

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:35 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts John (Duke) and Billie Jean Kinney;

2000 Democratic National Convention chair Terence McAuliffe and his son, Jack; and President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria.

The President's Radio Address

September 2, 2000

Good morning. On this Labor Day weekend, as we relax with our families, we honor the hard-working men and women who've helped build the strongest economy in our Nation's history. With more than 22 million new jobs, record surpluses, the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, all Americans have a right to be proud.

But even at this time of unprecedented prosperity, millions of Americans still are working every day for the minimum wage. Today I want to talk about giving them a much deserved raise.

Every one of us knows someone who works for the minimum wage and often struggles to make ends meet, people like Cheryl Costas, a mother of four I met just a few months ago. Cheryl's from a small town in Pennsylvania. She works at a local convenience store for the minimum wage so she can support her four children and her disabled husband. As she said to me, \$5.15 an hour doesn't pay the bills. It doesn't put food on the table.

Seventy percent of all workers on the minimum wage, like Cheryl, are adults; almost 50 percent work full-time; 60 percent are women. In many cases, they are their family's sole breadwinners, struggling to raise their kids on \$10,700 a year. These hard-working Americans need a raise.

For more than 7 years now, our administration has sought to build an America that promotes responsibility and rewards work. That's why we nearly doubled the earned-income tax credit to cut taxes for millions of hard-pressed working parents; why we passed a children's tax credit for \$500 that 15 million Americans have taken advantage of; and why we provided for tax cuts for college tuition that 10 million families have taken advantage of; why we fought to pass the Family and Medical Leave Act that over 20 million Americans have taken advantage of to take a little time off when a baby is born or a parent is sick; why we've worked for better

health care coverage and more child care coverage; and why, in 1996, I signed legislation to raise the minimum wage to \$5.15 an hour over 2 years.

It's long passed time we raised it again. In fact, more than a year-and-a-half ago, I proposed to raise the minimum wage by a dollar over 2 years. That's a modest increase that merely restores the minimum wage to what it was way back in 1982 in real dollar terms.

Still, that's no small change to more than 10 million Americans who work for the minimum wage. For a full-time worker, it means another \$2,000 a year, enough for a family of four to buy groceries for 7 months or pay their rent check for 5.

But month after month, even with bipartisan support in Congress, the Republican leadership has sat on our proposal to raise the minimum wage, costing the average full-time worker more than a \$1,000 in lost wages. So far it's been the victim of every legislative maneuver in the congressional handbook, from poison-pill attachments to special interest strong-arming.

Some Republicans have even reverted to the same old attacks they used back in 1996, the last time we raised the minimum wage. Back then, they called the increase, and I quote, a "job killer" that would, quote, "lead to a juvenile crime wave of epic proportions." Well, my fellow Americans, the only thing of epic proportions that's happened since 1996 has been the continued growth of our economy. Since we last raised the minimum wage, our economy has created more than 11 million new jobs, and juvenile crime has gone down every year. Study after study has shown that raising the minimum wage is not only the right thing to do for working families; it's the smart thing to do for our economy.

So my message to Congress is simple: Stop stalling. If the subject is tax breaks for the

wealthy or legislative loopholes for special interest, this Congress moves with breathtaking speed. It's now time for the Republican leadership to stop riding the brakes on the minimum wage.

In the last week, with the election fast approaching, we've seen signs that some Republican leaders may be willing finally to work with us. So when they come back to Washington next week, I urge them to send me a minimum wage bill as the first order of business. It should also include a moderate tax cut package that everyone can agree on, without harmful provisions that would threaten overtime protections.

Once we secure the victory for hard-pressed working families, we can get to work on other pressing priorities—on education, Social Security, Medicare, prescription drug coverage, a Patients' Bill of Rights, a middle class tax package

including deductions for college tuition, and paying down the debt. Now, raising the minimum wage isn't just about dollars and cents; it's also about fundamental values: everybody counts; everyone's work should be rewarded; we all do better when we help each other.

America's workers have kept their end of the deal, and let's keep ours and honor Labor Day the right way, by giving working Americans the raise they have earned.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10:05 p.m. on September 1 at a private residence in Cazenovia, NY, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on September 2. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 1 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Remarks at a Reception for Hillary Clinton in Cazenovia, New York September 2, 2000

Thank you very much. Thank you for coming. I want to thank Christine and Patty and Les and Sandy and Sarah and everyone else who had anything to do with this event. But especially, I thank our hosts for welcoming us to this beautiful, beautiful home, and we should give them a big hand, I think. *[Applause]*

Thank you, Kelly. And the madrigals were great. Let's give them another hand. *[Applause]* And thank you, Kelly. You were great.

Well, we have had a great day. We just came from the State Fair, and there were tens of thousands of people. And after the other candidate for the Senate refused to eat a sausage sandwich there, this one did not. Let's get right down to the basic issues in this election. *[Laughter]*

Let me say, I want to be very brief because I want Hillary to make the speech tonight, but I want to just make a couple of points. First of all, we are very grateful to the people of New York State for being so good to us and to Al and Tipper Gore these last 8 years. New York has always been there for us. And I hope that you feel that America is better than it was 8 years ago and that it's worked out pretty well for us.

The second point I would like to make is an abbreviated version of what I said in Los Angeles at the Democratic Convention. This country is in very good shape. But how a country uses its prosperity is just as stern a test of its judgment, its values, and its vision as how you deal with adversity. And I'm old enough to know now that we may never have another time like this in our lifetime. And in my lifetime, we have never had a time like this before, when we have at once so much prosperity and so little internal stress and external threat.

So we really have a chance to do some things we've never done before, including bring economic opportunity to places in upstate New York that aren't part of our prosperity yet, including giving all of our children a world-class education, including dealing with our long-term challenges from the aging of America, the long-term environmental challenges of the country.

I want Hillary to talk about all of this, but I tell you, how elections come out—I've been involved with them since I was—the first election I ever worked in, I was 8 years old, passing out cards at the polling place for my uncle who was running for State legislature. They had 2-year terms, and his wife made him quit after