

Week Ending Friday, November 26, 1999

**Statement on the Texas A&M
University Bonfire Tower Tragedy**
November 19, 1999

Today I spoke with Dr. Ray Bowen, president of Texas A&M University, to extend my deepest sympathies on the tragedy that occurred at the campus. This is a heartbreaking loss. America stands with the College Station community as it joins together during this difficult time. Hillary and I offer our thoughts and prayers to the families and friends of those who were injured or killed in this devastating incident.

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

The President's Radio Address
November 20, 1999

Good morning. I'm speaking to you from Istanbul, Turkey, where we just wrapped up a successful summit meeting of the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe, one that focused on the global challenges of the new century. At the same time, our administration has also wrapped up our work with Congress on the first budget of the new century.

Today I want to talk to you about what we achieved and highlight a little-known accomplishment that will make a big difference to people with disabilities who want to be part of our Nation's growing economy.

This week's budget agreement is truly a victory for the American people, a victory for children because it invests in world-class education that keeps us on the path to hiring 100,000 quality teachers to reduce class size. It doubles funds for after-school and summer school programs, and it provides help for communities to turn around failing schools or shut them down. It's a victory for families and neighborhoods, because it commits the

resources necessary to begin hiring another 50,000 community police officers to keep our crime rate, already at a 25-year low, coming down. It's a victory for future generations, because it protects the environment and preserves more natural areas, and it's a victory for American leadership in the world, because finally, it pays our U.N. dues and maintains our commitments around the globe to peace in the Middle East, to reducing the nuclear threat and chemical weapons threats, to helping relieve the debt of the world's poorest nations.

In short, we have delivered a 21st century budget that prepares for the future and lives up to our values. It also continues to pay down our national debt, because we walked away from that big \$792 billion tax cut that the Congress passed and I vetoed. So we got the best of all worlds.

Perhaps nothing better symbolizes just what we were fighting for than the historic progress made in the budget to open new doors of opportunity for Americans with disabilities.

Now, we're enjoying one of the strongest economies in generations. Yet even today 75 percent of Americans with severe disabilities who are ready, willing, and able to work aren't working. One of the biggest reasons is they fear they'll lose their health insurance when they get a job. And there's a good reason for this fear.

Under current law, many people with disabilities are eligible for Medicaid or Medicare coverage. But they can't go to work and keep that coverage. Yet when they do go to work, they can't get private insurance because of their disability. So there is a tremendous disincentive to work. Let me just give you one example.

I met a man in New Hampshire not long ago who is paralyzed as a result of an accident. He wanted to take a job that paid \$28,000 a year, but he would have lost his Medicaid health coverage, which would have

led to medical expenses of \$40,000 a year. Now, the taxpayers would actually be better off. We're going to pay the medical expenses one way or the other, but if he went to work, he'd become a taxpaying citizen. And, more important, he would have the dignity of work. No citizen should have to choose between going to work and paying medical bills.

I'm very proud this week that Congress, on a bipartisan basis, finally agreed on the historic "Work Incentives Improvement Act." It's bipartisan legislation to allow people with disabilities to keep their health care on the job. They can earn a salary, pay taxes, and be role models by proving what people can do if given a chance to live up to their God-given potential.

This will make a real difference, also, for people with potentially severe disabilities—those who are facing the early onset of diseases like AIDS, muscular dystrophy, Parkinson's, or diabetes. Right now they may be able to work, but their conditions aren't deemed severe enough to qualify for Medicaid. Yet because they have them, they still can't get private health insurance. In other words, they can't get any health care until they're too sick to work.

In the final hours of negotiations, we were able to further strengthen this legislation by getting \$250 million for a demonstration program to allow these Americans to buy into Medicaid, stay on the job, and stay healthier longer. I encourage all the States to take advantage of these new health care options.

Taken together, this initiative is the most significant advancement for people with disabilities since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act almost a decade ago. It is part of our administration's 7-year commitment to tearing down barriers to work and rewarding responsibility. Along with reforming welfare, increasing the minimum wage, increasing child care assistance, and doubling the earned-income tax credit, the "Work Incentives Improvement Act" is another milestone on the path to opening work and rewarding responsibility for Americans.

Now, I hope we'll stay on that course and take on America's still-unfinished agenda: commonsense gun safety legislation, a real Patients' Bill of Rights, meaningful hate crimes legislation, saving Social Security, re-

forming Medicare, adding prescription drug coverage, raising the minimum wage.

To Congress I say, we've done a good job for the American people by working together. Let's keep working together, build on our progress, and get the right things done for the American people.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 12:41 p.m. on November 19 in the Perge Room at the Conrad Hotel in Istanbul, Turkey, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on November 20. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 19 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Konstandinos Simitis of Greece in Athens

November 20, 1999

Prime Minister Simitis. Ladies and gentlemen, with very special pleasure, the Greek Government and the Greek people and I, personally, are welcoming President Clinton and the American delegation. This visit is confirming the historic friendship relations between the two countries and between our two people, a relationship that has been kept alive by the Greeks who have lived and are still living creatively in the United States, by the common struggles in other times, by our close relationship and partnership within the North Atlantic Alliance, political solidarity, and cooperation, our cooperation for our common goals.

With President Clinton, we had a very friendly, open, and free discussion. During our talks we covered all issues, those which under the present situation have a certain importance from our country, for going from Greek-American relations to developments in the Balkans, Greek-Turkish relations, and the Cyprus issue. We agreed, as regards Greek-American relations, that there is still considerable margin for the improvement of the cooperation between the two countries.

Greece, thanks to its economic renewal these last few years, provides new major opportunities for investments, trade relations, relations in the field of technology, and other areas. For the Balkans, our conviction is that