

We did that in Arkansas 24 years ago, so that now when someone serves their sentence, including the probation, they automatically get the right to vote back. It's a very cumbersome process. A lot of people, particularly less well-educated people, without much money, they have no idea how to get a Federal pardon or that they can get it. And the system often takes years and years and years. And I think—it would seem to me that most Americans would agree, when someone serves their sentence and pays their debt to society, we all, the rest of us, have a vested interest in their becoming law-abiding and contributing citizens.

And I think that there may be other reasons people want to or need to apply for a Federal pardon, but I don't think the right to vote is one of them. So that's one thing I would really like to see done. As I said, we amended the Voting Rights Act in Arkansas—or constitutional amendment—when I was attorney general in 1977, to do that.

And I regret that we couldn't pass the legislation this year. But I think that there's a lot of bipartisan interest in it, especially among people who have thought about it and have personal contacts. If you look at this whole Federal pardon process, part of—a big reason people do it is to get the right to vote back. And they understand that the pardon is not really a pardon saying it's okay what you did. That's not what this is about. It's about basically saying this person has lived a good enough life that they ought to be given a chance to be a full citizen.

So, when it comes to voting, I don't think they ought to have to get a pardon. I think they ought to just change the law—completed their sentence, including the parole period, they automatically get their right to vote back. And I think most Americans would support that. I've never had a word of criticism in my home State about it in 20-some years.

NOTE: The exchange began at 10:45 a.m. In his remarks, the President referred to President-elect George W. Bush. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary did not include the complete opening remarks of the President. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks at a Martin Luther King, Jr., Holiday Celebration

January 15, 2001

The President. Thank you very much. Normally, I don't think Presidents should get awards. But I believe I'll accept these, if it's all the same to you.

I want to begin by saying that I am delighted to be here at this university, in this great hall, with all the people who are here on the stage. I brought something to Mayor Williams and to Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton. He mentioned that we signed the—that we passed the Southeast Federal Center bill to spur community development with a public/private partnership on Federal property. At the time it passed, we weren't able to do a formal signing ceremony, so I brought Mayor Williams and Eleanor Holmes Norton a copy of the bill and the pens I used to sign it, and I'd like to give it to them now.

I want to thank the DC City Council Chair Linda Cropp, Kathy Patterson, and the other councilmembers who are here who helped to make my stay in Washington, along with my family's, so wonderful. I want to thank Robie Beatty and Shirley Rivens Smith from the King Holiday Commission.

I'd like to thank the people who are here from my administration, present and former. I want to thank Frank Raines, former Director of OMB, and Jack Lew, our present Director, for all the work they did, along with the indomitable Alice Rivlin, to make sure that the Federal Government became a better partner for the District of Columbia in the allocation of our money.

On this Martin Luther King Holiday, I want to thank my friend of almost 20 years, the Secretary of Transportation, Rodney Slater, who is always serving. And I want to thank the present head of the Corporation of National Service and the person who started our national service program, first Senator Harris Wofford, then Eli Segal. Thank you for bring AmeriCorps to life.

And I know we have AmeriCorps award winners and their families here and members and alumni. Thank you for your service. And thank you, Nancy Rubin, for your support. I also am proud to announce on Eli Segal's

birthday that under the leadership of Nancy Rubin, a group of people are creating a new Eli Segal AmeriCorps Award for Entrepreneurial Leadership, and I thank you for that.

And I want to thank the members of the new DC Commission on National and Community Service. I just came from the kick-off, and I swore in the first community service volunteers—swore in, not swore at—[*laughter*]*—the first community service volunteers. And we did some painting, and I can prove it because I've got paint on my pants and shoes to show it—[laughter]—not the ones I'm wearing now.*

I want to thank Mayor Williams for this award and for what he said about our common efforts to make this great city even greater. It has been a real honor for me to live and work in Washington these last 8 years. I went to college here, and I worked here when I was a young man. And I love this city. I loved all of its neighborhoods. Even when I was in college, I spent a lot of time in all the neighborhoods. I was a community service volunteer in Northeast Washington when I was a student at Georgetown. And one of the first things I did after I got elected was to take a walk down Georgia Avenue. It looks better today than it did 8 years ago, I might add.

And I'm very proud of the work that we have done. I'm also—you might be interested to know that when Hillary was elected to the Senate and we had to find a place for her to live, she absolutely insisted on living in the District of Columbia. She wanted to be here. So I'll be back from time to time. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Don't go! [*Laughter*]

The President. Don't say that. [*Laughter*] I want you to know that while I think we have done a reasonably good job these last few years of relocating government functions and getting more funds to the District of Columbia and getting some of the burdens off your back that should be lifted, I believe that you should still have your votes in Congress and the Senate. I think that, maybe even more important, you should have the rights and powers and responsibilities that statehood carries.

[*At this point, reveille was played on a bugle.*]

The President. We practiced that for an hour yesterday. How did we do? [*Laughter*] We did great. It's okay. It's all right. It was good. I mean, it—[*laughter*]*—you know, look, I've only got 5 days left; it's hard to hold your interest. So we did the best we could. [Laughter]*

And I want you to know that the Secret Service delivered to me this morning, so I get to ride around in it for 5 days, the newest Presidential limousine, which, I might add, is an enormous improvement in terms of the workability of the inner space. But we still have the license plates on it that calls for DC statehood. So I hope you'll keep working on that and keep making the case.

Meanwhile, we have worked together to use Federal resources to help spark economic growth, housing development, and job creation: over a billion dollars in new tax incentives for businesses and homeowners; \$25 million to build the New York Avenue Metro station; \$110 million for new and better public housing in Anacostia; \$17 million for the DC College Access Act—3,000 young people now taking advantage of that in its very first year. Congratulations. I want to thank all of you who worked in the vineyards to make all these things happen.

This is a day we celebrate not only the life but the service of Martin Luther King, and not only the service of the famous but the service of those who are not known, embodied in the famous statement of Dr. King that everybody can be great because everybody can serve. You forget the rest of it—“you only need a heart full of grace and a soul generated by love.”

In 1992 when I ran for President, and Eleanor and I actually jogged up Pennsylvania Avenue in the rain together, some people thought that America had become so divided and cynical that somehow the spirit of service was gone, especially among our young people. I never believed that. Then I read all these articles about young people, this so-called generation X group, and how self-absorbed and selfish they were. I never believed that. I saw people serving together everywhere and yearning to be part of a higher calling.

In 1993 in my Inaugural Address, I challenged the American people to a new season

of service. And I proposed national service legislation to give young people in America the chance to serve in their own communities or other communities across the country and earn some money for college while doing it. Well, I think that what these young people have done in the last 7 years, since we had the first AmeriCorps class of 1994, has proved that what I saw 8 years ago was right. I'll say more about that in a moment.

In 1994 I signed the King Holiday and Service Act, sponsored by then Senator Harris Wofford and Congressman John Lewis of Atlanta, who worked with Dr. King. They wanted to make this holiday a day on, not a day off. Today, as a result of what they did, hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens are serving in their communities today, including over 1,000 here in Washington.

I've just come from the Greenleaf Senior Center with some very dedicated young people from four AmeriCorps projects, including City Year, a program that I found in Boston in 1991 that helped to inspire the creation of the national service program we have today. Today I swore in the first new members of City Year here in Washington, DC. When I became President, there were 100 of them around the country—100 members; today there are over 1,000 in 13 cities.

But listen to this. When we created the AmeriCorps program in 1994, we wanted to give young people the chance to serve. Obviously, we didn't know how many people would do it. The pay is modest. The scholarship benefits are not inconsiderable, but they're not enormous. But listen to this. Since the first class of volunteers in 1994, almost 200,000 men and women have participated, more than have served in the Peace Corps in the 40 years since it was created.

I say that not to diminish the Peace Corps; I'm a huge supporter of the Peace Corps. We've dramatically increased enrollment there, and I'd like to see the Congress continue to do so. But I just want to make the point that people do want to serve in our communities; they do want to make a difference.

And today, the young people that I painted the columns with over at the Greenleaf Community Center, three of them were from the DC area, but one was a young woman from

Seattle. And the other young AmeriCorps volunteers I swore in, they were from all over America. And that's the great thing about it. You get all kinds of people, all different races and ethnic groups and backgrounds and income groups, coming together in all kinds of communities, dealing with all kinds of other people. And pretty soon, before you know it, you've got America at its best just happening there at the grassroots level. This is a big deal. And these 200,000 people have not only changed their own lives but the lives of millions and millions of other Americans. We must continue to do this.

So far there have been 677 DC residents in AmeriCorps. They've earned a total—listen to this—of \$2½ million for college education. And I want to thank, by the way, since we're here, the University of the District of Columbia, along with seven other of Washington's colleges and universities, for their participation in the AmeriCorps Heads Up program. AmeriCorps volunteers who are students here work as reading and math tutors at Davis Elementary School in Benning Heights, gaining valuable teaching experience. And the young people they are tutoring are gaining a head start on learning that will last a lifetime.

Citizen service changes people for the better. I don't know how many times I've heard volunteers in the classroom say they have learned more than their students have. And that makes every one of our young volunteers a winner. But today I want to congratulate some very special ones, those who won this year's All-AmeriCorps Award, 10 men and women selected for outstanding service to AmeriCorps.

And I want to talk about it a little bit to try to illustrate that this is not just about numbers. Yes, we've got 200,000 people in AmeriCorps in 7 years of classes, more than 40 years in the Peace Corps. Yes, they've gone all across this country and had a transforming effect. But that's the key. It's not the numbers, it's the impact. The adult literacy programs, the community learning centers, the volunteer programs—that these award winners are getting today—are still going strong, in some cases, years after their service has ended.

One young woman is a former migrant worker who used the skills she learned in AmeriCorps to teach 2,400 farm workers about pesticide safety. One man has been elected mayor of the community in which he served. Shoot, I wish we would have had this around when I was a kid. [*Laughter*]

Right here in Washington, Carey Hartin started a diversity club to help the many cultures at Roosevelt High School understand one another better. The kids in that club were so inspired, they went out and got a grant to expand Carey's program to other DC schools. Carey is now studying for her master's in education and student teaching at Cardozo High School. Where are you, Carey? Stand up there. Give her a hand. [*Applause*] Good for you.

She also has with her today another success story, the young woman who was the first president of Roosevelt High's Diversity Club, and is now in college studying music education. Stand up—where are you? [*Applause*] Give her a hand.

Now I want all the award winners to stand up. Let's give them all a big hand. [*Applause*] Thank you all, and bless you.

Let me say, when you see their numbers, you should multiply in your head times 12, because studies show that every full-time AmeriCorps volunteer generates on average a dozen more volunteers.

Now, all across America, you should also know that one million students are doing public service as a part of their school curriculum. And I might say, I would like to see every State in America follow the lead of the State of Maryland, under Lieutenant Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, and require, as a course, community service as a condition of graduation from high school. I think it would be a very good thing.

The United Nations has named 2001 the International Year of Volunteers. Americans have a lot to be proud of on that score. Our citizens are volunteering more and giving more to charitable causes than ever before. And the most generous donors by percentage are families with incomes of less than \$10,000 a year.

I came here today, on Martin Luther King's Holiday, to talk about citizen service and AmeriCorps because it is the embodi-

ment of my dreams of one America, an America in which we not only tolerate but respect and even celebrate our differences, but in which we work together and live together knowing that our common humanity is even more important.

Part of Martin Luther King's dream was somehow we would learn to "work together, pray together, struggle together, go to jail together, stand up for freedom together." If I could leave America with one wish as I depart office, it would be that we become more the one America that we know we ought to be.

Today I'm sending a message to Congress—you can read about it in the papers; I won't go through it all—but it follows up on the work I have done on this One America initiative over the last several years. And I wanted to basically inform the Congress and the incoming administration about where we are in dealing with our racial issues, our opportunities and our continuing difficulties, about what progress we have made in the last 8 years and what still needs to be done to build one America.

I advocated some things that will doubtless be somewhat controversial, but I have been working on them: improvements in the criminal justice system; restoring voting rights to people when they complete their sentences, so they don't have to get a Presidential pardon; a national election commission headed by Presidents Ford and Carter to look into why some Americans have so much difficulty voting and how we can ever avoid—always avoid having another election like the last one, with all the controversies that we had there; and new steps forward in closing the disparities in health and education and economic development.

But what I want to say to you is that building one America is like life. It's a journey, not a destination. And the main thing will always be whether we're still making the trip.

Did any of you see the jazz series on TV this week? It was fabulous, wasn't it? My favorite line in the whole thing—my favorite line was uttered by that great Washington, DC, native Duke Ellington. When he was asked, "What's your favorite jazz tune," he said, "The one coming up." [*Laughter*] Well,

believe me, that's what I believe about our country.

I see these young people, I see these volunteers, and it's been an honor for me to serve. It's been an honor for me to help make Washington stronger and better. But when somebody asks you what the best day is, think about these young folks and say, "The one coming up."

Thank you very much, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:32 p.m. in the Building 46 Auditorium at the University of the District of Columbia. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Anthony A. Williams, Council Chair Linda Cropp, and Ward 3 Councilmember Kathy Patterson of Washington, DC; Alice Rivlin, chair, DC Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Authority; Chief Executive Officer Harris Wofford and former Chief Executive Officer Eli Segal, Corporation for National Service; Nancy Rubin, U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Human Rights Commission; and All-AmeriCorps Award winners Angela Campos, Mayor Cleveland L. Rippons of Cambridge, MD, and Carey Hartin. H.R. 3069, the Southeast Federal Center Public-Private Development Act of 2000, approved November 1, 2000, was assigned Public Law No. 106-407.

Executive Order 13189—Federal Interagency Task Force on the District of Columbia

January 15, 2001

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and in order to further the revitalization of, and to improve prospects for the success of "home rule" in the District of Columbia, the Nation's Capital, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Background and Policy. The District of Columbia is the Nation's Capital, and the Federal Government is the largest employer, landholder, and purchaser in the region. The Executive Office of the President has established and maintained an interest in fostering the Federal relationship with the District of Columbia since 1963. This Administration has long sought to strengthen the relationship between the Federal Government and the District of Columbia by initiating a historic restructuring of this relation-

ship. At the request of the President, in 1995, the Federal D.C. Interagency Task Force, chaired by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, and directed by the Special Advisor to the President and Executive Director of the Federal D.C. Interagency Task Force, was created to revitalize the District of Columbia and improve prospects for "home rule" to succeed in the Nation's Capital. The Federal D.C. Interagency Task Force Office has worked with Federal agencies, the Congress, and local officials to promote long-term financial stability, economic growth, and opportunity for self-government for the District of Columbia. In 1997, the President signed into law the National Capital Revitalization and Self-Government Improvement Act of 1997, under which the Federal Government undertook certain responsibilities and governmental functions befitting a State or county government. Also in 1997, the President signed into law tax incentives designed to spur economic growth in the District of Columbia.

It is the policy of this Administration, therefore, to build on the momentum of the accomplishments over the last 5 years by formally establishing the Federal D.C. Interagency Task Force to further assist the District of Columbia in achieving financial stability, economic growth, and improvement in management and service delivery.

Sec. 2. Establishment of the Federal Interagency Task Force on the District of Columbia.

- (a) There is established the "Federal Interagency Task Force on the District of Columbia" (Task Force).
- (b) The Task Force shall be composed of the following members:
 - (1) The Attorney General;
 - (2) The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development;
 - (3) The Secretary of Health and Human Services;
 - (4) The Secretary of Labor;
 - (5) The Secretary of Transportation;
 - (6) The Secretary of the Treasury;
 - (7) The Administrator of General Services;
 - (8) The Secretary of Education;
 - (9) The Secretary of the Interior;