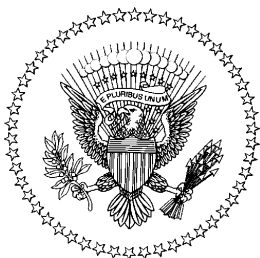


Weekly Compilation of
**Presidential
Documents**



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Week Ending Friday, March 19, 1999

**Remarks at a Reception for
Representative Max Sandlin
in Texarkana, Texas**

March 12, 1999

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you. You know, I told Leslie, I said, “Max is doing so well I don’t need to say anything.” [Laughter] “If I say anything now, it’s going to be an anticlimax.” [Laughter] He had me halfway believing that stuff by the time he got through. [Laughter].

Let me say to all of you, I am delighted to see such a large crowd. I’m sorry, apparently some people had to be turned away; I wish I could have seen them as well. I thank you for coming. I thank you for coming to see me and for coming to support your Congressman. I want to thank Mr. Mayor, thank you for making me feel so welcome. And I thank the whole committee that was involved in this, my longtime friend Judge Ed Miller. Thank you, Judge—Molly Beth Malcolm, and Willie Ray and all the others who are here on the host committee.

I want to thank my friend of many years, once my law student, John Rafaelli, who has got a lot more money than I do and is putting us up in this beautiful hotel now. I thank him for that.

Let me say just a couple of words. You know, I came today for two reasons. I came here to help Max, and I also went home to Hope to dedicate the birthplace that the local foundation there set up. They restored the old home that I lived in from the time I was born until I was 4 years old. And it was an interesting day. You know, it was cold and rainy, and the wind was blowing. I said, “You know, I always got humbled when I came home, but this was the worst.” I mean, for 5 years I’ve been trying to convince the American people that this global warming was for real. [Laughter] And we have the coldest March day in 100 years in Hope. I

don’t know how much ground I lost today on that. [Laughter]

But as you might imagine, it was a very emotional day. A lot of my—my brother and his wife and my wonderful young nephew came in from California. My stepfather was there; a lot of my kinfolks from all over southwest Arkansas and from Texas came in on my mother’s and my father’s side of the family. And last night, when I was coming back from a remarkable trip I had to Central America to see the victims of the hurricanes there and the associated disasters and to reaffirm the partnership that we have for the future, I sat and tried to write down a few things that I wanted to say. And I had, surprisingly, since I was 4 when I moved out of that place, a lot of memories still of that wonderful old house.

And it occurred to me that in that little town where I was born and where I spent so much time in the intervening years, when I was a kid, nearly 50 years ago, there were two things that we were raised to believe in that town that I have tried to bring to this country and that I have tried to get every child in this country to believe: One is to be optimistic, to believe that you can create a life for yourself and live out your dreams; the other is to have a sense of belonging, to believe that we are part of one community in our towns, in our States, in our country, and increasingly with like-minded people all around the world, that we belong, and that because we belong we have a responsibility not only to ourselves and our loved ones but to others, and that the better our neighbors do, the better we’ll do.

I’ve tried to convince every child in this country that both those things are true. And the evidence is I may have done better out in the country than I have in Washington, DC—[laughter]—but making the effort has been a joy for me.

I can say without any hesitation that much of the good things that have happened I was

a part of but certainly not solely responsible for. Many of the things which Max talked about could not have been achieved if I hadn't had strong allies in the United States Congress.

And I came here for him today not simply because he is a member of my party but because we share the same values, the same convictions, the same vision for the future of the country, because he fights for you up there, because he—and he does it, I think, in three ways. Number one, on issues that are specific to this district, he speaks to me about them. Number two, he believes in things that are good for America that will have a special impact here—our efforts to lower class sizes in the early grades, our efforts to open the doors of college to all people with the tax credits and the student loans the other initiatives to the administration. He believes that we ought to have a Patient's Bill of Rights to protect the quality of health care for people in managed care programs throughout the country. And I do, too. [Laughter] He believes in the proposal I made to save Social Security and Medicare before we spend the surplus, and I want to talk about that a little in a minute. And finally, in this last year, even though he is a very junior Member of the United States House of Representatives, he was one of the most serious, substantive, thoughtful, and effective advocates, asking all the Members of Congress to read the Constitution, read the history, and uphold their oath to protect the kind of Government that we have preserved in this country for over 220 years. For all those reasons, you should be very, very proud of your Congressman, who is a remarkable person.

Now, I'm having a great time. You know, I can now go around, and I can go to fund-raisers like this, and none of them are for me. [Laughter] And I love that. I love the idea that if I can stay healthy, I can spend quite a few years trying to give back to this political system and to candidates and to people that I believe in who have given me so much.

I want you to know that in the 2 years I have left, what I'm going to try to do is to take advantage of the good times we have now and the optimism and the self-con-

fidence we have to ask the American people to look at the big, unmet challenges this country still has ahead of us when we start this new century.

You know, when I ran for President in 1991 and 1992, we had to get the country working again—literally, working. The unemployment rate was too high, real wages for working people hadn't gone up in 20 years. The crime rate was going up. The welfare rolls were exploding. We had increasing social tensions between people of different racial and religious groups, manifested in civil disturbances in some of our cities. And it seemed to me that we clearly had to stop doing the same things we've been doing for the last dozen years and take a different course. And we did, and the results have been good, and Max talked about them.

But now we have to say, "Well, so now what?" Should we just sort of, like being at school, should we call a recess and just say, "Gee, we feel good. We're going to go out and play a while?" I think that would be a big mistake. I think it would be a big mistake for several reasons. Number one, we've still got some unaddressed problems. Number two, there are big challenges looming ahead of us that are not right in front of us now. Number three, the world is changing very, very fast, and people get punished for sitting on their laurels. You don't hire people to be Presidents, Senators, Members of Congress, Governors, mayors, hold other positions of responsibility, to go around and smile and say how great things are.

I never will forget one time in 1990 I was trying to decide whether to run for Governor again in Arkansas, and I had been Governor 4 times, and I had served 10 years. And I used to have Governor's Day at the State Fair, and I'd just sit out there in a little booth and anybody that wanted to come by could come by and talk. And this old boy in overalls came up to me, looked to be about 70 years old, and he said, "Bill, are you going to run for Governor again?" And I said, "I don't know. If I do, will you vote for me?" He said, "I guess so. I always have." "Well," I said, "aren't you sick of me after all these years?" He said, "No, but everybody else I know is." [Laughter] And I said—it's a true story. And I said, "Well"—and I was sort of

hurt, you know. I said, "Well, don't you think I've done a good job?" He said, "Yes, but you also drew a paycheck every 2 weeks, didn't you?" He said, "That's what we hired you to do. What I want to know is what you're going to do tomorrow." Interesting point. Smart guy. Smart man.

And so while it's important to take our time to do what I did today—to honor our past, to water our roots, to cherish the ties that bind—it's also important to realize that the fundamental obligation of life is to make the most of today and tomorrow. And to always be thinking ahead.

Now, let me tell you about this Social Security issue, for example. Here are the big challenges I think we face, and there are more, but I'll just say a few. Number one, we've got to figure out how to keep this economy going because it's beginning to work for people. I mean, average people are finally beginning to get pay raises, with inflation under control, and we're beginning to get jobs to people who haven't been able to get jobs. So we've got to keep the economy going, and we've got to bring opportunity to people who haven't had it.

There are still urban areas, there are still small towns, there are still rural areas, there are still Indian reservations where you couldn't prove it by the people who live there that we've got 18 million new jobs. And we've got to figure out—one of the reasons I went to Central America, one of the reasons I travel around all over the world is, a bunch of our growth comes from our ability to sell what we make to other people, and if half the world is in a recession as they are today, it's hard.

I'm telling you, we've got a lot of farmers in terrible shape—terrible shape. Record low prices for commodities, but partly because we've been selling a ton of stuff to Asia and a lot of stuff to Latin America, and they can't buy, in the case of Latin America, as much as they did, and in some cases in Asia they can't buy anything they were buying before because of the economic problems. So I want to deal with that.

Now, the second problem we've got is the aging of America. Now, the older I get the more I see that as a high-class problem. [Laughter] But the truth is, the average age

in America today is over 76 years. If you're in this audience tonight and you're over 60 years old, if you're still in pretty good shape, you have a life expectancy of 80 or more.

Audience member. I hope so.

The President. Yeah. [Laughter] That's right.

So it's a high-class problem. This is the kind of problem every society wants. Wouldn't it be terrible if our friends—and I say that in a serious way—our friends in Russia who are struggling to make their democracy stay alive and get their economy going again, because they've had such terrible economic problems, because their health care system has been in terrible disrepair, their life expectancy is going down. They don't have a Social Security problem. You wouldn't like it. This is a high-class problem, okay? So let's just—we have a challenge to Social Security and Medicare because we're going to have twice as many people over 65 in 30 years as we've got today. But it is as a result of the hard work of the American people, of our economic success, of better health care habits by ordinary citizens, and of stunning advances in medical science.

Nonetheless, we've got to deal with it. In about 30 years, there will only be about two people working for every one person drawing Social Security. In 10 years, if we don't do something, Medicare is going to run out of money. And there are a lot of people who wouldn't have the life they have today if Medicare weren't in good shape. So the aging of America is a big challenge.

We've got the economy. We've got the aging of America. The third thing we have to realize is that for the future, more and more people are going to work and have children, and we have a big stake in seeing them do well at both jobs. If we have to choose, if parents have to choose between succeeding at home and succeeding at work, we're in trouble, because the most important job of any society is raising children well—ever—and because if people are sick at heart worrying about their kids when they're at work, they're not going to be very effective on the job.

So we have to do more in that regard to help people with quality child care, to get them some time off without losing their job

if the kids are sick or they've got sick parents or other problems—we have to do this to make sure we do continue to raise the minimum wage where it's appropriate, so people who work 40 hours a week and are doing the right thing and paying their taxes, they're not still living in poverty. These things are important.

The fourth thing we have to do is to make sure we give all our kids a world-class education. We now have the most diverse student population in history. At this little grade school in Hope, Arkansas, just up the road, named for me, there are 27 immigrant children in that little school—27 in Hope, Arkansas. In the school district across the Potomac River from Washington, DC, we now have people—listen to this—from 180 different national, racial, and ethnic groups. I went out to a school the other day, not very far from Washington, where the principal was elated to have me there talking to the students and all their parents, and the only thing that made her sad was we weren't able to arrange for a consecutive translation of my remarks, first in Spanish and second in Arabic.

Now, this is a good deal in a global society if, but only if, you can educate every child to world-class standards. I'm not trying to tell the Texarkana school district how to run their business, but I know we need more teachers. I know we need after-school and summer school programs so kids can learn instead of just passing them whether they learn or not. I know that. So the education of our children is important.

And the fifth thing we have to do is, we've got to commit ourselves to live in the world of the 21st century, which means we have to deal with environmental challenges like climate change. It means that we can't run away from our responsibilities to try to be a force for peace, whether it's in Europe or Latin America or Northern Ireland or you name it—the efforts I've made in the Middle East. It's all in our interest.

It means that we have to stand up against terrorism and chemical and biological weapons and all these things that most people would rather not think about. My first National Security Adviser, Tony Lake, used to tell me that the most important thing a President could do to protect the security of the

country was to have a lot of dogs that don't bark. In other words, for me to be able to go to Texarkana and tell you I'm working on a biological weapons issue, and you're not quite sure what I'm talking about because the dog has never barked.

But the President needs to keep those dogs at bay. So what I've tried to do and what I tried to do in the State of the Union Address, what I try to do in my conversations with Members of Congress like Max, is to say, "Look, we've got these big issues out there, and if we can take care of them, we're going to be all right."

I just want you to think about one—I'll just give you one example, though. We do have a surplus that is very strong. Now, you know when the economy is good, you have more surplus because you've got more people working and fewer people spending government money and more people paying taxes. And then if the economy goes down, then you may run a little deficit because you've got fewer people paying taxes and more people on welfare and taking government assistance.

But what happened to us for the first time in the 1980's was we made a decision to run a big deficit every year. And for 12 years we quadrupled the debt of the country, and we had high interest rates, and wages wouldn't go up. You all remember. And then when the economy went down, we couldn't spend our way out of it. We just got stuck in high unemployment. So I wanted to balance the budget so we wouldn't have to worry about that, so we could keep interest rates down.

Now I'm asking the American people to help me do something that may be hard for a lot of people to do. I think we ought to take about three-quarters of this surplus we've got and save it to do two things. We should save it in the next few years and save it in the following way: We should be buying back the public debt—in other words, pay our debt down—and as we do it, in effect, give a certificate of obligation for that money to Social Security and Medicare for 15 years, after which the Congress can do whatever they want to about it.

But let me tell you what will happen. If you do that we can help to solve the Social

Security problem. We can make Social Security solvent until 2050 or beyond; we can make Medicare solvent until 2020. We still ought to make some other changes in it, but we can do those things. We can keep interest rates down. That means more business loans, more jobs, lower car payments, lower mortgage payments, lower credit card payments, lower college loan interest rates, paying the debt down. It means that—you know what Max has to do every year when he votes on a budget? The first thing he's got to do this year is to take over 13 cents of every dollar you pay in taxes and put it to the side to pay interest on the debt we've run up.

So when you think about what we're spending money on and you say, "Well, Max, I want more for education," or, "Max, I want a tax cut," or, "Max, I want you to spend more money on building us some more highways here"—just keep in mind, you're thinking, "Well, I'm giving him \$100, right, in taxes." Well, you're not. You're giving him \$87 in taxes because you've got to take 13 off the top just to pay interest on the debt we've run up.

Now, if we do what I'm suggesting, not only can we deal with the financial crisis in Social Security and Medicare, 15 years from now—and, again, it won't be me, I won't be there—but 15 years from now the Members of Congress will only be taking 2 cents on the dollar for interest on the debt. They'll be spending the money on Social Security, Medicare, education, investing in a peaceful world, giving you tax cuts, whatever. But don't you think it makes sense for us to take care of the Social Security and Medicare problems and to pay the debt down and to secure our economic strength? I mean, I think it makes a lot of sense.

So I came here today to help a man I admire. I came here today to thank you for sticking with me and for giving me the chance to serve and giving the country the chance to have these good things happen. And I'd like to make just a whoop-de-do speech. But I owe it to you to tell you that this new century will present us with unparalleled new opportunities and unforeseen new challenges. And our predecessors, the people that were here 5 years ago and 10 years ago and 15 years ago were up to their ears in

alligators. They did not have the opportunity that we have to take the confidence, the economic success, the things we've got now, and think about the long-term welfare of the country.

And if you believe what I said when I started and you clapped—50 years ago I was raised to believe that everybody could live out their dreams, but that we had responsibilities to one another to live in one community—then let's act like that now and give those gifts to our children.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:20 p.m. in the Stephen F. Austin Ballroom at the Four Points Hotel Sheraton. In his remarks, he referred to Leslie Sandlin, wife of Representative Sandlin; Mayor John M. Garvis of Texarkana; event cohosts former Bowie County Judge Edward Miller, Texas Democratic Party Chair Molly Beth Malcolm, and Texarkana City Council member Willie Ray; John D. Rafaelli, owner, Four Points Hotel Sheraton; the President's brother, Roger Clinton, and his wife, Molly, and their son, Tyler; and the President's stepfather Richard Kelley. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Statement on the Accession of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic as Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

March 12, 1999

I welcome the accession today of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic as NATO's newest members. The people of these three nations know what it means to lose their freedom. For years they struggled with dignity and courage to regain their freedom. And now they will help us defend it for many years to come. Their membership will make America safer. It will make NATO stronger. And it will help us realize our common vision of a Europe that is for the first time undivided, democratic, and at peace.

For 3 days, beginning on April 23, NATO's 19 members will meet in Washington for the 50th anniversary summit of our alliance, joined by our partners from across the new Europe. We will honor NATO's achievements in protecting peace and security. We will also prepare our alliance to meet the

challenges ahead, strengthen our partnership with Europe's newly democratic nations, and reaffirm our commitment that NATO's newest members will not be the last.

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

Remarks at a Dinner Honoring Representative Sandlin in Texarkana
March 12, 1999

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. I'd like to begin just by thanking you all for giving me such a wonderful, warm welcome tonight, coming up, saying hello, shaking my hand, seeing if I still knew how to write my name—[laughter]—taking the pictures. It's wonderful to be back here. I have had a lot of incredible times in this community over the last 24 years or so. And I've seen a lot of old friends here tonight, and I'm delighted to see you.

I came here for a lot of reasons, but I want to begin by just thanking Truman and Anita and the Joyces, the Youngs, the Pattersons, everybody else who had anything to do with this. When I was Governor, and when I started running for President, no one but my mother thought I could win. [Laughter] Maybe on a good day, Hillary did. [Laughter] I don't know if anybody else did. Truman Arnold was there for me. The people of Miller and Bowie Counties were there for me. And I have never forgotten it, and I never will.

I was sitting here looking at Truman, you know. I just want to tell you it's little things that mean a lot to me. I go all over the country, and I do these events. And I'm paying more attention to them, I think, than I ever have, maybe because they're not for me anymore because I can't run for anything. He thanked more people who worked for me who never get acknowledged by anybody, anywhere, tonight than anyone in the United States of America ever has at one of these events. And I appreciate that. That means a lot.

I also want to thank Molly Beth Malcolm, even though the Congressman ragged her a little bit for agreeing to be head of the Texas Democratic Party. No matter what you think,

it is alive and well, and we have a majority of the House delegation, and I hope we increase the numbers next time. And I thank you very much.

I'd like to thank the people who served the food, the people who cooked the food. This is the most I've gotten to eat at one of these things in a long time. [Laughter] And the people that let me eat, I appreciate that, too, although I really didn't need to. I enjoyed it. I'd like to thank the band. They were great.

You know, I wanted to be here tonight for a number of reasons. You know, I came home to Hope today, and we dedicated—we had a formal dedication of my—they call it my birthplace. I was actually born in a hospital, as near as I remember. [Laughter] But I lived there from the time I was born until I was 4 years old. And they restored this wonderful old house that was built in 1917, and the last time I saw it before they started in 1990, it needed condemning. But the people have done a wonderful job. And my kinfolks from all over here have given them memorabilia and things, and other people have contributed. A lady came from the Midwest today and stood out in that cold, driving rain, drove all the way from Iowa, I think, to give them a Lionel train, because she read that when I was 4 years old, I had a little Lionel train there. And she had one that was made in 1950, and she gave it to them. It was a wonderful thing for me. And I came here because I wanted to help Max Sandlin. And I'd like to tell you something about the connection between the two things.

As I said, I feel incredibly grateful to have had the chance to be President. I'm grateful for the people here who have supported me, I'm grateful for the people from Arkansas who went to Washington with me. Truman recognized Bob and Janis and Nancy Hernreich, and my good friend Mack McLarty's here, and we may have some more Arkansans here with me tonight.

But I want you to know that I hope that the good Lord gives me good health for a few more years, and I can spend my time being a citizen, trying to help other people I believe in stand up and fight for causes that I believe in. And after over 20 years in public life, I am acutely mindful of the fact

that while every politician would like to have you believe that he was born in a log cabin that he made himself—[*laughter*—the truth is that all—any of us, even a President, can hope to do, is to be a part of setting a direction of taking the chains off people, creating the conditions in which people can make and live their own dreams.

But I'm here for Max, in part, because I think it's not only something I want to do; it's something I think would be good for the children of this district and this State and this country. I said today at the dedication of my birthplace that when I was born in Hope yea long years ago, right at the end of World War II, it wasn't a perfect place. It was still segregated, and we had our fair share of flaws in that little town. And as Mack McLarty reminded me today on the airplane, we even had a gossip or two, God forbid. [*Laughter*]

But the children in the blush of optimism and national unity after World War II were basically raised to believe at least two things in little towns all across America like the one that I came of age in: One was to believe they should be personally optimistic, that they should have their dreams and live them and believe that they could; and the second was to be acutely sensitive to and respectful to other people, to never forget that they were part of a community, that the good news was they belonged to something bigger than themselves, but they also had a responsibility to care for people besides themselves.

And one of the biggest reasons that I ran for President in 1991 and '92 was to give the young people of this generation that feeling back. All these young people working for us tonight, you don't have any idea what they do when they're not serving you food. But unlike me, they've got most of their lives ahead of them. I want them to believe that they can live their dreams. I want them to, in fact, have a chance to do it.

I want them to also believe that in this country that is incredibly diverse—I told somebody today the little grade school named after me in Hope, Arkansas, now has 27 kids who are first-generation immigrants, whose first language is not English. The school district across the river, the Potomac River, from Washington, DC, now has chil-

dren in one school district from 180 different national, racial, and ethnic groups. We had better remember that we are one community, and that if any of us hope to do well, we ought to want our neighbors to do well, too. And we ought to be willing to go to some trouble to see that they have that chance.

And so that's what I said today at my little dedication in my home. I said I learned that lesson as a little boy in Hope. And if I hadn't learned it, we wouldn't be here 50 years later.

I came here tonight because I like Max Sandlin and because I admire him and because he has already had an unusual impact for a person that hasn't been in the House any longer than he's been there and shown an unusual amount of personal courage and responsibility. And I will just give you three examples—[*applause*—the other people also like him; otherwise my Congressman, former member of my administration, Marion Berry, the Congressman from eastern Arkansas, would not be down here tonight in the cold and the rain. You don't do that just out of some sense of obligation. And there are three reasons.

Number one, I want you to know he does his work for the district. On far more than one occasion, he has personally lobbied me about a specific issue relating to this district. That's part of his job. But you would be amazed at how many people—so has Marion Berry—[*laughter*—but he took me to race 20 years ago, so he feels he has a right to. But you would be amazed how many people get around the President, and then they say, "Oh, I'd better not bother him with that. He's probably thinking about Kosovo." Well, I probably am. But the only reason I have a right to think about Kosovo is that people from Miller County and Bowie County gave me the vote to put me there to do it. And he never forgets that.

Second thing is, he really, deeply believes in the things we're trying to do. You could look at him when he was up here talking; he wasn't faking it. He believes we were right to fight those who oppose us, to put another 100,000 teachers in the classroom so every child in this country has a chance in the early grades to be in a small class with a teacher that can give that child individual attention so that all our kids learn to read and to speak

and to be able to learn for the rest of their experience. He really believes that we ought to have a Patients' Bill of Rights to protect the patients and the right of medical professionals to practice medicine, even as we try to manage the health care system.

We shouldn't manage people's right to a specialist away. We shouldn't manage people's right to the nearest emergency room away. We shouldn't manage people's right to continue treatment even if their employer changes their health care provider in the middle of a pregnancy or chemotherapy treatment or something else. He believes that. It's just not something he's saying because it happens to sound good this year. And he really believes, and this is important, because the Democratic Party used to have an image as the party that had promoted the deficits. It was never true.

Even in the 12 years—and remember, I'm not running for anything, so I'm entitled—and we've had a pretty good economy, so all I'm asking you for is the benefit of the doubt. But I'd like to put this down. Even in the 12 years before I became President, when the Democrats had a majority in Congress and we quadrupled the debt, the Congress actually spent less money than my predecessors asked them to spend. So what I wanted to do was to prove that you could be progressive: You could believe in community; you could believe in raising the minimum wage; you could believe in helping working families with child care; you could believe in opening the doors of college with more scholarships and tax credits and first make the economy work by bringing the deficit down, balancing the budget, getting interest rates down so people would invest their money, run the stock market up, start new businesses, put people to work and raise wages. I thought good economic policy and good social policy would go hand in hand. It turned out to be right. Well, I'm only going to be there 2 more years. Max Sandlin believes that. He wasn't kidding when he said we ought to pay down the debt.

If I had come to you in 1992 and said, "Now listen, before I'm done, I'll be coming back here telling you we can pay off the national debt," you'd have said that guy's too unstable to be President. *[Laughter]*

Wouldn't you? Nobody would have believed that. We just took it for granted. You know, the deficit would always go up; crime would go up; welfare would go up; the country would grow unequal; working people would never be able to get ahead again. It turns out not to be true. If you do the right things and work at it, consequences flow from that.

So I'm telling you, I don't want to give you a whole policy speech tonight, but if you watch every elected official in Washington, DC, for the next year, there will be a zillion issues. You may think I'm wrong about some of them, but some of them will determine how the children in this room and their children live, way into the 21st century.

One is, how are we going to handle the fact that America is aging. The Second World War baby boom generation, everybody born from 1946 to 1964, when we all get into the retirement system, there won't be but two people working for every one person drawing Social Security. Even before that, within 10 years, because life expectancy is going up and the older you get the more you need to have medical treatment, Medicare will run out of money under the present system, unless we put some more money in it and make some changes.

Now, that's a high-class problem. The older I get, the higher class problem that is. *[Laughter]* But if you think about it, that's a high-class problem. It's because of advances in medical science, advances in basic health care, things like clean water and immunizations, and because people are taking better care of themselves. But it will bankrupt the country and the Social Security system unless we make some changes.

So now we've got this chance. Why? Because we've got a surplus and because you've got a President who is not running for office and is not afraid to tell you a few things you might not like to hear about the changes we need to make to make sure this is going to be there 75 years from now. And this is not an issue for the elderly. Everybody over 60 in this audience, Social Security will be there if you live to be 85. Don't worry about it. It's not a problem. It's a problem for people my age and the nagging worry we have that if we don't fix Social Security, then our children will have to take care of us in a way

that undermines their ability to take care of our grandchildren. That's what this is about.

And it's a big issue for America. And it's very easy for politicians to get out there and tell you, "Oh, we'll take care of this down the road, and I'm going to give you this surplus back right now in a tax cut." Well, we ought to have a tax cut this year, but we ought to save three-quarters of that surplus until we fix Social Security and Medicare. We ought to do that. And we have given the Congress a way to do it that will enable us for the next 15 years to buy down the national debt while we're making future commitments for Social Security and Medicare.

Now, you know, this is an alien subject in America. We had—as Max said, we hadn't balanced the budget in 30 years, now we're talking about buying down the debt. But I've been thinking about this. I just got back from Central America, one of the places in the world we actually have a trade surplus with. That's why I want to help them get over the hurricane and because they're our neighbors and our friends.

A lot of people say, "I wish we didn't have so much illegal immigration." Well, a lot of people down there love their children and can't make a living for them. That's why they come up here. If we help them get over this hurricane and help them make a living down there, they'll be good trading partners, and you won't have to worry so much about illegal immigration.

But I got to thinking about it. I'm also trying to do it because we're trying to keep the world economy going. But if you talk to any farmer that grows crops or raises cattle or hogs, you know this is a very tough time to be a farmer. We may have 18 million new jobs; we may have the best American economy in history; but you couldn't prove it by the grain farmers in the high plains of America. You couldn't prove it by most farmers.

Now, why is that? A big reason is, half the world's in a terrible recession because of the Asian financial crisis and because it gave the financial flu to a lot of countries in Latin America, and they can't buy our stuff anymore. Now, I've got to worry about how to keep this economy going.

So here's the good news: You can save Social Security and Medicare and because we'll

be paying down the debt, we'll keep interest rates down, and we will be better off if things go bad in the world, and we'll do even better if they go well in the world. If you pay this debt down, it means business loans will be cheaper; therefore, there will be more taken, more businesses started, more jobs created.

It means your kids' college loan will be cheaper. It means your car payment, your house payment, and your credit card payment will be cheaper. It means America will grow more. It means when Max Sandlin goes to Congress every year from now on, every year he'll have to take less and less and less money off the top to pay interest on the debt.

When I became President, 14½ cents of every dollar you pay in taxes had to be taken off the top to pay interest on the debt that had been accumulated in the 12 previous years before we could invest in education, invest in highways, invest in the environment, invest in health care, or give you a tax cut. In other words, when you hire a Congressman, you're basically getting 86 percent of a brain—[laughter]—or a capacity, because he can't think about 14 cents; 14 cents, he plunks down off the top end. Now, it's not always bad to go into debt. It's not always bad for a nation to do it. But it is a terrible thing for a nation to do what we did for 12 years and borrow money every year just to keep up with current expenses.

You build a new building in Texarkana, you borrow the money, build the building, advertise it, pay the debt off. You're making a long-term investment so you can make a long-term payment on it. But to keep borrowing money to go to dinner every night, which is what America did for 12 years, is a terrible mistake.

And I am telling you, we can be out of debt in 17 years. In 15 years, if you will do this, we will be down to where only 2 cents of every dollar you pay in taxes goes to debt service, and the rest can then be spent for Social Security or Medicare or education or for a tax cut if that's what the people in Congress want then. But let's secure the American economy for the long run.

Let's say—I'm doing my best to help Asia, to help Latin America, to ward off wars that can wreck the economy, to keep things going.

But we have limited control over events beyond our borders. Maybe I'll get this done. Believe me, I am trying. But I want America to be as strong as possible no matter what. If it rains, I want us to have a good roof up. If the Sun shines, I want us to be able to fly higher. This is the right thing to do. Max Sandlin believes that. You saw him up here tonight. He wasn't just giving a speech; that's what he believes.

And the third reason I'm for him is that at a time in the last year when a lot of people just worried which way the political winds were blowing, that guy was telling people to read the Constitution of the United States of America.

And so I thank you for coming here. I thank you for raising all this money. I thank you for sending a signal that you understand that good civic leadership is important, and you'll stay with it. I thank you for everything you've done for me in two races for President and times in-between and many of you for many, many years before.

But I ask you to think mostly about tomorrow and all the tomorrows of the 21st century. I ask you to remember that in a time this dynamic we cannot afford to sit back and rest on our laurels. Yes, we've got a great economy. Yes, we've got the lowest crime rate in 30 years. Yes, the welfare rolls have been cut in half. Yes, we seem to be making advances toward peace and security in the world. But things are changing in a hurry out there. We don't control everything. Therefore, it is very important, with all this prosperity and all this confidence we have, that we act on what we can control which is what we do and what we care about and what kind of dreams we've got for our kids.

And you know, we're having a good time tonight, and I didn't really mean to get this serious, but I don't know if I'll get to talk to you again personally before I leave office. And I'm telling you, we've got a chance to make the next 100 years better for America than the last 100. But it will be a very different world, and it will move in a hurry. And we will have to work hard always to ask ourselves: Is what I am going to do going to make it easier for every kid to dream big dreams and have a chance to live them; and is what I'm going to do going to make it easier

for us to come together as a community—in our community, in our State, in our Nation and with our friends around the world?

And I'm telling you, you can boil all this stuff down to that: Are we going to make it easier for people to live their dreams? Are we going to make it easier and more likely that people will get along together and understand that for all of our differences, God made us more in common than different? And if the answer to those questions is "yes," then that's probably the right thing to do. I trust Max Sandlin to find that answer.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:05 p.m. in the Truman Arnold Center at Texarkana Community College. In his remarks, he referred to event cohosts Truman and Anita Arnold, Cary and Lois Patterson, Gene and Mary Kay Joyce, and Damon and Doris Ann (D.A.) Young; and Molly Beth Malcolm, chair, Texas Democratic Party. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

March 13, 1999

Good morning. I'm joined here at the White House today by Members of Congress, Deputy Attorney General Holder, Acting Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Bill Lann Lee, representatives from law enforcement and civil rights groups, all here to talk about what we must do to strengthen the bond of trust between police officers and the communities they serve, and make our streets safer than ever.

Six years ago I took office committed to lowering the crime rate and to raise the levels of trust and cooperation between police and the communities they serve. Working with law enforcement and community leaders, we put in place a comprehensive crime-fighting strategy with more police and better prevention, more positive activities for young people, and fewer guns in the hands of criminals. The strategy is working even beyond our expectation. Nationwide, crime is down to its lowest level in decades. In communities all across America, families feel safe again.

Community policing has been at the heart of our success, by giving police the chance to get to know the people on their beats and

giving those people a chance to be part of law enforcement decisions that affect their lives. Community policing helps to prevent crime, to catch more criminals more quickly when crime does occur, and in the process, to build bonds of understanding and trust between police and citizens.

Our Nation's police officers every day put their lives on the line for the rest of us. I have done my best to support and to honor them. But I have been deeply disturbed by recent allegations of serious police misconduct and continued reports of racial profiling that have shaken some communities' faith in the police who are there to protect them.

While each specific allegation will have to be dealt with on its own merits, it is clear that we need a renewed determination as a nation to restore those bonds of trust that have been absolutely critical to our success at lowering the crime rate. So today I am proposing five steps both to reduce crime and to increase the public's trust in law enforcement.

First, better training and better education lead to better policing. I'm asking the Justice Department to expand police integrity and ethics training to all 30 biregional community policing institutes and proposing a \$40 million increase in funding to improve police training nationwide and to help police officers raise their level of education and their level of understanding.

Second, communities and police must work as partners in the fight against crime. I am proposing to launch a new nationwide program to help more communities to establish citizen police academies that inform residents about police procedures and teach them new ways to make their own neighborhoods safer.

Third, police departments ought to reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. To help meet this challenge, I am proposing to increase funds for minority recruiting to build up the bond of trust where it is most needed.

Fourth, when police officers do break the law, they should be brought to justice. Our budget includes new funding to enforce our civil rights laws so that a few bad police officers do not undermine the progress and the

support that hundreds of thousands of police officers have worked so hard to earn.

Finally, we must continue the revolution in community policing we began 6 years ago. Again I call on Congress to build on our progress by passing the \$1.3 billion 21st century policing initiative I have proposed to put up to 50,000 more police on the street and give them the high-tech tools they need to do their job.

We know these efforts will work. Just to take one example: In Boston, a city that historically had had deep tensions between police and communities, law enforcement and community leaders came together to do something about it, establishing clear guidelines to involve residents in police decision-making and to hold police accountable for their actions. Today the crime rate in Boston has fallen to record lows, and reports of police misconduct are down as well.

Today I am asking Attorney General Reno to convene a series of meetings with law enforcement and community leaders to discuss how communities around the country can follow the example of Boston and other successful cities and ensure that our criminal justice system serves all Americans in a lawful, constitutional, sensitive way.

Together we will build safer communities and be one step closer to building our "One America in the 21st Century."

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 9:20 a.m. on March 12 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 13. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 12 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Statement on the Attempted Bombing of a Family Planning Clinic in Asheville, North Carolina

March 13, 1999

I was deeply disturbed to learn of the attempted bombing of a family planning clinic in Asheville, North Carolina. We can all be grateful that no one was harmed and that the clinic suffered only minor damage. But whether or not a terrorist's bomb achieves

its deadly purpose, such cowardly and criminal acts strike at the heart of the constitutional freedoms and individual liberties all Americans hold dear. I strongly condemn this act of senseless violence. Federal agents are already in Asheville to assist local law enforcement officials. I am confident that the perpetrators of this terrible act will be brought to justice.

**Remarks at a Dinner Honoring
Former Senator Dale Bumpers
in Little Rock, Arkansas**

March 13, 1999

Thank you very much. Senator Lincoln, thank you very much. We're all very proud of you. Dale and I were looking up at you, listening to you speak, feeling a little bit better about his retirement and my imminent retirement in the next couple of years.

I'd like to thank Congressman Snyder and Congressman Barry for representing you fiercely and well, and for being my friends and for doing our State proud. The three of them remind me of why I have always loved public life in Arkansas. And I'm always delighted to see people who have served others and worked for others and helped others and done others service be rewarded with higher positions. And all three of them deserve it richly, and I'm very pleased to see that.

I'd like to thank Rabbi Levy for being here tonight, and Bishop Walker, who is my long-time friend and whose vociferous and highly public defense of me may have won an election for me back in 1982, without which I wouldn't be here. Thank you, Bishop. I'm glad to see you.

I thank Rodney Slater for his remarks and for his extraordinary service. He has really done Arkansas proud. And there are a lot of other Arkansans who have been critical to the success our country has enjoyed in the last 6 years who are here tonight. I'll probably miss some of them, but I can't help mentioning Mack McLarty, Bob Nash, Janis Kearney, Bruce Lindsey, Nancy Hrenreich, Carroll Willis, Kris Engskov—anybody else who is here from home in the administration, I apologize that I missed you. But you should

be very proud of your fellow Arkansans who are making a contribution in Washington.

I would like to thank Vaughn McQuary for his leadership of the party. He has done a great job, and I'm proud of him. And I'm glad he's coming—and to all the other dignitaries that are here tonight. I almost cried listening to David Pryor talk, until I remembered that he's gone over to the other side. David Pryor tonight gave me his Harvard card. *[Laughter]* Says he's a fellow at Harvard. *[Laughter]* You know, I think I deserve some credit. I had enough guts to go to the Ivy League before I was elected to office in Arkansas. *[Laughter]* David was always one of them. He was just waiting to get out of office. *[Laughter]*

You know, one of the truly great joys of my life is that I got to serve as Governor when they were Senators together, Dale and David. I admired them. I liked them. I was so proud of what we were able to do together. I rarely ever called them about any issue they had to vote on, and when I did, they tolerated what I had to say and then did what they thought was right. *[Laughter]*

But when I saw David up here talking about Dale and I, and then Dale whispered to me a story about two friends of ours who were Senators from another State who, to put it charitably, do not like each other—and it interferes, I think, with what they're doing—I thought of how many examples I have seen, State after State after State, where good people let their egos get in the way in the Senate and don't work together. And there was no State that had a better team of Senators, but they were made 10 times better because they respected and liked and even loved each other, and they never let themselves get in the way of doing their jobs. And I appreciate it.

You know, the thing I'm going to miss most about having Dale Bumpers not in the Senate and not handy is that when I get really low, I can't call him and hear his latest joke. *[Laughter]* There has never been a person who liked jokes better than Dale Bumpers, I'm sure, in all of human history. *[Laughter]*

You know, the three of us, we'd go on these road shows when we were all down here; we'd go to these roasts; and we'd tell

each other jokes; and if one of us would forget to tell one of our best jokes, somebody else would tell it and never give credit. [Laughter] But it got so bad one time, Dale Bumpers called me and said, "You remember that joke you told me about a month ago?" He said, "I can't remember the punch line to save my life." He said, "Tell it to me again." So I was really happy because his jokes were funnier than mine, by and large, and I got in the middle of a joke, and he remembered it, and he started laughing. And I never to this day—that was 10 years ago—I still haven't finished that joke. [Laughter]

I have crashed a plane with Dale Bumpers. [Laughter] I have been through all kinds of adversity and shared a lot of joy. But I would like to say something, if I might, to try to add my poor pittance to what Senator Pryor and others have already said.

Yesterday I got to go home to Hope to dedicate the birthplace foundation, the home I lived in for the first 4 years of my life, and it was a very emotional thing. I had a lot of my family there. And I was coming back from Central America, night before last, thinking about what I could say and how I could say it in a very few words. And I said to them that in the heady days after World War II, when I was a child and first coming of age, my hometown wasn't perfect. It was still segregated and had its share of flaws, Mack McLarty reminded me, including a pretty bad town gossip or two. We glorify those types today. [Laughter] At least people used to be embarrassed about it.

But I knew then that every child was raised with at least two things in my time, when I was a child coming of age. One was an immense sense of personal optimism, that life was good and that you could live your dreams if you worked for them. And the other was a sense of belonging, a sense of community, a sense of responsibility to others as well as to your own life, and a clear understanding that a lot of the richness and texture and meaning of life came from being a part of a web of relationships with other people.

And in that time, we also thought of, from my earliest childhood, public service as a truly noble endeavor, not that the people who were in it were perfect but that they were well motivated and that they wanted

to serve and they wanted to advance our common dreams.

Dale Bumpers represents all that to me in a time when it has been under assault from many quarters. And I tried to think about what it was about him that made him stand up all these years for our State, for the children, for the country, for the environment, for the Constitution, for all the things he fought for, made him believe he could cast unpopular votes, like the Panama Canal vote, and still come home and tell the people why he did it and have them stick with him.

I think there are three things: He never forgot the lessons of the past, beginning with the Constitution of the United States; he never stopped dreaming of the future; and he never lost his essential humanity. Our public life is poorer when people forget the past and ignore the future. It is poorer when they choose power over purpose because they forget we're just here for a little speck of time. And in 100 or 200 years, nobody will remember any of us, and all that will endure is whatever contribution we made to make life better and richer and more decent.

I've watched Dale Bumpers in a way that the whole world got to watch him when he spoke in the Senate. But when you strip it all away, it comes down to that, to humility, humanity, a sense of one's own mortality and one's own capacity for incredible dignity and glory. He has represented all that.

So if a child asks you if he or she should ever go into public life in this country, you should say yes. But don't ever forget the lessons from the past and how smart the people were that started this country. Don't ever stop dreaming about a better future. And do not ever lose your essential humanity. And all the complexities of all the problems I face and all the battles I see come before me, 90 percent of them would go away tomorrow if people could just understand they do not have to define their lives in terms of putting someone else down, defeating someone else, thinking they're better than someone else, ignoring their common humanity.

I was looking at Dale and David tonight, and I was thinking, it seems like yesterday I first saw David Pryor running for Congress in 1976. It seems like yesterday I was first excited about Dale Bumpers coming out of

Charleston in 1970. It seems like yesterday when we were all young and beginning and everything was new. And it passes in the flash of an eye. And when it's over, what remains is the feeling that you have been human and alive to the needs and aspirations of other people. There is nobody in public life in this country today who embodies it better than Dale Bumpers, and I am honored and proud to have served with him.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9 p.m. at the Statehouse Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Rabbi Eugene Levy, Temple B'nai Israel, who offered the benediction; Bishop L.T. Walker, Church of God in Christ, who offered the invocation; Arkansas State Democratic Party Chair Vaughn McQuary; Carroll Willis, director, community services division, Democratic National Committee; Kris Engskov, the President's Aide; Senator Blanche Lambert Lincoln; and former Senator David Pryor.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With NATO Secretary General Javier Solana and an Exchange With Reporters

March 15, 1999

President Clinton. Let me just say that I'm delighted to have Secretary General Solana here. I think he has done a superb job in leading NATO. We are very much looking forward, in just a little over a month, to celebrating the 50th anniversary of NATO by admitting new members. The documents were issued over the weekend. The Secretary of State went to Missouri with the representatives of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, and we're very pleased. I'm looking forward to the meeting and looking forward to NATO's missions in the 21st century.

Let me say I'm also very, very pleased by the news we received this morning that the Kosovar Albanians have agreed to sign the peace agreement. And I want to thank Mr. Solana and Secretary Albright and all the others who have worked on this so hard. And again, I would encourage Mr. Milosevic to agree to the terms, as well, so that we can avoid further conflict and bloodshed.

Kosovo

Q. Do you think they will—the Serbs will go along with it?

President Clinton. I don't know. I hope they will. And I think it is clearly the right thing to do. From his point of view, I think it's the best chance to preserve the integrity of Serbia and avoid economic and other adversity. So I would hope that he would do that.

Q. Mr. President, is it a certainty that NATO will strike if he doesn't sign? Is that for sure?

Q. Well, do you have anything to talk him into it?

President Clinton. One at a time. Wait. Wait.

Q. Is it a certainty that NATO will strike the Serbs if Milosevic does not sign?

President Clinton. Well, all I can tell you is I think we have a clear statement out there about what our policy is. And if he shows intransigence and aggression, I think from our point of view we would have little option. You might want to ask Mr. Solana what he thinks about that.

Q. Do you agree with that, Mr. Secretary General?

Secretary General Solana. I agree. Yes, yes. As just said, the President—I do agree, yes.

Q. Mr. President, how long are you prepared to let these talks in France go on?

President Clinton. Well, I think they ought to be able to talk this through a little bit. I don't know that anyone was absolutely sure the Kosovar Albanians would sign this morning. And peace is better than war. But obviously, they can't go on indefinitely. We need to give everybody time to assess the current situation and where they're going to go from here.

But again, I think the most important thing now is that Mr. Milosevic and the Serbs agree to sign. And it's clearly the right thing to do.

Q. Mr. President, in the past, NATO has only been willing to act in the wake of extreme atrocities. Why is it credible to threaten the use of military force in this situation if that doesn't take place?

President Clinton. What would your answer be?

Secretary General Solana. My answer is that if an agreement is not reached—if President Milosevic doesn't sign, the risk of a catastrophe will be very likely. And we have to prevent that from happening. And NATO will prevent that from happening.

President Clinton. Let me say, in sort of support of the other NATO allies as well, the reason we—you're absolutely right, there's not a lot of precedent for what we're trying to do here. But the reason that we worked so hard—that Secretary Albright, Secretary Cohen, the rest of us—the reason we worked so hard to get NATO to take this position is to avoid the level of atrocity and death that we saw in Bosnia. We didn't want to go down that road again. We wanted to try to dramatically shorten the timetable from aggression and the loss of innocent life and upheaval to action.

And so far I would say that it seems to have been a successful policy, in the sense that we at least have one side now signing on to this peace agreement. We just have to stay with it. We have to be firm about this.

Press Secretary Joe Lockhart. Thank you, pool.

Q. Thank you.

President Clinton. Thank you.

Q. Going to hold a news conference soon, right?

President Clinton. Good morning. That's what—I think so. I just miss you so terribly and not having any questions.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:08 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Interview With Michael Jackson on KRLA Radio

March 15, 1999

Mr. Jackson. Forgive me. There we had the Deputy Director of the Office of Management and the Budget with us, Sylvia Mathews. We are supposed to be at the end of the show, but I'm changing the rules. I'm going to carry my microphone and stand up

for a moment. I'm truly honored to have the opportunity of saying good morning to the President of the United States.

The President. Good morning, Michael. Or good afternoon, here.

Mr. Jackson. It's good to see you again, sir.

I have had most of your Cabinet here this morning. The enthusiasm that they show for the jobs that they have—and they all come from different worlds. It's something uniquely and distinctly American. And I also said to, I think it was Donna Shalala—I said, when I see pictures of you with the leadership of Japan or the Central American countries most recently, you look America. And when I see you standing next to Al Gore, you look America. And when I see you standing with the First Lady and Al Gore's wife, Tipper, you look America.

What are you most proud of, sir?

President's Accomplishments

The President. You mean about what we've done here?

Mr. Jackson. Yes.

The President. I think I'm most proud that we've been able to pull the country together and give people a sense that we're going in the right direction again. I'm proud of the opportunities that millions of Americans have had to live out their dreams and shape their destinies and take care of their children. I'm proud of the fact that we have faced the tough challenges that our country has, instead of dodging them. I'm proud of the fact that—I think Americans have a lot of confidence now that we can deal with all the things that are before us and move into the future in a very good way.

I'm proud of all that. I'm just grateful that I have the chance to serve and that we've got almost a quarter of our time left to get some of the things done that I very much want to do before it's over.

Mr. Jackson. Isn't that expression "lame duck" a painful one? A quarter of your time still remains.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Jackson. Do you know a full agenda of what you would like to be able to accomplish in that time, sir?

The President. Well, sure. I mean, I talked about it at great length in the State of the Union Address, but I very much want to secure the long-term economic well-being of the country as much as I can, and to do that, we have to deal with the challenges of Social Security and Medicare and paying the debt down.

I very much want to make a lot more headway on bringing economic opportunity and a better quality of life to the urban and rural areas where there is still trouble. There are places within the sound of our voice now, in Los Angeles, where we still haven't seen the level of recovery I would like to see. And I've got a major initiative designed to leave no one behind as we go into this new century, and I'm hoping that we can pass that this year. And of course, around the world there are a lot of places that I'm still trying to build bridges to and bring peace to. That's what my trip to Central America was all about.

China

Mr. Jackson. Nothing is black and white, or simple, is it, in your position? I mean, China makes the news, but not all for the constructive things that are going on in our relationship with them.

The President. That's right. Well, one of my predecessors once said that he never got any easy decisions because all the easy ones were made before they got to the President's desk. So there are a lot of complex issues. You know, with China we have our differences. We differ with them on their human rights policy. We differ with them on their Tibet policy. We are struggling to establish an economic partnership that is fair and good and—good for them, good for us.

But because we have worked with them, instead of trying to isolate them, we've also made the world a safer place. They've helped us with the nuclear problem in Korea. They've helped us in refraining from giving dangerous technologies to other countries that we believe might misuse them or would aggravate tensions where they are. They've helped us to try to limit the Asian financial crisis.

So I believe that the best policy with China is an honest one: where it's in our interest and theirs, we should work together for world

peace and for economic prosperity, and where we have honest differences, we ought to state them.

The American Century

Mr. Jackson. Mr. President, earlier this morning in a conversation with Bill Daley, your Secretary of Commerce, I said, only a short while ago people would say, "This is the American Century; the next one won't be." Now, everybody's convinced it will be. The 2000's will be ours as well. What is it we've got?

The President. I think an infinite capacity for renewal, for change, anchored in a magnificent set of common values in our Constitution.

Every year, in one way or the other, we see the wisdom of our framers ratified. We've got a Government that's a democracy but also has protections against abuse of power. We've got a Government that has some absolutely unbending rights for its citizens but is infinitely flexible. And I think that—what I hoped to do when I came to the Presidency, over 6 years ago, was to give people a sense of possibility again and to give our country a sense of community again.

You know, I was deeply moved by all the troubles in Los Angeles in the early nineties. And it became almost a metaphor for what was going on through the country. We had more and more diversity, more and more people whose family's first language was not English. I saw that as an enormous opportunity in the global society of our children's future. But I knew we had to find a way to come together as well as to move forward. I think we're doing that now, and I feel very good about it.

Central America

Mr. Jackson. How was the trip to Central America?

The President. Well, it was sobering but heartening. It was heartening in the sense that all those countries are democracies now. They've overcome bitter, bitter civil wars. People that were shooting each other a few years ago are now dressed in suits and ties and nice dresses, sitting in parliaments, you know, working with each other. And that's good.

It was sobering because the hurricane was the worst natural disaster, perhaps ever, in Central America, devastating to a lot of those countries. And I'm hoping the United States will do more to help.

I want the American people to know that Central America is one of the few regions of the world where we actually have a trade surplus. And if we want to reduce illegal immigration from Central America, the best way to do it is to strengthen their democracies and their economies, make them good business partners for us. They help us fight drugs; they help us promote democracy; and they'll help us grow our economies.

Immigration

Mr. Jackson. Interesting, sir, in a conversation earlier this morning with your Secretary of Health and Human Services, Donna Shalala, she made a comment, just in passing, that most of the people that come here would rather—in the main—stay home in their own countries. It's opportunity here that brings them.

The President. I think that's right. Most of the people who wish to emigrate to America and stay sign up, get on the list, wait their turn, and do it in a legal way. Most of the illegal immigrants who come here come because they literally can't make a living at home, and many of them have children.

For example, the largest source of foreign exchange that El Salvador has is \$1 billion a year that Salvadoran citizens working in the United States send home to their families. So if we could stabilize their economies, make it possible for them to make a living at home by doing business with us, instead of having to come here and try to sneak through the borders, the illegal immigration problem would go way, way down.

Mr. Jackson. Mr. President, I have been given the word. You have a very busy schedule. I am thrilled. This was very unexpected.

The President. Well, I just wanted to thank you, Michael, for what you do on your program, the people whose voices you give the opportunity to be heard, and for giving all of our people a chance to come by and talk.

I think it is true, we are still enthusiastic. We act like we got here last week, most days.

But I think that's because we try to stay busy. We try to focus on not what we did yesterday or last year or 5 years ago but what we're going to do tomorrow.

Kosovo/2000 Democratic Convention

Mr. Jackson. Sir, last night I went to a restaurant, and there's your Secretary of State working over dinner. You're overworking her, sir.

The President. I am overworking her. She—we got some good news today there, you know. We had two announcements today of note. One is that the Kosovar Albanians said that they would sign the peace agreement—

Mr. Jackson. Congratulations.

The President. —which means that now we just have to convince Mr. Milosevic and the Serbs to go along. If they do, we can avoid a major war there.

Of course, the other big announcement today is the Democrats are going to have their convention in Los Angeles.

Mr. Jackson. In our town.

The President. That's right.

Mr. Jackson. I'm going to be there every day doing my show.

The President. Well, we're all very excited about it. You know, bringing back California became an obsession around here in my first term. And we know now that in the State, and even, indeed, within the confines of Los Angeles County, there is an example of virtually every good thing that this administration has tried to do over the last 6 years. So we're excited about going there, and we think America will like it, seeing it on television. They'll see, I think, a very good picture of America's future, and that's what we'll hope to provide.

Gov. Gray Davis of California

Mr. Jackson. If I can just throw one more quick one. Rodney Slater, your Secretary of Transportation, was on this morning, sir. And we were talking about the impact that you've had on our new Governor, the fact that he did what Pete Wilson never did in 8 years. He went to Central America—he went to Mexico, I beg your pardon—

The President. Yes.

Mr. Jackson.—and built a bridge there. And our State's almost a nation.

The President. Well, I think, first of all, I think Governor Davis is doing a terrific job. And I suppose I've learned as much from him as he's learned from me. But I think the thing that Californians can be proud of is that he will, in my view, he will keep the State focused on the future. He'll keep working on the big issues, and he'll get results. He will stay at something until he gets results.

And I personally thought his decision to go to Mexico and establish a relationship with the President there, who is a progressive, able person and an honest person, was a very smart decision for the people of California. But it's one of many smart decisions he's made. And I think that when we come there for the convention, it will give America a chance to see a lot of the good things that are going on in California.

Mr. Jackson. Mr. President, thank you very much indeed for your time, sir.

The President. Thank you. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview began at 3 p.m. in Room 415 of the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, the President referred to President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to the Legislative Conference of the International Association of Fire Fighters

March 15, 1999

Thank you. That's a true story. *[Laughter]* But the truth is that Al didn't need to have any fear because by the time I called him, Harold had gone over the whole list, and I had written it down. Do you remember that? I mean, he had been very tough, very specific, very firm. And I actually wrote it down. And I think if I hadn't written it down, he would never have let me off the hook. *[Laughter]* I just called Al because sometimes people get better care in the hospital after I call them. *[Laughter]*

I was with a guy over the weekend—I went home to Arkansas over the weekend—I was

with a guy over the weekend who is about 83 years old. And he literally was at death's door. And I called him in the hospital, and I don't—this sounds more insensitive than it is, but this guy is like a brother to me, and we've been friends for 30 years. And I call him up, and I say, "You old coot. You can't die. I'm not done with you yet." *[Laughter]* And all of a sudden, everybody rushed into his room. The next thing I know, 2 weeks later he's at a Democratic event, last weekend. So if you get in the hospital and you don't think they're doing right by you, let us know, and I'll see what I can do. *[Laughter]*

I want to thank Al and Harold and Vince and all the officers of the IAFF for working with us. I want to thank my good friend James Lee Witt, and Kay Goss, who has now worked with me as my liaison to firefighters as Governor and as President. Thank you very much. I want to thank Congressmen Neil Abercrombie and Bill Pascrell, both of whom are here and are good friends of the firefighters and good friends of mine.

You know, I was thinking about how much we have in common on the way over here. When I was a boy, like most kids I used to love to go to the fire station, slide down the pole, crawl on the truck, do all that. I never became a firefighter, but I believe I've learned about as much as you have about putting out fires in the last few years. *[Laughter]*

I'm working on about 20 years now, of working with firefighters, working with the IAFF. When I was Governor, I worked with our local IAFF members to create a state-wide fire and police pension system and to establish death benefits for firefighters killed in the line of duty. And I asked Al where Pete Reagan was standing over there because he's the president of the Arkansas Professional Fire Fighters, and whenever I go back to northwest Arkansas, he still leads the motorcade.

I haven't been asked to pick up a hose or anything on any of these trips, but a few years ago when we were in Fayetteville, where I used to teach and where Hillary and I were married, I asked him if we could go by and see the home where we first lived in and where we were married. Pete redirected the entire motorcade to go past the

house. You cannot imagine how this traumatized the Secret Service. *[Laughter]*

Everybody else—I just said, “I want to go by my house.” And so, boom, boom, boom, all of a sudden we’re going by the—then, they had to take us down a dirt road in order to get back on the motorcade route, which makes the point I want to get into, which is that now people who are firefighters have to do a lot more than battle fires.

You all know that Benjamin Franklin started the country’s first fire department in 1736. It was called the Union Fire Company, but it was not a union shop. It was a private company. And in those days, different companies would actually show up at a fire, and then they would fight over who would put it out, because you actually got paid if you put the fire out. Meanwhile the building would burn down. Kind of the way Washington works today. *[Laughter]*

That bickering system ended with the rise of municipal fire departments in the 19th century. And ever since, I think that almost every American would agree that firefighters have embodied the best values of this country: teamwork, professionalism, helping your neighbor, showing courage when it’s necessary. These things are at the core of this country’s character, and they’re what we think about—the rest of us—when we think about you and the people you represent.

But the job has changed. From reviving heart attack sufferers, to cleaning up hazardous chemical spills, to rescuing victims of earthquakes and floods—firefighters have been called upon to assume ever-broadening responsibilities for helping our fellow countrymen and women.

As we approach a new century, we have to ask our firefighters to meet yet a new challenge: to protect our citizens from terrorists armed with chemical and biological weapons. Today I want to talk about these new threats and about the efforts we’re undertaking to equip and train our Nation’s firefighters to deal with those threats, thanks in large part to the IAFF.

America’s municipal firefighters are already the best trained and best equipped in the world. All Americans benefit from that. The number of Americans killed in fires has dropped by one-third since 1988. I don’t

think the American people know that, and since the press is covering it, I want to say that again—I hope this gets on, if nothing else does—the number of Americans killed in fires has dropped by one-third since 1988. Thank you very much.

This is due, of course, to the prevention measures you have tirelessly advocated, to your bravery and skill. With the help of better safety equipment that you have fought for, such as flame-retardant suits, firefighters have been able to get to the heart of fires quicker and pull more victims to safety.

Firefighting is still extremely dangerous. Firefighters are 6 times more likely to be injured on the job than the average private sector worker. That’s why I have worked very hard with your leaders to better the lives of firefighters. We’ve improved the pay system for Federal firefighters, supported efforts to give all firefighters the right to join unions and bargain collectively, strengthen Federal rules—*[applause]*—thank you. Thank you. And we strengthened the Federal rules that protect the lives of firefighters. But we have to do more.

The 21st century will be a fascinating time. I envy those of you who are in this audience who are younger than me, which is most of you, because you’ll live to see more of it. It will be a century in which limitless opportunities will be linked to dangerous new threats. Here’s why: Open borders and fast-paced technological change fuel our prosperity; they create new job opportunities, new business opportunities every day; they also make life more interesting and they spread the message of freedom quickly around the globe.

You may have noticed last week I was in Central America visiting four countries that were ravaged by the hurricane. All these countries once were gripped by horrible civil wars. Today, they’re all governed by freely elected leaders, people sitting in the assemblies who fought each other for years. There’s a lot of good things going on.

But the more open and flexible societies are, the more vulnerable they can become to organized forces of destruction. They give new opportunities to the enemies as well as the friends of freedom. For example, scientists now use the Internet to exchange

ideas and make discoveries that can lengthen lives. But fanatics can also use it to download formulas for substances and bombs that can be used to shorten lives.

In most instances of domestic terror, the first professionals on the scene will be the firefighters. They're becoming the frontline defenders of our citizens, not just from accidents and arsonists but from those who would seek to sow terror and so undermine our way of life. The truth of this is apparent to anyone who saw that unforgettable photograph of firefighter Chris Fields, cradling in his arms a tiny victim of the Oklahoma City bombing.

Since 1996, the number of weapons of mass destruction threats called in to firefighters, police, and the FBI has increased by fivefold. The threat comes not just from conventional weapons, like the bomb used in Oklahoma City, but also from chemical weapons, like the nerve agent that killed 12 but injured thousands in Tokyo in the subway just 4 years ago, and even from biological weapons that could spread deadly disease before anyone even realizes that attack has occurred.

I have been stressing the importance of this issue, now, for some time. As I have said repeatedly, and I want to say again to you, I am not trying to put any American into a panic over this, but I am determined to see that we have a serious, deliberate, disciplined, long-term response to a legitimate potential threat to the lives and safety of the American people. *[Applause]* Thank you.

The only cause for alarm would be if we were to sit by and do nothing to prepare for a problem we know we could be presented with. Nothing would make me happier than to have people look back 20 years from now and say, "President Clinton overreacted to that. He was overly cautious." The only way they will say that is if we are over cautious, if we're prepared, we can keep bad things from happening.

Now, last fall the Attorney General announced plans to create a national domestic preparedness office, a one-stop shop where State and local first responders can get the equipment, the training, the guidance they need from a variety of Federal agencies. I proposed and Congress agreed to a 39 per-

cent increase in resources for chemical and biological weapons preparedness.

In the budget I submitted last month to Congress, I asked for \$10 billion to combat terrorism, including nearly 1.4 billion to protect citizens against chemical and biological terrorism here at home, more than double what we spent on such efforts just 2 years ago.

Today I want to talk about the specifics of our domestic antiterrorism initiative that will most affect the people in this room and those whom you represent.

First, equipment: Later this year, the Justice Department will provide \$69½ million in grants to all 50 States and the large municipalities to buy everything from protective gear to chemical/biological detection devices. Next month, we'll be asking you to tell us what you need.

Second, training: This year, the Departments of Justice and Defense, along with FEMA, will invest nearly \$80 million in new and existing training efforts for firefighters, EMS personnel, and other first responders. We want all of these resources to be accessible to the National Domestic Preparedness Office.

Third, special response teams: The Department of Health and Human Services has helped 27 metropolitan areas develop specially trained and equipped medical response teams that can be deployed at a moment's notice in the event of chemical or biological attack. These teams, composed of local medical personnel, will get to the scene quickly, work closely with firefighters and police and ensure that patients are safely transported to hospitals. Our goal is a response team in each of the Nation's major metropolitan areas, and my new budget moves us in that direction.

But the need is too urgent to wait for Congress to act on the budget at the end of the year. Therefore, Secretary Shalala will notify Congress today that she plans to spend an additional \$11 million this year to create medical response teams in 12 more metropolitan areas, including Salt Lake City, the home of the 2002 Winter Olympics.

Fourth, advice from the front line: Later this year, the Department of Defense will name members of a new weapons of mass destruction advisory panel. Three of the 17

panel members will be firefighters. [Applause] Thank you. Next month, the National Domestic Preparedness Office will hold a conference with fire and police chiefs and hazardous materials experts to develop guidelines for dealing with biological and chemical threats and incidents.

With action in these four areas, to better equip and train local firefighters and other first responders, we can save lives and show terrorists that assaults on America will accomplish nothing but their own downfall.

Let me tell you again how grateful I am to have had the chance to work with you over these last 6 years, and for the next 2, how important I think it is that we always be preparing for the future, how strongly I believe—I was glad when you—and touched—when you stood up when I said I believed in the right of firefighters to organize and bargain collectively. I do. I think most people don't understand, until they go through a fire or some other emergency exactly how many different things you do and how dangerous it can often be.

I also think that because you are leaders of your community, because your kids play on the ball teams, because you show up at the PTA meetings, because you're involved in the civic clubs, and the other activities, you can help to sensitize people to this issue I've talked with you about today.

And again I say, I don't want any American to go around in mortal fear of a biological and chemical attack. But you have—a lot of you have kids that are better on the computer than you are. As a matter of fact, anybody here who is better than his or her child on a computer deserves a medal. [Laughter] But you know there are millions of websites now. You know what people can pull up. Now, it's not unusual now for children to turn in term papers where they never have to go to the library, and every single source they cite came off the Internet. And with that sort of access to information, people who want to do bad things with elemental chemical and biological products that can be poisonous or spread disease, is a legitimate possibility. I will say again, the best chance we have for this not to be a problem is to understand the dimensions of it and prepare for it, with discipline, in the quickest possible way.

And so I hope you will talk to your friends and neighbors about it, again, not to overly frighten them but to sensitize them so they expect their elected officials and their other leaders to take appropriate steps. That is the way to deal with it.

You know, I remember, it wasn't so many years ago that people were panicked that every airplane they took might be hijacked. And then we had the airport metal detectors. And then some people said, "Well, is this too much of an infringement on our liberty?" I can only speak for myself; I never once minded being stopped and asked to empty my pockets when I set off the metal detector, because I knew it was a way that we could prepare for a problem so that we wouldn't have to go around frightened all the time.

That's all we've got to do here, to deal with this in an aggressive, comprehensive, professional, disciplined way. And I really think that you understand this. And I ask you when you go home, try also to make sure in all kinds of ways, perhaps formal and informal, that your fellow citizens do as well.

Al said today that this is the first time a President has ever addressed the IAFF in person. The others made a mistake; that's all I can say. [Applause] Thank you. And I was a little slow off the mark. [Laughter] But I would like to point out that IAFF has hardly gone unnoticed by past Presidents. One I particularly admire, Harry Truman, sent this letter on August the 1st, 1952, to the then-president of your organization, John Redmond. He described you and your union in plain words that I cannot improve upon. So I would like to close with them.

"Your members are at their posts, day and night, ready to accept the call of duty, to protect the lives and property of their fellow citizens. They do so at risk of life and limb. For their devotion and heroism, they deserve the praise of all Americans." Amen.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:05 p.m. in the International Ballroom at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Alfred K. Whitehead, general president, Harold A. Schaitberger, executive assistant to the general president, and Vincent J. Bollon, general secretary-treasurer, International Association of Fire Fighters.

**Statement on Signing Legislation
Providing Guaranteed Loans for
Farmers and Ranchers**

March 15, 1999

I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 882, a bill that will accelerate the availability of federally guaranteed loans to our Nation's farmers and ranchers to give them continued access to credit that is necessary to operate their farms and ranches.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates that it will soon exhaust the funds available to guarantee loans for farm ownership and operations. This bill will make available more than \$450 million in guarantees to qualified farmers and ranchers. Normally, these funds are reserved for beginning farmers and ranchers until April 1, when they are made available to all qualified farmers and ranchers. This bill will not affect a separate reserve for minority farmers.

These additional amounts, however, will not fully address the unprecedented increase in demand for USDA financing caused by low commodity prices, which are expected to continue. For this reason, I recently submitted to the Congress an emergency supplemental request for an additional \$1.1 billion in USDA loan authority. I call on the Congress to work expeditiously to include these amounts in a supplemental bill I can sign that does not include unwise and unnecessary off-sets.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
March 15, 1999.

NOTE: H.R. 882, approved March 15, was assigned Public Law No. 106-2.

**Statement on the Killing of
Rosemary Nelson in Northern
Ireland**

March 15, 1999

The killing today of Rosemary Nelson, a leading human rights lawyer in Northern Ireland, was a despicable and cowardly act by the enemies of peace. Our deepest sympathies go out to her family and friends. It

is long past time for the bloodshed to end once and for all. We urge all the proponents for peace to unite to condemn this act and reject the violence. We urge the parties to move forward with implementing the Good Friday accord.

**Statement on Senator John H.
Chafee's Decision Not To Seek
Reelection**

March 15, 1999

For more than a generation, Senator John Chafee has been a strong leader for his beloved Rhode Island and for America. He has been a tireless champion of our environment—helping to lead the fight against global warming, promoting wetlands conservation, and crafting legislation for clean air and safe drinking water. On behalf of all Americans, I thank him for his many contributions, including his leadership in expanding health care to more women and children and improving services for people with disabilities. It is truly a rich legacy for America. Hillary and I wish John and his family all the best in the years to come.

**Statement on the Cuban
Government's Sentencing
of Human Rights Activists**

March 15, 1999

I am deeply disappointed that the Cuban Government has sentenced four courageous human rights activists—Vladimiro Roca, Felix Bonne, Rene Gomez Manzano, and Marta Beatriz Roque—to prison terms. They did nothing more than assert their right to speak freely about their country's future, call on their Government to respect basic human rights, and seek a peaceful transition to democracy for the long-suffering Cuban people. They were tried without a fair process, behind closed doors. I call on the Cuban Government to release them immediately.

**Message to the Congress
Transmitting a Report on the
National Emergency With Respect to
Iran**

March 15, 1999

To the Congress of the United States:

As required by section 401(c) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1641(c), section 204(c) of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), 50 U.S.C. 1703(c), and section 505(c) of the International Security and Development Cooperation Act of 1985, 22 U.S.C. 2349aa-9(c), I transmit herewith a 6-month periodic report on the national emergency with respect to Iran that was declared in Executive Order 12957 of March 15, 1995.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
March 15, 1999.

**Remarks at the Sixth Millennium
Evening at the White House**

March 15, 1999

The President. Thank you. First of all, let me welcome all of you here tonight and thank our participants. I will be very brief, because the only thing that frustrates me about these Millennial Evenings is that you will be amazed—we will get literally thousands of questions that will start coming in on the Internet and lots of frustrated people out there. So I don't want to take a lot of time.

I would like to say again—I think I speak for all of us—when Hillary had the idea to do these evenings, I thought they sounded interesting or at least maybe most of them would be interesting. *[Laughter]* They have all turned out to be fascinating and, each in their own way, better than the ones before. And I think this is a great gift she has given our country for the millennium, and I thank her for it.

The remarks generated scores of questions in my mind and one fact I want to say. If you ever want an example of whether or not the gender gap exists, you are looking at it—*[laughter]*—because I would not be here if

it did not exist. Or if it did not exist in the right way, I would have had bigger margins, depending on how you look at it. *[Laughter]*

One of the things I wish that somebody would comment on before we get through—although, it's not my question—is, if women learn different ways of doing things through the century of struggle, how would this Congress be different if the party divisions were exactly the same, but 55 percent of the Members were women? That would be interesting. I don't know the answer to that, but feel free to comment if anyone wants to. *[Laughter]*

I want to ask Professor Kessler-Harris to answer a question that has concerned me quite a great deal, just from remembering the patterns of life with my working grandmother and my working mother. Now that we have opened more opportunities for women in the workplace, but they still are spending, I think, even in two-parent households, more than half of the time spent raising children, and we've even opened more opportunities for women in the political workplace, and more are being opened all the time, I would like to have you comment on what you think the potential is for voluntary citizens' groups of women to still produce both social movements and specific legislative changes. That is, will voluntary groups still have the same impact? And if so, how are we going to continue to encourage that?

Because I think that that's really the unique story of the whole 20th century, all those parades and everything we saw in the films. Will more women in the workplace, still having to raise the kids—and in the political workplace, which may make women think they're represented in more ordinary ways—lead to a reduction or an increase in these voluntary associations? And what are some specific examples where we might see voluntary movements produce social movements and legislative change?

[At this point, the discussion continued.]

The President. I just wanted to say one thing that I have learned from a lifetime of sort of listening to the way people talk and relate. And this goes to Deborah's—the previous question, too. I think if you will really

study the Americans and how they vote, you will see that sometimes they vote based on income, sometimes they vote based on racial experience, sometimes they vote on philosophy. But a lot of the gender gap is a cultural gap; it's almost about the way we relate to one another and define winning and losing in our own lives.

And I think in order for men to ever get through this, one of the things that men are raised to believe is that fulfillment and success is defined in terms of winning and control; whereas people who—women, historically, have had more nurturing roles. They have to raise their children. So you don't think—maybe you have to control your child for a while, but sooner or later you even give up on that. But winning is defined not just as winning against someone else, but it's doing something in the context of your family, in the context of your childrearing.

And I think a lot of subconscious patterns that men are raised with make it almost impossible for them to really get there on this issue. And I think that for a father to raise a son to believe that there is a way to win in life and find fulfillment in a shared victory and shared decisionmaking and not always victory over someone else and continued control over someone else, I think it's something that take some doing.

But it's something that doesn't come naturally to men once we've been socialized. And I think that's an important part of this, and that until we can change it, it will never be just like it should be.

[At this point, the discussion continued.]

The President. Thank you, Vicky. First of all, I'm sure all of you here know how deplorable the conditions are for women in Afghanistan. Hillary and I had an event here at the White House not very long ago, we had two Afghan women here, among others, to sort of stand for what women in their country are going through.

I want someone in the audience to help me. There is a national organization of women, a group now focused on this, and most of the leaders are in California, although some in the East Coast—Ann, what's the name of it?

Ms. Ann Lewis. The Feminist Majority. And Ellie Smeal is here—

The President. Yes, Ellie is here working—Feminist Majority is working on it. And I'm going to have a meeting with some of their leaders pretty soon to talk about what more I can do, aside from not recognizing the Taliban and speaking against it.

I think the important thing is that we need people to support this organization. We need women and men around the country to engage in contributing to a common effort to highlight what is going on, who is being hurt, what the consequences are to the society as a whole, and what we can do to help the people that are being hurt?

This is the 50th anniversary of the International Declaration of Human Rights. It is simply not acceptable to say that this is nothing more than an expression of religious convictions. We just had an election in Iran, local elections. There were hundreds of women candidates. We see, even in Iraq, a country we have serious differences with, their women are not subject to these sorts of constraints because they are women.

And I think that the most important thing I could say to an ordinary citizen is, write your Member of Congress and tell them not to acknowledge or recognize the Government under any circumstances until there are changes, and get in touch with the Feminist Majority and get all the material and make sure that you are doing whatever you can do to help those women over there and to give support for the ones that are sticking their necks out to try to change things.

[At this point, the discussion continued.]

The President. When the Founders wrote the documents that got us all started, they said they were doing all this so that we could better protect life and liberty and pursue happiness. And even they were smart enough to know that they weren't really writing that for white male property owners only, even though those were the only folks that could vote then.

So a great deal of the history of this country is about the expansion of the notion of liberty, with notions of equality and justice. And we hardly ever think about what they meant by the pursuit of happiness. They

didn't mean riding the rides at the county fair. They really meant the pursuit of a good life, dreaming dreams and trying to live them.

When I think about what the women's issues of the 21st century will be, I do think there will still be some significant liberty, equality issues related to wealth and power, closing the wage gap, the earnings gap, dealing with the enormously complicated problem of the fact that there are more elderly women than men—because you may be genetically superior to us after all—[*laugh-ter*]*—*and that, as a consequence, their poverty rate is twice the rate of elderly men, breaking all the glass ceilings that have been alluded to.

But I predict to you that there will be increasing focus, more than any time in our history, on the latter purpose of our getting together as a nation, and that is the pursuit of happiness. And I believe that will require us to deal with questions of balance and interdependence, more than ever before. The one we talked about a little tonight is a balance between work and family. There is no more important job for any society than raising children. And men have to recognize that, too. But I think that will be a big deal, how to balance work and family.

The other big balance questions will come involve with how do you keep society together with all the diversity we share, not just gender but the racial diversity, the cultural diversity, the religious diversity. And women will be uniquely positioned to play a major role in that.

And finally—I'll just give one other example because we're running out of time—how do we balance our obligation to prosper as well as we can and preserve the planet in the face of the evidence on climate change and other things?

So I believe there will be a huge challenge, which is an enormous opportunity for women, in the whole area of our pursuit of happiness properly defined.

When Susan B. Anthony came here in 1906 and gave what turned out to be her last public comment, in a church here in Washington, DC, the last public word she ever uttered was, "Failure is impossible." I am persuaded by the presence of you in this

crowd and those whom you represent that on the edge of a new century she's still right.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The White House Millennium Evening began at 7:35 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Deborah Tannen, professor, Georgetown University; Vicky LeBlanc, attorney in Delafield, WI; and Eleanor (Ellie) Smeal, president, Feminist Majority. The panelists participating in the discussion, entitled "Women as Citizens: Vital Voices Through the Century," were: Alice Kessler, professor, Columbia University, Nancy Cott, professor, Yale University, and Ruth Simmons, president, Smith College. The discussion following the panelists was moderated by Ellen Lovall, Director, White House Millennium Council. The transcript made available by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady, the panelists, and the question-and-answer portion of the evening. The lecture was cybercast on the Internet.

Remarks to the Conference on United States-Africa Partnership for the 21st Century

March 16, 1999

Thank you. Good morning. Let me say, first of all, to Minister Ouedraogo, thank you for your fine address and for your leadership. Secretary General Salim, Secretary-General Annan, Secretary Albright, to our distinguished ministers and ambassadors and other officials from 46 African nations and the representatives of the Cabinet and the United States Government. I am delighted to see you all here today. We are honored by your presence in the United States and excited about what it means for our common future.

A year ago next week I set out on my journey to Africa. It was, for me, for my wife, and for many people who took that trip, an utterly unforgettable and profoundly moving experience. I went to Africa in the hope not only that I would learn but that the process of the trip itself and the publicity that our friends in the press would give it would cause Americans and Africans to see each other in a new light, not denying the lingering effects of slavery, colonialism, the cold war, but to focus on a new future, to build a new chapter of history, a new era of genuine partnership.

A year later, we have to say there has been a fair measure of hope, and some new disappointments. War still tears at the heart of Africa. Congo, Sierra Leone, Angola, Sudan have not yet resolved their conflicts. Ethiopia and Eritrea are mired in a truly tragic dispute we have done our best to try to help avoid. Violence still steals innocent lives in the Great Lakes region. In the last year, Nairobi and Dar es Salaam became battlefields in a terrorist campaign that killed and wounded thousands of Africans, along with Americans working there for a different future.

But there have also been promising new developments. The recent elections in Nigeria give Africa's most populous country, finally, a chance to realize its enormous potential. It's transition may not be complete, but let's not forget, just a year ago it was unthinkable. This June, for the first time, South Africa will transfer power from one fully democratic government to another.

More than half the sub-Saharan nations are now governed by elected leaders. Many, such as Benin, Mali, and Tanzania, have fully embraced open government and open markets. Quite a few have recorded strong economic growth, including Mozambique, crippled by civil war not long ago. Ghana's economy has grown by 5 percent a year since 1992.

All of you here have contributed to this progress. All are eager to make the next century better than the last. You share a great responsibility, for you are the architects of Africa's future.

Today I would like to talk about the tangible ways we can move forward with our partnership. Since our trip to Africa, my administration has worked hard to do more. We've created a \$120 million educational initiative to link schools in Africa to schools in this country. We've created the Great Lakes Justice Initiative to attack the culture of impunity. We have launched a safe skies initiative to increase air links between Africa and the rest of the world; given \$30 million to protect food security in Africa and more to be provided during this year. In my budget submission to Congress I have asked for additional funds to cover the cost of relieving another \$237 million in African debt on top

of the \$245 million covered in this year's appropriation.

We're working hard with you to bring an end to the armed conflicts which claim innocent lives and block economic progress, conducting extensive shuttle diplomacy in an effort to resolve the dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea. In Sierra Leone, we're doing what we can to reduce suffering and forge a lasting peace. We have provided \$75 million in humanitarian assistance over the last 18 months. And with the approval of Congress we will triple our longstanding commitment of support for ECOMOG to conduct regional peacekeeping.

We have also done what we can to build the African Crisis Response Initiative, with members of our military cooperating with African militaries. We've provided \$8 million since 1993 to the OAU's Conflict Management Center to support African efforts to resolve disputes and end small conflicts before they explode into large ones.

Nonetheless, we have a lot of ground to make up. For too much of this century, the relationship between the United States and Africa was plagued by indifference on our part. This conference represents an unparalleled opportunity to raise our growing cooperation to the next level. During the next few days we want to talk about how these programs work and hear from you about how we can do better. Eight members of my Cabinet will meet their African counterparts. The message I want your leaders to take home is, this is a partnership with substance, backed by a long-term commitment.

This is truly a relationship for the long haul. We have been too separate and too unequal. We must end that by building a better common future. We need to strive together to do better, with a clear vision of what we want to achieve over the long run. Ten years from now, we want to see more growth rates above 5 percent. A generation from now, we want to see a larger middle class, more jobs and consumers, more African exports, thriving schools filled with children—boys and girls—with high expectations and a reasonable chance of fulfilling them.

But we need the tools to get there, the tools of aid, trade, and investment. As I said when I was in Africa, this must not be a

choice between aid and trade; we must have both. In my budget request for the next fiscal year, I've asked for an increase of 10 percent in development assistance to Africa. But the aid is about quality and quantity. Our aid programs are developed with your involvement, designed to develop the institutions needed to sustain democracy and to reduce poverty and to increase independence.

To expand opportunity, we also need trade. Our administration strongly supports the "Africa Growth and Opportunity Act," which I said in my State of the Union Address we will work to pass in this session of Congress. The act represents the first step in creating, for the first time in our history, a genuine framework for U.S.-Africa trade relations. It provides immediate benefits to nations modernizing their economies, and offers incentives to others to do the same. It increases U.S. assistance, targeting it where it will do the most good.

The bill clearly will benefit both Africa and the United States. Africans ask for more access to our markets; this bill provides that. You asked that GSP benefits be extended; this bill extends them for 10 years. You said you need more private investment; this bill calls for the creation of two equity investment funds by OPIC, providing up to \$650 million to generate private investment in Africa.

We agree that labor concerns are important. This bill removes GSP benefits for any country found to be denying worker rights. You told us we needed to understand more about your views on development. This bill provides a forum for high-level dialog and cooperation.

It is a principled and pragmatic approach based on what will work. No one is saying it will be easy, but we are resolved to help lower the hurdles left by past mistakes. I believe it represents a strong, achievable, and important step forward. There are many friends of Africa in Congress and many strong opinions about how best to help Africa. I hope they will quickly find consensus. We cannot afford a house divided. Africa needs action now.

There's another crucial way the United States can hasten Africa's integration. One of the most serious issues we must deal with

together, and one of truly global importance, is debt relief. Today I ask the international community to take actions which could result in forgiving \$70 billion in global debt relief—global debt. Our goal is to ensure that no country committed to fundamental reform is left with a debt burden that keeps it from meeting its people's basic human needs and spurring growth. We should provide extraordinary relief for countries making extraordinary effort to build working economies.

To achieve this goal, in consultation with our Congress and within the framework of our balanced budget, I proposed that we make significant improvements to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative at the Cologne Summit of the G-7 in June. First, a new focus on early relief by international financial institutions, which now reduce debt only at the end of the HIPC program. Combined with ongoing forgiveness of cash flows by the Paris Club, this will substantially accelerate relief from debt payment burden.

Second, the complete forgiveness of all bilateral concessional loans to the poorest countries.

Third, deeper and broader reduction of other bilateral debts, raising the amount to 90 percent.

Fourth, to avoid recurring debt problems, donor countries should commit to provide at least 90 percent of new development assistance on a grant basis to countries eligible for debt reduction.

Fifth, new approaches to help countries emerging from conflicts that have not had the chance to establish reform records, and need immediate relief and concessional finance.

And sixth, support for gold sales by the IMF to do its part, and additional contributions by us and other countries to the World Bank's trust fund to help meet the cost of this initiative.

Finally, we should be prepared to provide even greater relief in exceptional cases where it could make a real difference.

What I am proposing is debt reduction that is deeper and faster. It is demanding, but to put it simply, the more debtor nations take responsibility for pursuing sound economic policies, the more creditor nations must be willing to provide debt relief.

One of the best days of my trip last year was the day I opened an investment center in Johannesburg, named after our late Commerce Secretary, Ron Brown, a true visionary who knew that peace, democracy, and prosperity would grow in Africa with the right kind of support. I can't think of a better tribute to him than our work here today, for he understood that Africa's transformation will not happen overnight but, on the other hand, that it should happen and that it could happen.

Look at Latin America's progress over the last decade. Look at Asia before that. In each case, the same formula worked: Peace, open markets, democracy, and hard work lifted hundreds of millions of people from poverty. It has nothing to do with latitude and longitude or religion or race. It has everything to do with an equal chance and smart decisions.

There are a thousand reasons Africa and the United States should work together for the 21st century, reasons buried deep in our past, reasons apparent in the future just ahead. It is the right thing to do, and it is in the self-interest of all the peoples represented in this room today. Africa obviously matters to the 30 million Americans who trace their roots there. But Africa matters to all Americans. It provides 13 percent of our oil, nearly as much as the Middle East. Over 100,000 American jobs depend upon our exports to Africa; there could be millions more when Africa realizes its potential. As Africa grows it will need what we produce, and we will need what Africa produces.

Africa is home to 700 million people, nearly a fifth of the world. Last year our growing relationship with this enormous market helped to protect the United States from the global financial crisis raging elsewhere. While exports were down in other parts of the world, exports from the United States to Africa actually went up by 8 percent, topping \$6 billion. As wise investors have discovered, investments in Africa pay. In 1997 the rate of return of American investments in Africa was 36 percent, compared with 16 percent in Asia, 14 percent worldwide, 11 percent in Europe.

As has already been said, we share common health and environmental concerns with

people all over the world, and certainly in Africa. If we want to deal with the problems of global warming and climate change, we must deal in partnership with Africa. If we want to deal with a whole array of public health problems that affect not only the children and people of Africa but people throughout the rest of the world, we must do it in partnership with Africa.

Finally, I'd like to just state a simple truth that guides our relations with all nations. Countries that are democratic, peaceful, and prosperous are good neighbors and good partners. They help respond to crises. They respect the environment. They abide by international law. They protect their working people and their consumers. They honor women as well as men. They give all their children a chance.

There are 46 nations represented here today, roughly a quarter of all the countries on Earth. You share a dazzling variety of people and languages and traditions. The world of the 21st century needs your strength, your contribution, your full participation in the struggle to unleash the human potential of people everywhere.

Africa is the ancient cradle of humanity. But it is also a remarkably young continent, full of young people with an enormous stake in the future. When I traveled through the streets of the African cities and I saw the tens of thousands, the hundreds of thousands of young people who came out to see me, I wanted them to have long, full, healthy lives. I tried to imagine what their lives could be like if we could preserve the peace, preserve freedom, extend genuine opportunity, give them a chance to have a life that was both full of liberty and ordered, structured chances—chances that their parents and grandparents did not know.

The Kanuri people of Nigeria, Niger, and Chad say, "Hope is the pillar of the world." The last decade proves that hope is stronger than despair if it is followed by action. Action is the mandate of this conference.

Let us move beyond words and do what needs to be done. For our part, that means debt relief, passage of the "Africa Growth and Opportunity Act," appropriate increases in assistance, and a genuine sense of partnership and openness to future possibilities. For

your part, it means continuing the work of building the institutions that bring democracy and peace, prosperity and equal opportunity.

We are ending a decade, the 1990's, that began with a powerful symbol. I will never forget the early Sunday morning in 1990 when I got my daughter up and took her down to the kitchen to turn on the television so that she could watch Nelson Mandela walk out of his prison for the last time. She was just a young girl, and I told her that I had the feeling that this would be one of the most important events of her lifetime, in terms of its impact on the imagination of freedom-loving people everywhere.

We could not have known then, either she or I or my wife, that we would have the great good fortune to get to know Mr. Mandela and see his generosity extended to our family and to our child, as it has been to children all over his country. But in that walk, we saw a continent's expression of dignity, of self-respect, of the soaring potential of the unfettered human spirit.

For a decade, now, the people of South Africa and the people of Africa have been trying to make the symbol of that walk real in the lives of all the people of the continent. We still have a long way to go. But let us not forget how far we have come. And let us not forget that greatness resides not only in the people who lead countries and who overcome persecutions but in the heart and mind of every child and every person there is the potential to do better, to reach higher, to fulfill dreams. It is our job to give all the children of Africa the chance to do that.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:38 a.m. in the Loy Henderson Auditorium at the State Department. In his remarks, he referred to Chairman Yousouf Ouedraogo and Secretary General Salim Ahmed Salim, Organization of African Unity (OAU); United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan; and President Nelson Mandela of South Africa. The President also referred to the Economic Community of West Africa Observer Group (ECOMOG) and the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP).

Remarks on Departure for Palm Beach, Florida, and an Exchange With Reporters

March 16, 1999

Amtrak Crash in Illinois

The President. Good afternoon. I would like to begin by saying that our thoughts and prayers are with all those people who were involved in this morning's Amtrak crash in Illinois. We've dispatched safety officials from the National Transportation Safety Board and other Federal investigators to the site to lead the investigation. I want you to know that we will do everything we can to help the victims and their families and to ensure that the investigation moves forward with great care and speed.

Medicare Reform

Now, before I leave for Florida, I would also like to comment on an issue of vital importance to our future: how to strengthen the Medicare program for the 21st century.

Today Senator Breaux and Representative Thomas will hold a final meeting of their Medicare Commission. Although it did not achieve consensus, the Commission has helped to focus long overdue attention on the need to modernize and prepare the program for the retirement of the baby boom generation and for the present stresses it faces. The Commission has done valuable work, work that we can and must build on to craft Medicare reform.

Make no mistake, we must modernize and strengthen Medicare. For more than three decades, it has been more than a program. It has been a way to honor our parents and grandparents, to protect our families. It has been literally lifesaving for many, many seniors with whom I have personally talked.

In my 1993 economic plan that put our country on the path to fiscal responsibility, we took the first steps to strengthen Medicare. In 1997, in the bipartisan balanced budget agreement, we took even more significant actions to improve benefits, expand choices for recipients, to fight waste, fraud, and abuse, and to lengthen the life of the Trust Fund.

But as the baby boomers retire and medical science extends the lives of millions, we

must do more; we must take some strong and perhaps difficult steps to modernize Medicare so that it can fully meet the needs of our country in the new century. If we don't act, it will run out of funds. That would represent a broken promise to generations of Americans, and we cannot allow it to happen.

As I said in January, we must act, and when we do our actions should be grounded in some firm principles. We must seize the opportunity created by our balanced budget and surplus to devote 15 percent of the surplus to strengthen the Trust Fund. We must modernize Medicare and make it more competitive, adopting the best practices from the private sector and maintaining high quality services. We must ensure that it continues to provide every citizen with a guaranteed set of benefits. And we must make prescription drugs more accessible and affordable to Medicare beneficiaries.

The plan offered by Senator Breaux and his colleagues included some very strong elements, which should be seriously considered by Congress. However, I believe their approach falls short in several respects. First, it would raise the age of eligibility for Medicare from 65 to 67, without a policy to guard against increasing numbers of uninsured Americans.

I know that back in 1983, the Commission voted in Social Security and the Congress ratified a decision to slowly raise the Social Security age to 67. But there is a profound difference here. Perhaps the fastest growing number of uninsured people are those between the ages of 55 and 65. We cannot simply raise the age to 67 without knowing how we're going to provide for health insurance options for those who are already left out in the cold between the ages of 55 and 65. It is simply not the right thing to do.

Also, the proposal has the potential to increase premiums for those in the traditional Medicare program beyond the ordinary inflation premiums that keep the percentage paid by the beneficiaries the same. It does not provide for an adequate affordable prescription drug benefit.

But most important of all, it fails to make a solid commitment of 15 percent of the surplus to the Medicare Trust Fund. That is the biggest problem. Even if all the changes rec-

ommended by the commission were adopted, because of the projected inflation rates in health care costs, it would not be sufficient to stabilize the fund. Only by making this kind of commitment can we keep the program on firm financial ground well into the next century.

Every independent expert agrees that Medicare cannot provide for the baby boom generation without substantial new revenues. Beyond that, it is clear that it will also require us to make difficult political and policy choices. Devoting 15 percent of the surplus to Medicare would stabilize the program and improve our ability to modernize and improve its services and to make those hard choices.

I want to thank the members of the Medicare Commission for their hard work and for their recommendations. Today I am instructing my advisers to draft a plan to strengthen Medicare for the 21st century, which I will present to this Congress. I look forward to a good and healthy debate about how best to strengthen this essential program. We must find agreement this year. Medicare is too important to let partisan politics stand in the way of vital progress. I believe if we make the hard choices, if we work together, if we act this year, we can secure Medicare into the future.

Thank you very much.

Q. Mr. President, your critics are suggesting that by not endorsing the Breaux plan you're simply assuring that there will be a campaign issue, something the Democrats can run on.

The President. I want an agreement this year. I have given my best assessment of where we are now, of what my objections are. I think it is now incumbent upon me to present an alternative proposal, and I will do that.

But I want to make it clear that I believe we owe it to the American people to make an agreement this year, and I'm going to do my dead-level-best to get it done.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:55 p.m. in the outside Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to the derailment of Amtrak's City of New Orleans train in Bourbonnais, IL.

Statement on Proposed Child Care Legislation

March 16, 1999

Making child care better, safer, and more affordable is at the heart of my effort to help America's parents balance their responsibilities at home and at work. Today, more than ever, parents struggle to find high quality, affordable child care for their children. That is why I have proposed significant new investments in child care, expanding subsidies and providing greater tax relief for working families, increasing after-school opportunities for children, improving child care quality, and providing new tax relief for parents who choose to stay at home.

I am pleased that today key Members of the House of Representatives took steps to move us closer to enacting meaningful child care legislation. Representative Ben Cardin introduced important new legislation—the “Child Care Improvement Act of 1999”—that, like my proposal, addresses the critical child care needs of working families. And Representative Ellen Tauscher and numerous Democratic colleagues introduced a comprehensive child care package—the “Affordable Child Care, Education, and Security Act”—that incorporates many of my proposals and would go a long way to fully addressing the child care demands of working families. These bills would help Americans fulfill their responsibilities as workers and their even more important responsibilities as parents. I look forward to working with Representative Cardin, Representative Tauscher, and other Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle to meet the child care needs of America's families.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in Stuart, Florida

March 16, 1998

If I had any judgment at all, I would not say a word. *[Laughter]* I had forgotten we did some of those things. *[Laughter]*

You know, when we came in this magnificent home tonight and I was looking around and commenting on the spiral staircase, Reverend Jackson said, “You know, Mr.

President, you and Hillary live in the White House. Willie and Gloria live in a white house. The only difference is they've got more floor space, and they're not term-limited.” *[Laughter]*

Let me say to the Garys, to Willie, to Gloria, to your mother, your children, your grandchildren how honored I am to be here with all of our crew from the White House tonight, along with Joe Andrew and Beth Dozoretz from the Democratic Party; how delighted I am to be here with my good friend Reverend Jackson who is also my Special Envoy to Africa. And I'll say a little more about that in a moment.

I thank Congressman Hastings and Congressman Deutsch for coming down here with me tonight. I thank Bishop Ray and my good friend Bishop Graves and the other members of the clergy who are here, and the college presidents. I thought the Drifters and Ernestine Diller were both just great. And I thank them for entertaining us. And I'd like to thank the people who prepared and served our food and our drinks tonight. I thank them very much for what they did.

You know, when Willie was talking about raising the average income of African-American households, I thought, you know, I didn't have to do anything; he did that all by himself. *[Laughter]*

Let me say—I have to say one thing on a serious note—some of you are here tonight who meant to be here at noon in Palm Beach. I was supposed to have a lunch in Palm Beach at noon. And the reason we couldn't do that is that the son of two of our hosts, Mel and Bren Simon, dropped dead of a tragic heart attack at a very young age in London a couple of days ago. And they're good friends of mine; they're wonderful people. They're part owners of the Indiana Pacers basketball team, among other things. And I would just like to ask all of you tonight—I know that all of us—I called Hillary who knows Mrs. Simon, in particular. I called her today when we heard about this, and I just talked to them. It just took her breath away. All of us who have been parents can only imagine the agony that we would feel. So I ask for you tonight, I want to go back to having a good time, but I ask you to say a little prayer for them when you go home tonight.

It's going to be a hard night for them and a hard few days. And they were very generous and very kind. They've been very, very good to me, and they've been good citizens for our country. And I just would like for you to all remember them.

Let me say—I really admire—I made a little fun of Willie tonight, but I really admire him and Gloria. And I love the fact that they have not forgotten where they came from. I love the fact that they had all these children up here. I know that we have at least one person here from North Carolina who is involved in a similar program of giving young people college scholarships for when they're at pivotal points in their life, and telling them, "Look, if you'll just stay in school and make your grades, you can go to college." And I want to say a little more about that in a minute, but that says a lot.

Now, I was thinking about—I've had all this on my mind a lot because, some of you may have noticed, over the weekend I went home to this little town in Arkansas where I was born, and they dedicated the house that I lived in with my grandparents until I was 4. And they've rebuilt it, and they've gotten some of the things back, some pictures we had on the walls when I lived there—unbelievable things they've done. It's just a little two-story, wood-frame house that my grandparents lived in when my grandfather ran a store, little grocery store, and my grandmother was a private-duty nurse.

And before that, my grandfather was a night watchman at a sawmill. That was my favorite job he had because I used to go and spend the night in the back seat of his car and climb in the sawdust pile. And some of you from the South may be old enough to remember when not all sawmills were big; they used to be little bitty sawmills and ordinary people could go and fool around in them. It was a great thing.

And I was thinking about Willie's upbringing and Gloria's upbringing and Jesse's upbringing that I know a lot about. And I thought the four of us sitting here tonight—all people in politics would like for you to believe they were born in a log cabin they built all by themselves. *[Laughter]* And the truth is not any of us would be here tonight at this nice dinner if we hadn't gotten a lot

of helping hands along the way. But still it is a great testament to the enduring power of the idea of this country that people who have the backgrounds of we four, and the backgrounds of many of the rest of you, could be here.

It is also a great testament to the enduring power of the American idea that those of you here who were born prosperous and got more prosperous came here tonight to help us and our party because we believe we can do better when more Americans do better.

And I've been thinking a lot about this because I had to go home and speak at my birthplace and talk to, among other things, three boys that I went to kindergarten with and all my kinfolks, many of whom are way up in years now, and think about my remarkable grandfather who—I was born on his birthday, and I loved him more than life. He died when I was young. But he was the first white person I ever knew in the segregated South who told me that segregation was wrong. And he had a fourth or a fifth grade education.

And I watched him live it every day. It was a great gift. I watched him run a grocery store before food stamps, and if people came in, they were honest and working hard, and they didn't have any money, he gave them food anyway. And when he died, my mother told me what it was like when they finally found his old books from his grocery store. And he had been gone from there 10 or 15 years, and all these people who had owed him money—he carefully kept it in his book, and when they paid off a little, he'd carefully keep it. But he never—he always said, "They're working hard. They're doing the best they can. I've got food. They should have it, too."

And I was raised in those heady days after World War II, with two simple ideas that I've tried to bring back to America in the last 6 years. One is the idea that everybody should have a chance to live his or her dreams. And the second is that we are part of a community. It gives us a sense of belonging and imposes on us a sense of responsibility, that we can never fully realize our own aspirations unless we are doing our part to give others the same chance.

And I believe that it's very important that we think about that today. Willie told you about all the good things that have happened in the last 6 years, and I'm glad he did because it would be unseemly for me to talk about them. But also because I don't think that that's the most important thing. I said to the American people in my State of the Union Address that one of the things that I knew before I became President but I couldn't see and feel until I took this job, is just how profoundly and how rapidly the world is changing and how we are changing the way we work and live and relate to each other, not just in our neighborhoods but in our States, in our Nation, and with people way beyond our borders.

And I'll bet whatever it is you do for a living, if you think about it, it's different than it used to be because of technology and because of who can participate. And what I'd like for you to think about just for a few moments tonight is not just how far we've come but what do we still have to do. What will the 21st century look like? What about all these young people around here who are going to be alive much longer than I am; what's it going to be like for them when they raise their children and their grandchildren? And what could we do now at this unbelievable moment of prosperity and confidence, where our security is not seriously threatened, what can we do now to keep the good times going, but also to deal with the challenges of America over the long run, so that more people have a chance to live their dreams and so we have a better chance to come together as a community?

And I'll just mention a few. Willie mentioned one. America is aging, and it's aging for two reasons. One is, health care is better and life expectancy is going up. It's already over 76 years. Anybody in this audience tonight over 60 who's still healthy has got a life expectancy of well over 80 years already. Children being born will do better still. And then the baby boomers are going to retire—I'm the oldest of the baby boomers, and when we all retire there will only be two people working for every one person eligible to draw Social Security.

So we have to prepare for the aging of America. The first thing I'd like to say is,

this a high-class problem. We shouldn't bemoan this. The only big country in the world where the life expectancy is dropping is in Russia because their economy has collapsed; their health care system has collapsed; their rate of disease and other problems have gone up. They don't have a Social Security problem. We do. And other wealthy countries do. It's a high-class problem. We should be happy for this. And the older I get, the better it looks. *[Laughter]*

But it is wrong for us to let all these folks retire and let us all get older, and then say, "Well, we're not going to take care of that, even though we have the money to do it now, because we know our children will." That would be a terrible thing to do, because the last thing we need to do is to have all of us in my generation retire and impose on our children a big burden which will undermine their ability to raise our grandchildren. It is not right.

And the reason I've said we ought to save more than half of this surplus for Social Security is that we can save the Social Security system without imposing a burden on our children. We have to do the same for Medicare. We have to give families tax credits for long-term care. More and more people are taking care of their own parents, or their parents are doing something other than going into a nursing home. We need to make provisions for this. There are going to be a multitude of different things that older people will do when they need some help, but they don't have to be completely taken care of 24 hours a day. And we've got to help families deal with that.

So that's the first thing. The second thing we have to do is to keep the economy going and reach out to people who have not been part of this free enterprise system yet. And let me say—I just went up to Wall Street with Reverend Jackson for his second annual conference where we're trying to get the people on Wall Street and in New York to invest in the areas of America from neighborhoods in New York City to Appalachia, to the Mississippi Delta, to south Texas, to the Indian reservations of this country, to east Los Angeles, which still haven't felt the economic recovery. And increasingly, that includes more

and more farmers who are getting hurt because of the problems around the world.

And I presented to the Congress a plan that would get private capital—not Government money, private capital—into the inner cities, into these small rural areas, on the same terms that we give people to invest in other countries today. And I think we ought to do it.

We've got all these people who are dying to go to work, and there aren't any jobs in their neighborhoods; there aren't any jobs in their towns; they don't have any investment opportunities; or they're businesses that would like to expand, and they can't get capital. And all I've asked the Congress to do is to provide the tax credits and the loan guarantees for people to invest in high-unemployment areas in America that we give them to invest in other parts of the world, not to take away the investments from the other part of the world but to just give poor American communities the same shot we're trying to give to people in other countries. And I think it's the right thing to do.

The third thing we have to do is to guarantee 100 percent of our kids a world-class education. I like this college program because I tried to open the doors of college to all Americans. Now every child in this country who comes from an upper-middle-income family down can get a \$1,500 tax credit for the first 2 years of college, tax credits for the last 2 for graduate school. We've improved the student loan program and more work-study programs. We've now got a mentoring program going on where we're bringing college kids in to help work with children who are in the seventh and eighth grade, to get them to think about going to college.

But if we can have more people doing what you're doing and telling these kids, "Okay, here's what you can get from the Government in tax credits; here's what you can get in the student loans; and by the way, here's a scholarship to help defray your costs," it will make a huge difference.

We did pass the first installment on that 100,000 teachers. Let me tell you what a big deal that is. We have 53 million kids in school today. We've got the largest number of children we've ever had and by far the most di-

verse student population. In my little hometown in southwest Arkansas, there is an elementary school they have named for me, in a little town with 9,700 people now—it's a lot bigger than it was when I was born there—9,700 people. In my one little grade school in southwest Arkansas, there are 27 children whose parents were not born in America and whose first language is not English.

In Fairfax County School District, across the Potomac River from Washington, DC, there are children from 180—let me say this again—180 different racial, national, and ethnic groups speaking over 100 different native languages—in one school district.

Now, if we're growing more diverse—this also is a high-class problem—if we're living in a global society, where we have to relate to people all around the world, it is good that America is the place that has the largest number of people that come from everywhere if, but only if, we can have a uniform educational system that gives opportunity to everybody and then if everybody has a chance to make a decent living. But it's got to start with the schools, which is why we want smaller classes, better trained teachers, higher standards, no social promotion. But don't brand the kids failures if the system fails them. Give them the after-school programs. Give them the summer school program. Give them the tutoring programs they need. That is what we need to do.

So the fourth thing we have to do, let me mention, is to deal with the problem of balancing work and family. Hillary and I had an evening at the White House last night, one of these Millennial Evenings that she has organized to discuss big issues that we'll face in the next 20 years. And we talked about the changing role of women, what had happened to women in the 20th century, how women got the vote, how women began to get economic rights, how women assumed larger and larger influence in our national life. And I said something about the role of women that also might be true for the role of African-Americans and other racial groups. I said, you know, for most of this century we've been focused on giving people more rights, stopping them from being oppressed, then making sure they had absolute

opportunity. Once you get those things, you then run into questions of how you balance the different rights you have, how people work out the different opportunities they have. With most families now, both the husband and wife work if there are two parents in the home. And most families, they have to do it. Others, they choose to do it, and everyone should have the right to do it. But I predict to you that one of the biggest challenges for this country for the next 10 or 20 years will be how we're going to work out the balance at home and work, because no society has any more important job than raising children. And if we could do that just right, we'd have about 10 percent of the problems we have today. There is no more important job.

So if we put parents in the position of having to choose between being successful at home and successful at work, we have lost before we start. There is no way to win that, no way for America to come out ahead.

That is why I've asked to expand the family and medical leave law. That's why I've asked for another increase in the minimum wage. I don't think anybody that works 40 hours a week and has a kid at home should be in poverty. I just don't believe that. I don't think that's right. That's why I've asked Congress to pass a child care program that would give families on modest incomes a tax credit and other support, so they could get quality child care while they have to be at work. That's why we have tripled the amount of money we want to give to the schools for the after-school programs and the summer school programs—to help people balance home and work.

And the next thing I'd like to say is I think we have to broaden our horizon of community and what it means to be a good citizen. I think we need, all of us, to think of ourselves in terms of not just the jobs we do and how well we do it, not just whether we pay taxes or not and obey the law, but whether we have some way of serving our community.

I was very moved when the bishop told me that these fine young athletes who were all introduced earlier, and their families, are members of his church and participating in the mission of reaching children and helping

them. And I thank them for that. One of the things that I am proudest of is that we passed what I like to think of as a domestic Peace Corps bill to set up AmeriCorps, our national service corps, and now over 100,000 young people, some from very poor backgrounds, some from wealthy, many in-between, have taken a year or 2 years of their lives, earned some money for college, just like GI's do under the GI bill, and served in their communities, helping to do all kinds of things.

We need to create in our children an ethic of service. And it needs to be a part of what it means to be an American. And we need to do it in a way that gets us all in touch with people who are different from us, so we can learn what the world will be like.

We need to make sure that we relate not only to ourselves but to the rest of the world. I told you Reverend Jackson is my Special Envoy to Africa. Today we had members of the governments of 46 African nations meeting in Washington. They'll be there tomorrow. I talked to them today. He's going to talk to them tomorrow. We're trying to have a new partnership with Africa. We're trying to turn a new page. We're trying not just to say, "Oh, yes, 30 million Americans have roots in Africa, and yes, we're sorry about the legacy of colonialism and slavery." We're trying to say, "Let's open a new chapter. Let's have a new future. Let's help both countries. Let's do something good."

And I just got back from Central America last week. We have millions of people in the United States who trace their roots to Central America, one of the few regions of the world where we have a trade surplus. All those countries racked by civil war, military dictatorship, all kinds of oppression—for decades. Now they're all governed by people who got elected in honest elections. They all have parliaments full of people that used to be at war with each other. They want to be our friends and neighbors.

We see all kinds of people concerned about illegal immigration. We ought to be good neighbors. If we're good neighbors, good partners, and they can make a living at home by selling to us and buying our things, then they won't be coming up here

as illegal immigrants. They'll be home, raising their kids, because they can make a decent living. That's being a decent neighbor, and we ought to do it.

So I want you—tomorrow my people are coming to the White House. Tomorrow is Saint Patrick's Day. And it has been my great honor to be the first American President deeply involved in the Irish peace process. The next day we have a group from Israel coming. And many people in this audience tonight have worked with me on the Middle East peace process. I have tried to do this because I want America not to see the world as either a hostile place or just a place where we try to make a buck. I want us to have a larger conception of our community responsibilities.

We have common environmental challenges, like global warming. We have common public health challenges, like HIV and AIDS. We have a common future to make. And I believe with all my heart if we think about the 21st century as a period where we will work on creating opportunity and community, where we will realize our interdependence, one with another, where we will celebrate all these differences and all this diversity, but underneath understand that we're basically all the same, I think we're going to have a very good future.

And let me just close with this story. I want to tell you a story that I thought about that I told the folks at home when I went to dedicate my birthplace. Last year I had a 91-year-old great uncle who died. He was my grandmother's brother. And I loved him very much, and he helped to raise me when my mother was widowed and went off to study so she could be a nurse anesthetist, and my grandparents were raising me. And this old man and I were close from the time I was born.

He and his wife were married for over 50 years, and she came down with Alzheimer's. And they had one of these old-fashioned houses with gas stoves, so they had to take her to the local nursing facility that was tied to our nursing home in this little town because they were afraid she'd turn on the stove and forget about it and blow the house up. We can laugh—we all laughed about it. It's okay to laugh. I've lost two relatives to Alz-

heimer's. You have to laugh to keep from crying half the time.

And it was an amazing deal. When she got over to the nursing facility, for weeks she'd know who she was for about 15 minutes a day. And she'd call my uncle, and she said, "How can you abandon me in this old place? Get your rear end over here, and take me home. We've been married for 56 years." And he'd get over there, and half the time by the time he got there she wouldn't know him again. *[Laughter]*

And any of you who have had this in your family know. I mean, I lost an aunt and an uncle, and you have to laugh to keep from crying. It grinds on you. So anyway, my uncle, who also had a grade-school education, was one of the smartest men I ever knew. All he ever did the whole time I was a boy, no matter how sad I was, or I missed my mother or whatever, or whatever was going on, or when I got to be a grown man and I lost an election, all he did was keep me in a good humor. He'd tell me jokes. He'd tell me not to feel sorry for myself. He'd always say funny things.

So I went to see him one night, about 10 years ago, after his wife went into this nursing home. And they'd been married over 50 years. And the first 20 or 30 minutes we talked, all he did was tell me jokes and tell me stories and think about the old days. And I was walking out and for the only time in our life, he grabbed me by the arm. And I looked around and he had big old tears in his eyes. And I said, "This is really hard on you, isn't it." And he said this, he said, "Yes, it is." "But," he said, "you know, I signed on for the whole load, and most of it was pretty good."

When you were up there singing "Stand By Me" tonight and I thought about how the American people have stood by me through thick and thin, I would just like to say to all of you, when I talk about community, that's what I mean. *[Applause]* Now, wait a minute. You don't have to sit down, because I'm nearly through. *[Laughter]* Don't sit down. Don't sit down. I'm nearly through. Here's the point I want to make: The reason I wanted you to come here tonight, the reason I'm thankful for your contributions, the reason I'm thankful for what you do is, this

country has got to get over believing that our political life is about beating each other up and hurting people, instead of lifting people up and bringing them together. That is what I've tried to do. That is what we stand for. And if we remember that, we're going to do just fine in the 21st century.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:55 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to Willie E. Gary and Gloria Gary, dinner hosts; Joseph J. Andrew, national chair-designate, and Beth Dozoretz, national finance chair-designate, Democratic National Committee; Bishop Harold C. Ray, Redemptive Life Fellowship, who gave the invocation; and Bishop William H. Graves, vice chairman NAACP Board of Directors, and Ernestine Diller, who sang the National Anthem.

Remarks at the Speaker's Saint Patrick's Day Luncheon

March 17, 1999

Well, I'd like to say, first of all, Mr. Speaker, thank you for inviting us here, for a wonderful lunch. We welcome all of our friends from Northern Ireland and the Republic—[inaudible]—welcome them home.

Father, we thank you for your invocation and for the plug for the town of my roots. You should know that after—I'm convinced that the chamber of commerce there encouraged this, because after the invocation he came over to me and said, "Don't you ever come back to Ireland without going there." [Laughter] So I thank you.

Taoiseach, Secretary Albright, Secretary Daley, and to all the Members of Congress. I congratulate Senator Kennedy on his award from the American Ireland Fund.

The Speaker said something I'd like to pick up on. You know, normally, at this time of year, for the last several years, John, David, Gerry, Seamus—somebody's come here and thanked some American for supporting the Irish peace process. But the truth is that we should all be thanking you, because it's only when you come here that you bring us all together—[inaudible]—add to that, to your citation. [Laughter] But we're very grateful.

Let me also say that we look forward to the day when this will be a total celebration. What a different year we had this year,

Taoiseach, because of the Good Friday accords. We're grateful that Senator Mitchell was able to take a leading role—[inaudible]—all you have done. We know not only in Ireland but, indeed, in other places, that the closer you get to peace, the more desperate the enemies of peace become. And we have seen the tragedy of the Omagh bombing. We have seen the tragedy of the murder of Rosemary Nelson. We just had another loss last night—[inaudible].

This is perfectly predictable. It happened in the Middle East. I've seen it happen all over the world. Whenever people in responsible positions stick their necks out, there's always someone who knows the best way to rekindle a sense of mistrust necessary to destroy the peace is to kill someone and focus on violence.

Your presence here today is a strong commitment to the peace process and therefore gratefully noted. And all I can say is, I think I can speak for every Member of Congress in this room without regard to party, for every member of our administration—you know that we feel, *Taoiseach*, almost an overwhelming and inexpressible bond to the Irish people. We want to help all of you succeed. It probably seems meddlesome sometimes, but we look forward to the day when Irish children will look at The Troubles as if they were some part of mystic Celtic folklore, and all of us who were alive during that period will seem like relics of a bygone history.

We hope we can help you to achieve that. And believe me, all of us are quite mindful that it is much harder for you—every one of you here in this room who have been a part of this—than it is for us. We don't mean to meddle, but we do want to help.

And we've had a lot of great Speakers of the House who were Irish: McCormack, O'Neill, Foley. I think we ought to rename the Speaker "O'Hastert" after—[laughter]—his words today, because they were right on point.

So you know that across all the gulfs of American politics, we join in welcoming all of our Irish friends. And right now, I'll ask *Taoiseach* Bertie Ahern to take the floor and give us a few remarks.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 12 noon in Room H207 of the Rayburn House Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Father Sean McManus, who gave the invocation; Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland; Social Democratic and Labour Party leader John Hume; Ulster Unionist Party leader David Trimble; Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams; and Deputy First Minister Seamus Mallon, Northern Ireland Assembly.

Remarks at a Saint Patrick's Day Ceremony With Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland

March 17, 1999

The President. Thank you very much. Welcome, ladies and gentlemen. Happy Saint Patrick's Day—and what a beautiful day it is.

We are following the custom today, which is, first of all, I received my shamrocks, for which I am very grateful. And with the year ahead I'd say we are very much in need of them, and we'll make good use of them. I would like to ask the *Taoiseach* to come up now and make his remarks, as is customary, and then I'd like to say a few words about where we are in the peace process.

Mr. Prime Minister, welcome back to the United States.

[Prime Minister Ahern made remarks on the peace process.]

The President. Thank you very much, *Taoiseach*. Thank you for the beautiful crystal bowl of shamrocks, its promise of spring, which is reflected in the weather we enjoy today, and its symbol of our shared heritage, our shared values, and our shared hopes for the future.

Let me say first a few words of tribute to you for your leadership of the Republic and the success you have enjoyed. Last year was Bertie Ahern's first Saint Patrick's Day in Washington as *Taoiseach*. I talked then about Frank McCourt growing up in poverty in Limerick, about Van Morrison growing up in Belfast and hearing a new world through music, about a generation of children growing up in the shadows of The Troubles. Together on that day, the *Taoiseach* and I reaffirmed that the parties in Northern Ireland had the chance to find common ground.

Now, a year later, look at what's happened. First of all, as I told the *Taoiseach* over lunch, Frank McCourt's book, "Angela's Ashes," is being made into a movie. But Ireland and Limerick are doing so well economically, as I had a chance to see for myself last summer, that the producers could not find in all of Limerick enough dilapidated buildings to use in the film. And so in order to film in Ireland, they actually had to construct new dilapidated buildings. That is true economic progress. Meanwhile, Van Morrison's music continues to inspire people seeking to end the violence and, of course, most importantly, in the last year the negotiators did the job with the Good Friday agreement. The people of Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic overwhelmingly endorsed it, and as the *Taoiseach* has said, enormous progress has been made in its implementation.

We are grateful for the work of the leaders in Northern Ireland, in Ireland, and in Great Britain for their support and their efforts in this regard. We are grateful, in particular, for the *Taoiseach*, for Prime Minister Blair, for Mo Mowlam, and all those who have taken an especially leading role. We are grateful for the Nobel Prize winners, John Hume and David Trimble, and all the other leaders of the various factions in Northern Ireland.

But as Bertie said, the enemies of peace are still rearing their head. We saw it in Omagh. We saw it on Monday with the murder of Rosemary Nelson. We saw it with another act of violence yesterday.

Now, in a few short weeks, the time will come to bring the new institutions to life so that the people of Northern Ireland finally can begin to take their destinies into their own hands.

To fully implement the Good Friday accord, the parties simply must resolve their differences, and to do it, they have to have the same spirit of cooperation and trust that led to the first agreement. They must lift their sights above the short-term difficulties. They must see that distant horizon when children will grow up in an Ireland trouble-free, and not even remember how it used to be.

You know, on Saint Patrick's Day, we all rejoice in being Irish; even people that aren't Irish in America claim to be Irish. I told the *Taoiseach* at the Speaker's lunch—we just

came from that—I said, “You know, every time we have these Saint Patrick’s Day events, the Prime Minister of Ireland and all of the leaders of all the factions in Northern Ireland, they come here to the United States and they thank us for helping to promote the peace in Ireland. But the truth is, we should be thanking them because it’s the only time we can be absolutely sure there will be peace between Republicans and Democrats in the United States. When they come here, all the Irish Republicans and the Irish Democrats in the United States and all the people who claim to be Irish on Saint Patrick’s Day actually behave in a very civil and cooperative way toward one another.”

I think it’s worth remembering that when Saint Patrick came from England to Christianize Ireland, he did it without a sword, without the order of law. It was the only time in all history that a whole nation had converted without any force or bloodshed. He did it by carefully listening to the Irish people, understanding what they needed to do, how they could change, how they could not, and treating them with a profound amount of care and respect.

We pray now that the Irish people on opposite sides of this last divided peace process will heed the example of Saint Patrick and give us an even bigger celebration here next year.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:10 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Tony Blair and Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Marjorie Mowlam, United Kingdom; Social Democratic and Labour Party leader John Hume; and Ulster Unionist Party leader David Trimble.

Statement on National Missile Defense Legislation

March 17, 1999

I am pleased that the Senate, on a bipartisan basis, included in its national missile defense (NMD) legislation two amendments that significantly change the original bill, which I strongly opposed. By specifying that any NMD deployment must be subject to the authorization and appropriations process,

the legislation now makes clear that no decision on deployment has been made. By putting the Senate on record as continuing to support negotiated reductions in strategic nuclear arms, the bill reaffirms that our missile defense policy must take into account our arms control objectives.

We are committed to meeting the growing danger that outlaw nations will develop and deploy long-range missiles that could deliver weapons of mass destruction against us and our allies. Next year we will, for the first time, determine whether to deploy a limited national missile defense against these threats, when we review the results of flight tests and other developmental efforts, consider cost estimates, and evaluate the threat. In making our determination, we will also review progress in achieving our arms control objectives, including negotiating any amendments to the ABM Treaty that may be required to accommodate a possible NMD deployment.

This week the Russian Duma took an encouraging step toward obtaining final approval of START II. We want to move ahead on the START III framework, which I negotiated with President Yeltsin in 1997, to cut Russian and U.S. arsenals 80 percent from cold war levels, while maintaining the ABM Treaty as a cornerstone of strategic stability. The changes made in the NMD bill during Senate debate ensure these crucial objectives will be fully taken into account as we pursue our NMD program.

Statement on Patients’ Rights Legislation

March 17, 1999

Today the Congress is beginning its work on patients’ rights legislation. This issue is critical to assuring Americans high quality health care in the 21st century, so I am pleased that we are moving forward.

Unfortunately, the proposal by the Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee falls far short of the legislation the American people deserve. Because it applies patients’ rights only to those in self-insured plans, this proposal leaves 120 million Americans in insured and individual

plans without the guarantee of critical protections. Millions of Americans should not be held hostage to the hope that their State might pass legislation providing these protections. In fact, while States have the authority to pass patient protections for these plans, not one has enacted all of these protections. That is why we need strong Federal legislation to ensure that all health plans provide patients these important rights.

Even for those it does cover, the Chairman's proposal leaves out many of the most fundamental protections. For example, it does not have an adequate enforcement mechanism to ensure that patients are compensated when they are injured or die as a result of a health plan's decisions; it does not assure patients access to specialists, such as oncologists or heart specialists; and it leaves our continuity of care protections. That is why every major patient, doctor, and nurse advocacy organization has concluded that this proposal is simply inadequate.

Today represents the first test of whether this new Congress is serious about providing Americans with a strong, enforceable Patients' Bill of Rights to assure high quality health care. I urge the Committee to do everything it can to pass this test and give Americans the health care protections they need.

Remarks on Presenting the Presidential Medal of Freedom to George J. Mitchell

March 17, 1999

The President. Well, thank you very much. I am very grateful for your warm reception. I take it you had a good time inside. [Laughter] You not only put me out of the White House, you put all of yourselves out, too, because we wanted to be here where we could sit as one, to participate in this very important ceremony.

I thank you, *Taoiseach*, Celia. I thank all the party leaders who are here: Mr. Trimble, Mr. Mallon, John Hume, Gerry Adams, all the others. I thank Mo Mowlam for her tireless work. And the members of the Irish Government who are here, I thank all of them.

Mo Mowlam has got a great sense of humor, so I'm going to tell you a story she told me upstairs, and I'll never live over it, I know. But she said one night she spent the night here with Hillary and me, and she got in rather late. We stayed up rather later speaking. And then she went to sleep, and something happened, and she had to get on the phone early in the morning, London time, which is in the middle of the night our time. And the operator called back and said that she was having trouble finding Secretary Mowlam; she was in Mr. Lincoln's bedroom. [Laughter] She said it was quite obvious the operator did not know who Mr. Lincoln was or that he had been deceased for quite some time. [Laughter] But she at least felt that she was in good company. [Laughter]

I would like to thank the members of our administration who are here and the rather astonishing number of Members of Congress who are here. I'd like to ask all the Members of the United States Congress who are here to please stand, wherever you are. [Applause] Thank you. Many have come with their spouses. Congressman King came with about 15 members of his family—[laughter]—represents about 5 percent of the total brood. [Laughter] We're delighted to see them all.

I'd also like to say a special word of welcome to Senator Mitchell and to Heather and to all of George's family and friends who are here. As all of you know, in addition to the entertainment, which we'll talk about in a moment, our primary purpose here is to give me the opportunity, in front of the Irish-American community and so many of our friends from Ireland, north and south, to present the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Senator George Mitchell. [Applause] Thank you.

I really don't know if this is going to mean anything to George anymore; he's gotten so many honors lately. He can't walk two blocks down any street without someone throwing some sort of trophy at him—[laughter]—Irish-American of the Year, Honorary Degree from Dublin's Trinity College. He even got an honorary knighthood from the Queen of England. George Lucas offered to give him "the Force"—[laughter]—but he said "the Force" was already with him. [Laughter]

Few Americans have served with such distinction in so many different capacities: prosecutor, judge, Senator, Presidential envoy, chair of Northern Ireland's historic peace talks. His, as most of you know, is a great American story. His father, born to Irish immigrants, adopted by Lebanese immigrants; his mother herself born in Lebanon. She worked a night shift at a textile mill; his father cleaned the buildings at Colby College. They stressed education and hard work, and George supplemented his scholarships with jobs as steward, dorm proctor, construction worker, night watchman, truck driver, and insurance adjuster.

Now we all know why he fought so hard for the working people of our country. At one time or another, he did everything that they do all day, every day.

I've heard George say on more than one occasion that his favorite part of being a Federal judge was administering the citizenship oath to new American citizens. He said he was very moved when one of them told him, "I came here because in America, everybody has a chance."

Well, this son of immigrants has done his dead-level best to make sure that in our country everybody does have a chance. And he replaced a remarkable man, Senator Edmund Muskie, in the Senate and in just 8 years became the majority leader.

In our time together, he pushed through crucial laws that enabled us to turn around our horrendous deficit, get our budget in order, and start to grow our economy again, to give tax breaks to working people, to broaden voter registration, to give 20 million people, now, access to the family and medical leave law, to put 100,000 police on the street, protect religious freedom, clean up the environment, stand up for our veterans. That's just a few of the things that he did.

When he announced his retirement, it was a bittersweet moment, for friends and colleagues wished him well but also knew we would miss him dearly in this town. And I devised a scheme, the dimensions of which George would only later appreciate. [Laughter] I think it is the only time in our long relationship where I outsmarted him, instead of the other way around. [Laughter]

I asked him to take a small, part-time commitment as my special economic adviser to Northern Ireland. [Laughter] Then the British and Irish Governments stepped in and asked him to chair talks on disarmament and then on bringing a comprehensive peace after a generation of bloodshed. The small, part-time commitment became more all-consuming than being Senate majority leader. I got even with him for leaving me. [Laughter]

He drew up principles of nonviolence, aimed at preventing further tragedies while the talks proceeded. In building common ground among longtime antagonists he was a patient listener when he needed to be and a decisive leader when he had to be. He earned the respect of all parties for fairness, integrity, and judgment. And he built the trust necessary to move toward an agreement.

Through more than 100 trips across the Atlantic, shall I say that again?—through more than 100 trips across the Atlantic, he continued to press ahead in the cause of peace. Northern Ireland learned what its sister and brothers knew from endless nights of cribbage, what his college basketball teammates saw from their tenacious starting guard, what his fellow legislators learned on the Senate floor and on the tennis court, and what I learned as his friend and colleague: Don't be fooled by the calm demeanor; this guy is a ferocious competitor, determined to succeed.

During the course of this endeavor, George and Heather's son, Andrew, was born. George thought of Andrew, and also of the 61 children born in Northern Ireland on the same day. He wanted to champion their future as well, to give them the same chance for a good life he wanted for his own son.

What motivated George brought to mind for me a letter I read last summer at Omagh when, together, we met with survivors of the bombing there. It was sent to our then-Ambassador to Ireland, Jean Kennedy Smith, who is also with us tonight, and thank you, Jean.

I want to read this to you so you will understand from a personal point of view why I'm giving this medal to George tonight and why

I want every person who is a part of this process to leave here tonight determined to get over this last hurdle and to remember that we do not have a day to waste. Easter is coming again. Good Friday is coming again.

We have to give an accounting of ourselves. So remember this: "Dear Ambassador, you may not know me. You may not even get this letter. But after yesterday's tragedy, I wanted to do something. I'm 29 years old, an Irishman to the very core of my being. But throughout my life, there has never been peace on this island. I never realized how precious peace could be until my wife gave birth to our daughter, Ashleen, 20 months ago. We don't want her to grow up in a society that is constantly waiting for the next atrocity, the next batch of young lives snuffed out by hatred and fear.

"Ashleen's name means 'vision' or 'dream,' and we have a dream of what Ireland might be like when she grows up. Ireland could be a place where dreams would come true, where people would achieve things never imagined before, where people would not be afraid of their neighbors. We know America has done much for Ireland and all we ask is that you keep trying. Please keep Ireland in mind because Ashleen and all Irish children need to be able to dream."

Well, my thanks go to the *Taoiseach*, to Prime Minister Blair, to Mo Mowlam, the leaders of the parties, our Government, but especially to my good friend George Mitchell, who never meant to sign on for quite the job he got but who did it as an act of love and devotion.

George, thank you for your service to our Nation. Thank you for your wisdom. Thank you for being so tenacious. Thank you for your friendship and for being a truly fine human being.

Major Everhart, read the citation.

[At this point, Maj. Carlton Everhart, USAF, Air Force Aide to the President, read the citation. The President then presented the medal, and George Mitchell made brief remarks.]

The President. Thank you, George, for your service and your remarks tonight.

You know, when you stay in this work as long as Senator Mitchell and I have, you're not often moved by what other people in

public life say. And even sometimes when you're moved, you doubt the ability of one person's words to move another. Tonight I think I can speak for all of us when I say we were genuinely moved by what George Mitchell said.

And I believe I can speak for all of us who are not parties and will have no direct say, that we hope and pray that they were moved and emboldened and redetermined by Senator Mitchell's words. I will say what I have said from the beginning: The United States will support all sides in Ireland that take honest steps for peace. And I hope and believe that the necessary steps can be taken before we pass another Good Friday.

Thank you very much.

Now, enough of this really too serious stuff. Now we're going to have St. Patrick's Day fun. Let me begin by thanking the performers who already have been entertaining you here and in the White House. Let me mention them all, and then I think we should give them a round of applause: the Irish Fire band and dancers from the O'Hare School of Irish Dance; the Culkin School of Traditional Irish Dance and The Next Generation Band; the harpists, Ellen James and Michael O'Hanlan; the Prince George's County Police Pipe Band; and the U.S. Marine Band Irish Ensemble. Thank you very much. Hilary and I appreciate it. [Applause]

There is another great performance ahead: Both Sides Now, music and spoken words celebrating the people of Northern Ireland. You will hear the great music from our friends Phil Coulter and James Galway, two of Ireland's and the world's great musicians. Last December they performed together in Oslo on a great day, the day John Hume and David Trimble received the Nobel Peace Prize.

They are joined by some familiar faces, Roma Downey and Aidan Quinn. We thank them for being here. And you will hear from the musicians of Different Drums of Ireland, whose sounds represent a melding of Ireland's traditions.

Finally, you will hear from a truly beautiful and remarkable young woman, Claire Gallagher. She lost her sight in the terrible bombing at Omagh, but she did not lose the vision

and strength of her spirit and soul. And her mission for peace is powerful and clear.

Claire came here tonight with her parents, her siblings, her teacher, and we are genuinely honored to have her. Hillary was so moved by her before in Northern Ireland, and I can't say enough about my respect for what she has done to carry on with what will still be a genuinely remarkable life.

I thank all of our performers in advance. And again, I say I hope the music and the spirit embodied by the Irish who are here will also help to give us the strength and resolve to fulfill the final promises of the Good Friday accord.

Thank you, and God bless you

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:45 p.m. in a pavilion on the South Grounds at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland; Celia Larkin, who accompanied Prime Minister Ahern; First Minister David Trimble and Deputy First Minister Seamus Mallon of the Northern Ireland Assembly; Social Democratic and Labour Party leader John Hume; Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams; Queen Elizabeth II, Prime Minister Tony Blair, and Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Marjorie Mowlam of the United Kingdom; "Star Wars" creator George Lucas; and actors Roma Downey and Aidan Quinn. The transcript made available by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Mr. Mitchell.

United States-Africa Ministerial Joint Communiqué

March 18, 1999

From March 15–18, 1999 the United States hosted the first-ever meeting of African and American Ministers to enhance the U.S.-Africa partnership in order to foster greater economic development, trade, investment, political reform, and mutual economic growth in the 21st century. The President, eight members of the Cabinet, and four agency heads met for the first time with the African delegations. Eighty-three Ministers from forty-six sub-Saharan African nations, representatives from four North African nations, and the heads of eight African regional organizations participated in this historic and successful meeting. African Ministers also met with members of the U.S. Congress.

In an effort to consolidate and build upon the significant progress achieved in Africa in recent years, Ministers and senior U.S. officials discussed concrete ways to accelerate Africa's integration into the global economy. African Ministers expressed strong support for the immediate passage by Congress of the African Growth and Opportunity Act and for continued implementation of the President's Partnership for Economic Growth and Opportunity.

U.S. and African Ministers engaged in an active exchange on a broad range of economic, political, and social issues. They shared the view that high indebtedness constitutes a serious constraint to sustainable development in many African countries. In response to African requests for more effective debt relief, President Clinton proposed a six-point expanded debt relief program for highly indebted poor countries, which was warmly welcomed by the African ministers.

African and American officials discussed trade finance, market access, and access to private investment capital for ventures in Africa. Initiatives to enhance trade and investment links and economic policy dialogue were discussed as well as efforts to improve transportation and communications infrastructure and cooperation in agribusiness and energy. Ministers also reaffirmed the importance of addressing environmental issues. They noted that early ratification by the U.S. Senate of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification will help to mobilize community and international efforts to better manage land and water resources.

African Ministers and their U.S. counterparts exchanged ideas on how to enhance Africa's ability to compete in the global market through the development of its greatest resource—its people. Emphasizing the need for accelerating reform and continued development assistance as well as trade and investment, participants examined ways to bolster human capacity through investment in education, skills training, gender equity, micro-enterprises and health, particularly the prevention of HIV/AIDS. All agreed that these steps will accelerate the ability of Africa to sustain socio-economic development and reduce poverty. They also recognized the crucial role of regional cooperation in the overall

development process and in the integration of African states into the global economy.

Recognizing that sub-Saharan Africa is a vast and diverse region marked by serious problems as well as significant successes, Ministers examined ways to enhance U.S.-Africa cooperation to prevent and resolve conflicts. They also agreed on the importance of strengthening democratic institutions and respect for worker and human rights, accelerating economic reform, and creating a positive climate for business through political and social reforms. Ministers noted that the Ministerial illuminated the breadth and depth of the U.S.-Africa partnership, and set it on a firm foundation for future mutual advancement in the 21st century. All recognized the need for continuing dialogue and agreed to work out the means of ensuring regular and timely follow-up.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

**Joint Statement by U.S. President
Bill Clinton, the Irish Taoiseach
Bertie Ahern, and the British Prime
Minister, Tony Blair**

March 18, 1999

Northern Ireland Peace Process

As we approach the first anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, we can all take heart at how far we have come in a year.

The Agreement has provided the basis for the two traditions to work together, both in Northern Ireland and on the island as a whole, for the first time in 200 years. Democratically endorsed by an emphatic majority of people in both the North and the South, it gives a unique opportunity for peace and reconciliation in which all the signatories can take pride. It has rightly been acknowledged as an example to the rest of the world of how dialogue can bring an end to conflict.

Much progress has been made in implementing the Agreement. The basis for a new partnership government in Northern Ireland has been agreed. Elections have been held. Last week, the Irish and British Governments signed treaties providing for the establishment of North/South implementation

bodies, a North/South Ministerial council, a British-Irish Council and a British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference. With these treaties, arrangements have been finalized for institutions which will provide for a new level of cooperation and partnership. This will bring real, practical benefits to everyone concerned.

Implementation of the provisions of the Agreement, ensuring that the future is based on full respect for equality and freedom from discrimination for all, is also well advanced. The review of the criminal justice system is well under way, as is the work of the commission examining the key area of policing.

The balanced constitutional accommodation set out in the Agreement, based on consent, is ready to become operational. The solemn commitment that the future will be shaped by exclusively democratic and peaceful means, provides the framework within which the new institutions can work and enjoy the confidence of all sides.

Large numbers of prisoners have been released on both sides of the border. That is an essential part of the Agreement, although one that has caused undoubted pain to those who have loved ones during the years of conflict. The ceasefires remain solid. General de Chastelain continues his vital work to achieve progress on decommissioning.

There is much work still to be done to implement all aspects of the Agreement. But the substantial progress already achieved gives us hope for the future.

Despite the progress, Omagh demonstrated that the peace has not been a perfect peace. The cruel and senseless murder of Rosemary Nelson is a further reminder. But the response to Omagh showed that, despite the pain, there is deep determination in both the North and the South that peace is the only path. We call for an end to all the killings and punishment beatings. Violence of the kind we have seen again this week must not be allowed to unsettle the peace process.

The Agreement endorsed by the people last May must be implemented in all its aspects and the remaining difficulties must be resolved.

We, as leaders, bear that responsibility and that means all of us, whether we live in

Northern Ireland, the Republic, Britain, or the United States.

This is what the people want and we must not fail them. A year ago, people said it was hopeless, that the sides were too far apart. But the people and political parties in Northern Ireland proved them wrong. We all persevered. People compromised. People showed courage.

One year on, we can meet the deadline that has been set. More courage will be needed. But we are nearly there.

The prize is very great indeed and it is now in sight. We have come too far to go back now. Let us finish the task between now and Good Friday.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Statement Announcing a Review of Security at the Department of Energy Weapons Labs

March 18, 1999

Today I have asked the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, chaired by Warren Rudman, to undertake a review of the security threat at the Department of Energy's weapons labs and the adequacy of the measures that have been taken to address it. The Board is a bipartisan, independent advisory body responsible, among other things, for assessing the quality and adequacy of our counterintelligence efforts.

I have asked the Board to address the nature of the present counterintelligence security threat, the way in which it has evolved over the last two decades and the steps we have taken to counter it, as well as to recommend any additional steps that may be needed. I have asked the Board to deliver its completed report to the Congress, and to the fullest extent possible consistent with our national security, to release an unclassified version to the public.

I am determined to do all that is necessary to protect our sensitive national security information and to prevent its diversion to foreign countries. Last year I signed Presidential Decision Directive 61 to strengthen security and counterintelligence at the labs, and since 1995, we have increased the De-

partment of Energy's counterintelligence budget fifteenfold, from \$2 to \$31 million.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting *March 18, 1999*

To the Congress of the United States:

As required by section 19(3) of the Public Telecommunications Act of 1992 (Public Law 102-356), I transmit herewith a report of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. This report outlines, first, the Corporation's efforts to facilitate the continued development of superior, diverse, and innovative programming and, second, the Corporation's efforts to solicit the views of the public on current programming initiatives.

This report summarizes 1997 programming decisions and outlines how Corporation funds were distributed—\$47.9 million for television program development, \$18.8 million for radio programming development, and \$15.6 million for general system support. The report also reviews the Corporation's *Open to the Public* campaign which allows the public to submit comments via mail, a 24-hour toll-free telephone line, or the Corporation's Internet website.

I am confident this year's report will meet with your approval and commend, as always, the Corporation's efforts to deliver consistently high quality programming that brings together American families and enriches all our lives.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
March 18, 1999.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report of the National Endowment for Democracy *March 18, 1999*

To the Congress of the United States:

As required by the provisions of section 504(h) of Public Law 98-164, as amended (22 U.S.C. 4413(i)), I transmit herewith the

15th Annual Report of the National Endowment for Democracy, which covers fiscal year 1998.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
March 18, 1999.

Remarks on Receiving the Peace Garden Scroll and the Shalom Chaver Award for International Leadership

March 18, 1999

Leah and Dahlia; Noa, Yuval, Tali, Rachel: Hillary and I are honored to welcome you here. We are honored by the Shalom Chaver Award and the Peace Garden and the power of your example.

Thank you, Noa, for the beautiful song. I thank the members of the Cabinet who are here, the administration, especially Secretary Albright and Mr. Berger, and I want to say a special word of thanks to all those who have been on our peace team, now and for the last 6 years: Mr. Ross, Mr. Indyk; before them, Secretary Christopher, Mr. Lake and others.

I welcome the members of the diplomatic corps who are here. I think it would be worth noting, as a particular tribute to Prime Minister Rabin that the members of the diplomatic corps who are here are the Ambassadors of Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Qatar, Oman, and the PLO. Welcome.

I thank Congressmen Lantos, Lewis, and Lowey for being here. We have many distinguished guests from Israel, including General and Mrs. Mordechai and Mrs. Barak. We thank you for being here, all of our guests from Israel, and all of our American guests. Thank you for coming, in the words of Prime Minister Rabin, to make a stand against violence and for peace.

We are gratified to know that this Rabin Center will promote Yitzhak's legacy and his vision of a Middle East in a world where people do not have to die for peace but can actually live in peace and enjoy it.

I still remember quite clearly the meeting we had in March of 1993, when the Oslo agreement was still months away, but he had already foreseen the bold steps he would

have to take. He shared with me his assessment of the danger posed by the adversaries in the Middle East. As I recall, he called it a marriage of extremists and missiles. He understood that Israel needed a strategic peace, a circle of peace with others in the region to isolate and weaken extremists.

All I could say to him then, and all I can do now is to state again that, as Israel takes risks for peace, the United States will do everything in its power to minimize those risks and advance that cause.

Today I also thank Leah and Dahlia for remembering our friend His Majesty King Hussein. In a humorous moment in an otherwise profoundly somber day, at his funeral, I was standing with another leader of the Arab world whom I dare not mention for fear of embarrassing him, and we noticed, standing there at the King's funeral Prime Minister Netanyahu, General Barak and General Mordechai. And the leader looked at me and he said, "This is truly an amazing world. King Hussein is the only thing they agree on." *[Laughter]*

Hussein and Yitzhak Rabin were brave soldiers who had the courage to tell the hard truth that there would be no security for any in the Middle East without fairness for all, that the time had come to lift people's hopes, not exploit their fears, to reach across the divide of history and hatred, to fulfill the true promise of the Promised Land. They knew well enough that extremists would try to derail the peace accord by keeping fear and frustration, mistrust and misery dominant in the lives of ordinary Palestinians and Israelis. But they were determined to turn back the tide, and so they did.

How we gloried in those brilliant days in 1993 and 1995 when the leaders of the Middle East gathered here to grasp hands and pledged to build a safer and better future. How we enjoyed those first halting steps toward reconciliation. Even then there was humor. I will never forget when Yitzhak promised me in September of '93 that he would shake Mr. Arafat's hand as long as there was no kissing. *[Laughter]*

But it wasn't long after that when they came here to sign all the maps to embody in concrete terms the accord which had been reached, when a dispute arose. And it was

at the last minute, and no one knew how to resolve it. So I showed them back to my private dining room and I said, "I believe I could find Jericho, but otherwise I don't know much about this map. You guys go in that room and solve it. We'll wait until it's done." And they sat there alone and resolved the problem.

Today, the people of the Middle East still have a chance to build the secure peace of Prime Minister Rabin's dreams, to isolate the extremists, to weaken their ability to shatter the peace with terrorism or missiles or weapons of mass destruction. But it is just a chance.

I can still hear the strong voices of Yitzhak Rabin and King Hussein speaking to us today and saying: Push ahead with the peace process. Build on Oslo and Wye River—before it is too late. But today, their voices must be embodied by others all across the Middle East. *Tzarich chaverim li-shalom*. We need friends of peace.

The loss of Yitzhak Rabin, the premature death of His Majesty King Hussein make it time—and past time—for all in the Middle East to remember the wisdom of the ages: Life is fleeting. When we return to dust, our differences are as nothing. All that remains is our legacy. It must be an affirmation of our common humanity. Why is it we can only see the humanity we share when we lose someone we love?

Long ago, Leah said it very well in 1975 at a women's conference in Mexico City. She said this: "War solves nothing. Our area thirsts for peace, for the benefit of all peoples living there. Our true enemies are poverty, illiteracy, disease, and inequality of opportunity."

Leah, you and Yitzhak lived the history of Israel together, from your marriage in the year of your nation's birth, from the ashes of the Holocaust and the seeds of the diaspora. You fought for independence and survival. You helped to build the enlightened, vibrant democratic society that Israel is today. And I want to say that we are very grateful to you for your sacrifices, for your contributions to help build an Israel that is strong and free, prosperous and at peace. We thank you.

That is also America's cause in the Middle East; and in Central America, where I visited last week, and where longtime adversaries in civil wars now reach across great divides; and in Northern Ireland, the land of my ancestors, whose leaders I met with yesterday, where we are so close to finishing the job; and in the former Yugoslavia, where we are determined to avoid in Kosovo a repeat of the terrible senseless bloodshed of Bosnia; and in Africa, where too much blood still is being shed but whose leaders came here this week in a remarkable display of unity to seek a partnership of freedom and opportunity with the United States.

In all these places the struggle for peace continues, and we must continue it in the Middle East, between Israelis and Palestinians, and all across the region, because every day we delay the process of peace strengthens the extremists and supports their violent designs.

I would like to close with three admonitions. We must not grow weary. The psalmist says, "Do good; seek peace, and pursue it." We must not harden our hearts in the face of all that has been lost. Shakespeare said it best:

The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
It droppeth as a gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest:
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes.

Let us give it and take it. And finally, we must not lose faith. Yitzhak Rabin once quoted these words from the poet Tchernichovsky: "I believe in the future. That day will come when peace and blessings are borne from nation to nation." And he added, "I want to believe that that day is not far off."

With the help of a merciful God, we will hasten the day of Yitzhak Rabin's dreams.

Shalom. Salaam. Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:49 p.m. in the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to the following members of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's family: Leah Rabin, widow, Dahlia Rabin-Pelossof, daughter, Noa Pelossof, granddaughter, Yuval Rabin, son, and his wife, Tali, and Rachel Jacob, sister. The President also referred to Gen. Yitzhak Mordechai, and his

wife, Cochi; Gen. Ehud Barak, chairman, Israeli Labor Party, and his wife, Nava; Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority. The scroll and the award were presented by the Yitzhak Rabin Center.

Remarks to the Radio and TV Correspondents' Dinner

March 18, 1999

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Jim. I want to thank all the officers for making me feel so welcome. Evelyn, thank you for the great dinner conversation—Mr. Speaker, Members of Congress, my fellow Americans. I want to thank you for your invitation to come have dinner with 2,000 members of the Washington press corps. [Laughter] I accepted. If this isn't contrition, I don't know what is. [Laughter]

I know you can't really laugh about this. I mean, the events of the last year have been quite serious. If the Senate vote had gone the other way, I wouldn't be here tonight. I demand a recount. [Laughter]

Look, this is just the beginning of my week with the press. Tomorrow I've got a press conference and then the Gridiron dinner the day after that. You'd think I was selling a book. [Laughter] Now, I know it's been a long time since I had a press conference, but I remember it well. [Laughter] All those questions that day about the nomination of Zoe Baird. [Laughter]

Look, you can probably tell I'm a little nervous being around all these reporters tonight. So if you will forgive me, I'd like to employ a method that has worked pretty well for me over the last year.

[At this point, "Fuffles and Flurishes" was played and the Prime Minister of the United Republic of Carjackador, Joreb Onspot, was announced.]

The President. Your Excellency, welcome to the United States. [Laughter] The podium is yours. [Laughter]

[The Prime Minister spoke briefly in a foreign language.]

The President. Well your Excellency, without my headphones, I have no idea what you just said. [Laughter] But it sounded very much like words of praise. I want you to know that they mean more to me than I could possibly express. [Laughter]

[The Prime Minister replied briefly in a foreign language.]

The President. I agree with that, as well. [Laughter]

Now, your Excellency, this is just a dinner with the press. Tomorrow is the real press conference. I look forward to seeing you there. [Laughter]

Now, I know that the press corps has been busy preparing questions for me. So I've been working on the answers. Never mind the questions; here are the answers. [Laughter]

"Yes, Helen." "She was first, Sam. I'll get to you, Sam. Not yet, though." "The longest peacetime expansion in history." "No, I didn't watch it." [Laughter] "No, I haven't read it." [Laughter] "Yes, Wolf, I am doing this press conference because Joe made me do it."

Your Excellency, why don't you just have a seat right here, just listen to the translation, and I'll ask you to join me again if I need some cover. [Laughter]

Now, I know there's been a lot of interest in the future political career of the First Lady. I honestly don't know what she'll decide, but I can tell you this. Yesterday at breakfast, she was complaining that it is impossible to get a decent bagel in Washington. [Laughter] By the way, I'm from Arkansas. You know, what is a schmeer? [Laughter]

The Prime Minister. [Unintelligible]—Philadelphia Cream Cheese.

The President. Cream cheese. Thank you very much. I got it.

And you know, the Vice President's been busy, too. When I was in Central America, I turned on my trusty C-SPAN, and I saw the Vice President talking about how rough it is to travel on airplanes these days, the delays, the lost baggage, the disgusting meals. [Laughter] Al, I didn't know it was that bad on Air Force II. [Laughter] I think he's due for an upgrade.

Aren't you glad Garrison Keillor is here? I welcome you, sir, to Washington, where all the lobbyists are strong, all the politicians think they're good-looking, and all of the lawyers are above average. [Laughter] I'm glad Governor Ventura let you out of the head lock, and I hope he let's you go home to Minnesota.

Folks, I was going to make jokes about the House Republicans tonight, about the managers. It wouldn't be fair; they're not here to defend themselves. They're all at the "Taliban Correspondents Association Dinner." [Laughter] You know, the House managers were really unhappy with the Senate verdict. In fact, they're appealing it to the judges in the Holyfield-Lewis fight. [Laughter]

This is a pretty tough time for the right wing. The president of the Council of Conservative Citizens had to resign because of his alleged ties to Bob Barr. [Laughter]

Now, look, as I have often said, politics aside, this is truly a great moment for America. Since I took office, more than 18 million new jobs—opportunity abundant. But there are pockets of our economy that have been hurt by change—

Prime Minister. Oh, Bob Barr! [Laughter]

The President. He and I liked it better than you did. [Laughter]

Anyway, as I was saying, in spite of all this prosperity, there are some pockets of our economy that have really been hurt by change. For example, now that the trial is over, we have a responsibility to do something about the growing ranks of dislocated pundits. [Laughter] You know, in this era of technological change, the average worker will change jobs 7 times. And now we know that for a full 50 percent of them, one of those jobs will be a short stint as a panelist on MSNBC. [Laughter]

My friends, when their time in Washington is up, we simply must help displaced pundits make the most of the opportunities of the 21st century. This is a challenge best met at the State level. [Laughter]

So I propose a new relocation grant, to move Washington's pundits out to our 50 States, the laboratories of democracy—[laughter]—to give them new, fresh, vibrant

opportunities to torment our Nation's Governors—[laughter]—from Trenton to Tallahassee and Albany to Austin. I also want you to know that I am absolutely firmly committed to passing the long overdue Pundits' Bill of Rights: You have the right to a fresh Danish in the green room, the right to interrupt others, the right to shout down Chris Matthews—I think that's an obligation, myself—[laughter]—and never, never should you have to make the painful choice between the beat you cover and the talk show you love. [laughter]

Now, the cable networks have to fill 24 hours of news programming with 24 minutes worth of actual news. [Laughter] That's pretty tough. Anyway, here are a few of the better ideas for new shows: "MSNBC In Crisis"—[laughter]—"Inside the Politics of 'Burden of Proof'"—[laughter]—"Totally Subpoenaed Videos." [Laughter] But just for you tonight, we got our hands on a preview of cable news next really big show. Here it is, look on the video screen.

[At this point, a video of "Punditubbies" with journalist Robert Novak hosting Teletubbies Tinky-Winky, Dipsy, Laa-Laa, and Po was shown.]

I'll explain it to you later, your Excellency. [Laughter]

Well, there has been some real news this week. The DNC announced it will hold the 2000 Democratic Convention in Los Angeles. But what you may not know is that the Los Angeles Planning Committee insisted on some minor changes in the convention format. For example, the Democratic candidate must start his acceptance speech by thanking the Academy and saying what an honor it is just to be nominated. [Laughter] In addition to the red-meat rhetoric of usual, there will be a fabulous vegetarian plate prepared by Wolfgang Puck. Tough questions will now be handled by stunt doubles. There'll be a fundraiser at Grauman's Chinese Theater. And basically—even after it's over—in Hollywood, Oscars will still be bigger than the convention.

Speaking of the Oscars, everybody's got his or her own pick for Best Picture. Now, I like some in particular, but none of these were nominated. But there were a lot of pictures

about Washington this year, and I think they deserve a little consideration.

There was "Leaving Los Alamos," "You've Got Subpoenas,"—[laughter]—"Throw Momma in the Grand Jury." One of my favorites, the prequel to "Star Wars," "The Robert Fiske Story"—[laughter]—and "Saving Private Life." [Laughter]

Now that this speech has gone on long enough, I know we should work together to bring it to closure. So I want you to let me say something, just for a moment, serious. There are three journalists here tonight from Radio Free Asia who sought to cover my trip to China last year but had their visas canceled by the Chinese Government. I was pleased to sit for an interview with them before I left and took the opportunity to say that China had made a serious mistake.

This, of course, is part of a larger problem, because around the world, still, journalists are barred, harassed, imprisoned, sometimes even murdered, for the crime of seeking and speaking the truth. When leaders in China or anywhere else do this, it is a cause for dismay. And what leaders everywhere must realize is that a robust and independent press actually strengthens a nation. It promotes debate, and in a free society, given enough time, the people pretty much always get it right.

Together we must continue to state forcefully our belief that free expression and independent journalism are absolutely essential to building better societies and protecting the rights of all people. In the daily push and pull of our jobs and lives, we should never lose sight of that one goal, which I know every person in this room shares, not only tonight but every night.

All in all, this hasn't been too bad. I'd do it again. In fact, I'm dumb enough to do it again tomorrow. So I'll see you tomorrow in the East Room. Look for me. I'll be the guy without the red sash. [Laughter]

Thank you, and good night.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:30 p.m. in the International Ballroom at the Washington Hilton. In his remarks, he referred to Jim Mills, president, Radio and TV Correspondents Association; Evelyn Thomas, CBS News; former Attorney General nominee Zoe Baird; Helen Thomas, United Press International; Sam Donaldson, ABC News; Wolf

Blitzer, CNN; radio entertainer Garrison Keillor; Gov. Jesse Ventura of Minnesota; boxers Evander Holyfield and Lennox Lewis; Chris Matthews, CNBC; and chef Wolfgang Puck. Actor Nick Olcott appeared as the Prime Minister of the fictional nation of Carjackador.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

March 13

In the afternoon, the President traveled from Texarkana, TX, to Little Rock, AR, and in the evening, he returned to Washington, DC.

March 15

The President announced his intent to nominate Brian E. Sheridan to be the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict.

March 16

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Stuart, FL, and in the evening, he returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Detroit, MI, and Boston, MA, on April 16.

March 17

In the afternoon, the President met with Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland in the Oval Office.

In the evening, the President met separately with Deputy First Minister Seamus Mallon of the Northern Ireland Assembly, Ulster Unionist Party leader David Trimble, and Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams in the Oval Office.

March 18

The President announced his intent to appoint Iris J. Burnett as a member on the Board of Governors for the United Services Organizations, Inc.

March 19

In the morning, the President met with Senate leaders in the Oval Office to discuss issues regarding Kosovo.

In the afternoon, the President held a news conference in the East Room.

In the evening, he attended a Democratic National Committee dinner in a pavilion on the South Lawn.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

Submitted March 15

Raymond C. Fisher,
of California, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit, vice David R. Thompson, retired.

Adalberto Jose Jordan,
of Florida, to be U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Florida, vice Lenore Carrero Nesbitt, retired.

Submitted March 18

Brian E. Sheridan,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, vice Henry Allen Holmes.

Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released March 15

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joe Lockhart

Transcript of a press briefing by Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Susan

Rice and NSC Senior Director for African Affairs Gayle Smith on the U.S.-Africa Partnership for the 21st Century

Statement by the Press Secretary: The President's Council on Food Safety/National Academy of Sciences Report

Announcement of nomination for U.S. Court of Appeals Judge for the Ninth Circuit and nomination of U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Florida

Released March 16

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joe Lockhart

Released March 17

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joe Lockhart

Transcripts of press briefings by Deputy National Security Adviser Jim Steinberg on the President's schedule on Saint Patrick's Day

Released March 18

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joe Lockhart

Transcript of remarks by Vice President Al Gore to the National Newspaper Publishers Association

Acts Approved by the President

Approved March 5¹

H.R. 433 / Public Law 106-1
District of Columbia Management Restoration Act of 1999

Approved March 15

H.R. 822 / Public Law 106-2
To nullify any reservation of funds during Fiscal Year 1999 for guaranteed loans under the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act for qualified beginning farmers or ranchers, and for other purposes

¹ This Public Law was not received in time for inclusion in the appropriate issue.