

Week Ending Friday, August 8, 1997

The President's Radio Address

August 2, 1997

Good morning. This week we reached agreement on a bipartisan balanced budget that honors our values, invests in our people, and gives middle class families a well-deserved tax cut. With overwhelming bipartisan support in both Houses, the Congress has sent me this measure, and next week I will sign it into law. This is an historic achievement, a plan that will strengthen our economy and prepare our people for the challenges of the 21st century.

There has been a lot of cheering here in Washington, but there has been cheering on Main Street as well, for the real impact of this budget will be in the lives, the dreams, and the futures of families all across America. Today I want to talk to you about how this balanced budget will affect millions of American families. I have asked some of them to join me here in the Oval Office today.

For 4½ years, our goal has been to keep the American dream alive and to expand opportunity for all Americans who would work for it. In 1993, when I took office, our economy was not creating that opportunity, and I vowed to change our Nation's course. We put in place a new economic approach, cutting the deficit to create the conditions for growth; investing in the education and health of our people, so that all Americans could reap the rewards of that growth; and opening foreign markets to American goods and services through tough trade agreements.

That strategy relied on tough cuts and hard choices. It produced 4 straight years of deficit cuts and slashed our deficit by 80 percent. We had well begun the work of putting our fiscal house in order before this budget agreement. And in a real sense, what was done back in 1993 made it possible. The low interest rates we've enjoyed have produced economic expansion as well as real benefits for the middle class in the form of lower car

payments, mortgages, and credit card rates. Now, we learned yesterday that unemployment is at its lowest in 24 years. The economy created 316,000 new jobs last month alone. Investment is up, and inflation is low. And family incomes finally have begun to rise.

Our new balanced budget law gives us a chance to make sure all Americans have the tools to prosper in the hopeful new century ahead. For parents who work at home, there is an increase in the home office deduction. For family farmers who buy their own health insurance, there is a provision allowing them to deduct their health costs, just like other small-business people. For parents whose children go to schools that are crumbling, this budget helps them and their communities to repair those schools or build new ones. Most important, in its core provisions, this balanced budget will help working families live up to their responsibilities to their children, their parents, and their communities.

One family has three children. He's a carpenter; she cares for his mother who lives at home with them. The \$1,500 a year they will receive from the children tax credit will be the biggest increase in take-home pay they have seen for some time. In another family, the mother wants to go back to school but can't afford to until her own children finish college. The new HOPE scholarship tax credit would make it possible for her to live out her dreams and return to school. Another mother works full time but has no health insurance for her two children, one of whom has a heart ailment. She was told she works too many hours to receive Medicaid. This budget invests \$24 billion in children's health care, so that parents like her can have greater peace of mind, knowing their children can get health insurance.

This balanced budget is a victory for every parent who wants a good education for his or her children, for every child in our hardest pressed households who needs health care,

for every family working to build a secure future. After years in which wages did not rise as fast as they should, this tax cut will clearly provide a direct increase in take-home pay for millions of families. It is the best investment we can make in America's future. It is the achievement of a generation, and all Americans should be proud.

This is a moment of profound hope for our country. As the new century approaches, we've come together to conquer one of our most persistent problems, and we've done it in a way that benefits all our people and our future. I hope that's how we'll meet all our challenges in the years to come, because when Congress and the President put aside partisanship and find common ground, when they act together for the common good, America can meet any goal and master any challenge.

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 Business Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters

August 4, 1997

Helen Thomas' Birthday

The President. Before we start, I think it's only fair to note that we are observing another anniversary of Helen's 50th birthday. [Laughter] We wanted to give you a birthday cake with a telltale number of—

[At this point, participants sang "Happy Birthday."]

Ms. Thomas. Now may I have a press conference? [Laughter]

The President. I'm going to make a statement, and you get the questions. [Laughter]

Ms. Thomas. Thank you.

The President. Take it to the press room and cut it up. [Laughter]

Ms. Thomas. Thank you. This is painful. [Laughter]

The President. You don't make it look that way. It's painful for me, too. [Laughter]

Action on Climate Change

I'm glad to be joined today by the CEO's of 10 Fortune 500 companies who have come here to meet with me on climate change. These companies represent electric utilities, the oil and gas industry, finance, high technology, and heavy industry. They are all intimately interested in this issue and will be affected by whatever happens on it in our country and throughout the world. We want a responsible approach to climate change. We believe that the science makes it clear that the climate is changing. I want to proceed based on some fairly straightforward and simple principles.

First of all, as we get ready for the Kyoto conference, I believe there should be realistic but binding limits to emissions of greenhouse gases. I believe that we have to do it in a way that keeps our economy growing. And I believe that we ought to embrace flexible, market-based policies. I believe we should reemphasize and reenergize our efforts in research and development to find as many technological solutions to this as possible and to keep our Nation in the forefront of what is now a \$400 billion market for environmental technologies. And finally, I believe the agreement has to be a global one. I think all nations, developed and developing, should be a part of this. So this is part of an ongoing process that I and our administration have undertaken to try to make sure we're working together with all the people who would be affected by this issue and try to reach, hopefully, a common position.

We're going to have a good meeting today, and I'm looking forward to it. And again, I want to thank all the executives for coming here and giving vent to their views.

Q. What do you think of the opposition, who says there is no such thing as global warming and that they don't agree with the scientists—some of the scientists?

The President. Well, I think that the real question is—I don't think that very many people disagree with the fact that there is climate change now. I think there's some disagreement about what the impact of it is and what the appropriate response is. There's still some debate there. But I think the scientific evidence for the fact of climate change is pretty compelling. We had that panel of sci-