

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:50 p.m. at the International Trade Center. In his remarks, he re-

ferred to U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam Pete Peterson; Vietnamese Ambassador to the U.S. Le Van Bang; and Minister of Trade Vu Khoan of Vietnam.

The President's Radio Address *November 18, 2000*

Good morning. I'm speaking to you from Hanoi, Vietnam, where I'm working to fulfill America's commitment to the families of those still missing from the war and opening a hopeful new chapter in our relationship with Vietnam and its people. Today I want to talk to you, however, about the new steps we're taking at home to strengthen our working families.

It may be hard to remember, but just 8 years ago many Americans were out of work, and Washington was out of ideas. Our economy was stagnant, burdened by a crushing debt and rising unemployment. I said I would work hard to turn the country around, to create a situation where everybody who was willing to work and take responsibility has the opportunity to live the American dream.

Since then we've worked hard to restore the value of work, increasing the minimum wage, expanding the earned-income tax credit, helping more than 15 million Americans work their way out of poverty toward the middle class. Congress passed the family and medical leave law, which has given over 20 million Americans the chance to take time off from work to care for a newborn child or a sick loved one. And we passed welfare reform, ending welfare as we knew it, cutting the welfare rolls in half, to their lowest levels in 32 years, and helping millions of parents move into the work force.

We were able to do this while protecting health care and nutrition for children, investing more in child care, transportation, and housing, to help parents go to work and to succeed at home and at work.

By rewarding work and promoting responsibility, we've helped put the American family back on top again, with 22 million new jobs, the lowest poverty in 20 years, the lowest Hispanic- and African-American unemployment ever recorded, and the highest homeownership in history. While we have made great progress,

no one who works hard every day should have trouble putting food on the table at night. And the fact is there are still too many hard-pressed families struggling to get ahead and to make the often difficult transition from welfare to work.

Every day 17 million of our fellow Americans rely on food stamps for proper nourishment. These food stamps allow parents to give their children the necessities while getting their own feet on the ground. But as they return to work and struggle to make ends meet, many don't realize they're still eligible for food stamps. And in some States, parents who do sign up for food stamps have to fill out paperwork as often as once a month, and leave the workplace in order to do so.

Now, this simply should not be the case. So today I'm announcing new steps to remove some of the barriers facing working Americans and to help the families get the food they need.

First, it would allow States to provide recipients with an automatic 3-month food stamp benefit as they make the transition from welfare to work. This gives new workers stability in what can be a trying time. Second, we're eliminating unnecessary bureaucracies by allowing recipients up to 6 months to report income changes, reducing the amount of time they spend in food stamp offices. Third, if we want people to work, they need to be able to get to work. Today's action will make it easier for food stamp recipients to own a dependable car without having to sacrifice proper nutrition for their children. This builds on the steps we took in the Agriculture appropriation bill I signed last month. Finally, to ensure that the families who need assistance get it, we are requiring States to let recipients know that they're still eligible for food stamps when they start to work again.

Supporting hard-pressed working families is the right policy for America. It's also the smart

thing to do. It encourages millions of people to take responsibility to strengthen their families, as well as our economy. I urge our Nation's Governors to implement these steps so that all working families get the nutritional benefits they need and deserve. And again I call on Congress to restore food stamp benefits to hard-working legal immigrants and to raise the minimum wage for all working families this year. No family working full-time and playing by the rules should have to raise children in poverty. In the coming weeks, Congress still has the chance to honor and award work by raising the minimum wage for our hardest pressed working families.

Thirty years ago Robert Kennedy reminded us that work is the meaning of what the country is all about. With the actions outlined today,

we can create new opportunities for hard-working families and move our Nation closer to the time when everyone willing to work for it can achieve the American dream.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 5 p.m., local time, on November 17 in the Briefing Suite at the Daewoo Hotel in Hanoi, Vietnam, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m., e.s.t., on November 18. Due to the 12-hour time difference, the radio address was broadcast after the President's schedule of activities in Vietnam for November 18 had been completed. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 17 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Remarks to the Vietnamese Business Community in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

November 19, 2000

Thank you very much. Ms. Liu, thank you for your remarks and for your introduction—and for your excellent English, much better than my Vietnamese. [*Laughter*] I thank Secretary Mineta and the other members of the American delegation. And thank you, Flemming Jacobs, for making us feel welcome in this magnificent port. I would also like to thank the members of the Vietnamese Government and the government of Ho Chi Minh City who are here. I thank you all for the time that we have had together these last few days.

I wanted to come here today to this remarkable place, which symbolizes Vietnam's gateway to the future, to say that one of the things I have learned in the last 3 days is that Vietnam has an ancient history, but it is still a very young nation. Over half your people were born in the last 30 years. And your best days clearly lie ahead, as you continue to find the means to release the skills and the ingenuity of your people.

Over the last decade, Vietnam has taken positive strides toward economic and social reform. In less than a decade, you have seen income per person rise almost 70 percent. You have lifted more than 15 million people out of poverty. You have eradicated polio. And this con-

tainer port is an astonishing example of how Vietnam is seizing the new opportunities of the 21st century.

You should be very proud of what you have built here. I can tell you that any nation in the world would be happy to have a facility like this. And it should cause you to imagine just how much more you can achieve.

Already in the last decade, Vietnam's exports to the world have increased by 6 times over. You will grow even more as your economy becomes more open and the rule of law develops. More investment will come when people see Vietnamese entrepreneurs creating companies like OPL. And many more companies like OPL will be created if foreign and domestic investors see barriers to investment fall in a more business-friendly Vietnam.

Already the people of Vietnam have the highest rate of literacy in Southeast Asia. Imagine how much more you will achieve as even more young people gain more freedom to shape the decisions that affect their lives if vigorous competition and innovation bring down the cost of using the Internet for all your schoolchildren and all your entrepreneurs, so that all Vietnamese people can benefit from the free and open exchange of ideas.