

Statement on Signing Legislation To Establish National Birmingham Pledge Week

November 17, 2000

Recently I signed into law House Joint Resolution 102, designating National Birmingham Pledge Week. This resolution recognizes that the Birmingham Pledge is making a significant contribution in fostering racial harmony and reconciliation in the United States and around the world. By signing the pledge, signatories state their belief in the worth of every individual, that every person is entitled to dignity and respect regardless of race or color, and that every act of racial prejudice is harmful to all. Those who sign pledge themselves to actively discourage racial prejudice in themselves and others. They recognize that in honoring this pledge, they are making the world a better place.

It is entirely fitting that this pledge began in the city of Birmingham, a place of some of our most painful racial strife. We remember in particular the September 15, 1963, bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church and the death of four children there. We know that the conflicts of the past are not fully resolved today

and that we have new challenges before us. The United States is now more diverse than ever in terms of race, ethnic groups, and religion. At the same time, our world is witness to a resurgence of society's oldest demon, the inability to love our neighbors as ourselves.

In my lifetime, our Nation has never had the chance we now have to build the future of our dreams for our children. To do it, we will have to embrace our common humanity with humility and gratitude.

Hillary and I were proud to sign the Birmingham Pledge in 1998. We applaud this effort to recognize its importance nationally. We urge all Americans to use National Birmingham Pledge Week as a powerful tool for helping to build the future of our dreams for all our children, a dream of one America.

NOTE: H.J. Res. 102, approved November 9, was assigned Public Law No. 106-483.

Remarks to the American Embassy Community in Hanoi

November 17, 2000

The President. Thank you very much. I want to thank Senator Kerry for what he said and for what he's done all these years and for being a wonderful friend to Hillary and me in many, many ways. And I want to thank Sandy Berger and our whole team in the White House and the State Department for supporting this trip from the beginning. And I want to associate myself with what Hillary said—now that she's going to be a Senator, I can just let her give the speeches, and I can say, "I completely agree." And that will save everyone from having to hear two speeches. *[Laughter]*

But I do want to say a couple of things, if I might. First, I, too, want to thank you for the endless hours you have put in in preparation for this trip and for the work you have done representing our Nation here in Vietnam. I want to thank especially the Vietnamese nationals who

work at our Embassy and who, therefore, embody this new partnership we have worked so hard to build these last several years.

We started this process of reconstructing our relationship a long time ago, and I have been working at it now, with the people on this stage and others, for at least 8 years. And I'm very grateful to all of them. But I want to take my time tonight to say a special word of thanks to Pete Peterson.

Most everybody, I guess, in Vietnam knows that he was a fighter pilot here, that he was a prisoner of war here. You may know that his wife was 9 months pregnant with their third child when he came here. He was supposed to fly 100 missions, and he was shot down two-thirds of the way through. And by the time he got home, his son was 6 years old.