

As we remember the centennial Olympics, the weeks of courage and triumph, the wonder of the world's youth bound together by the rules of the game in genuine mutual respect, let us resolve to work for a world that looks more like that in the 21st century, to stand strong against the moments of terror that would destroy our spirit, to stand for the values that have brought us so many blessings, values that have made us at this pivotal moment the indispensable nation.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:26 a.m. in the Lisner Auditorium. In his remarks, he referred to Stephen J. Trachtenberg, president, and Harry Harding, dean, Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University; former Sen. George S. McGovern, of South Dakota; and John Dorin, mayor of Montoursville, PA.

Remarks at a Ceremony Launching the Paralympic Torch Relay

August 6, 1996

Thank you so much. First of all, welcome to the White House. Welcome to the lawn. Welcome to summertime.

I want to thank Al Mead and Andy Fleming for being here today; and Randy Snow and all the members of the 1996 U.S. Paralympic Team. We are so delighted to have you here, so excited that this is the beginning of the torch relay. We know that the torch that we launch here today will ignite the world's second largest sporting event and the first Paralympic Games ever to be held here in the United States.

I want to echo what has just been said. It is very fitting that the torch was lit yesterday by the eternal flame at the tomb of Dr. Martin Luther King. His life has come to symbolize the struggle and the promise, the opportunity and the responsibility of our Nation. This is the first time his flame has been shared for any other purpose. And I'd like to thank Coretta Scott King and Dexter King, the entire King family, for sharing it with these games. It is a remarkable statement and an altogether fitting one. *[Applause]* Thank you.

I know that our American team, many of whom are gathered here today, and the other

teams around the world will thrill people all around the world with their courage and their achievements. And we will be reminded everywhere, but especially here in the United States, how much more we can accomplish when all people everywhere are given the chance to participate fully in our national life.

The people in these Olympics got here because they believed in themselves and worked hard to achieve their goals. The organizing committee of the Atlanta Paralympic Games, under the leadership of Andy Fleming and Al Mead and many others here today, have also worked very hard to make these games the best ever. This year's games are the result of an unprecedented partnership between the committee, the corporate community, and the Federal Government. And APOC has done an outstanding job of educating corporate America about the value of being associated with these games.

For the first time there will be network television coverage. The dedication to these games for the members of my own administration I can tell you has been very heartfelt, and I want to thank them. Education Secretary Riley himself is now down on the Mall waiting to receive the torch. The Vice President will have the great honor of declaring the games open on August the 15th, and as all of you know, there will now be more than 3,500 athletes there from 120 different nations.

Our American team includes some of the finest athletes and some of the finest individuals in the world. Aimee Mullins, a student at Georgetown, my alma mater, who is here with us today, is the only disabled member of an NCAA Division I track team. And I thank her for being here and for her contribution. She's a world record holder in the 100 and 200 meter dashes and in the long jump, and she'll be competing in all three of those events in Atlanta. Trischa Zorn is a swimmer from Indiana who's been competing since the age of 7 and has won more than 30 Gold Medals in her career. Fourteen-year-old LeAnn Shannon from Orange Park, Florida, is the youngest member of our team and the youngest member ever. At this year's trials, she finished first in the 100, 200, 400, and 800 meter races. The joys of youth.

She also volunteers in a rehabilitation hospital in her community, helping other people.

In addition to being a world stage for some of the greatest athletes, the Paralympic Games will also give us an opportunity to reflect on where the disability movement is heading worldwide, in the areas of equal opportunity, economic opportunity, and access to sports for all people with disabilities. I'm determined to press on with meeting the challenge to our Nation that I put forward in 1992, a national disability policy based on inclusion, independence, and empowerment. The Paralympic Games are a powerful demonstration of what can happen when inclusion, independence, and empowerment become realities in individuals' lives with great abilities and great hearts.

In Atlanta, experts from around the world will be discussing these issues in the Third Paralympic Congress, chaired by our good friend Justin Dart who's also here with us today and who in his own way has the most Olympian spirit I believe I've ever come across. We thank you for being here, sir.

My domestic policy adviser, Carol Rasco, will cochair a session on how to make the athletic experience available to children with disabilities around the world. And we know this will be a very successful Congress.

In a few minutes, the Paralympic torch, representing the triumph of the human spirit, will be formally presented to me on behalf of the 1996 Paralympic team by Paralympic swimmer Diane Straub. I want to thank her not only for bringing the flame to the White House but also for her selflessness, her determination, and her achievement. The flame of her life burns just as brightly as the flame of these games and is lighting the way to others. Even with her demanding medical school studies and her training schedule, she still finds time to help disadvantaged children. She is truly a Paralympic champion and an American hero.

I'd also like to thank the Cochair of the President's Commission on Physical Fitness, Tom McMillen, for being with me here today and for supporting the concept that physical fitness is every bit as important, if not more important, for Americans with disabilities than for other Americans. We are committed to that. And I thank you, Tom, for being here.

Now, this torch is beginning its journey home to Atlanta carried by one of America's best. Randy Snow has been a member of six United States National Wheelchair Basketball teams. An accident when he was 16 left him a paraplegic. His enthusiasm and excellence in sports, however, did not diminish. He's gone on to have an outstanding career in both basketball and tennis. He devotes a lot of his time to extolling the value of recreation and wellness to people with disabilities. And in 1994, the National Council of Disability presented him with its Outstanding Citizenship Award. In 1989, he won the coveted Jack Gerhardt Award as the Wheelchair Athlete of the Year.

He will hand the torch off to Georgia Congressman John Lewis who was, as many of you know, an associate of Dr. King, who will take it off the White House grounds. One thousand people will participate in the relay that will cover 1,000 miles. When the torch reaches Atlanta on August 15th, it will take its place in the Olympic Stadium, the most accessible arena of its kind in the world. I am proud that we have worked hard to make this a reality.

Dr. King once said, "Everybody can be great because everybody can serve." That is a great lesson of these games. In their dedication to excellence, equality, and community, APOC, the athletes, their families, their coaches are the best examples of what is right with our country. May this torch serve as an inspiration to all Americans to give their best in every endeavor, to make the most of their God-given abilities, and to recognize that we are all stronger and more vibrant when we develop, recognize, and support the talents of all of our people. May that be the lasting legacy of the 1996 Paralympics.

It is now my honor to invite Diane Straub, a member of the 1996 Paralympic team, to bring the torch to the stage.

Diane.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:11 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Al Mead, member, board of directors, and G. Andrew Fleming, president and chief executive officer, Atlanta Paralympic Organizing Committee; and Justin Dart, Chair, President's Committee on Employment of People With Disabilities.

Remarks on Signing the Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments of 1996*August 6, 1996*

Thank you. I'd like to begin by thanking Diana Neidle for her years of work in this cause and all the other environmental and community workers who are here who have also labored in this vineyard. I want to thank Secretary Browner and the others at the EPA who have done such good work on this legislation, and the Members of Congress who are here and those who are not here who were active. Senator Warner, Senator Kempthorne, thank you especially for your efforts in this. I know how long and hard you worked on it. Representative Boehlert and Borski and Oberstar and Waxman and Norton who did such good work, and the others who were mentioned by Carol Browner who are not here.

I thank Governor Voinovich and the mayors and the commissioner and the State senator who have come here today because their constituents will be affected by it, and the way they govern will be, I believe, eased and improved as a result of this legislation.

This legislation represents a real triumph because it demonstrates what we can achieve here in Washington and in our country when we turn away from partisanship and embrace shared values. Last week I was proud to sign the Food Quality Protection Act, which passed with full bipartisan support. I said then and I'd like to repeat today that I think a fundamental promise we must make to our people is that the food they eat and the water they drink are safe. American families, after all, have enough to worry about without having to worry about whether that glass of water Diana talked about that you might offer to a child or a grandchild will be contaminated.

Today we come together in that same spirit of bipartisanship to celebrate another cornerstone in the foundation of security for American families. The Safe Drinking Water Act is terribly important. I know that many of us take safe drinking water for granted. Unfortunately, it's not always so. I came into office determined to change this. In 1993, I asked Congress to strengthen our drinking water laws to meet the challenges we face

today and the ones we will face in the future. I am proud to say that the proposals I made then were at the heart of the law I will sign today.

Americans do have a right to know what's in their drinking water and where it comes from before they turn on their taps. Under the new law, water authorities will be required to tell them. Americans have a right to trust that every precaution is being taken to protect their families from dangerous and sometimes even deadly contaminants like cryptosporidium. The new law sets high standards that consider the special needs of children, the elderly, people living with AIDS and weak immune systems.

Americans have the right to believe that Government is doing everything it can to keep water systems safe. The new law requires it to act. It protects the sources of our drinking water from pollution. Even more important, it authorizes nearly \$10 billion in loan funds to help communities all across our Nation upgrade their drinking water systems.

I hope that Congress, and I believe that Congress, will now take the steps necessary to release all of the available monies to communities as quickly as possible. As some of you know, just by chance, the law passed a few hours too late to access money that had been set aside. But the law passed with such strong and passionate support, I believe it will be forthcoming.

Today we helped to ensure that every family in America will have safe, clean drinking water to drink every time they turn on a faucet or stop at a public water fountain. From now on our water will be safer, and our country will be healthier for it.

Again, let me say there are environmental and consumer and public health groups represented here who work so hard to make this happen, and it wouldn't have happened without you. Again, let me say that Congress performed so very well in this endeavor, coming together, working together, securing our future together.

This has been a good couple of weeks for positive achievement: these environmental laws, a higher minimum wage, incentives for small businesses, health reform, meaningful