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NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Jesse Helms, chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 10.

Remarks on the Budget Debate
November 10, 1995

Good afternoon. The budget debate we are now engaged in is a serious and critical moment for this country. The debate is about whether we will balance this budget in a way that is consistent with our fundamental values: our responsibility to our parents and to our children; our determination to provide opportunity for all Americans to make the most of their own lives through good jobs and education and technology; our obligation to protect the environment and to maintain America's ability to be the world's strongest force for peace and freedom, for democracy and prosperity.

In a larger sense, I believe this budget debate is about two very different futures for America: about whether we will continue to go forward under our motto, E Pluribus Unum, out of many, one; whether we will continue to unite and grow; or whether we will become a more divided, winner-take-all society.

I recognize that the Republican Congress has a very different view. The American people deserve a serious debate over these two approaches to balancing the budget. But we cannot have that serious debate under the threat of a Government default or shutdown. And we cannot cut Medicare, education, and the environment as a condition of keeping the Government open.

The bills Congress voted on last night are not ordinary measures designed simply to keep the Government open while we continue the debate over how to balance the budget. Instead, last night Republicans in Congress voted to raise Medicare premiums; they voted to cut education and to cut it deeply; and they voted to overturn three decades of bipartisan environmental safeguards.

Beyond that, these measures would make a Government default almost inevitable, for the first time in our history, because they take away from the Secretary of the Treasury the tools now available to avoid default under extraordinary circumstances. This is deeply irresponsible. It has never happened before, and it should not happen now.

Republicans in Congress have a responsibility to keep the Government running without cutting Medicare and increasing premiums, without cutting education and undercutting the environment. I want to work with Congress to resolve these differences and to keep the Government running in the interest of the American people. After all, we have shown we can work together on this. Just last September we agreed on an appropriate measure to keep the Government running while we finish the job of balancing the budget. We should simply do now what was done in September so that the Government and the budget debate can go on. And I believe Congress should stay in this weekend and finish this work.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:05 p.m. in the Briefing Room at the White House.

The President's Radio Address
November 11, 1995

Good morning. At midnight this Monday night, unless Congress passes legislation to keep the Government running, the Federal Government will be required by law to begin shutting down. For months, the congressional Republicans have made a consistent threat: If I don't

sign legislation cutting Medicare, education and the environment, they'll plunge the Government into default and force it to close its doors.

I don't want to shut down basic Government services for the American people, but I can't allow that to be used to force us to accept extreme budget measures that would violate our basic values as a nation and undermine the long-term welfare of the American people.

A very great deal is at stake in this debate. This budget debate is not about whether we will balance the budget. Both parties support that. It's about whether we will balance our budget in a way that is consistent with our fundamental values: our responsibility to our parents and to our children; our determination to provide opportunity for all Americans to make the most of their own lives through good jobs and education and technology; our obligation to protect the environment and to keep America the world's strongest force for peace and freedom, democracy and prosperity.

This budget debate is about two very different futures for America: about whether we'll continue to go forward under our motto, *E Pluribus Unum,* out of many, one; whether we will continue to unite and grow together; or whether we will become a more divided winner-take-all society.

Today as I speak with you, the congressional Republicans are on the verge of carrying out their threat. I want to explain how we have come to this juncture and why it is so important that we stand firm against measures that would endanger our future. The congressional Republicans propose to balance the budget in 7 years, but they would get there with deep cuts in Medicare, education, protection for the environment, and by raising taxes on working people. Five full months ago, I proposed an alternative plan to balance the budget in 10 years while protecting Medicare and Medicaid, increasing our investment in education and technology, protecting the environment, without raising taxes on working families. Since then, the Republican Congress has dismissed my proposal at every turn and has not met the deadlines established by law for setting this year's budget.

The new Federal fiscal year started back on October 1st. Now it's November 11th, Veterans Day, and still they haven't sent me a budget, even though the Republicans control both Houses of Congress. This is very unusual. In my first 2 years, we passed budgets to reduce the deficit in a timely fashion.

Also this year, the Republicans have not come close to resolving their own internal differences in their overall budget plan between measures passed in the House and the Senate. Back in 1993, we passed our deficit reduction plan 3 months earlier than this, in August. That plan has now given us 3 years of deficit reduction in a row for the first time since Mr. Truman was President. And the United States now has the lowest deficit as a percentage of our income of any industrial nation in the world except one. Let me say that again, we now have the lowest deficit as a percentage of our income of any industrial nation in the world except one.

Now, there have been times in our history when our budget process has run late before. I want to acknowledge that. But when that happens, the differing sides, regardless of party, usually agree to find a fair and unbiased way to keep the Government going and to enable the United States to pay its bills, while the broader debate about budget priorities goes on.

That is what I worked out with Congress in September. They passed and I signed a simple, straightforward bill to keep the Government running and to prevent America from going into default. That was the serious and responsible thing to do, and I applauded them for doing it at the time. Last week, I met with the Republican congressional leadership to try to find a way, again, to keep our Government open and to keep it from falling into default. As I told them then, we should balance the budget. But we cannot do it under a threat of Government shutdown and default.

Instead of following the path of reconciliation, however, they have, once again, gone their own way. This week, they voted on an unprecedented measure. On Thursday night, as a part of their bill to keep the Government going, both Houses voted a 25 percent increase in Medicare premiums for every single senior citizen on Medicare. That is an extraordinary act. No Congress in our history has ever demanded an increase in Medicare premiums as a condition of keeping the Government open. That is wrong, and I will not accept it.

And on this Veterans Day, they have a strange way of honoring all of those men and women who have sacrificed for our country. Eight million of the senior citizens and disabled Americans whose Medicare premiums would be raised

by Congress are veterans, and they, too, deserve better.

The Republicans in Congress are also demanding deep cuts in education and the environment and a profound weakening of environmental laws as a condition of keeping the Government open and our bills paid. And they have added conditions to the debt limit legislation that amount to a shortcut to default on the full faith and credit of the United States.

Think of it this way, my fellow Americans. Imagine the Republican Congress as a banker and the United States as a family that has to go to the bank for a short-term loan for a family emergency. The banker says to the family, "I'll give you the loan, but only if you'll throw the grandparents and the kids out of the house first."

Well, speaking on behalf of the family, I say, no thanks. I believe we can find a good-faith way to keep the Government open and make good on its obligations. So I've asked my Chief of Staff, Leon Panetta, to meet with the Republican and the Democratic leaders of Congress this afternoon. I've instructed him to present them with the straightforward ideas to keep the Government open, just like we did in September and just as Congress has done dozens of times before. But I will not allow them to impose new, immediate cuts in Medicare, education, and the environment as a condition of keeping the Government open.

I believe we can resolve these differences without hurting the American people or our future. All around us we see evidence that America is on the move. Our economy is the envy of the world. The unemployment and inflation rates together are at a 25-year low, new businesses and exports of American products at an all-time high.

As I said, our deficit already is the smallest of any major economy in the world but one. Our Government as a percentage of the work force is the smallest it's been since 1933. We're making a serious assault on our social problems, like crime. Now our challenge is to balance our budget in a way that is consistent with our fundamental values and to do it without threats and without partisan rancor. We can do that, so let's get it done.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks at a Veterans Day Ceremony in Arlington, Virginia

November 11, 1995

Thank you, Secretary Brown, for your introduction and for your remarkable service on behalf of the veterans of the United States. General Foley, Commander Liwack, distinguished leaders of all our veterans organizations, Secretary Brown, Secretary Perry, General Shalikashvili, Attorney General Reno, Senator Simpson; especially to my friend Congressman Montgomery. I want to join the remarks that were earlier made and thank you, sir, for your lifetime of service to the United States and for your unparalleled service to the veterans of the United States. We will all miss you, and we thank you. To our men and women in uniform and their families here today and most of all, of course, to all of our veterans and their families and the Gold Star mothers and wives, their survivors who are here today; my fellow Americans.

On this day that marked the end of World War I, we close the 50-year commemoration of the end of World War II. Together on this day we offer a prayer for peace and a tribute to those who defend it. All across this land a symphony of 50 bells will soar. Together on this day we say thank you to those who stepped forward to safeguard our security and our ideals. Today, this day, our grateful Nation is united to honor America's veterans.

This year we have paid special homage to the World War II generation. From the windswept beaches of Normandy to the craggy rocks of Corregidor, meeting the Americans who fought in that struggle has been one of the great privileges I have had as your President. Later today we will honor all of them in dedicating the site of the World War II memorial, ensuring that we will never, never forget those