

them being overworked. These good people are putting in long, long hours.

And one of my jobs is to remind those who sacrifice on behalf of our Nation that we appreciate it a lot. And I'd rather have them sacrificing on behalf of our Nation than, you know, endless hours of testimony on congressional hill. The appropriate place to do that, of course, is the intelligence committees. And again I repeat, the reason why that's important is because we have

got to guard the methodology—methodologies of our country, of how—it's important for us to not reveal how we collect information. That's what the enemy wants, and we're fighting an enemy.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The exchange began at 10:45 a.m. in the Operations Center at the National Security Agency.

Remarks to Welfare-to-Work Graduates June 4, 2002

The President. Thank you all for coming. Welcome. Please be seated. Well, thank you all for that warm welcome, and welcome to the people's house.

All of you here today who have gone from welfare to work really represent courage and strength. And I want to thank you for your examples of what is possible and for your stories of success. You've earned independence and the respect of your families and your communities, the respect of your President. I congratulate you—I want to congratulate you on using and utilizing your God-given talents to their fullest. So, welcome.

I want to welcome Tommy Thompson, who's the Secretary of Health and Human Services. Tommy, thank you for being here. He's a former Governor—nothing wrong with former Governors. [*Laughter*] But Tommy has been a leader in welfare reform, which is really a leader in helping people. He did a great job as the Governor of Wisconsin. He's doing a great job here in Washington. Thank you, Tommy.

Elaine Chao is here as well, who is the Secretary of Labor. I want to thank you for coming, Elaine, as well.

I want to thank Members of the Congress who are here. Wally, thank you for coming—Wally Herger from California,

Buck McKeon of California, Michael Bilirakis of Florida. I appreciate your interest. I thank you for coming.

I want to thank Rodney Carroll, who is here. Rodney is the president and CEO of the Welfare to Work Partnership. What that means is, Rodney is really in charge of convincing corporate America to do their duty, and that is to help people who want to find work. And Rodney's done a great job. There's—millions of people have been placed in employment because of the Welfare to Work Partnership.

And one of the really terrific companies that has responded to the call to be a responsible corporate citizen in America is UPS. And I want to thank the representatives of UPS who are here; "Big Brown," I think you call yourself now. [*Laughter*]

On the stage with me is Al and Ann Briscoe. They're going to have something to say if we can ever get the President to stop talking. [*Laughter*] But I want to welcome the Briscoes and all the welfare-to-work graduates from the States of Pennsylvania and Michigan and Connecticut and Florida. We're really glad you're here.

I want to thank the Briscoes for their willingness to share the inspiring story—stories, by the way, which we heard yesterday in Arkansas as well. These are stories

that are being repeated all across the country, compelling human stories of people conquering very tough odds to succeed, to go from poverty to success and from welfare to work.

The people in this room who have overcome the obstacles have obviously known some really tough times, starting with the fact that the hardest job in America is a single mom. That's the hardest work. People have overcome incredible odds and obstacles and hurdles. But thanks to courage and determination and hard work—in many cases, prayer—you've turned your lives around, and you're strong, proud, successful women, and we want to thank you for that—and strong, proud, successful men, I might add.

The historic welfare reform passed by Congress in 1996 helped many Americans find dignity and self-respect. And that's what we're here to talk about. We're not only here to talk about the lives that have been changed but law and how to make the '96 law work better. And the '96 law worked well because of the—much of it had to do with the work requirement in the law. It basically said, you've got to work. In order to be independent and free, you've got to work, and we want to help you find work. That's what the law said.

The statistics are strong about how successful the '96 law was. At the time, however, it was quite controversial. I wasn't here. I was working with Tommy, trying to get the law passed from the perspective of a Governor. But there was one study, for example—to show you how controversial the bill was—that said, at least a million children would be cast into poverty by the welfare reform law—if it passed, if the '96 bill passed, that a million children would be thrown into poverty.

Well, whoever did that study probably is out of work—at least I hope so—[laughter]—because the truth is, there are 5.4 million fewer people in poverty today than in '96, and there are 2.8 million fewer children living in poverty than in '96. Anyway

you look at it, the bill has been really successful.

The real success, though, is not found in the numbers. The real success has been found in the number of lives that have been changed. It's one thing to talk about reducing welfare rolls, and that's fine. But the most important thing is the number of lives that have been saved and enriched. That's the most important part about the '96 law and its consequences.

Maria Medellin, *de mi estado de Texas*—from the State of Texas is here, and she is one type of story. She's been working for UPS, Big Brown, now for 3 years. When she first came to UPS, she was a single mom on welfare, raising two sons. She needed extra income and benefits to support her family, so she started working at UPS for \$8.50 an hour, and then she was promoted. And now she is a recruiter; she's a boss. She's enrolled in college, and she's going to get her degree in 3 years.

Maria says this about her journey and about her struggles: “It was a challenge to overcome the statistic of being a single minority female with two children on welfare. UPS is the foundation that has allowed me to be where I am today. Being able to raise my children and provide for them is my greatest source of pride. Just showing my children that I'm strong enough and can succeed is more than enough for me.”

Maria, congratulations.

And there are a lot of people with stories like Maria's. The great thing about the subject we're talking about today is, there are Marias all across America and right here in this room.

And so the fundamental question is, How can we continue this progress? What can we do to continue to make America a better place? As you know, we struggle hard to keep America secure, and we're going to. We will win the war on terror and keep us free. But as we fight for our security, we also must work to make America a better place. And where we find people

who've lost hope, we must work to provide hope. And where we find pockets of despair, we must work—all of us work—to eradicate pockets of despair. And one way to continue to make sure America is a hopeful place, a better place, is to work on a new reauthorization bill for welfare that continues to make progress to help people. That's what we've got to do.

The bill in '96 is up; it kind of run out of its time. And so it's now time for Congress to come together and pass another measure. And the debate's going to be, What do we do? How do we make it? What do we do? The House has already answered the question by passing a law that really makes sure that work is still an integral part of welfare reform. Work and family are integral parts of welfare reform, I might add.

Here's what I think ought to happen: I think the Senate ought to pass a bill that has the same principles embodied in the House bill. And it says that rather than lowering standards, we need to keep high standards in America, particularly when it comes to what we expect in terms of work.

We want 70 percent of the people on welfare working by the next 5 years. That's what we want. We don't want to reduce the number of people that should be working in America, because we understand how important work is to the future of every citizen. We want to raise the standard and raise the bar. And that means 40-hour workweeks. That's what work—that's the definition of work.

Now, I recognize there are a lot of people that need help, and so within the 40-hour workweeks there are credits for education and vocational training, to help people help themselves. A work requirement isn't punishment. A work requirement is part of liberation in our society. But in order to make sure that people are able to work, we want to make sure there is ample training and ample education, to give people the chance they want. And that's

what this bill—and that's what this vision for a better welfare reform bill talks about.

And then, of course, there is the issue of money, and that's always a big debate here in Washington, DC. [*Laughter*] It seems like you can never spend enough. And so one of the things I decided to do was to be wise about how we spent—the amount of money we spent in the welfare appropriations. I thought it made sense to keep the level of welfare spending the same as it has been, which really doubles the amount of money available for States to spend, because the caseload has declined in half. So if you've got the same amount of money and the caseload has declined in half, you've got double the money available for people you're trying to help.

And that ought to be ample money for the States to help people with education, vocational training, to help people help themselves. And so I'm confident the amount of money we've got in the bill is more than adequate to meet the needs and to help meet our goals of work and money available to help—to help the 2 million families who are still on welfare rolls. And that's the goal, is to help as many as we possibly can achieve independence and dignity and work.

I think it's important for Members of Congress to talk to the people who—and listen to the people who've succeeded under the current law, who have actually become independent from Government, and what it means to their lives. They ought to listen to the Marias and the people who I've had the honor of talking to, as they decide how best to help people. They ought to listen to the stories, and they ought to be hopeful and optimistic about what is possible in America. People who are pessimistic about the future lower standards. People who are optimistic raise the standards, because we believe in the best.

I'm honored to have the Briscoes here with us today. They are exemplary of what

is possible in America. And I fully understand that laws are important; no question about it. And spending money is important; there's no question about that. But there's nothing more important than heart and courage and desire.

And so it's my honor to welcome here to the podium Mr. Allen Briscoe, who is a man who has overcome tough odds to be a great, proud dad and successful American.

Welcome.

[*At this point, Mr. and Mrs. Briscoe made brief remarks.*]

The President. So there you have it. I want to—I want to thank you all for—I want to thank you all for sharing—just a—not quite yet.

Participant. Stay?

The President. Yes, you stay right there.

[*Laughter*]

Participant. Yes, sir. [*Laughter*]

The President. I want to thank you all for sharing your story with us. And we could have had some great stories here,

long—we could have taken a lot of time with some of the great stories here. And I want to thank you all for coming.

This is a fabulous country in which we live. It is, and it's because the people are fabulous. For those who represent corporate America, keep doing what you're doing. You have a responsibility to the country in which you thrive. You've got a responsibility to help people; you do. Those of us in Government have a responsibility to pass good law that will help people. And for those of you who have overcome incredible obstacles, thanks for the example you've set.

May God bless you and your families, and may God continue to bless America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:53 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former welfare recipients Alfred and Ann Briscoe. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at the Congressional Barbecue June 5, 2002

Welcome. Laura and I are really happy to give you all a taste of Texas. We want to thank our friends Asleep At The Wheel out of Austin, Texas, for your fantastic music. Thank you all very much. And I want to thank our friends from Buffalo Gap, Texas, the people who brought the food. That would be Tom Perini and—[*inaudible*]*—*we want to thank them and all the people who served the food. We want to thank you all for coming tonight.

First I want to say something to the spouses and the family members who are here. Thank you for your service to the country. We appreciate your patience and we appreciate you supporting your loved

ones in their important jobs of representing the greatest nation on the face of the Earth, the United States of America.

The last time we were supposed to have this party was on September the 11th. And we have come together here in Washington and around the Nation for a great and noble cause, and that is to defend freedom. The defense of our freedoms here in America is not a Republican calling or a Democratic calling; it is an American calling. And I want to thank all the Members of Congress.

I want to thank you for your support here in Washington, and I want to thank you for going home to your districts and