

Mar. 10 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 2000

We can do a better job. Starting next summer, with the help of everyone here today, we will.

Again, let me say, Secretary Slater and to Jane Garvey and to all the people standing with me and all of you sitting out in the audience who had anything to do with this, this is the way our country ought to work in a lot of other contexts. I thank you for what you have done.

I think we have to do more. But this summer a lot of people will benefit from the enormous efforts you have made, and I am very, very grateful.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:21 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Statement on the United Negro College Fund's Technology Enhancement Capital Campaign

March 10, 2000

Today the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) announced the creation of its Technology Enhancement Capital Campaign, a technology initiative that will bring digital opportunity to historically black colleges across the Nation. Through a \$50 million contribution by Microsoft and key commitments from IBM and AT&T, UNCF will help empower students, faculty, and staff at all 39 UNCF member colleges by strengthening technology infrastructure and improving computer access. I applaud the creation of this partnership and strongly support the efforts behind it.

While computer and Internet access has exploded in recent years, America continues to face a "digital divide"—a gap between those who have access to information age tools and the skills to use them and those who don't.

We cannot allow unequal access to deepen divisions along the lines of race, income, education level, and geography. I believe we can use technology to help make the American dream a reality for more citizens, and that is why I have made the effort to bring digital opportunity to all Americans a top administration priority.

My administration is committed to doing its part to ensure that all Americans benefit from opportunities created by information technology. But the Government can not and should not do this alone. That is why I will lead a new markets trip the week of April 9th—designed to mobilize significant private and public efforts to close the digital divide. Efforts like the Technology Enhancement Capital Campaign are inspiring examples of what can be done in partnership to meet this important goal.

The President's Radio Address

March 11, 2000

Good morning. In just a few days, Congress will begin to write the next year's budget. This is an important challenge we in Washington take up every year, with important consequences for the American people. Today I want to talk to you about the outcome I seek for our families and our future.

I've always thought you could tell a lot about people's priorities by what they do first. For me, above all, that means maintaining the fiscal discipline that has brought us to this point of unprecedented prosperity, with 21 million new

jobs, the lowest unemployment in 30 years, the longest economic expansion in history. It means staying on the path to make America debt-free by 2013. It means saving Social Security, strengthening Medicare, modernizing it with a voluntary prescription drug benefit that so many of our seniors need and too few can afford. And it means continuing to put the education of our children first, with higher standards, more and better trained teachers, after-school and summer school programs, modernizing our schools.

These are my first priorities. I think they're most Americans' first priorities. But it seems the congressional majority has hardly given them a second thought. Before Republican leaders have put a single penny toward strengthening Social Security or Medicare, before they put a single penny toward a prescription drug benefit, before they put a single penny toward educating our children, they've allocated nearly half a trillion dollars to risky tax cuts. More than half our money already spent—and not a penny on our most pressing priorities.

Unfortunately, the majority tried to take us down this road before. Last year, they went for one big tax cut with one big grab. This year, they're doing it piece by piece, one tax cut after another. Just this week, we saw Republican leaders attach special-interest tax breaks to what should have been a simple raise in the minimum wage. Now, all these cuts together add up to a serious threat to Social Security and Medicare. They would make it impossible to pay down the debt by 2013 or make vital investments in education, fighting crime, protecting public health and the environment, and other urgent national priorities.

As the budget process begins, I urge Republican leaders to change their course and steer clear of a fiscal dead end. It's wrong for America. It was wrong last year, and it's wrong this year. Let's do first things first.

I urge Congress to write a budget that puts aside enough funds from our hard-won surplus to eliminate the debt by 2013; to write a budget that strengthens and modernizes Medicare with a prescription drug benefit; to write a budget that extends the solvency of Social Security; one that invests in education, extends health coverage to more American families, and meets other pressing priorities.

Of course, Congress still has plenty of time to get its work done right and get it done on time. I hope it will do so. If Congress takes care of first things first, we can also give targeted tax relief to America's families: a tax credit to help pay for college or save for retirement; a tax credit to help care for aging or ailing loved ones; a tax relief to reduce the marriage penalty; tax relief to reward work and family with an expanded earned-income tax credit; an increased tax credit for child care expenses.

I will work with any Member of either party to get these things done. We can get them done, but only in the context of a realistic, responsible, balanced budget, one that maintains our fiscal discipline and makes the most of this great moment of prosperity. Now, that's a budget that makes sense, one that works for working Americans.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

Interview With Sam Donaldson of ABC's "This Week"

March 10, 2000

Gun Safety Legislation

Mr. Donaldson. Mr. President, thanks very much for letting us come over and talk to you today.

The President. You're welcome, Sam.

Mr. Donaldson. You know, among your top legislative priorities, everyone understands, is gun control. You want trigger safety locks; you want a 3-day waiting period for the sale at gun shows; you want photo ID's, among other things. Going to be tough to get?

The President. It's tough to get. We were able to get the Brady bill passed in '93 and the assault weapons ban in '94. And unfortu-

nately, several of the Members who voted for those were defeated because they did. But it's a safer country because of that. We've had half a million people who couldn't buy handguns because they were felons, fugitives, or stalkers, and we've got the gun death rate down to a 30-year low.

So I think nearly everybody who has looked at it thinks we ought to close the gun show loophole, require child safety locks on the guns, and ban the importation of these large ammunition clips. I hope we can do that.

Mr. Donaldson. The NRA says that the gun manufacturers have trigger locks now. They say