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Statement on the Executive Order on Environmental Justice

February 11, 1994

All Americans have a right to be protected from pollution—not just those who can afford to live in the cleanest, safest communities. Today, we direct Federal agencies to make environmental justice a part of all that they do.

NOTE: This statement was part of a White House press release announcing the signing of Executive Order 12898. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Remarks on Signing California Earthquake Relief Legislation and an Exchange With Reporters

February 12, 1994

The President. Good morning. I'm glad to be here with the Speaker and members of the California delegation and one member of the Missouri delegation, Secretary Brown and Senator Hatfield and others, to sign this bill today.

This was legislation requested by our administration to provide the most comprehensive national response ever to a region experiencing a natural disaster, the earthquake which inflicted such damage in the Los Angeles area on January 17th. Many people had their lives shaken and transformed by the damage caused by the Northridge quake. They faced the human tragedy of 61 deaths, nearly 10,000 injuries requiring hospitalization, and many, many thousands of people who lost their homes, their jobs, or otherwise had their lives turned upside down.

We saw the fierce power of the shifting earth twist and break highways, uproot homes, ignite fires, and literally reshape parts of the Los Angeles landscape. More than 150 public schools were damaged. Five hospitals suffered destruction requiring as much as $700 million in repair. Much of the damage will take months if not years. It is only the latest hardship that the people of that area have experienced.

The first line of defense was the spirit the people of Los Angeles brought to this tragedy. Before the tremors had a chance to subside, we saw all the moving stories of neighbors helping neighbors; police, fire, rescue, and medical people serving without rest; and dedicated public officials who put people above politics. Although the central highway throughout the region sustained enormous damage, imaginative means were immediately employed to permit a return to some semblance of normal life. Crime was down 21.5 percent in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake. Something good happened amidst all that tragedy as people pulled together and they stayed together.

The second line of defense against the quake was coordinated by FEMA under the leadership of James Lee Witt. FEMA has already accepted over 300,000 applications for disaster assistance. HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros led his Department's efforts to provide emergency housing aid. The SBA is processing nearly a quarter of a million applications from homeowners and businesses for disaster loans. Transportation Secretary Peña and Highway Administrator Slater are doing work to try to speed the highway repairs and to try to help provide alternative means of transportation. In each of these agencies, people are serving the way the taxpayers deserve to be treated, as customers, neighbors, and friends.

Today we put in motion the third line of defense: Federal disaster relief for California. It was the largest package of such aid in history, and as Congressman Volkmer's presence here reminds us, it also contains some aid for the people who suffered from the 500-year flood in the Middle West.

The bill provides $8.6 billion in housing assistance and home repairs, repairs to public

facilities, transit and road reconstruction, school repairs, loans to get businesses back in business, plus funds I'll be able to use to respond to unanticipated needs. Congress considered and adopted this legislation very quickly. Democratic and Republican representatives from California in the affected region worked in close cooperation. Senators Boxer and Feinstein, the House delegation, Mayor Riordan, Governor Wilson represented the needs of the city and the States very well. And I want to compliment the legislators throughout the country for recognizing that this is a national problem and making it a national effort.

Ultimately, the reconstruction of Los Angles will depend upon the resilience and the patience of the people there. Their will has been tested often over the last several years. Their spirit has remained unbroken, and I'm confident it will continue to be. Secretary Brown is here to symbolize the ongoing effort we have had to work with the people of California under his coordinated leadership since the beginning of our administration. Just yesterday we had White House officials there working on the long-term repair work to make sure that the people of California did not believe that this was just a short-term effort on our part.

We have to continue to do this. The size of the appropriation and the speed with which Congress adopted it indicates the generosity of the American people when tragedy strikes. What we now have to demonstrate is that we have the consistency of commitment to stay until this matter is put back together. It's the same thing I said to the people in the Middle West who were affected by the floods; we know there's a short-term and a long-term problem. But I must compliment the Congress on this terrific response to the terrible tragedy of January 17th. And I'm glad to be signing it today, and I'm glad that the benefits will begin to flow tomorrow.

[*At this point, the President signed the legislation.*]

Japan-U.S. Trade

Q. Mr. President, did you share with Prime Minister Hosokawa at your breakfast any of the measures the U.S. is now considering in light of the breakdown in talks?

The President. No, it was a totally social visit. Mrs. Hosokawa came, I gave them a tour of the upstairs at the White House, and we talked about other things. We did talk a little bit about Latin America and a little about China, but otherwise there was nothing that could even be remotely characterized as business.

Q. Where do you think the United States will go next?

The President. We'll have to examine what our next step should be, and I will be turning to that next week. As I said, we worked until 4 o'clock in the morning the night before last hoping to get an agreement, and part of it depends upon whether the framework agreement is something that both countries will adhere to. If you go back and read the framework agreement, it plainly called for the development of objective measures, qualitative or quantitative or both—those were the words used in the agreement—to see whether we're making progress in reducing this trade deficit. So we'll just have to assess where we are and what happens. I don't really have anything else to say about it today.

Q. Thank you.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:07 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. H.R. 3759, Making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1994, and for other purposes, approved February 12, was assigned Public Law No. 103–211.

The President's Radio Address

February 12, 1994

Good morning. Twenty-six days ago the people of Los Angeles suffered a devastating earthquake. Sixty-one people died; thousands of homes were destroyed; thousands of people were hospitalized. Highways were broken and twisted by the violent movement of the earth.

Because of the extent of the damage, I have just approved $8.6 billion in emergency disaster assistance for the people of California to help them rebuild roads and other