

But the main thing I did—I just wanted to get in the plane this morning and fly here and say thanks. I know this is hard, and I know a lot of you are a long way from home. I know some of you have to get, almost, permission to go back to where you come from just so you can pay the bills and keep them from turning off the water and the electricity.

But I want you to know that your fellow Americans appreciate it. These fires have been very well publicized, and the American people know how they're being fought and who is fighting them. And you need to know that we're proud of you, and we're grateful to you.

I know there was a terrible fatality, and there is a funeral today, and our prayers are with the family of the man who lost his life. This

is hard, and I know it. And the main thing I wanted to do was just hop on Air Force One this morning at 6 o'clock so I could come over here and say thanks. You've done a good thing for your country and a good thing for your fellow Americans.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:55 a.m. in the Fire Incident Command Post in Payette National Forest. In his remarks, he referred to Scott Vail, incident commander, National Interagency Incident Management System Team One, who presented the President with a firefighter's axe; and Dave Alexander, forest supervisor, Payette National Forest.

Statement on the Decline in Teen Birth Rates

August 8, 2000

I am very encouraged by new data released today by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showing that teen birth rates in the United States have reached their lowest level since record keeping began 60 years ago. These preliminary data for 1999 show that birth rates among 15- to 19-year-olds dropped 3 percent from the previous year and 20 percent from the most recent peak in 1991.

This new information confirms that we continue to make impressive strides in addressing one of the most important social problems facing our Nation. By enacting welfare reform in 1996, taking executive action to require young mothers to stay in school or lose welfare payments, cracking down on child support enforcement, and launching a national campaign to prevent teen pregnancy, the Clinton-Gore administration has sent a clear message to young women and young men alike: Don't get pregnant or father a child until you are ready to take on the responsibility of parenthood. Working in partnership with States, communities, families, religious leaders, the media, and teens themselves, we have promoted innovative teen preg-

nancy prevention strategies that have contributed to the historic progress we witness today.

These encouraging trends cut across both younger and older teens, married and unmarried teens, all States, and all racial and ethnic groups. The sharpest decline last year was a 6 percent drop in the birth rate for American Indian teenagers. And since 1991, the African-American teen birth rate has decreased by 30 percent. Together, we are helping more young people make responsible choices and delay parenting until they are financially and emotionally ready.

However, we still have much to do, and I urge all sectors of society to continue their efforts to reduce teen pregnancy even further. To build on our progress in breaking the cycle of dependency, I call on Congress to enact my budget initiative to provide \$25 million to support "second-chance homes." These adult-supervised, supportive living arrangements for teen parents who cannot live at home offer parenting skills, job counseling, education, and other referrals that help reduce repeat pregnancies and improve the prospects for young mothers and their children.

Statement on Productivity Growth August 8, 2000

Today's announcement that productivity rose at a 5.3 percent annual rate last quarter is a remarkable confirmation of the continued strength and vitality of the U.S. economy. Over the past 3 years, productivity has grown 3.3 percent annually—more than twice the growth rate of the previous two decades. Rising productivity has been the key to the combination of strong growth, rising wages, and low core inflation underlying our record economic expansion. Today's news is further evidence that our commitment to fiscal discipline, opening markets, and investing in people has helped lead to an unprecedented era of business investment, innovation,

and technological advance that is providing new opportunities for millions of Americans.

This continuing productivity growth underscores the importance of maintaining the fiscal discipline that has been so crucial to this investment-led economic expansion. The majority in Congress continues to pursue a series of misguided tax breaks which, taken together, would bring America back to the era of deficits and knock us off the path of fiscal discipline that has led to this prosperity. Their approach is wrong for America. Let's work together to ensure that our strong economy will continue to grow.

Statement on Signing Legislation To Expand the Women's Rights National Historical Park August 8, 2000

I am pleased today to sign S. 1910, bipartisan legislation to expand the Women's Rights National Historical Park, in Seneca Falls and Waterloo, New York, with the addition of the home of Jane Hunt. In 1848 early supporters of women's rights, meeting at Hunt's home, resolved to convene the Nation's first women's rights convention. A century and a half later, the addition of the Hunt House to the historical park is a fitting tribute to all those who have engaged in the struggle for women's rights. With this

legislation, this historic home will be purchased by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and donated to the National Park Service. Jane Hunt made a tremendous difference in the lives of American women, and this legislation will ensure that her efforts are remembered and honored in the years ahead.

NOTE: S. 1910, approved August 8, was assigned Public Law No. 106-258.

Memorandum on the Impact of Wildland Fires to Rural Communities August 8, 2000

Memorandum for the Secretary of Interior, the Secretary of Agriculture

Subject: Impacts of Wildland Fires to Rural Communities

We are a little over halfway through the 2000 fire season and all indications are that it will be the worst season in 50 years. As of August 7, 2000, 63,623 wildland fires have so far this

year burned more than 4 million acres at a cost of \$500 million in firefighting expenses. There are up to 300 new fires every day, and Federal, State, and local agencies are managing 50 fires over 1,000 acres in size. The current weather conditions following the prolonged drought in much of the west are drying out millions of acres of forest and rangeland, and