

the American people what we really believe and let them decide.

And I appreciate Governor Bush being candid enough to say he didn't believe in *Roe v. Wade*. In another article a couple weeks ago he said the two Justices on the Supreme Court he most admired were Justices Scalia and Clarence Thomas. I think this is good. [Laughter] No, no, this is a good thing. People should say what they think. And we shouldn't be hateful about it; we shouldn't be mean; we don't have to get in the—but we should make sure that everybody knows where everybody else is coming from in this deal. And it's not helpful to go around with your head in the sand and pretend that there are no consequences here.

I believe we ought to get this country out of debt for the first time since 1835. I think one of the reasons we're cooking right along here is that we've gone from running up debt to paying debt off. We've even paid some of our debt off early this year, for the first time in history, ever. And that keeps interest rates down lower for the rest of you and enables us to have more broadly shared access to capital and to keep things going. So even though I am a Democrat, I'm going to recommend at the State of the Union we spend more money on education and health care, the environment. I want to keep running some surpluses and keep paying this debt down and not fool with the Social Security portion of the surplus so we can get out of debt for the first time.

If we adopt the tax cut that the leading candidate in the other party has proposed, it won't happen. And all of us will get money out of it. I mean, you'll all be happy for a month or 2. But it's a bad deal. We won't have the money we need to continue to improve education, and we will not be able to manage this economic situation, and we will never get this country out of debt over the next 10 to 15 years. So there are real consequences here.

So again I say, I'm glad you're here. But when you leave here, I want you to leave with a renewed sense of citizen activism. I want it to be beyond writing checks. And if somebody asks you how come you were there, I want you to be able to tell them: number one, it's better than it was 7 years

ago, and they had specific ideas, and they implemented them, and it worked. Number two, we've got to think about what the big challenges of the future are. And number three, there is a real difference between the two parties. And we don't have to be bad-mouthing each other and throwing rocks at each other and saying terrible things about each other—we can just have an honest discussion about that. That's one thing I do hope our new self-confidence will allow us to have, a less acrimonious, less hateful election, but it should be no less intense. So I ask you all of that.

You know, most of us have been blessed or we wouldn't be here today. Our grandchildren's generation should never forgive us if we walk away from our responsibility to do what is necessary in this millennial election, so that they will be living the future of their dreams.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:35 a.m. in the Grille Room at the Regency Club. In his remarks, he referred to brunch hosts Irwin and Lynne Deutch; Gov. Gray Davis of California and his wife, Sharon; Joel Hyatt, finance cochair, and Edward G. Rendell, general chair, Democratic National Committee; Janice Griffin, national chair, Women's Leadership Forum; and Gov. George W. Bush of Texas. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks Announcing the Equal Pay Initiative

January 24, 2000

Thank you. Well, first of all, I think Sharon was a little apprehensive coming out here because she doesn't do public speaking for a living. But I thought she was magnificent, and I thank her for it. I want to thank Secretary Herman for her leadership on this issue, and Secretary Shalala, and our EEOC Chair, Ida Castro, who is here.

We have a number of Members of Congress who are here, and I would like to acknowledge their presence, because this will be a bipartisan effort. I thank—we'll start down here—Congressman Eliot Engel from New York, Congressman Jim McGovern from Massachusetts, Congresswoman Ellen

Tauscher from California, Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton from the District of Columbia, Representative Eddie Bernice Johnson from Texas, Representative Rosa DeLauro from Connecticut, Representative Ted Strickland from Ohio, Representative Connie Morella from Maryland, and Representative Albert Wynn from Maryland. Thank you all for coming.

I'd also like to thank Donna de Varona for being here. She was the World's Cup organizing chair last year, and herself a great athlete; and she's now working with General McCaffrey and the Olympics Committee to try to make sure that the Olympics in Sydney and all future Olympics are properly conducted in every conceivable way. Thank you very much for being here; we're delighted to see you.

I want to thank Michelle Akers for coming here and telling the story of her life and her family's. I think all of us who saw the Women's World Cup final—and I had the privilege of being there, much to the dismay of my wife and daughter, I had the privilege of going—[*laughter*—were truly overwhelmed by the experience. It was one of those just excruciatingly exciting moments. Grown people of both genders were weeping in our group.

And afterward, you may remember that Michelle took quite a blow and was hurt. And I saw her walking through the stadium after the game, and I went up to her and I said, "You're my favorite because you can take a punch, and I know something about that." [*Laughter*] And so I am delighted that she was able to come here and be with us today and delighted that she has both continued to fight for the interests of women athletes and never forgotten about the experience of her own mother.

You heard Michelle talking about the role of Title IX. Whenever something really magnificent happens, like that World Cup final, it's a tribute to—it's not just a moment. In that moment, you see years and years and years of hard work and determination and victory and disappointment—all the things people go through—that is all lost in the glory of the moment. And something no one ever thinks about is, how did these people get this opportunity? What kind of frame-

work was there so that they got to develop their talents and live their dreams?

Well, that's what Title IX is all about, and we've had the honor, Hillary and I have, of having big events here at the White House to celebrate Title IX, and that wonderful HBO series on the history of women and sports, which I hope you've all seen—if you hadn't, you ought to make arrangements to do so. But if you were thinking about the application of the principle of Title IX to the workplace, and you think about Sharon Long's heroic story—and how many people like her there have been; how many countless people like her there have been, who didn't stand up and fight like she did—then you have to view the Equal Pay Act as Title IX for the playing field of life. That's why I'm glad both these women are here today.

We want to make sure that in every field of endeavor, everyone knows that those who work hard and play by the rules will have the chance to make the most of their abilities. This is about the value of work, the values of our country. It's about whether people can truly have a chance to choose the life they will lead; and for women, increasingly, it's about whether they'll have the chance to succeed both at home and at work.

That's what the family leave law was all about. Twenty million people have now taken advantage of that, to take some time off and not lose their jobs when there's a baby born or a sick parent. It's what the earned-income tax credit and the minimum wage and the child care reference and the strengthened pension coverage that these Members of Congress have worked with me on over these last few years are all about. And so today, because there's still a big need, as you have heard, we want to take new steps this year to reward work, to strengthen pay, and to make equal pay a reality for all Americans.

First of all, I want to propose a \$27-million equal pay initiative, which will be part of my budget, to expand opportunities for women and to do more to end wage discrimination. If Congress agrees, we'll be making the largest investment ever to promote equal pay. There's never been a better time to take on this challenge. We have the strongest economy in generations; more than 20 million

new jobs; next month, the longest economic expansion in American history.

Working women have had a big role in this economic expansion. You heard Secretary Herman detailing that in just the last year. And women are sharing in the progress. Listen to this. Even though we have a higher percentage of women in the work force than ever before, the female unemployment rate is now the lowest since the end of World War II—the lowest female household poverty rate, female-headed household poverty rate we have ever recorded; wages for women up 25 percent since 1992. The pay gap has narrowed by about half since the Equal Pay Act was passed back in 1963.

But that means that we've still got half to go, after 37 years. And 25 percent is a lot of money. You heard—Secretary Herman gave you her grocery store analogy. How would you like to show up for work every day, but only get to take home three out of every four paychecks? If someone tried to do that, there would be riots in the street; but if you get paid 75 percent for the same kind of work, it's as if you were only picking up three paychecks, instead of four, in four pay periods.

The average woman has to work, therefore, an extra 17 weeks a year to earn what a similarly-qualified man in the same kind of job makes. And even after you make adjustments—and that's why I thought what Sharon said was so important today, to hammer home this point. Yes, some of this can be explained by differences in education, experience, and occupation. But even after you make all those adjustments, there is still a very significant gap. As women get older, the gap gets wider. And it is widest, regrettably, for women of color. African-American women earn 64 cents for every dollar earned by white men; Hispanic women, just 55 cents.

Now, this is not just a women's issue. And I appreciate the fact that we have five women Members of Congress and four men here. I'm the son of a working mother, the grandson of a working grandmother, the husband of a working wife, and my daughter plans to follow suit. I've joked, every time I do an event like this, that the first time in our entire marriage that I made more money than

Hillary was when I became President—[laughter]—and all I'm really doing is trying to give other men the privilege of riding on the same gravy train I did all these years. [Laughter]

But it's not a women's issue. If a woman with a family is being denied equal pay for equal work, then her husband suffers, her children suffer, the family dynamic suffers. You think about how much time you spend at work every day; you can't go to a workplace and feel like you're getting the shaft and not have it have an impact that goes even beyond economics on your home life. And I'm glad—Sharon has her husband and family members here today. They all pay. Everybody pays. So this is a big issue in that sense.

I'd also like to point out that it's a much bigger economic issue, even than the paycheck. Why? Because if you make less, then you have less going into your Social Security account, and you'll earn less in your Social Security check. Because if you make less, you're far less likely to be able to have your own retirement plan. And if you do have one, it'll be smaller.

The average woman who is about to retire—keep in mind the pay gap is 75 percent—the average woman who is about to retire, if she even gets a pension in the first place, can expect only about half the pension benefits of the average man who retires. So the pay gap leads to an even bigger retirement gap. And this is something we have to think about more and more and more. And again, it's not just a women's issue.

The poverty rate among elderly women is about twice the poverty rate for people over 65, generally. The number of people over 65 will double in the next 30 years. Americans today who are 65 years old already have a life expectancy in excess of 82 years. And women live a few years longer than men, on the average. This is a huge deal, with implications for our entire society, even for families where women do not experience discrimination in the workplace. They, too, will be affected in an aging society where more and more retirees are women who are severely disadvantaged.

So today we want to close those gaps. First, I propose \$10 million for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to train more

than 1,000 EEOC enforcement personnel to identify and respond to wage discrimination. This would be, believe it or not, the first time the EEOC has ever received funding for this kind of training. The resources will also be used to educate employers and workers about their responsibilities and their rights under the law.

I made this request last year, and Congress failed to pass it. I again implore Congress to do the right thing and pass this funding. And I hope you will help us do this. If we train enough people to spot the problems early and work on them aggressively, the EEOC can help give us more stories like Sharon Long's, without the waiting time.

Second, another important way to close the wage gap is to open new opportunities. So we propose a \$17 million investment in the Department of Labor, to include resources to expand opportunities for women in nontraditional jobs. We're making headway in the construction industry. We're also going to put a special focus on the jobs of the future in the high-tech industry.

Today—listen to this—men outnumber women by more than two-to-one in many high-tech occupations. These are among the highest paid jobs in our economy, paying on average almost 80 percent above the average jobs. Now, that's another element of the digital divide. We need to close the divide in employment and expand opportunities for women in these kinds of jobs.

Third, and finally, we need to clearly send the message that wage discrimination against women is just as unacceptable as discrimination based on race or ethnicity. So once again I ask the Congress to pass the "Paycheck Fairness Act" sponsored by Representative DeLauro and Senator Tom Daschle. Pass it. It's a good bill. There is no excuse not to pass it. We plainly need to strengthen the law. We've had the other Equal Pay Act on the books since 1963, and we've still got a 25 percent gap. The evidence is there. We should have been able to eliminate this problem after 37 years, and we have to do more.

Again, I say—and I thank, particularly, Representative Morella for being here—this is not a Democratic or a Republican issue; it's a family issue, and it's an American issue. It's about what kind of country we want our

children to grow up in. I am delighted that these young women in the soccer team have come here as a team. And it must be a great thrill for them to see Michelle Akers, and I hope it spurs them to greater achievement in athletics and in academics. Most of them won't be professional soccer players. Most of them will be in the work force.

We do not want them to grow up and have children in a country which still has not solved this problem. And we can do better. Again I say that the same rules that apply on the playing field ought to apply in life. People who work hard and play by the rules ought to be rewarded, and rewarded in proportion to their contribution, not their gender.

This is a time of enormous promise. As I always say when I urge greater action to bring economic opportunity to poor areas that have been left behind, if we can't deal with this issue now, at a time of unprecedented prosperity, when in the wide world will we ever get around to dealing with it?

I thank the Members of Congress for their commitment. I thank you for being here. I ask you to help us bear down and act, now.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:44 a.m. in Presidential Hall in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Sharon Long, who introduced the President; and Michelle Akers, member, 1999 Women's World Cup U.S. championship team. The President also referred to Title IX—Prohibition of Sex Discrimination, part of Public Law 92-318, the Education Amendments of 1972.

Statement on the Supreme Court Decision on Campaign Financing

January 24, 2000

The Court's opinion is a victory for democracy. The American people know that our political system needs to be fixed, and today's decision sets the stage for further reform. For years, I've challenged Congress to pass legislation that would ban the raising of unregulated soft money, address backdoor spending by outside organizations, and strengthen public discourse. Now I am again