

Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Radio Remarks on the “Insure Kids Now” Initiative

February 23, 1999

As every parent knows, nothing is more important than keeping our children healthy. So I have very good news for working parents. Even if you can't afford private health insurance, it's now possible to get help with doctor bills, medicines, and hospital care for your children. If your children are uninsured, please call 1-877-KIDS-NOW—1-877-KIDS-NOW. With a little help, your children can get the care they need to grow up healthy and strong.

NOTE: The President's remarks were recorded at approximately 2:54 p.m. in the Oval Office on February 22 for later broadcast as a public service announcement. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 23. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the Kosovo Peace Talks

February 23, 1999

The peace talks in Rambouillet, France, are a significant step forward in the search for a fair and lasting peace in Kosovo. In the last three weeks, the negotiations have produced more progress than we have seen in the decade since Kosovo's autonomy was stripped away by the Government in Belgrade.

By agreeing in principle to a strong plan that would provide substantial self-government for the people of Kosovo, the negotiators on the Albanian side have shown courage and leadership. The agreement by the Serb side to substantial autonomy for Kosovo also represents an important, but incomplete, recognition that only by allowing the people in Kosovo control over their day-to-day lives can there be a lasting peace.

The Kosovar negotiators have asked for time to consult with their constituents before formally signing the peace plan. I believe that

the Kosovar Albanian people will strongly support what their negotiators have done, because the agreement represents the opportunity for a better life after years of repression and fear. The Serbs should be prepared to return to the negotiations on March 15 with a commitment to sign the full agreement—including the indispensable provisions on the withdrawal of most Serb security forces from Kosovo and the deployment of a NATO-led peace implementation force.

In the meantime, it is imperative that all sides avoid provocations that would imperil this progress. NATO Secretary General Javier Solana retains the authority given to him by the NATO Council to act if necessary.

I want to thank Secretary Albright and all her negotiators for their tireless efforts that led to hopeful developments, and commend British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook and French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine, the cochairs of Rambouillet, for their leadership.

Statement on the Verdict in the James Byrd, Jr., Murder Trial

February 23, 1999

When James Byrd, Jr., was murdered, it was my hope that people would join together across racial lines to demonstrate that an act of evil like this is not what our country is all about. That hope was fulfilled over the past 8 months, as citizens across the country expressed their outrage and grief over this tragedy and their determination to ensure that justice be done.

I hope that the verdict rendered today by 12 citizens in Jasper, Texas, will bring some sense of closure to the family and friends of Mr. Byrd. The First Lady and I offer our prayers for them and our hope that their memories of Mr. Byrd's life will sustain them in the difficult time ahead. The jury has spoken. Our work for racial reconciliation and an end to all crimes of hatred in this country will go on.