

freely with whomever we choose. And we are able to express our disagreements with our government freely and openly. These rights, routinely accepted today, have been maintained only through years of testing and reinforcement in our Federal and State courts, which have continued to extend freedom and liberty across the land.

So when we celebrate our freedom, we also celebrate a system of law that makes freedom possible. For more than two centuries, we have prospered and endured because we have relied on that system of law. We must keep that system strong and vibrant in our national life.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, in accordance with Public Law 87-20 of April 7, 1961, do hereby proclaim May 1, 1997, as Law Day. I urge the people of the United States to use this occasion to consider anew how our laws protect our freedoms and contribute to our national well-being. I call upon members of the legal profession, civic associations, educators, librarians, public officials, and the media to promote the observance of this day with appropriate programs and activities. I also call upon public officials to display the flag of the United States on all government buildings throughout the day.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-second day of April, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

William J. Clinton

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NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on April 24.

Remarks on the Chemical Weapons Convention

April 23, 1997

The President. Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Wallace, for your remarks and for your service; Mr. Vice President, General Shalikashvili. Thank you, General Scowcroft, for being here. Thank you,

Admiral Zumwalt, for being here and for being on this issue for so long. General Jones, Admiral Arthur, to all the distinguished veterans and veterans groups who are with us today and to the men and women in uniform who are here today. And I'd like to say a special word of thanks to General Powell and to Senator Dole for being here.

You have witnessed today, I believe, an example of America at its best, working as it should, putting the interests of the American people and the interests of the men and women of America in uniform first. And it is something for which I am very grateful.

This treaty will make our troops safer. It will make our Nation more secure. It will at least reduce the likelihood that innocent civilians here and around the world will be exposed in the future to horrible chemical weapons. That is why every Chairman of the Joint Chiefs for the last 20 years and all the military leaders and political leaders and veterans you have heard today have supported it.

All the arguments have been made, so I would like to tell you a story. We now know that chemical weapons have bedeviled Americans in uniform from Belleau Wood in World War I to Baghdad in the Gulf war. We know that thousands were injured or killed by chemical warfare in World War I. And I thought it would be a wonderful thing today to show what this treaty is all about, to have one remarkable American veteran of World War I who survived such an attack. And he is here with us today, Mr. George Clark. Thank you for coming, sir. God bless you.

Mr. Clark was just in the Oval Office with all of us. And Senator Dole apparently asked him if he was a contemporary of Senator Thurmond, and he said he thought Senator Thurmond was a little young for the heavy responsibilities that he has enjoyed. [*Laughter*]

As a 16-year-old marine, almost 80 years ago, George Clark fought in the Battle of Soissons in July of 1918. Taking cover in a ditch during fierce fighting, his squad came under artillery attack by mustard gas. Every man except him was either killed or wounded as the poisonous fog settled on the ground. But Corporal Clark, who received the Purple

Heart for what he endured that day—and he's wearing it here today, 80 years later—refused medical treatment even though, as he said, “It hurt my lungs bad.” This man went on to serve our country in World War II and the Korean war in the Army and in the Air Force, retiring after 32 years of active duty.

Sir, I thank you for your extraordinary record of service and sacrifice to our Nation. I thank you for caring about all the young people who will follow in your footsteps and for taking the effort and the trouble to be here today to support the ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention. God bless you, sir, and thank you.

All the arguments have been made, and the vote is about to come in. But let me just restate a couple of points I think are very important that the opponents of this treaty cannot effectively rebut. We have decided—as General Powell said, we have decided to give up our chemical weapons. We decided to do that a long time ago.

Now, as more and more nations eliminate their arsenals and they give up not only their arsenals, but they give up developing, producing, and acquiring such weapons, our troops will be less likely to face attack. But also as stockpiles are eliminated and as the transfer of dangerous chemicals—including chemicals which can be put together to form chemical weapons for that purpose—as that is controlled, it will be more difficult for terrorists and for rogue states to get or make poison gas.

That is why it is not a good argument that we don't have some countries involved in this treaty. That's not an argument against ratification. This commits everybody else not to give them anything that they can use to make chemical weapons to use against our forces or innocent civilians.

We also have now tough new tools on short notice, on-site inspections; we create a worldwide intelligence and information sharing network; we strengthen the authority of our own law enforcement officials. That is also very important. That's one of the reasons the Japanese were so supportive of this, because of what they have endured in their country. All these things together are going to help

us make America's men and women in uniform and American citizens safer.

During the last 2 months, as Senator Dole said so clearly, we have worked hard with Senate Majority Leader Lott, Senator Helms, Senator Lugar, Senator Biden, and others. We've resolved virtually all the concerns that some Senators have raised, and those resolutions will be embodied tomorrow in an amendment with the 28 understandings to which Senator Dole referred.

Now, we can't let the minor and relatively small number of disagreements that remain blind us to the overwhelming fact, to use the words of Admiral Zumwalt, that at the bottom line our failure to ratify will substantially increase the risk of a chemical attack against American service personnel. None of us should be willing to take that. As Commander in Chief, I cannot in good conscience take that risk. I'm very proud of the work that's been done under the two predecessor administrations to mine of the opposite party. And I'm very proud that we're all standing here together today as Americans in support of a good and noble and tremendously significant endeavor. And all working together, maybe tomorrow it will come out all right.

Thank you, and God bless you.

Q. Mr. President, at his briefing today, Senator Lott appeared to be leaning toward supporting this treaty—that's sort of my analysis—because of the so-called 28 conditionalities, as he says. If there are so many provisos—if this passes with so many provisos, what is the rest of the world going to think of this treaty? And can we just—the United States say, because we're putting so much in the bill—can we just say, “You accept it the way we like it?”

The President. If you read the provisos tomorrow, every one of them is consistent with the overall treaty and would clearly be a clarification of it. I think the rest of the world will applaud what we have done. And I believe that in very important respects they will say, “That's the way we read the treaty all along.” So I believe it will be reinforcing it. And I think you'll see the differences over the debate tomorrow, where the line falls. I think it will be clear that this will strengthen and enhance the meaning of the treaty, not

only for ourselves but for others all around the world.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:25 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Robert Wallace, executive director, Veterans of Foreign Wars; Gen. Brent Scowcroft, USAF (Ret.), former National Security Advisor; Adm. Elmo Zumwalt, USN (Ret.), former Chief of Naval Operations; and Gen. Colin L. Powell, USA (Ret.), former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; and former Senator Bob Dole.

Statement on the Supreme Court Decision To Expedite Review of the Line Item Veto

April 23, 1997

I am pleased that the Supreme Court has granted the Solicitor General's request to provide an expedited review of a lower court ruling on the line item veto. The line item veto provides a critical tool for the President to strike wasteful spending and tax items from legislation. Congress took the correct step giving the President this authority, and I was pleased to sign the line item veto into law. It is my hope that this expedited ruling will clear up any confusion on this matter.

Message on the Observance of Take Our Daughters to Work Day

April 23, 1997

Warm greetings to everyone participating in "Take Our Daughters to Work Day." We dedicate this special day each year to empowering girls with the encouragement and practical work experiences that will enable them to become leaders in the workplace of the future.

Young girls must never believe that there are limitations on what they can do or become in this country. That's why all of us have a responsibility to renew our commitment to gender equality not only at work, but also in our homes, schools, and communities. It is time to treat our children the same, to embrace their unique gifts, and to allow them to utilize their God-given talents as they choose.

As parents, family members, mentors, and teachers, we also have an obligation to introduce our children to new experiences and to extend their education beyond the boundaries of the classroom. If we are to fulfill the exciting promise of the twenty-first century, we must instill in our girls and boys a deep appreciation for lifelong learning and the confidence and self-esteem to live out their dreams.

I commend the thousands of families, businesses, schools, and communities participating in "Take Our Daughters to Work Day" for showing America's young women that we believe in them and in their ability to lead us in the years to come. You are making a lasting investment in America's future.

Hillary joins me in extending best wishes for a memorable observance.

Bill Clinton

NOTE: This message was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 24 but was not issued as a White House press release.

Statement on the Proposed "Employment Non-Discrimination Act"

April 24, 1997

Today Vice President Gore and I met with a bipartisan delegation from Congress, representing the lead House and Senate sponsors of the "Employment Non-Discrimination Act" ("ENDA")—an important piece of civil rights legislation which would extend basic employment discrimination protections to gay and lesbian Americans. At our meeting, I underscored my strong support of the bill, which will soon be reintroduced in Congress, and our intention to work hard for its passage.

As I said in my State of the Union Address this January, we must never, ever believe that our diversity is a weakness, for it is our greatest strength. People on every continent can look to us and see the reflection of their own great potential, and they always will, as long as we strive to give all of our citizens an opportunity to achieve their own greatness. We're not there yet, and that is why ENDA is so important. It is about the right of each