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Telephone Remarks to the Wall Street Project Conference

January 14, 1999

I am very sorry that bad weather prevented me from being with you tonight. But if Mother Nature is kind, I will be in New York tomorrow. I want to thank all of you for coming together through the Wall Street Project to work to ensure that the unprecedented prosperity of our time reaches into every corner of America.

We are living in blessed times. Our economy is the strongest in a generation. Our social fabric is mending. That's why we must seize this moment of prosperity to tackle some of our greatest challenges. You gather tonight in one of the greatest monuments of American capitalism. But just blocks away, there are hard-working families who have yet to feel the prosperity. We have not only an opportunity, we've got an obligation to give all of them the tools they need to share in this bounty.

As leaders of the companies on the Big Board, as the men and women who have helped to transform America into the world's economic superpower, you must help to build the bridge between those who work in our gleaming office towers and those who live in their shadows, between Wall Street and our greatest untapped markets. Tomorrow I'll talk about my plan to work with all of you to bring capital and hope to our most underserved neighborhoods.

Not too long ago, Reverend Jackson once talked about the freedom symphony he would write for America. The first movement would represent our liberation from slavery; the second would be the struggle to end legal segregation; the third would be the fight to win the vote; and the final movement would be the crusade to bring economic opportunity to all Americans. You can help to write that movement. In fact, it can't be written without you.

I thank you for helping to make sure that no family is left behind. And I look forward to seeing all of you tomorrow.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 8:30 p.m. from the Oval Office at the White House to the conference in New York City. In his remarks, he referred to civil rights leader Rev. Jesse Jackson. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Review of Title III of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996

January 14, 1999

Dear _____:

Pursuant to section 306(c)(2) of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–114), (the ''Act''), I hereby determine and report to the Congress that suspension for 6 months beyond February 1, 1999, of the right to bring an action under title III of the Act is necessary to the national interests of the United States and will expedite a transition to democracy in Cuba.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Jesse Helms, chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; Ted Stevens, chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations; Benjamin A. Gilman, chairman, House Committee on International Relations; and C.W. Bill Young, chairman, House Committee on Appropriations. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 15. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Statement on Review of Title III of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996

January 15, 1999

I am today notifying the Congress that I have decided to suspend for an additional 6 months implementation of provisions of Title III of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, which allow legal actions to be brought against firms trafficking in confiscated properties in Cuba. I believe that this decision best implements the Act's objective to enhance human rights and hasten the day when the Cuban people enjoy democracy and prosperity.

This action further enhances our efforts to strengthen international cooperation in promoting peaceful democratic change in Cuba. For the past 2½ years, the United States has pursued a strategy, coordinated by Under Secretary of State Stu Eizenstat, to increase international pressure on the Cuban Government to respect human rights and to begin political and economic reforms. We have urged our democratic friends and allies to take concrete actions in support of this goal. Encouraged by the results, in January 1997 I said that I expected to continue suspending this provision of Title III so long as our partners' stepped-up pro-democracy efforts continued.

Over the past 6 months, the Cuban Government has heard a more concerted message from the international community in support of democracy. A number of national leaders have publicly and privately pressed senior Cuban officials on the need for human rights and democracy. While visiting Cuba, they have spoken openly of the need for change, and they have met with and given important encouragement to pro-democracy human rights activists. In international forums, our friends in Latin America and Europe have been explicit in their condemnation of Cuba's deplorable human rights situation. The European Union has renewed its Common Position on Cuba, calling for ''a peaceful transition to pluralist democracy, the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.'' The senior-level report made at the U.S.–EU Summit last month stressed our joint efforts to promote such a transition in Cuba. This partnership has succeeded in increasing international pressure on Cuba to respect human rights and make fundamental reforms. Nongovernmental organizations have augmented their efforts as well. A strong consensus is emerging among business and labor groups that investors in Cuba should adhere to clear ''best business'' principles. While we do not encourage investment in Cuba, we welcome efforts to seek the agreement of those who do invest to provide Cuban workers with decent pay, the right to organize, and safe working conditions. Major European NGO's have undertaken to develop an international working group to pursue this important initiative further.

We underscored our determination to support freedom in Cuba again on December 10, International Human Rights Day, when we honored human rights activists around the world, including the four members of Cuba's Internal Dissidence Working Group awaiting trial merely for defending their right to speak freely about their hopes for the future. Their willingness to make personal sacrifices for their peaceful, democratic cause inspires us to persevere on their behalf. I again pledge this administration's strongest efforts to encourage and work with our allies on effective steps to promote democracy and human rights in Cuba.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Remarks to the Wall Street Project Conference in New York City

January 15, 1999

The President. Thank you. I'm not sure I know what to say. [*Laughter*] First I was thinking, here I have to go follow Jesse again. [*Laughter*] You know the story about the guy that went to heaven, and St. Peter said, ''Well, we've got a lot of new entrants today, and we want everybody to stand up and tell them what the best thing they ever did in their life was. How would you like to participate?'' The guy said, ''I'd like to do that. I did a great thing once.'' He said, ''Well, what did you do?'' He said, ''I saved a bunch of