

Remarks at the Swearing-In Ceremony for Spencer Abraham as Secretary of Energy and an Exchange With Reporters  
March 2, 2001

*The President.* It's my honor to welcome the Secretary and his family. I forgot that he and I were members of the fathers of twins club. [Laughter] Jane, it's good to see you. I want to welcome you all here. We look forward to having a picture-taking session next door after our brief remarks.

Two months ago, in Austin, I announced my intention to nominate Senator Spence Abraham as the Energy Secretary. He's obviously since then been confirmed by the Senate. His performance in office has already confirmed that I chose the right man for the job.

Secretary Abraham knows energy policy. He understands the many challenges and opportunities before us. Today, we are seeing the consequences of going too long without an energy policy. Many Americans are struggling with the high cost of energy. People who live in the West face a major energy shortage, which has caused rising prices and growing uncertainty.

I have asked Federal agencies to work with California officials to bring more energy to the people of that State, as quickly as possible. Also I've asked Secretary Abraham to work with Vice President Cheney and Secretary of Commerce Evans and other senior officials to develop a comprehensive energy policy for the United States.

Our objective should not only be to manage the current situation but to avoid any crisis in the first instance. This requires a four-part strategy: first, to make energy security a priority of our foreign policy, by restoring American credibility with overseas suppliers and building strong relationships with energy-producing nations in our hemisphere; second, to encourage environmentally friendly exploration and production of domestic energy sources like oil, natural gas, and coal; third, to promote the

production of electricity to keep pace with America's growing demands; fourth, to support the development of cost-effective alternative energy sources.

The goals of this strategy are clear: to ensure a steady supply of affordable energy for America's homes and businesses and industries, and to work toward the day when America achieves energy independence.

It was in the State of Michigan that I first pledged a comprehensive energy policy for our country. This afternoon I welcome to the Cabinet a proud son of Michigan, a grandson of immigrants, and a good man.

Mr. Secretary.

[At this point, Secretary Abraham made brief remarks.]

Q. Mr. President, do you have time for questions, sir?

*The President.* No. [Laughter]

*Camp David*

Q. You're going to Camp David a lot. Can you tell us why you like going there, what you do when you're up there?

*The President.* I guess I do. He's asking—I'm going to Camp David, and I like to spend time with my family. And my brother Marvin and my sister, Dorothy, will join us up there. It's a good place to relax, and it's also a good place to catch up on my work. I'm a little bit behind on my mail right now. But I intend, every chance I get, to go. If I'm not going to Crawford and I don't have to give a speech here on the weekend, I'm going to go to Camp David.

*Federal Spending Limits*

Q. Mr. President, some members of your own party are chafing at the idea of holding Federal spending increases for—

*The President.* Yes.

Q. What argument can you make—

*The President.* Well, I know there's a lot of folks that are used to big spending. After all, the spending increases were very dramatic at the end of the last session. And my answer is, let's—why don't we have some fiscal sanity in Washington. My budget increases the rate of growth in discretionary spending by 4 percent. And surely, Congress will be willing to work with the administration to bring—to control the appetite by 4 percent.

And I believe when people are willing to take a hard look at setting priorities in different spending programs, we'll be able to meet that target and thereby be able to send some of the surplus back to the people, which is an important part about making sure our economy gets a second

wind. And it's an important part—and this country has got to remember, the people up here in this—have got to remember that this country—in this country, a lot of folks are paying high energy bills, and a lot of folks have got a lot of debt, personal debt. And if we're wise about how we spend money in Washington, we will enable people to have more money in their own pocket, and that would be wise economic policy.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:02 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary Abraham's wife, Jane. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary Abraham.

### Statement on Relief and Reconstruction Assistance for El Salvador *March 2, 2001*

I had a good meeting today with El Salvador's President Francisco Flores. I commended him for the strong leadership he and his government have shown in the aftermath of two recent earthquakes that killed and injured thousands of people and left many more homeless.

The United States responded to these earthquakes by quickly sending rescue workers and over \$16 million in relief assistance to the people of El Salvador. Today I told President Flores that the United States has pledged \$52 million in reconstruction assistance to El Salvador this fiscal year, and I will seek to match or increase that amount for next year.

In addition, I informed him of the Attorney General's decision to grant temporary relief from deportation for a period of 18 months for Salvadoran citizens living in the United States. This will allow them to continue to work here and to remit some of their wages back home to support El Salvador's recovery efforts.

The recent earthquake in Washington State brings home to the citizens of our Nation how natural disaster can strike any of us. And it reminds us of our obligation to reach out to help those in other nations struggling in the wake of disaster to rebuild their homes and lives.