

and actually used them to change the lives of our people for the better.

And finally, let me say to all the people who have been a part of this, I'm not running for anything anymore. I'm doing this because I believe in the enterprise of Government and in the work and impact of citizenship. And if we can use technology to chip away at cynicism and increase participation and give—empower citizens to feel that they're holding their elected officials accountable and they're helping them to do their jobs, that will be a very great thing, indeed.

So I would urge you to keep the E-mails coming into the White House, keep the E-mails coming into the DLC. If you have questions that weren't answered or ideas you want to share, keep pouring them in there.

But let me tell you something. There's a reason this country's been around here for more than 200 years, and there's a reason we're enjoying this enormous level of economic prosperity with our social conditions improving and our leadership in the world unquestioned. America is a great country founded on a great set of ideas, capable of permanent renewal. And the technology of the moment has made it more exciting than ever before. But it still requires, more than anything else, even more than good leaders, good citizens.

Those of you who have been part of this tonight have been good citizens. I thank you, and I want to urge you on because our country's best days lie ahead in the new century.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:14 p.m. in the Marvin Center Auditorium at George Washington University. In his remarks, he referred to John A. Koskinen, Chairman, President's Council on Year 2000 Conversion; Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel; and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority. In addition to the President, the Democratic Leadership Council-sponsored discussion included the following participants: Marc Andreessen, founder, Netscape; Gov. Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire; Mayor Donald Cunningham, Jr., of Bethlehem, PA; Lt. Gov. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend of Maryland; and Wisconsin State Assemblyman Antonio Riley, chairman, Democratic Leadership Council State Legislative Advisory Board. On-line participants used first names only. A portion of this discussion could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Statement on Signing Legislation To Locate and Secure the Return of Zachary Baumel, a United States Citizen, and Other Israeli Soldiers Missing in Action

November 8, 1999

Today I have signed into law H.R. 1175, "An Act to locate and secure the return of Zachary Baumel, a United States citizen, and other Israeli soldiers missing in action." I deeply sympathize with the families of the missing soldiers and have made the resolution of these cases a priority throughout my Administration. The United States remains determined to pursue every concrete lead to ascertain their fate. We will continue to consult closely with the families and the Government of Israel in our long effort to resolve this important issue. We will also continue to raise this issue with other governments in our search for answers.

I believe that two sections of the bill must be carefully construed to avoid constitutional and practical problems. Specifically, section 2(a) of the bill states that "the Secretary of State shall continue to raise the matter of Zachary Baumel, Yehuda Katz, and Zvi Feldman on an urgent basis with appropriate government officials" of certain foreign governments. To the extent that this provision can be read to direct the Secretary of State to take certain positions in communications with foreign governments, it interferes with my sole constitutional authority over the conduct of diplomatic negotiations. Therefore, this provision will be treated as precatory.

In addition, section 3 of the bill would require the Secretary of State to report to the Congress on efforts taken with regard to section 2(a) and additional information obtained about the individuals named in section 2(a). I sign this bill with the understanding that this section does not detract from my constitutional authority to withhold information relating to diplomatic communications or other national security information.

Section 3(b) of the bill would require the Secretary of State to report to the Congress not later than 15 days after receiving "any additional credible information" relating to the missing servicemen. Because there could

well be a delay between the receipt of information and the determination that such information is “credible”, I regard the 15-day period as commencing upon that determination.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
November 8, 1999.

NOTE: H.R. 1175, approved November 8, was assigned Public Law No. 106-89. This statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 9.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Cabinet Members and an Exchange With Reporters

November 9, 1999

Budget Negotiations

The President. Good morning. We're about to begin a Cabinet meeting that will be a briefing on the current state of the budget negotiations. As I think all of you know, our budget negotiators have been meeting with congressional leaders almost around the clock in an effort to complete our work and produce a budget that reflects the values of our people, lives within our means, and looks to the future.

We are seeing encouraging signs of real progress in our efforts to put 50,000 community police officers on our streets and keep the crime rate coming down, in our new markets initiative that seeks to bring investment to areas of our country that have not participated fully in our prosperity, in our efforts to preserve and protect our environment. We are even seeing the first signs of agreement.

But there's still a lot of work to be done, a number of critical priorities yet to be resolved. Most important is the commitment to a quality education and our agreement to hire 100,000 new highly qualified teachers to reduce class size in the early grades. We will keep working with Congress to keep the promise that both of us made to the people of America last year.

The Senate's voting on a minimum wage bill today. I urge them to pass a bill that helps more Americans into the circle of opportunity and to do it in a way that does not

give unfair and excessive tax breaks to special interests. Congress also needs to pass a strong hate crimes bill to protect more of our citizens from violence and bigotry.

And I am hopeful that we can resolve these issues and the other remaining issues, especially the one involving United Nations dues, so that we can complete our work. It's still possible that we can complete our work in the next few days and get out of here. And we're working hard—Mr. Lew's working hard particularly, and Mr. Podesta and Mr. Ricchetti and others, and I thank them for their efforts. And I'm going to give the Cabinet an update.

Education Legislation

Q. Mr. President, on education, what is really wrong with the Republican idea of giving the money to the school districts and letting them decide whether to buy computers or hire new teachers?

The President. Well, first of all, we have done a great deal for the school districts on computers, and in 4 years we went from 4 of our school districts wired to 51 percent.

Secondly, there is flexibility—Secretary Riley might want to answer this—but there's flexibility in that bill if the schools get their classes down. But Secretary Riley brought that study with him today, we mentioned yesterday, that gives clear evidence that smaller classes in the early grades have permanent learning benefits. And I think that we need to stay with that.

We don't have enough money to spend, in my judgment, to risk wasting any of it. And when the educators and local school leaders and all the educational research agree that something needs to be done and we allocate the money for it, I don't think we should turn around and break the commitment and just say, “We'll give you a blank check. We don't really care what happens to the money.” We can't afford to waste a penny of the money we spend on education.

UnitedHealthcare

Q. Mr. President, what do you think of a major HMO deciding that doctors should say whether you're sick or well?

The President. Good for them. I applaud them. And they're large enough that they