

that the Israeli Government has confirmed this yet, and I think the matter is still in some dispute.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:54 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Statement on the Proposed “Ending Discrimination Against Parents Act of 1999”

November 11, 1999

I am pleased that last night Senators Dodd and Kennedy introduced the “Ending Discrimination Against Parents Act of 1999.” This landmark bill protects America’s working parents from unfair treatment on the job. It builds on our Nation’s longstanding commitment to equal opportunity. And it sends a clear message that parents striving to meet their responsibilities both at home and at the office should never be considered second-class workers.

This bill would, for the first time, protect parents and those with parental responsibilities against job discrimination. It does not stop employers from making hiring and promotion decisions on the basis of qualifications or job performance, but it does ensure that workers are not discriminated against simply because they are parents or exercise parental responsibilities. It would, for example, bar employers from taking a parent off the “fast track” because of unsubstantiated concerns that parents cannot perform in demanding jobs. Similarly, it would not allow employers to prefer applicants without children over equally or better qualified working parents or to refuse to hire single parents.

As more mothers enter the workforce and as more families rely on the earnings of single parents, these protections are increasingly important. We cannot afford to let working parents be held captive to baseless assumptions about their ability to work.

Already, a number of States have enacted commonsense laws that prohibit or pave the way to prohibiting discrimination on the basis of parental or familial status. I urge Congress to safeguard the interests of America’s working families and give this legislation prompt and favorable consideration. Our workplaces should work for all Americans.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With President Abdurrahman Wahid of Indonesia and an Exchange With Reporters

November 12, 1999

President Clinton. Let me say, it’s a great honor for me and for all of our team to welcome President Wahid here, with the members of his government. He is now the leader of the world’s third-largest democracy, and we are very encouraged by that. We have seen this peaceful transition in Indonesia. We’ve seen a resolution in East Timor, even though there’s still the problem of refugees in West Timor. And I’m looking very much forward to this visit.

I think the American people know that a strong and stable and prosperous and democratic Indonesia is very much in our interest. That’s the sort of partnership we’re interested in pursuing, and I hope I can be helpful in that regard.

So I’m delighted to have you here, Mr. President. And if you’d like to make any public comment to the press while you’re here—

President Wahid. Well, thank you for putting a little time for me today to visit you, Mr. President, because you know that I come from Indonesia just to make sure that we are still great friends of the United States, that we are still in good touch with you. And I think that in the future, we meet you more than before. So also that you know that although there is a shift in policy but not at the expense of the American-Indonesian relationship. This is very important to know, since you understand that this is one world, so we have to create that kind of one world.

And I’m interested in the comment you made about our religious dialog, which goes toward one world, in that sense. You see, from far away we heard that you made very nice comments on those inter-religious dialogs in Indonesia. And I hope that 2 months to come, in January, we’ll have a discussion initiated by the Americans from Philadelphia, with the Foreign Minister to be a participant there, to be on the organizing committee. We

will invite, of course, chief rabbi of Israel as well as the former chief rabbi. And from here from the Catholic side and so forth, I don't know who will come. But anyway, around 50 people will come there of the three Abrahamic traditions.

And since, you know, that kind of thing is special for us in Indonesia, I would like to use this occasion to inform you about this, before anything else—economic things. Those are the troubles there.

So I'm very glad. Today I met people from the World Bank and the IMF and then from the Ex-Im Bank, in which we see the possibility of having more hands extended towards us, to help us to overcome the difficulties in the economic shape, now.

Well, you mentioned about East Timor. I think that, of course, we still have trouble, and we would like the United States to take attention to this kind of problem as well. But I would like to inform you, Mr. President, that—[inaudible]—will come to Jakarta, and I'll meet him. So I hope that will ease a little bit the situation in that area, because East Timor is, you know, our brothers.

President Clinton. Thank you very much. That's very good news.

Pardon for President Soeharto

Q. President Wahid, sir, President Wahid sir, why are you inclined to be willing to pardon your predecessor, President Soeharto? And President Clinton, what do you think of the possibility of a pardon for him?

President Wahid. I think if we—we will use law, of course. And we would like to know whether he is guilty or not, according to the law. But after that, we will pardon him because of two reasons. First is that he was our President, so we have to be careful about this for the future generations. Second thing is that, you know, that it's not easy, because Mr. Soeharto still has big followers. So we have to be careful not to, let's say, topple the cart.

President Clinton. I think the decision, first of all, is one for the Indonesian people and Government to make. And I think every country has to decide how to resolve the tension between the pursuit of a particular case and the desire for the reconciliation of people, and to go forward. And I think that that's

a decision that the President has to make, and we ought to support his—anything that he's trying to do to build democracy and to take Indonesia into the future.

Yes, you had a question?

Military Assistance to Indonesia

Q. Mr. President, after this meeting will you resume military assistance to Indonesia?

President Clinton. Well, we're going to talk about that and about what kinds of things that we both can do, over a period of time, to strengthen our relationships, including the issue of military-to-military ties. And I look forward to talking to the President about that.

Territorial Integrity of Indonesia

Q. How important is the structural integrity—the territorial integrity of Indonesia? And is it more important than the self-determination of the peoples of Indonesia?

President Clinton. Well, I don't think it has to be an either-or thing. I think the—I said, at the time when Indonesia supported giving the East Timorese a vote, that I would support that, and that having given them the vote, that the vote had to be respected.

On the other hand, we support the territorial integrity of Indonesia. And I think we have to acknowledge that it's quite a challenging task to preserve a democracy so widespread and so diverse. And I hope we can be somewhat helpful in the President dealing with this challenge.

Abortion Rights and U.N. Dues

Q. Sir, are you willing to compromise on the abortion funding issue in order to get the U.N. dues paid? And where is the status of those talks concerning the budget matter?

President Clinton. Well, I think it's very important that we pay our United Nations arrears. We can hardly ask others to do their part unless we do ours. And it's a big national security issue for us.

And it's related to this whole idea of whether we're going to fulfill our responsibilities in the world. And we have negotiations ongoing. They haven't been resolved yet. And I think I should follow the same admonition I try to give others when they're involved in negotiations around the world: the less we

say, the better—until we have an agreement that we think we can all stick by. But we're working on it, and I hope we can work it out.

Deputy Press Secretary Siewert. Thank you, pool.

World Trade Organization Talks in China

Q. [*Inaudible*]*—Mrs. Barshefsky coming back tomorrow? Have you given up hope of any deal, a WTO deal before the end of the year?*

President Clinton. No. You know, they're actually—I have committed not to talk about the details of the talks, and I won't. But there are a finite and limited number of issues over which there are still differences, and they're working on them. And I have not given up.

I think it would be a very good thing for the world, and a very good thing for the Chinese if China were in the WTO. But the reason it would be a good thing is that it would give them participation in a rule-based system, where you could have more and more open trade on fair and balanced terms. So the entry has to be a decision that has some real integrity to it, and it makes sense in terms of everybody else's membership and everybody else's responsibilities. And we're just trying to work through that. I hope we can.

But I think it's a very, very important objective. And I'm certainly glad we've pursued it, and we will continue to do so. And I hope we'll be successful, but I don't really have anything to say. I wouldn't read too much one way or the other into developments so far. Let's wait and see where we are when we've actually run out of time.

Q. On Pakistan, do you have any information?

President Clinton. Not yet.

NOTE: The exchange began at 12:20 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks on Signing Legislation To Reform the Financial System

November 12, 1999

Thank you, and good afternoon. I thank you all for coming to the formal ratification of a truly historic event. Senator Gramm and Senator Sarbanes have actually agreed on an important issue. [*Laughter*] Stay right there, John. [*Laughter*] I asked Phil on the way out how bad it's going to hurt him in Texas to be walking out the door with me. [*Laughter*] We decided it was all right today.

Like all those before me, I want to express my gratitude to those principally responsible for the success of this legislation. I thank Secretary Summers and the entire team at Treasury, but especially Under Secretary Gensler, for their work, and Assistant Secretary Linda Robertson. I thank you, Chairman Greenspan, for your constant advocacy of the modernization of our financial system. I thank you, Chairman Levitt, for your continuing concern for investor protections. And I thank the other regulators who are here.

I thank Senator Gramm and Senator Sarbanes, Chairman Leach and Congressman LaFalce, and all the Members of Congress who are here. Senator Dodd told me the Sisyphus story, too, over and over again, but I've rolled so many rocks up so many hills, I had a hard time fully appreciating the significance of it. [*Laughter*]

I do want to thank all the Members here and all those who aren't here. And I'd like to thank two New Yorkers who aren't here who have been mentioned, former Secretary of the Treasury Bob Rubin, who worked very hard on this, and former chairman, Senator Al D'Amato, who talked to me about this often. So this is a day we can celebrate as an American day.

To try to give some meaning to the comments that the previous speakers have made about how we're making a fundamental and historic change in the way we operate our financial institutions, I think it might be worth pointing out that this morning we got some new evidence on the role of new technologies in our economy, which showed that