

benefit there. I hope we can reauthorize the Older Americans Act. I hope we can do a lot of other things this year. But the spirit—again, I want to thank the Members of Congress, the Republicans and the Democrats, for the spirit behind this action. This is how America is supposed to work. You have done a good thing today.

Thank you very much.

Now I'd like to invite the Members of Congress to come up here for the bill signing. And

I'd like to invite the seniors to go over this way and kind of stand behind me, too.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11 a.m. in Presidential Hall in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Florence Mallonee, Social Security recipient, who introduced the President, and Brittany Collins, granddaughter of Representative Mac Collins. H.R. 5, approved April 7, was assigned Public Law No. 106-182.

Remarks on the Legislative Agenda for International Family Planning Assistance

April 7, 2000

Thank you very much. Please be seated. Good afternoon, and welcome to the White House on this beautiful day. I want to thank all of you who have joined us, particularly the Members of Congress who are here. Representatives Carolyn Maloney and Jim Greenwood will speak in a moment, but I also want to acknowledge the presence of Representatives Nita Lowey, Nancy Pelosi, Ellen Tauscher, Lois Capps, Connie Morella, Joe Crowley, and Barbara Lee. Thank you for being here.

I thank Secretary Shalala for being here and for her strong advocacy. And Secretary Albright and Dr. Ifenne of Nigeria will talk in a moment. We are joined today by the Ambassadors from Albania, Colombia, and Nigeria. We welcome them.

I want to thank the foundations and the non-profits who are here, who have stepped up their own support for women's health and family planning, and all the individual citizens who have also come here to take part in this endeavor.

This week Congress begins debate on a new budget. And we have a new chance to return America's support for family planning around the world to the level it ought to be, a new chance to lift the international family planning debate out of partisan politics and back to what it's really about, human potential and human lives. I have proposed an increase of \$169 million in USAID's international family planning assistance this year and \$25 million to support the U.N. Population Fund.

Members of the administration and I have made clear at every opportunity that we are ready to fight, and I know you are ready to help us win.

One person who is not here today, who wanted very much to be here, is Hillary, but she's out struggling to make sure I gain a place in the Senate spouses club. [*Laughter*] But I would like to quote something she said last year at the Hague forum: "We know that no nation can hope to succeed in the global economy of the 21st century when its women and children are trapped in endless cycles of poverty, when they have inadequate health care, poor access to family planning, limited education, or when they are constrained inside social or cultural customs that impoverish their spirits and limit their dreams."

Two weeks ago I was in a little village in India, a country with nearly a billion people and a per capita income of about \$450 a year. I met the women who, with the smallest amount of encouragement, have started the women's dairy cooperative and taken over the local milk business. I saw their community center's computer that any village woman, poor or nearly illiterate, can use to get the latest information on caring for a newborn child.

Think about how life in that one village is changing for the better because women have access to education and health care. Hillary and I have seen again and again around the world, in the smallest, poorest rural villages on every continent, how empowering women lifts the

lives of individuals and transforms the future of communities.

Family planning is a vital part of that empowerment. It allows women and families to make their own choices and plan their own futures. If you believe God created women equal, if you believe every society needs women's contributions to succeed, then you must be in favor of returning decisions on family life to the hands of women and their families.

Around the world, the complications of pregnancy kill about 600,000 women every year. We all agree on fighting child and maternal mortality, just as we're working to eradicate polio and TB. But maternal mortality has been stuck at the same level for more than a decade now, even though we know family planning could help women bear healthier children and save the lives of 150,000 women a year. If you're in favor of healthy mothers raising healthy babies, you ought to be in favor of family planning.

Around the world, 34 million people are now living with AIDS, and in the developing world, almost half of them are women. Last year, AIDS killed 1.1 million women, leaving broken communities, crippled economies, and millions of orphaned children. If you care about stopping the spread of AIDS, you ought to care about empowering women to make safe choices for themselves and for their children.

Around the world, more than a billion young people are entering their reproductive years, the largest generation in history, and the one behind it is 2 billion strong. More than 150 million women worldwide would like to limit or space their children, but they have no access to contraception. The option these young people have and the choices they make will have vital consequences for every one of us and will, in large measure, shape the world of the 21st century. So if you're concerned about the health of our planet and about the health of everyone on it, you ought to support our family planning assistance around the world.

America has a profound interest in safe, voluntary family planning, a moral interest in saving human lives, a practical interest in building a world of healthy children and strong societies. And because we are a nation that believes in individual freedom and responsibility, we have every interest in supporting others around the world who seek the same rights and responsibilities we ourselves enjoy.

That is why we have consistently supported family planning since 1993. We do not fund abortion. We fund family planning we know reduces the demand for abortion. And I have asked Congress to return our support for international family planning to the level it reached in 1995, a level that serves our interests, keeps our promises, and leverages support from other donors around the world.

I urge Congress to give us that money without restrictions that hamper the work of family planning organizations and bar them from discussing or debating reproductive health choices. Those congressionally sponsored restrictions impose a destructive double standard. When would we ever accept rules telling Americans at home not even to discuss women's health and women's choices? And how in the name of democracy and freedom can we impose those rules on others, which would be illegal here in the United States? That is not the American way.

We know Americans favor family planning at home and voluntary family planning assistance abroad. We should not cloud what is at stake here. Does the United States want to save lives, promote mother's and child's health, and strengthen families and communities around the world? Together, we must make sure the answer is a resounding, unequivocal yes.

Now I would like to turn to someone who has been a leader for us in the administration and around the world in making this case for women's health and women's empowerment, herself a trailblazer and a role model, who has distinguished herself, I believe extraordinarily, as our Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright.

[At this point, Secretary Albright made brief remarks, followed by Dr. Enyantu Ifenne, Director, Center for Development and Population Activities of Nigeria, and Representatives Maloney and Greenwood.]

The President. Well, I want to thank all of the speakers. Secretary Albright, thank you. And I thank Representative Carolyn Maloney, purist though she is. *[Laughter]* We need a few. *[Laughter]*

And I thank Representative Greenwood; so many other Members who are here: Representative Pelosi, who had to leave, Representative Lowey have been leaders in this fight. And I thank, particularly, the Republicans who have joined in this fight. Representative Connie

Morella here. I was just looking at Connie thinking, she's probably got more kids and grandkids than anybody else in this audience—[laughter]—and therefore probably has more standing on this issue than anyone else. And we thank her and all the Members of the House who are here. I thank them.

But mostly, I want to thank you, Dr. Ifenne, for being here. I think you could see what a responsive chord you struck. But when you were speaking and then when Congressman Greenwood got up to speak and he talked about visiting a village in Bolivia, you know, the fundamental problem here, I believe, is that too many people are voting on this issue based on either pressures they receive or personal values they hold dear, genuinely. But they've never actually seen this.

If I hadn't been President, I don't suppose I ever would have gone to those small villages in Latin America and Africa and India and East Asia and met with all those village women who are, I think, the most impressive citizens in the entire world today, changing the whole future.

When Dr. Ifenne was talking, I remembered, when I was in Senegal, I visited with a group of village women who came to see me from their little village. They wanted to come to the capital to see me, because Hillary had gone out to see them. And it was a village where genital mutilation was practiced. And these women organized the village and got rid of it. And so they got up, dressed in their beautiful native dress, and they came to see me, and they even brought along a handful of men who supported them. [Laughter]

When you see these things, when you see people in the most basic ways taking control of their lives, and you realize it is pro-child,

pro-family, pro-every value that any of us ever proposed to espouse, I believe that the United States is—in my budget, I think it's the least we should be doing. And frankly, I only proposed that much because I thought it was the most I could get passed.

But if you were to ask me what I have learned as President about our dealings with other countries, I would say two things. One is, large countries too often forget the little people in other countries. You can't afford it here, because they can vote you out. But we know that the citizens are the strength of this country; the same is true everywhere. The other thing I have learned is that we get far more—that foreign policy is a lot more like real life than most people imagine. You get a lot more, on the whole, out of cooperation than coercion.

So, Doctor, we thank you for coming. It's a long way from Nigeria. I hope your trip will prove to be worthwhile. If every Member of the United States Congress could hear you, I'm quite confident we would prevail. For the rest of us, we have to do our best to add to your voices.

But I hope as you argue this, you will remember to talk to those who have never been to those villages about what we know is true. The empowerment of individuals in difficult circumstances is the ultimate answer to all of our challenges, and this is a very important part of that.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:02 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Ambassadors to the U.S. Petrit Bushati of Albania, Luiz Alberto Moreno of Colombia, and Jibril Muhammed Aminu of Nigeria.

Radio Remarks on the Social Security Internet Retirement Planner April 7, 2000

For more than 60 years now, Social Security has provided a measure of financial security for seniors after a lifetime of work. Beginning today, Americans of all ages can log on to the Internet and find out in seconds the amount of Social Security benefits they can expect in retirement. The new on-line retirement planner estimates

future benefits based on past, present, and projected future income. Just log on to the Social Security website at www.ssa.gov, and click on the new Social Security retirement planner. It's never too early to plan your financial future.