

May 15 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 2000

by the President. In developing this plan, where appropriate, you should consult with other relevant Government departments and agencies. The plan should designate a group of experts representing all aspects of the public safety sector, management, and labor, including law enforcement officers, firefighters, and emergency services officers who will submit written recommendations to you of candidates who exemplify the valor this award recognizes. Further, the plan should establish criteria for recommending nominees for the award of valor, as well as the design of the award itself. I direct

you to report back to me with this plan within 30 days.

All Americans can feel pride in the work done each and every day by those who promise to protect and serve. It is my hope that with the creation of this award of valor the efforts of public safety officers are more publicly recognized and appreciated by our Nation.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: The Executive order of June 29 on establishment of the Presidential Medal of Valor for Public Safety Officers is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on the Supreme Court Decision Striking Down a Provision of the Violence Against Women Act

May 15, 2000

I am deeply disappointed by the Supreme Court's decision today in *United States v. Morrison*. In this case, the Court struck down the civil remedy provision contained in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). In 1994, as part of comprehensive crime control legislation, I signed into law the Violence Against Women Act. This historic, important piece of Federal legislation contains a broad array of groundbreaking laws to combat violence against women. VAWA passed Congress with bipartisan support.

The Supreme Court's decision today does not affect the viability of VAWA as a whole. It does not affect any of the VAWA grant programs nor does it affect Federal criminal provisions that punish interstate domestic violence and stalking crimes. The Supreme Court did, however, invalidate one important provision of the

Violence Against Women Act that gave victims of gender-motivated violence the ability to sue their attackers for lost earnings, medical expenses, and other damages. Because I continue to believe that there should be remedies for victims of gender-motivated violence, we plan to study the Supreme Court's decision in *Morrison* to determine the best means to help these victims.

VAWA has provided funds to communities across the Nation to address the tragedy of violence against women. These funds have made a crucial difference in women's lives. Unfortunately, VAWA funding is only authorized until the end of fiscal year 2000. I have made the reauthorization and strengthening of VAWA a top legislative goal for this year. If we work together, we can enact a bill that will keep women in this country safe from violence.

Remarks to the 1999 Women's National Basketball Association Champion Houston Comets

May 15, 2000

The President. Please be seated. Good afternoon, and welcome to the Rose Garden. I want to thank the Marine Brass for playing for us

and bringing us in, and also thank three Members from the Texas delegation for being here: Representative Ken Bentsen, Representative

Sheila Jackson Lee, and Representative Gene Green, thank you for coming.

I want to welcome the president of the WNBA, Val Ackerman; Coach Chancellor; and Leslie and Nanci Alexander. And I know we have all the team here. Sheryl Swoopes was here in April of 1993 with the Lady Raiders of Texas Tech. How about that? I remember that.

And I want to say a special word of welcome to Loretta Perrot, sister of Kim Perrot. I know we're all glad that she's here with the team today, and I welcome her.

We have a lot of other distinguished athletes and sports figures in the crowd today, as well as some students from Ben Murch Elementary School, the DC city public school champions. Welcome.

Today we're here to celebrate the team that refuses to lose, the Houston Comets. Three years ago I had the privilege of speaking with your team after you had won the first championship, the first in WNBA history. In 1998 you took the crown again. And this season, with your victory over the Liberty, you're at the top again, joining the ranks of Bill Russell's Celtics and Michael Jordan's Bulls, becoming only the fourth franchise in the history of basketball to win three titles in a row. I have—yes, give them another hand. *[Applause]* That's good.

Some of you may know, I'm a modestly fanatic basketball fan, and I follow the WNBA every season. And I am delighted by the continuing progress in both the great quality of play and the enthusiasm of the fans, and I think it's only going to get better and better and better.

I want to say, too, I watched the final series. I saw some or all of every one of those games. And I was impressed by the teamwork, as well as the star work. I was pretty impressed that in the last game, Cynthia and Sheryl scored 20 of the first 22 points. I need some people like that on my team from time to time around here. *[Laughter]*

And I want to say also, though, you don't win three times in a row unless you have a team, unless everybody has a role to play and everybody plays it, and unless people understand that they all do better when they help each other. And that's the sort of spirit that we need more of, indeed, in more other teams in our country and in running our communities and our Nation.

Great basketball teams are also led by great coaches. Coach Van Chancellor has raised the standard of excellence in women's basketball. And in return, he's been named Coach of the Year three times in a row. I know, because of the loss of Kim, this has not been an easy year for this team. Adversity breaks some people. It caused you to break records. You should all be proud of that as well.

Your team has taught America a lot, not just about the game at which you excel but about courage and perseverance, self-confidence and teamwork. It's no wonder so many young girls are now following your lead in taking up basketball. A new generation of women are watching, learning, developing better skills, and dreaming loftier dreams.

Congratulations on a well-deserved victory, and thank you for setting an example for all of us to follow.

And now, I'd like to introduce the president of the WNBA, Val Ackerman. Val.

[At this point, Ms. Ackerman and Coach Van Chancellor made brief remarks. Players Cynthia Cooper, Sheryl Swoopes, and Tina Thompson then presented a jersey to the President.]

The President. Well, thank you very much for the unisex jersey here. *[Laughter]* I'll fight with Hillary over the right to wear it.

Thank you again for your example. I did want to say this about your coach: When I first started watching him on television, you know, when I saw him working with them and I thought about his roots, I thought, it's kind of nice to have a guy winning in the WNBA who speaks without an accent. *[Laughter]* Maybe it's just my ear, but it sounds good to me.

Coach Chancellor. We're from the same area.

The President. I know. That's what I was meaning, you know. You may get mine back, before I know it. *[Laughter]*

And thank you, Cynthia, for your remarks. And I thank all of you. And I will wear this when I work out, and I'll always remember this day. I wish you many more championships. We have a lot of happy moments here in the Rose Garden, but I have a feeling that this is one I'll remember for a good long while.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:06 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Houston Comets President Leslie

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L. Alexander and his wife, Nanci; and Loretta Perrot, sister of team member Kim Perrot, who died of cancer.

Remarks at a Reception for Representative Robert Wexler

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Thank you very much. When Rob started saying all that, I had to pinch myself and make sure I was still alive. *[Laughter]* I want to, first of all, thank all of you for being here for Rob and for Laurie. And I want to thank you for your support for what his career has embodied.

I feel just as strongly about him, if not more strongly, as he apparently does about me. I was very pleased. I admire him because he stands up and fights for what he believes in. He'll take a tough vote when it has to be taken, and he tries to think things through in ways that always have an eye on the future.

You know, the great problem that any advanced society has is that it's always well organized, and that's good. But the bad news is, too often there are too few people who will be willing to change and move us toward the future.

And he was a part of this, what we called the New Democratic movement, when I started back in '93. We believed we could be pro-business and pro-labor. We thought we could balance the budget and still invest in education more. We thought we could be pro-economic growth and pro-environmental preservation. And I think part of it was his experience with State Government before coming here, because a lot of us who had lived in the real world before we moved to Washington—*[laughter]*—thought that it was sort of strange here. Everybody expected you to get on one side of an issue or another, and then just scream as loud as you could and hope every third or fourth day you'd get your 15 seconds on the news. It wasn't a very efficient way to govern or run a country, and we were paying for it.

And so we've had a pretty good run here. But you must understand that very little I've achieved would have been possible if I hadn't had the support of Members of my own party in Congress at critical times. And nobody embodies, in my view, the approach we ought to

be taking toward the future any better than he does. I'm really proud of him.

And we have a lot of big decisions to face this year and next year. But when you encapsulate them all, I would say, here's the story line: When I took office in 1993, a lot of people didn't know whether America would work or not. If I said to you in '92, in the election, "Vote for me, folks, and when I get done here, we will have turned deficits into surpluses, and we'll pay off \$300 or \$400 billion on the national debt," you'd say, "You know, he seems like a pleasant young man, but he's slightly deranged. We'd better send him home." *[Laughter]*

So what did we do? We had to worry about, first of all, getting our priorities in order, putting people first, as I called it in '92, getting the right kind of ideas, and then, basically, pointing the country in the right direction. That was the metaphor I used in our '96 campaign, building a bridge to the 21st century. And a lot of it was really tough.

We passed our economic plan by one vote in the House and the Senate in '93. And there were several other times during the last 7 years when we won by one vote, especially in the Senate. As Al Gore always says, "Whenever I vote, we win." *[Laughter]* And lamentably, he had to vote a lot. So it wasn't easy.

Now the country plainly is going in the right direction. Just last week we announced that for the eighth year in a row, crime is down, gun crime down 35 percent since '93, the lowest overall crime rate in over 25 years. So it's not just the economy—welfare rolls cut in half, 90 percent of our kids immunized for the first time in history. And I could go on and on.

So what's the question this time? The question this time is, what do we as a people propose to do with this prosperity? When you go home tonight you ought to think about it. Those of you that brought your children, you ought to look at them before you answer.