

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.