

know that pollution affects children more than it does adults. We want to clean up these sites, but the Republican cuts would limit what we can do.

The Republican budget cuts are aimed squarely at our children. They will face larger classes and fewer Head Start programs. Ten million will live near toxic waste sites that won't be cleaned. Fewer will be immunized. Millions will be denied adequate medical care. And more than one million will be forced into poverty.

That is no way to treat our children. Let them threaten to shut the Government down. It is not necessary to do this to balance the budget, and so I am not going to let them hurt our children and compromise their future.

Our budget proposal shows these cuts are not necessary. Our plan balances the budget in 7 years, reforms Medicare and Medicaid, keeps costs down. It protects education and gives working families with children a tax break, not a tax increase. It is wrong for the congressional Republicans to insist that I make deep cuts in Medicare and Medicaid just as a condition to talk. It is wrong for them to shut the Government down again just before Christmas. It would be wrong for me to accept that threat. I rejected it last month; I reject it now.

I know this shutdown will affect the lives of millions of Americans, especially at this holiday season. I'll do whatever I can to lessen the impact. Above all, the Republicans should come back to the table. Congress should immediately pass straightforward legislation to reopen the Government. That is the responsible thing to do. And we should be talking again with each other about how to balance the budget in the interest of the American people.

I'll continue to fight for our American principles in this budget battle, because that's the only way our children can come out the winners.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Democratic Members of Congress

December 16, 1995

Let me, first of all, welcome all of you here. I thank you for being here. I imagine some of you have stayed here in an unplanned way over the weekend.

We are determined, as Democrats, to try to work together and to try to work with the Republicans to achieve a balanced budget but in a way that is consistent with our principles.

As all of you know, yesterday the Republican congressional leaders called the negotiations off unless we would first put much bigger Medicare and Medicaid cuts on the table. I thought that was wrong and unwarranted.

Virtually all of us don't agree with the large portions of their tax package and particularly a lot of the special interest provisions of it. But we didn't ask them to abandon it just to talk and begin negotiations.

So we hope that we can get back to a constructive dialog consistent with our values, our principles, and what's good for this country. And that's what we're going to be working on today.

We don't believe that decimating Medicare and Medicaid and undermining our investments in education and the environment, raising taxes on working families is a good prescription for America's future. And it is not necessary to balance the budget.

So we're going back to work today. We're going to keep working, trying to reach as much agreement among ourselves as possible, and then we'll keep reaching out to the Republicans in Congress in the hope of passing the right kind of balanced budget.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:40 p.m. at Blair House.

Remarks on Vetoing Departments of Interior, Veterans Affairs, and Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Legislation and an Exchange With Reporters

December 18, 1995

The President. Good morning, everyone. The Republican Congress has shut down the Federal Government because they haven't passed a budget for this year and because they want to make the price of opening the Government up my acceptance of 7 long years of unacceptable cuts in health care, education, and the environment, in research and technology, cuts that are not necessary to balancing the budget and will have an adverse effect on our way of life and on the strength of our economy.

It is wrong for the Congress to shut the Government down just to make a political point the week before Christmas. It is unfair to the American people and unfair to the public employees. This is a season of peace, and it should be a season of cooperation, not rancor or threats. Congress should reopen the Government. I am ready to work with them to balance the budget in a way that reflects our values and that is consistent with the resolution to which we both agreed when the Government was reopened a few weeks ago.

So I call on Congress to reopen the Government, to come back to the negotiating table to resume discussions on finding common ground. We have to balance this budget in a way that reflects our values and our obligations to our children.

The ultimate test of any budget is what kind of world it leaves for future generations. If we balance the budget without investing in our children or protecting their environment, it means we are really borrowing from the next generation without ever paying them back. Protecting the environment is one of the most important ways to uphold this value. We want to pass on to our children the good Earth God gave us. We want to give them the opportunity we enjoy. We want to safeguard their health. Then any budget must ensure strong protection of the environment.

These science students who are with me today from Jefferson Middle School in Vir-

ginia have done a lot of work on the environment. They have helped to reduce energy use at their school. They have promoted recycling at home and at school. They know that the decisions that we make today will affect them and our Nation in the future. We owe it to them to put partisanship aside and to work in their interest to balance the budget in a way that protects the environment.

I say again, when I agreed a few weeks ago to work with the Congress to balance the budget in 7 years, Congress committed to a budget that protects the environment. These bills that I have to veto today I do because they do not meet that test. For 25 years, leaders of both parties have recognized that our country is stronger when we control pollution and protect public health. Environmental protection is not, or at least it never has been until now, a partisan issue. It's an American issue. It's an American issue outside Washington. But Republicans in this Congress have attempted to roll back decades of bipartisan environmental protection. It's wrong, and I cannot permit it to happen.

They have sent me legislation that would give our children less clean drinking water, less safe food, dirtier air. If I sign these bills, I would be condemning more than 10 million children under the age of 12 to living near toxic waste sites that might not be cleaned up for years. Therefore, in the interest of our children I am vetoing these measures because they would cripple these kinds of environmental protections.

The bill that funds the Environmental Protection Agency, for example, would cut enforcement by 25 percent and pull the cop from the pollution beat. There would be a 45 percent cut in safe-and-clean-drinking-water aid to local governments. The bill that funds the Department of the Interior would endanger some of our most precious natural resources. It would permit clearcutting in the Tongass National Forest in Alaska, and it would undercut our newest national park, the Mojave National Preserve in California, the largest addition to the park system in the lower 48 States.

I'm vetoing the bills not only because of the impact they have on the environment that we leave our children but also because