money for other purposes, installing floodlights, hiring private security guards, paying overtime for existing officers, whatever they believe will work best to forestall the fires.

I'm asking Congress to quickly approve the transfer through a special procedure that allows action without a time-consuming floor vote. We don't have any time to waste. With this step, the National Government will be helping local police not only to investigate arson and apprehend the guilty but to help to physically protect churches from harm in the first place.

If this emergency measure is not enough to beat back the church burnings, we will take further steps as needed. This is a struggle against racism and religious bigotry, and we will escalate that struggle as necessary with enough people power and willpower to make sure the struggle is won. This is a test not just for law enforcement but for all law-abiding Americans.

Earlier today, I signed a proclamation designating a national month of unity. During the month of July, I call on religious leaders of all faiths to speak from the pulpit and emphasize the need for healing. And I call on all citizens to join together, to reach out to one another, to strengthen the ideals that light our way and keep us strong.

On Thursday, we will celebrate America's Independence Day. This year, let us take this opportunity to rededicate ourselves once again to the proposition that all Americans are created equal and that every American should be able to worship in freedom and freedom from fear.

Thank you very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:39 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Remarks to the Convention of the National Council of Senior Citizens in Chicago, Illinois

July 2, 1996

The President. Thank you very much. Pretty rowdy group today. Thank you. I want to—what's the problem over here on the right? [*Laughter*] Steve said, you know, he said, "This room is 285 feet long. It's like a giant bowling alley." [*Laughter*] There's kind of a wave that goes from right to left here.

Let me, first of all, thank Lois and Tom for their introductions. I want to thank your outgoing president, Gene Glover, for his years of outstanding service and wish your incoming president, Harry Gunther, well, and say that I hope this means that we have an even better chance of carrying Florida than we did before we started, Harry.

I thank all the distinguished labor leaders who are here, George Becker and Jay Mazur. And I see Doug Fraser there. You're looking great; I'm glad to see you, Doug. Thank you and God bless you, sir.

I want to say a special word of thanks to Steve Protulis. He has done a great job for you and a great job for me. Thank you, Steve. And I want to recognize one other person apart from the elected officials, and that is my great friend, Justin Dart, over there. Thank you for everything you have done, sir. I'm glad to see you.

When Tom was up there kind of being rough on the Congress I wanted to say, he didn't mean the Members of Congress who are here. [*Laughter*] He didn't mean Dick Durbin or Ed Pastor or Bobby Rush or Luis Gutierrez. We thank them for what they did in this Congress. They did a great job.

And, Mayor Daley, it's good to be in Chicago. And I'll be back before you know it. I thank you for having us all here.

I always love to come to Chicago, and I like to—we flew in a helicopter down to Meigs Field, and we got to fly over some of the suburbs—and I always reminisce when I do. But a lot of you know that Hillary was born in Chicago and grew up in Park Ridge. And I wish she were here today, but she is representing our country on a tour of nine Central and Eastern European nations. So I talked to her last night; she just finished a day in Romania. So I wish she were here, but she's over there talking about countries who love freedom. [*Applause*] Thank you.

I want to thank you for something else that I know you feel, and that is, it meant a lot to me when I took this recent trip to Europe to have the annual meeting of the seven largest industrial countries and then a meeting with those countries and Russia about political challenges facing the world to know that

the people back home were not only outraged by the murder of our service people in Saudi Arabia but determined to stand against terrorism wherever it exists.

And I know you must have been proud this morning to read in the newspaper that our Federal law enforcement officials thwarted a planned attempt to blow up buildings in Arizona. I thank them for that, and I'm proud of them.

I can tell you this: In this open world of ours where we can all move around the world and ideas and information and money and technology can move around the world in a split second, we are more vulnerable to the organized forces of intolerance and hatred and terrorism. But we can also prevent a lot of these things. I have seen it work here in the United States in the last 3 years, where we've headed off a number of such incidences. I see it happen in the Middle East, where incidences not only occur but many more are headed off. And we're going to have to work at this, work it together, and other nations need to work with us, because this is our common security threat after the cold war. And we can whip this if we'll stay together and work together. And we have to do that.

The other thing I'd like to say is that I signed a proclamation late last night proclaiming this month as National Unity Month and asking all Americans to find ways in their places of worship or in other places to stand up against this terrible wave of church bombings and the desecration of other houses of worship that we are seeing across this country.

Just before I came to see you I announced that we reallocated a few million dollars to the 12 States that have seen the great bulk of these church burnings so that every county will receive some funds either to hire extra officers or to have people work overtime, or to help churches put up security equipment or lighting at night, to do something to try to prevent these things from occurring.

But we also need to change the atmosphere. If you've seen the profiles coming out on a lot of the people who have been charged with these church burnings, they seem to be no discernible conspiracy, but instead a lot of people who share common problems, people who have disappointments in their own lives, frustrations in their own lives, and somehow think instead of saying, ''Well, what can I do to straighten myself out or who can I go to''—whom can I go to—''to ask for help,'' they say, ''Well, I'm just going to be mad and burn a black church.''

And you know, this is something that is sort of endemic to human nature. When you're in a crisis in your life, you can either say, ''What can I do to fix it,'' or ''how can I get some help,'' or you can look for somebody else to blame or say, ''Well, no matter how bad off I am there is somebody that's even lower than I am, and I'm going to punish them.'' And we have to stand up against that. We have to change the atmosphere in the country.

Don't forget that—don't forget, this country was founded on a belief in religious liberty. A lot of the first people who came to the shores of the United States came here because they wanted to come to a place where nobody would tell them how to worship God, and they could make their own mind up.

Don't forget that the first amendment to the Constitution not only protects the freedom of speech, the freedom of press, and the freedom of assembly, it protects the freedom of religion. It is the first amendment to the Constitution. And over our entire history we have displayed a fidelity to it that has kept our country strong. And we dare not allow this to continue without every American of conscience, without regard to their race, their region, or their political party, speaking up against it. It is wrong, and we must stand together.

For more than 30 years now, you have been fighting the good fight you were cheering about today, fighting first for Medicare and for Medicaid and for Social Security and then fighting to protect it. I am very proud that one of the things that happened last year with the leadership of Senator Moynihan primarily is that we finally made Social Security an independent agency, giving the autonomy it needs to fulfill its mission.

You know as well as I do that your fight for the well-being and the dignity of American seniors has never been more important than it is now. You know that the victories

that we won through the veto pen in 1995 didn't solve the fundamental problem of securing the Medicare Trust Fund in a way that honors the dignity of the seniors of this country or protects our sense of fairness. I am proud to stand with you. But what you do from here forward is central to our mission as we move into the 21st century.

When I ran for President, I said to all of you that I wanted to lead our country into the next century to ensure three things. I wanted the American dream to be a living reality to every person who is willing to work for it, without regard to their race, their gender, their region, or what they start out with in life. I wanted this country to be coming together around all of its ethnic and racial and religious diversity, instead of being torn apart the way so many countries around the world are. And I wanted this country to continue to be the world's strongest force for peace and freedom and prosperity.

At the end of the cold war, if the world is not going to be divided into the communist and non-communist world, and if we can force the nuclear threat to recede, we still have to have somebody out there standing up for human decency around the world and peace and freedom. You see that in Bosnia. You see it in Haiti. You see it in the fight against terrorism.

And it seemed to me that in order to accomplish these things we had to ask ourselves: Okay, the cold war is over. We're living in a new kind of world. All right, we're not dominated by large industrial bureaucracies and large government bureaucracies and mass production anymore. High technology and the information revolution has changed dramatically manufacturing and agriculture and every form of human endeavor. So we changed the way we work; we changed the way we live; we changed the way we are relating to the rest of the world—big changes, 100-year changes. Now what?

And it seemed to me that we had to start by saying we have to meet these challenges in a way that protects our values. And one of the values that has made this country strong for over 200 years is recognizing that we are, none of us, in this alone. We have responsibilities to each other. That's really what all these debates are about.

So if, for example, if you just take Medicare. If there's a problem with Medicare, solve the problem, but don't solve it by asking families to go back to the days when they had to choose between health care for the parents or college educations for the kids. That's not the answer to solve that problem.

This is about more than money. This is about what we are as a people. What are our obligation to our parents, and what are our parents' obligation to their grandchildren? How can we make these decisions in a way that allows America to grow but to grow together, to go forward together, so that we all feel like we're in this together and that we're growing stronger because we're holding hands and working together?

Now, that is what I believe we should be doing. And I don't think it's very complicated. I think we need a strategy which says our role is to create opportunity, not guarantees but opportunity for people to make the most of their own lives, to insist that our citizens act with personal responsibility, and to build a stronger sense of community, to recognize that we're all in this together, we do have certain obligations to one another, and we're all going to do better if everybody has a chance to do well, and that we can't lift up one group by keeping another down. We have to make these decisions together. That's the way to do it.

Take the economy. Four years ago our economy was drifting, unemployment was high, the deficit was out of control, we had the slowest job growth since the Great Depression. I wanted to chart a new course. And I said what we ought to do with this economy is to have a disciplined plan to move us into the 21st century with a growing economy that everybody had a chance to benefit from. Let's cut the deficit, get interest rates down, get investment into creating jobs and homes up. Let's continue to invest in the education of our children, the education of adults, high technology, research, the things that will create good jobs. Let's have more trade, but let's make sure it's not only free trade but fair trade. Let's do these things, and it will work.

I also believe very strongly that we had to do more to help working families to succeed at work and to succeed at home. You know, a lot of people talk about welfare.

Well, one of the things that I figured out was we had a tax system that was punishing people at the low end of the wage scale who chose work over welfare. So we doubled—we doubled the family tax credit, called the earned-income tax credit so we could say if you're working 40 hours a week and you've got a child in the home, we will not tax you into poverty. You should be out of poverty. We will lift you out of poverty with the tax system. It was pro-family.

We fought for the family and medical leave law, which simply said if you have a sick parent or a newborn baby and you have to take some time off work, you won't lose your job. It was a good bill, and it was the right thing to do.

Now, when we passed this economic plan, I predicted that if it passed, we'd be able to cut the deficit in half in 4 years, and the American people would produce 8 million new jobs, even though we were going to reduce the size of the National Government. Well, the Republicans in the Congress fought us tooth and nail. And I'll give them credit—every one of them voted against it. [*Laughter*] They didn't fool around; they were united. [*Laughter*]

Speaker Gingrich, then the minority leader, said, "I believe this will lead to a recession next year." Now the majority leader, Mr. Armey, said of my economic plan, "Clearly this is a job-killer." [*Laughter*] Senator Gramm said, "We are buying a one-way ticket to a recession. The American economy is going to get weaker, not stronger, and 4 years from today the deficit will be higher than it is today and not lower." Senator Dole said, "President Clinton knows, and the American people know, the plan does not tackle the deficit." And John Kasich, the head of the Budget Committee, from Ohio, said——

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Wait, let me quote this. Here is what he said of our economic plan, quote, "This plan will not work. If it was to work then I'd have to become a Democrat." [*Laughter*] Well, I want to tell Mr. Kasich that Mayor Daley is saving a seat for him at the convention, because it works. It does.

I don't know how they define "work," but in 3½ years the deficit, now we know, will be cut by more than half. We know the American people did not produce 8 million jobs in 4 years; they produced 9.7 million jobs in 3½ years; 3.7 million new homeowners; an all-time high in the export of American products; a record number for 3 years in a row of new businesses starting up. And for the first time in 10 years, thank goodness, average hourly earnings for working families are starting to go up. The lowest combined rates of unemployment and inflation in almost 30 years. I think it's fair to say that based on the evidence, when it came to the economy, we were right, and they were wrong.

Of course, we have more to do. The minimum wage this year is going to drop to a 40-year low in what it will buy if we don't raise it. You can't raise a family on 4.25 an hour. And if this Congress really believes in work and family values, let them go back and raise the minimum wage like they ought to.

And we ought to pass the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill and pass it now, unadulterated. So people won't lose their health insurance when they change jobs or someone in their family has been sick. We also ought to make sure that we do a number of other things. I've sent a package of retirement legislation to the Congress to make it easier for self-employed people and small-business people to take out retirement plans and then to keep it even if they go through periods of unemployment, or when they change jobs. There are lots of other things we need to do. But the last thing we need to do is to reverse a course that is working.

I also believe that when people get to the end of their working lives, they shouldn't have to worry about whether they can feed themselves when they retire. Nor, however, should they have to worry about whether Medicare will be there for them.

Now, I noticed when our friends on the other side debate Medicare in Washington, they never tell people that one of the important things that we did in our 1993 economic plan was to strengthen the Medicare Trust Fund, to add a few years to it. And they attacked us every step of the way for trying to do it, and in fact, in the '94 election promised to undo what we had done to strengthen the Medicare Trust Fund and protect the financial integrity of Medicare. It's why we

fought for the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act, so that seniors can get the nutrition and transportation and other services they need.

It's why I have worked so hard to pass and then to protect that crime bill. How many seniors would say that their number one concern over the last 5 years has been their personal safety? And again I would say, if you just look at the record this administration has worked on in the area of criminal justice and law enforcement—we passed the Brady bill, requiring a waiting period before people can buy handguns; we passed the crime bill, which put 100,000 more police on the street over a period of 6 years. I can tell you this: We are ahead of schedule with those police officers and under budget. And they are making a difference to lower the crime rate in America.

We passed the ban on assault weapons. And again, the leadership of the other side fought us every step of the way. They said we shouldn't give the communities any money to try to help prevention programs, to spend money to keep kids working in the summertime or giving them some things to do after school, instead of to walk the streets. They said that this was a waste of money, even though police officers were screaming for it all over America, so that our young people could have something to say yes to, as well as something to say no to.

They said if we passed the assault weapons ban and the Brady bill, we were just going to take everybody's gun away from them. Well, I'll tell you something, we've now been through two deer seasons—[*laughter*]—and where I live, every last hunter that hadn't wanted to buy a new gun is still hunting with the same rifle they had when those guys were trying to scare them to death.

But there are some people who didn't get guns: 60,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers didn't get guns because of the Brady bill. We were right, and they were wrong.

Ask Mayor Daley, a former prosecutor, about Chicago. Community policing, preventive strategies: the crime rate is down in virtually every major city in this country in every major category. Substantial drop in the murder rate, just from last year, right here in Chicago. So those people who fought the crime bill were wrong. They were wrong. The evidence is here. And that has to do with how senior citizens live.

We know that as we look to the future, we have to find a way to control medical inflation. Of course, we do. We have to find a way to try to bring inflation in health care down to the level of inflation in the country and keep it there. We know that as there's more seniors relative to workers in the population, we have to deal with that. We know that we have to have integrity in the Medicare trust fund. Can we do that without creating two classes of people under Medicare? Can we do it without destroying the guarantees of Medicaid to families with people with disabilities, to elderly people in nursing homes, to poor women and their infant children? You bet we can. We've done it before. We can do it again, and we will do it.

Medicaid, most people think, is a program for poor people. The truth is only about 30 percent of it goes to help poor families, pregnant women, and little children. Seventy percent of it goes to care for our senior citizens, most of whom come from middle class families, to enable their children to have stable lives and raise their children and educate them, and to go to help families with family members with disabilities, many of whom can live at home or independently because of Medicaid, many of whom are able to raise their children with serious disabilities at home without going into bankruptcy or having to give up their jobs because of Medicaid.

Now, can we do things to slow the rate of inflation there, to give the people on Medicaid more choices, to have more incentives to do all kinds of things? Yes, we can. Should we walk away from the guarantee we have given to try to help make people secure in their health care? No, we should not. No, we should not. Are there other strategies we can follow? You bet there are. What about preventive health care?

One of the things that I tried to do—it's turned out to be very controversial and I now see why no previous President ever wanted to get into this—is I believe that we should take strong action to stop the advertising, sales, and transference of cigarettes to children. I think it's wrong.

You talk about saving money. Three thousand children a day smoke—start smoking—begin. Three thousand children a day begin. One thousand of them will have their lives shortened because of it. And along the way society will pick up a significant part of the health care bill. Now, that's one way to save money.

Now, I have been amazed at the debate that's injected itself into the national campaign on this issue. I notice that Senator Dole questioned the other day whether or not tobacco was really addictive for everybody. [*Laughter*] And then, apparently, this morning, when it was—he was asked about Dr. Koop, who was President Reagan's Surgeon General, a remarkable man, who may be a Republican for all I know—President Reagan's Surgeon General, but he has been one of our most outspoken advocates of trying to stop smoking among young people—and this morning Senator Dole suggested that maybe Dr. Koop had been brainwashed by the liberal media. [*Laughter*] Well, I imagine Dr. Koop was surprised to hear that. [*Laughter*]

I believe Dr. Koop knows more about the dangers of tobacco than the so-called liberal media or Senator Dole. He's out there fighting for our children, and that's what we need more people to do, fight for children and not play politics with this issue.

Medicaid today spends at least $10 billion in Federal and State funds to pay for treatment for smoking-related illnesses. Now, if we're going to get serious about cutting the costs, that's one way to do it without hurting families. It will help families, it will strengthen families.

And finally, let me say that this sort of partisan division has only made the Medicare Trust Fund problem worse. Let's face it, we have enough savings identified in both the Republican plan and my plan to take the Medicare Trust Fund out to a decade right now. And we don't know yet whether we won't be able to find more in the development of managed care, voluntary options for seniors, and other things that are happening in the marketplace right now.

Now, why don't we go ahead and do this? Why are we holding out? Why is the Congress holding out for an agreement that would essentially develop a two-class Medicare system, where the older and the poorer and the sicker you are, the more likely you are to be in yesterday's Medicare that's under-funded; and the younger and healthier and more well off you are, the more options you're given to walk away. That's not what made Medicare work. What made Medicare work is you say, we have obligations to each other, and we're going to fulfill them. We're going to do this and solve this together. I think that is the right thing to do.

But you need to understand, every health care program—there is no such thing as a problem-free health care program. You have to manage this as it goes along. You have to deal with the population, what happens to people, what the costs are. But I'd just like for you to remember two things when all these people tell you how bad Medicare is, how it needs to be worked over and changed and, in effect, deconstructed. I'd just like for you to remember two things—the same thing for Medicaid—number one, Medicare has the smallest administrative overhead cost of any insurance program, public or private, in the entire United States of America, and number two—number two and far more important, America's longevity, unfortunately, is not as high as some countries, but the main reason is, we have lamentably higher rates of violence among young people, we have higher rates of AIDS, which kills a lot of young people in this country, and our infant mortality rate in some places is still higher than it is in some countries. But if you live to be 65 in the United States, you have the highest life expectancy of any group of seniors in the world. Medicare, Social Security, SSI, that's what did that. Now, I can't believe we can fix the problem of the financing in a way that preserves the fact that we have the seniors with the highest life expectancy in the world, with a program that already has the lowest administrative costs in the world. This is not rocket science. This is politics.

So I would say again, this is a great philosophical divide—should we abandon Medicaid's guarantee to poor women and little children——

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. ——to families with disabilities, to the seniors in the nursing homes?

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. No. Should we create in Medicare—we're not talking about saving money here; we're not talking about securing the trust fund for a decade. We're talking about whether we should create a two-class system of care.

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. You know, if I stay healthy—I don't know if I can the way things are in Washington—[*laughter*]—but if I stay healthy, I retire as President, and I have a nice pension, you know, I'll probably be fine. Their system might be great for me, I could walk away. But what about my responsibilities to everybody else? What about everybody else's—what about our responsibilities?

So, again, I would say that the Senate has new leadership and we have—we have identified the savings necessary to secure the Medicare Trust Fund. Why should we go into a work stoppage just because it's election season? Let's go ahead and secure the Medicare Trust Fund for another decade. You know how we're going to save the money and you said okay, and we can do that.

I know, you know, we've had a good time today, and I know that I'm here preaching to the saved—[*laughter*]—it makes it easier. But let me tell you, there is a serious issue here. We have serious questions to deal with. We all know that we're living longer and that the distribution of population is changing. We have the come to grips with these things. The only thing I'm saying is I believe the seniors of this country care about their children and grandchildren and their great-grandchildren.

When I was the Governor of my State, I spent most of my time trying to improve the education of our children, and I got most of my support for it from people who were in their golden years, who were more than happy to come up and invest more money or do whatever it took to make sure that their grandchildren had a bright future.

I do not want to see the generations in this country pitted against each other. We can find a clearly nonpolitical, bipartisan, even-handed, sensible solution to any problem the generational changes are going to face this country with, as long as we don't use it as an excuse to divide this country one from another, and to be unfair to the seniors in their quest, legitimately, to have a good life. You know it, and I know it.

I want to just say two things in closing. While I think we have obligations to you, I am impressed by how many of you still think that you've got plenty of energy to exercise obligations to other people, and I thank you for that. I thank you for that. I thank you for becoming foster grandparents or working with troubled young people or becoming mentors and tutors. Those kids need people like you, and we need more kids with more seniors helping them one on one.

I thank those who have joined our National Senior Service Corps. I thank those who work with other seniors who aren't as well off as they are either financially or physically. I thank you for your wisdom and your vigor. And I ask you to bring that wisdom and vigor not just to those who agree with you in the next 4 months, but to others as well.

We have here a very clear choice. And in a way that's a happy thing for America because you don't have to guess this time. You know, in lots of elections—in lots of election there's a certain amount of guesswork. But you know what I will do. First of all, you know that we did what we said we'd do, or we got caught trying to do it. [*Applause*] Thank you.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Thank you. Thank you. And that the results have been good. Compared to 4 years ago, we're better off than we were on the economy. We're better off than we were when it comes to crime. We've proved that you can protect the environment and grow the economy. We have worked with the States to move people from welfare to work. And while others in Washington talked about it, we now have 1.3 million fewer people on welfare than we did the day I became President.

We've proved that you can shrink the size of the Federal Government without being cruel to the Federal employees or undermining the quality of Federal service. We have proved, in other words, that we could grow the economy with opportunity and respon-

sibility and a stronger sense of community. That's the first thing.

The second thing is, there's lots more to do. Our country's transformation into the 21st century is far from complete. I proposed the other day that we amend the family and medical leave law to let people have a few hours off a year to go to regular conferences with their kids and make regular doctor's appointments with their parents if they need it, or their children if they need it. That's a good thing to do, a simple thing to do.

I proposed making 2 more years of education after high school universal for everyone through a system of tax credits that would let everybody go to their nearest community college. And there are lots of other things that we have to do.

And the third point I want to make is, on the you-don't-have-to-guess point is, you know where I stand, and you know where they stand. And if the American people want the budget that they passed in 1995 that I vetoed, they can get it. They can get it. But you need to talk to your friends and neighbors about this. Six months into 1997, if they had the White House and the Congress, that budget would be the law of the land. If you think it's a bad idea that we're putting 100,000 police on the street, and you want to remove that commitment and just throw money at the problem, you can get that. They did that once, but I stopped them.

If you think that I was wrong to take on this tobacco issue, or wrong to require the V-chip in the new television sets so that parents have some control over the things their young children watch, if you think I was wrong about the family leave law and you don't want it extended, you can have someone who agrees with you, who believes—who led the fight—who led the fight against everything I said.

Audience members. No-o-o!

Audience member. We'll stand with you, Bill!

The President. But what I want you to do is not just stand with me, I want you to go home and explain it to everybody else. That's what I want you to do. I want you to explain it to everybody else. [*Applause*] Thank you. Thank you.

Now, let me say one other thing. Let me say one thing. I'm going to do my best in the next 4 months to give this country back to the people, just like I tried to do in 1992. I want this election process to be in the hands of the American people, and I'm going to do everything I can to see that they get a chance to make these decisions based upon what will happen afterward that affects their lives, their children's lives, and the future of this country.

There is no nation in the world as well-positioned for the next century as the United States—no nation. All we have to do is to make sure that we give people the tools they need to make the most of their own lives, do everything we can to ensure responsibility from all of our citizens, and remind everybody that we are in this together. This is the greatest country in the world today because, in wave after wave after wave after wave over 200 years, we have steadily built a bigger group of American success stories. I believe we're in this together. That is the choice the American people face.

And if you go out there and remind people of the example and the story of your own lives, you can look into the future for people who are younger than you are. You can help them to take their blinders off; you can help to make sure that they're not distracted. And you can ask them to stand up to the finest and best in this country. And that will ensure a good result, not just in November, but far more important for our children and our grandchildren.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:10 p.m. in the Regency Ballroom at the West Tower of Chicago Hyatt Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Steve Protulis, executive director, and Tom Buffenbarger, board member, National Council of Senior Citizens; Lois Wellington, president, Congress of California Seniors; George Becker, president, United Steelworkers of America; Jay Mazur, president, Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees; Douglas Fraser, former president, United Auto Workers; Justin Dart, chairman, Justice for All; and Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Message on the Observance of Independence Day, 1996

July 2, 1996

I am pleased to join my fellow Americans across the nation and around the world in celebrating Independence Day.

On this day each year, we gather with family and friends to commemorate the anniversary of the signing of our Declaration of Independence. With vision and courage, our Founders stated unequivocally to the world: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." These were literally revolutionary concepts, and they fundamentally changed the course of human history.

Today we are living through another period of profound and historic change—change in the way we work, the way we live, the way we relate to one another and to the rest of the world. But the truths set down in our Declaration of Independence are immutable, and they continue to light our path into the challenges and possibilities of the future. Equality, individual rights, life, freedom, opportunity—we still cherish these values, and we must continue to reaffirm them daily.

America is a work in progress, and we have strived through decades of challenge and change to become what our Founders envisioned on our first Independence Day. As we continue that endeavor, let us work together to create an America that remains the world's strongest force for peace, justice, and freedom. Let us work for an America that is not driven apart by differences but instead is united around shared values and respect for our diversity. Let us work for an America in which every one of us, without regard to race or religious belief or gender or station in life, can achieve our dreams. In this way we will best pay tribute to those who, 220 years ago, pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to guarantee our freedom.

Best wishes for a memorable Fourth of July.

Bill Clinton

Remarks at a Reception for Representative Dick Durbin in Chicago

July 2, 1996

The President. Thank you very much.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Thank you. Well, if we get them, they'll be a lot better if Dick Durbin is in the Senate, I'll tell you that.

First of all, I'm delighted to be here with Senator Simon and Senator Carol Moseley-Braun, my good friend Bill Singer, and all of you who have contributed to this terrific fundraiser. I want to say how very much I admire Dick and Loretta Durbin—they live their family values, they don't just give political speeches about them at election time—and how happy I am to be here at this—[*applause*].

When Dick was talking about being a Lithuanian, I was just thinking that the Chicago person in my household would like to be here tonight. But when we were in France for the G–7 meeting, and I left Hillary, and she went on to Romania, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Estonia, and two or three other places. And she called me yesterday, and she told me about her day in Romania. And she told me—she said, "You realize all the places I'm going, all the people I'm going to see?" And she reeled them all off. And I said, "Look, I can make one trip to Chicago and see people from all those places."

So Dick reminded me of my wisecrack, and I thought I'd give it to you. [*Laughter*] It's really true about Chicago; it's one of the things that makes it so wonderful. The mayor and Bill Daley took me down to the Taste of Chicago today, and I walked, and I ate like a horse. [*Laughter*] But I was an equal opportunity eater. I gave—every ethnic group got a fair and equal shot at me. And I'll have to run an extra 5 miles in the morning, but it was wonderful.

Let me say on a more serious note how much I appreciate the support I felt from all the American people when I went to Europe to try to get our allies to support the United States in our fight against terrorism in the aftermath of what happened in Saudi Arabia to our Air Force personnel. But I also