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Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Lapse of the Export Administration Act of 1979

August 10, 1999

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

On August 19, 1994, in light of the expiration of the Export Administration Act of 1979, as amended (50 U.S.C. App. 2401 *et seq.*), I issued Executive Order 12924, declaring a national emergency and continuing the system of export regulation under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*). Under section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)), the national emergency terminates on the anniversary date of its declaration unless the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice of its continuation.

I am hereby advising the Congress that I have extended the national emergency declared in Executive Order 12924. Enclosed is a copy of the notice of extension.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Albert Gore, Jr., President of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 11.

Remarks on Presenting the Presidential Medal of Freedom

August 11, 1999

The President. Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the White House. A special welcome to Senator Robb, Congressman Scott, Congressman Sisisky, Secretary/Senator Bentsen's old colleagues in the Cabinet, and Mr. Rubin, welcome home. Secretary Kissinger, thank you for coming. Governor Rosselló, thank you for coming. Mrs. Ford, we're honored to have you here.

Shootings at the North Valley Jewish Community Center

Let me just say, before I begin the ceremony, Hillary has already said that like all Americans, we have prayed for the welfare of the children and their families and the entire community affected by the shootings in Los Angeles yesterday. Most of you probably know by now that the FBI received the gunman, who turned himself in, earlier today. I want to congratulate the law enforcement officials at all levels of government who quickly responded to the crime, identified the suspect, and kept the pressure on.

We are a long way from knowing all the facts about this case, and therefore, I think all of us have to be somewhat careful about commenting. But what we have heard about the suspect and his motives is deeply disturbing. Nothing could be further from the values we honor here today. Therefore, I would just say, again, I can only hope that this latest incident will intensify our resolve to make America a safer place and a place of healing across the lines that divide us.

Presidential Medal of Freedom

President Kennedy once said that a nation reveals itself not only by the people it produces but by the people it honors. Today we honor men and women who represent the best of America with the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Our Nation's Founders believed, as do we, that freedom is a gift of God, not only to be defended but to be used to improve the human condition, to deepen the reach of freedom, to widen the circle of opportunity, to strengthen the bonds of our national community.

By words and deeds, the Americans we honor today have done just that. And in honoring them, we honor also the values and principles of our Nation's founding and our Nation's future. Today I am proud to begin with a man who once held the office I am now privileged to occupy and one who has more than earned this honor.

From his earliest days as a student and athlete, President Gerald Ford was destined for leadership. He was an outstanding player on the Michigan football team in a segregated era. And his horror at the discrimination to which one of his teammates was subjected spawned in him a lifelong commitment to equal rights for all people, regardless of race.

He served with distinction on an aircraft carrier in the Pacific in World War II. Thirty

years later, as Republican leader of the House, and with the strong support of his colleagues in Congress in both parties, he was chosen to fill the vacancy in the Vice Presidency, which imposed on him subsequently the awesome responsibility of piloting our Nation through the stormy seas of Watergate.

Steady, trustworthy, Gerald Ford ended a long, national nightmare. He also ended a long and bitter war. And he signed the Helsinki Treaty on Human Rights that sent a signal of hope to people throughout the world and hastened the fall of communism.

When he left the White House after 895 days, America was stronger, calmer, and more self-confident. America was, in other words, more like President Ford himself.

During 25 years in the House of Representatives, and as House Republican leader, he won respect from both sides of the aisle. It is not just his penchant for hard work or his acknowledged mastery of everything from budgets to foreign policy to defense, but the way he conducted himself, arguing his position forcefully on the House floor but, at the end of the debate, always reaching over to shake the hand of his opponents. Gerald Ford knew when to put politics aside and when to put the interests of our Nation first.

The respect he commands has grown in the years since he left office, whether advising Presidents in the Oval Office or defending affirmative action or making the case for free trade on the editorial pages of our leading newspapers. His opinions are still very much sought after. I am immensely grateful for the wise counsel he has given me over the years.

And I think I can speak for Hillary and for all Americans when I also express my appreciation and thanks to Betty Ford, a tremendous First Lady who has demonstrated dignity, strength, and resolve, and inspired those qualities in millions of others in the way she has shared her life with us.

President Ford represents what is best in public service and what is best about America. Colonel, please read the citation.

[*Lt. Col. Carlton D. Everhart, USAF, Air Force Aide to the President, read the citation, and the President and the First Lady presented the medal.*]

The President. A Texas farmhand by the age of 6, a bomber pilot by 21, a Congressman by 27, an immensely successful businessman by 35, Lloyd Bentsen saw and did more in his youth than most see and do in an entire lifetime.

During his second 35 years, he managed another whole lifetime of achievement and service as a distinguished United States Senator from Texas. He rose to become chairman of the Finance Committee, where he demonstrated his lifetime concern for the interest of business and labor and the poor and his conviction that America should advance all these together.

Then, at the tender age of 71, when he had every right to settle back and enjoy the comforts of retirement, Lloyd Bentsen answered my call to take on perhaps the toughest challenge of his public life, to become Secretary of the Treasury at a time of grave economic difficulty for our Nation.

He accepted that challenge with characteristic gusto. He became one of the strongest voices in America and in our administration for fiscal discipline and expanded international trade. He became an acknowledged world leader in financial and economic affairs. His work with Chairman Greenspan and Mr. Rubin and others on our economic team earned respect around the world. Under his leadership in 1993, when some of the rest of us had our doubts, we passed the economic plan that paved the way for what is now the longest peacetime expansion in our history.

For a lifetime of exceptional service to his country, I am proud to bestow the Medal of Freedom on Lloyd Bentsen.

Colonel, read the citation.

[*Lieutenant Colonel Everhart read the citation, and the President and the First Lady presented the medal.*]

The President. Edgar Bronfman once said that, in forcing the world to face up to an ugly past, we help shape a more honorable future. That fairly describes his own personal mission over these last 20 years. As chairman of Seagram's, he's helped to build on his father's legacy and take the company to new heights. As President of the World Jewish Congress, he's traveled the world to expose

the legacy of oppression of the Jewish people and to spur action on their behalf, winning freedom for Soviet Jews in the 1980's, demanding justice from financial institutions on behalf of Holocaust survivors in the 1990's, and, in between, supporting philanthropies that work to break down barriers between nations and lift the lives of disadvantaged young people. A life of remarkable citizen service.

Colonel, read the citation.

[*Lieutenant Colonel Everhart read the citation, and the President and the First Lady presented the medal.*]

The President. Evy Dubrow came to Washington more than 40 years ago, ready to do battle for America's garment workers, and do battle she did. When it came to the well-being of workers and their families, this tiny woman was larger than life. The Halls of Congress still echo with the sound of her voice, advocating a higher minimum wage, safer workplaces, better education for the children of working families. And in opposition to President Ford and me, she also was against NAFTA. [*Laughter*]

No matter how divisive the issue, however, Evy always seemed to find a way to bring people together, to find a solution. As she put it, there are good people on both sides of each issue, and she had a knack for finding those people.

By the time she retired 2 years ago, at the age of 80, she had won a special chair in the House Chamber, a special spot at the poker table in the Filibuster Room—[*laughter*]—and a special place in the hearts of even the most hard-bitten politicians in Washington; even more important, for decades and decades, she won victory after victory for social justice.

Colonel, read the citation.

[*Lieutenant Colonel Everhart read the citation, and the President and the First Lady presented the medal.*]

The President. Sister Isolina Ferre. For more than 20 years, in a poverty-stricken barrio in Puerto Rico, Sister Isolina Ferre started passing out cameras to children. She told them to photograph whatever they saw. The point of the project she later recalled, was not just to teach young people to take pictures but to teach them to take pride in themselves. That is what Sister Isolina does best, teaching people to see the best in themselves and in their communities and making sure they had the tools to make the most of the gifts God has given them.

Armed only with her faith, she taught warring gangs in New York City to solve their differences without violence. In Puerto Rico, her network of community service centers, the Centro Sor Isolina Ferre, have transformed ravaged neighborhoods by helping residents to advocate for themselves. Her passionate fight against poverty, violence, and despair have earned her many awards and countless tributes from all around the world. Sister Isolina once said that a community grows only when it rediscovers itself. On behalf of the many communities you have helped to make that wonderful discovery, a grateful nation says thank you to you today.

Colonel, please read the citation.

[*Lieutenant Colonel Everhart read the citation, and the President and the First Lady presented the medal.*]

The President. I wonder whether any of the assembled parents, family, and friends in the audience at the law school graduation at Howard University in 1933 knew that they were watching history in the making?

Among the many talented people who graduated that day, two men stood side by side, one the valedictorian, the other salutatorian. Separated in class rank by a mere point or two, they were united in their determination to hasten our Nation to a day when equal opportunity was the birthright of every American.

One of these men was the late Thurgood Marshall. We're honored to have his wife here with us today. The other was the man it is our privilege to honor today, Oliver White Hill. Together, these two struck a fatal blow against the injustice embedded in our Nation's law, the disgraceful doctrine of separate but equal, that kept Americans apart and held too many Americans back for far too long.

In the 45 years since the Supreme Court handed down its landmark decision in *Brown* v. *Board of Education,* which both Thurgood

Marshall and Oliver Hill were active in, Oliver Hill has barely had time to catch his breath. Throughout his long and rich life, he has challenged the laws of our land and the conscience of our country. He has stood up for equal pay, better schools, fair housing, for everything that is necessary to make America, truly, one, indivisible, and equal.

The presence in this audience today of so many people who have devoted their lives to the cause of civil rights is ample evidence to the absolutely irreplaceable role he has played over these many decades. Our Nation is in his debt.

Colonel, read the citation.

[*Lieutenant Colonel Everhart read the citation, and the President and the First Lady presented the medal.*]

The President. Max Kampelman was probably not the first young man to work his way through college who made ends meet by skipping meals. But surely he is one of the few people who ever served his country in World War II by agreeing to stop eating altogether. [*Laughter*] He volunteered to participate in a military experiment on the effects of starvation, hoping to help doctors find new ways to treat returning POW's and concentration camp survivors, bespeaking a lifelong passion to alleviate the suffering of the victims of human rights abuses.

Forty years later, after a career spent advising public officials at the highest level, he would again help his country to fight oppression in Europe. As head of the United States delegation overseeing the Helsinki Act, his unflinching words kept human rights at the center of East-West relations. An uncommonly gifted negotiator, he won crucial arms control agreements.

Together, these efforts helped to set in motion the collapse of communism and the beginning of a new era of democracy. He has excelled as a diplomat, a philanthropist, a humanitarian. He has served both Republican and Democratic Presidents well. In so doing, he has been a quintessential American citizen.

Colonel, read the citation.

[*Lieutenant Colonel Everhart read the citation, and the President and the First lady presented the medal.*]

The President. I wish we all had been there with Edgar Wayburn when he first laid eyes on the spectacular vistas of the land north of San Francisco, for then we could have experienced the wilderness from his unique and wonderful perspective. As it is, millions of Americans and visitors from other lands have been able to experience our great American wilderness because of Edgar Wayburn.

From the broad shores of Point Reyes, where we spent our second anniversary, to the sharp peaks of the Alaska range, to the majestic heights of the California redwoods, Edgar Wayburn has helped to preserve the most breathtaking examples of the American landscape. In fact, over the course of the more than half a century, both as president of the Sierra Club and as a private citizen, he has saved more of our wilderness than any other person alive. And I might add, his wife, who is here with us today, has been his colleague every step of the way in that endeavor. Those who have been involved in these struggles with him credit his success to his persistence and to his profound conviction as a physician and a conservationist that our physical health depends upon the health of our environment.

As we look toward a 21st century in which the world and the United States must combat new challenges to our environment, and especially the challenge of climate change, we will need Edgar Wayburn as a model and a guide. And we should be very grateful that we have him.

Colonel, read the citation.

[*Lieutenant Colonel Everhart read the citation, and the President and the First Lady presented the medal.*]

The President. The ancient Greeks used to bestow various honors upon citizens who performed outstanding service—everything from laurel crowns, the equivalent of our Medal of Freedom, to a lifetime of free dinners at state expense. [*Laughter*] I have not yet won bipartisan agreement in the Congress for that to be attached to the Medal of Freedom, but I can invite you to join us in the State Dining Room for a reception.

Ladies and gentlemen, if hearing these life stories doesn't make us all prouder to be

Americans, I don't know what would. I thank these people for the lives they have lived and the light they have shined.

Again, we welcome them and all of you to the White House and ask you to join us in the State Dining Room.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:15 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Secretary of the Treasury Robert E. Rubin; former Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger; Gov. Pedro Rosselló of Puerto Rico; former First Lady Betty Ford; alleged gunman Buford O. Furrow; Cecilia A. Suyat, widow of Supreme Court Justice Thurgood A. Marshall; and Mr. Wayburn's wife, Peggy. The transcript made available by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Statement on the Tornado Damage in Salt Lake City, Utah

August 11, 1999

I want to express my concern for the people of Salt Lake City, who are suffering the effects of a devastating tornado that tore through their city this afternoon. I was particularly saddened to learn that the tornado left at least one person dead and dozens injured. Officials from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) are already on the ground; more officials are en route; and FEMA Director James Lee Witt has talked by phone with Governor Leavitt. The burden of recovery will be heavy, but it is a burden that the people of Salt Lake City need not carry alone. As they begin the difficult process of mourning, healing, and rebuilding, our Nation stands steadfastly behind them.

Interview With Susie Gharib of the "Nightly Business Report"

August 11, 1999

Wages and Inflation

Ms. Gharib. It looks like wages are really starting to pick up now, and this is benefiting even people on the bottom rung of the economic ladder. But this is something that's worrying Wall Street because you saw the reaction to the employment report that the worry is that as wages rise, that this could create inflation. Do you think that wages are rising so fast that you could create an inflation problem?

The President. I don't think there's any evidence of that now for a couple of reasons. One is, you know, we had about 20 years when, in effect, there was no real rise in wages for people in the middle and the lower income groups, and they have had a good rise. It's been going on for about 3 years now. But we have seen enough experience, at least so far, that we don't see the signs of inflation.

I also believe the fact that we have open markets and, therefore, lots of competition and a lot of productivity increases fueled by technology should give us some encouragement there. It's something obviously we have to be vigilant about. But based on the present evidence, I think people are—they're earning their pay increases, and they've worked hard for them and, so far, I don't think there is evidence of inflation.

Stock Market

Ms. Gharib. Mr. President, on Wall Street, they say that the direction of the stock market is a good predictor of where the economy is headed 6 to 9 months into the future. We've seen some rallies recently, but still stocks are down 10 percent or more from their recent highs. Do you think that the stock market is telling us that rough times are ahead?

The President. Not necessarily. No, I don't, because, keep in mind, the stock market was 3,200 when I took office. It was 6,500 in 1996, late in '96. So it's still perking along pretty well. And I think it's unrealistic to think that it's going to more than triple every 5 years. You're just not going to have that every 5 years. But I think that the most important thing I can say is that from my point of view, is that, as Secretary Rubin used to say, ''Markets go up. Markets go down.''

What the Government should focus on is keeping the fundamentals right. And it seems to me that if we can keep paying down the debt, practice fiscal responsibility, keep pushing to open markets, and keep making the kind of long-term investments that we know are good for the American economy, then the people in the private sector will take care of the rest.