump in the road, a lot of others of us could be in the same fix they're in. That's what this is all about.

We have worked very hard for 7 years now, based on a vision I had in 1992 that everybody that was responsible enough to work for it ought to have a shot at the American dream. And a lot more people do today, for the reasons that Secretary Glickman said. The Congress has helped us not just by getting rid of the deficit and getting interest rates down and getting investment up but also trying to make work pay.

That's what the earned-income tax credit's all about. And I hope Congress will expand it again by trying to make sure that especially parents in his position can, under family leave, more of them can take a little time off without losing their jobs if their children are in trouble or their parents are sick. And I think we ought to expand the law to cover regular visits to schools, too. You heard Michael mention that.

And it's working, all right. And it's working—the poverty rate is way down, lowest in 20 years, lowest Hispanic poverty rate in 20 years, lowest African-American poverty rate ever recorded, since we've been keeping separate statistics for about 30 years now. But there are still a lot of people who are responsible enough to work and go to school, who are not being rewarded with a chance to succeed at work, at school, and raising their kids, and work themselves into a middle class lifestyle. And as you just heard in graphic terms, one of the biggest barriers today is transportation and not, interestingly enough, not just for people living in small towns