

The President's Radio Address

July 29, 2000

Good morning. This weekend marks the start of the summer recess for Members of Congress. Many are heading home to their districts, and most Republicans are meeting in Philadelphia for their party's convention.

But wherever they go, I hope they will be thinking of the millions of Americans for whom summer vacations are not an option, the millions who work all summer long, all year long, earning no more than the minimum wage.

I want to talk to you today about giving these hard-pressed Americans a much-deserved raise and helping them to live the American dream. The face of the minimum wage is the face of America. Every one of us knows at least one person who works for minimum wage. It might be a member of your family. It might be the person who cares for your children during the day or serves you lunch at the shop on the corner or cleans your office every night.

Seventy percent of the workers on the minimum wage are adults; 60 percent are women; and almost 50 percent work full-time. Many are their families' sole breadwinners, struggling to bring up their children on \$10,700 a year. These hard-working Americans need a raise. They deserve it. They've earned it.

I've always believed that if you work hard and play by the rules, you ought to have a decent chance for yourself and for a better life for your children. That's the promise I made when I first ran for President, and that's the basic bargain behind so much of what we've done in the years since, from expanding the earned-income tax credit for lower income working people to passing the Family and Medical Leave Act, from increased child care assistance to health care for children to helping millions and millions of Americans move from welfare to work.

That's also why, in 1996, we raised the minimum wage to \$5.15 an hour over 2 years. It's high time we did it again. In fact, it's long overdue.

More than a year ago now, I proposed to raise the minimum wage by \$1 over 2 years, a modest increase that merely restores the minimum wage to what it was back in 1982 in real dollar terms. Still, it's no small change. For

a full-time worker, it would mean another \$2,000 a year—\$2,000 more to pay for a child's college education, to cover critical health care, to pay the rent. And for a year now, the Republican leadership has sat on that proposal.

Back in 1996, the last time we raised the minimum wage, some of these same Republicans called it, and I quote, "a job killer cloaked in kindness." They said it would cause—again, a quote—"a juvenile crime wave of epic proportions." Well, time has not been kind to their predictions, and neither have the numbers. Our economy has created more than 11 million new jobs since we last raised the minimum wage. And study after study shows that a raise in the minimum wage is good not only for working families; it's good for our entire economy, especially at a time of labor shortages when we want to increase incentives for all Americans who can, to find work.

So this time, unlike the last time, the congressional majority knows better than to speak against raising the minimum wage. This time, instead of arguing the facts, the leadership is playing legislative games, stalling action, and stifling debate. Already, these delays have cost the minimum wage worker more than \$900 in hard-earned pay. To paraphrase Shakespeare, they've come to bury the minimum wage, not to raise it.

For working Americans, the wait grows longer. As recently as this week, the majority in Congress was still talking about raising the minimum wage, but they couldn't bring themselves to actually do it. In the last hours before their recess, they were still working overtime to give tax breaks to the tiniest, wealthiest fraction of America's families and still doing nothing for the 10 million people who would benefit from a boost in the minimum wage.

This weekend Republican leaders gather in Philadelphia. From their seats inside the convention hall, I hope they'll stop a moment to think of Americans outside that hall—Americans working in the restaurants, the shops, the hotels of Philadelphia, working hard for the minimum wage.

If Republican leaders really want to make their compassion count, they ought to join me

in getting back to business and raising the minimum wage. I hope the majority will join the Democrats to seize this moment, to stop the delays, to work with me to help our working families.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 1:03 p.m. on July 28 in Room 606 at Barrington High School, Barrington, RI, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on July 29. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 28 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Remarks at a Luncheon for Hillary Clinton in New York City *July 29, 2000*

Thank you. First of all, I would like to thank all of you for making us feel so welcome. In particular, I thank you, Albert Kwok and John Ha and Gilliam Kim, for your words and your support. I would also like to thank those of you in the audience who worked so hard on this event, especially Janet Lee, thank you, and my good friend Tony George from Cleveland. I thank Lee Ho-Yeon for the song. Wasn't the song beautiful? Let's give her another hand for the beautiful singing. *[Applause]*

I want to say just a couple of things, if I might, today. First of all, I appreciate the previous remarks by Gilliam Kim about the relationship of the United States and Korea and South Korea during my time. I have been to Korea many times to see the people, the leaders, and the United States forces there. We have worked very hard to encourage the new direction in North Korea and to support President Kim as he has worked to break down the barriers of the past and to build a more peaceful future. And I certainly hope it will be successful.

I feel very good about what has been done, and I appreciate the support that this new direction has received from other nations in the area. So I hope you will all keep your fingers crossed and keep working for it, because it would be a very good thing to make the future in the 21st century safer for all of the children of the Korean Peninsula and all of Asia.

The second thing I would like to say is that I have worked very hard for these last 8 years to make America a place open and welcoming to all immigrants, a place of genuine opportunity that supported people who worked hard and took care of their families and contributed to their communities.

I have worked against discrimination against all people who come to America from other

countries, and I've tried to remind our fellow Americans that all of us came here from somewhere else. Even our native populations once crossed a landmass that no longer exists between the Northwest United States and the northeastern part of Asia. So I welcome you here, and I thank you for your participation in this event.

The last thing I would like to say is that I heartily endorse what was said earlier by Mr. Kim about hate crimes. You know, even though America has made great progress in overcoming our past of discrimination on the basis of race or ethnic origin or religion, we still have instances in our country where people are subject to discrimination. And we all know it. We can remember by name some of the victims: James Byrd, dragged to death in Texas; Matthew Shepard, stretched out on a fence in Wyoming. We know that a former basketball coach in Chicago was killed because of his race. We know that a young Korean Christian was killed walking out of a church by a fanatic who said he belonged to a church that did not believe in God but believed in the supremacy of his race.

We know, thankfully, these people are a very small minority in our country, but we know they have to be rebuked and stopped. And that is why we support the hate crimes legislation. Hate crimes are not like other crimes. People are singled out for victimhood simply because they belong to a certain race or a certain religion. In California not very long ago, a bunch of little Jewish children were shot at just because they were going into their school, and a Filipino postal worker was killed because he was Filipino and because he worked for the Federal Government.

There are very few of these people in our country, thank goodness, but we should pass