AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

Week Ending Friday, January 26, 1996

Message on the Observance of Ramadan

January 19, 1996

Greetings to everyone observing the holy month of Ramadan.

As the crescent moon signals the approach of this most sacred time in the Islamic year, Muslims the world over commemorate the revelation of the Koran to Muhammad. For Muslims, this marks a time of quiet reflection and religious devotion through fasting, self-examination, and intensive study of the teachings of Islam. Encouraging gratitude for our blessings and compassion for those in need, Ramadan cleanses the heart and lifts the soul.

During this time of unprecedented movement toward peace in the Middle East, Muslims and people of all faiths have the opportunity to join together in creating a new world of harmony. Ramadan, with its promise of renewal, helps to nourish the spirit of brotherhood in us all. In this season of hope, let us resolve to work together for a better, brighter future—a future in which children of every religion can live together in peace.

Hillary and I offer best wishes to Muslims everywhere for a memorable observance.

Bill Clinton

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 20.

The President's Radio Address

January 20, 1996

Good morning. Before I speak with you this morning about our budget, I want to take just a moment to remember someone very special, a national treasure our Nation lost this week, former Texas Congresswoman Barbara Jordan, the first African-American woman elected to Congress from the South.

In her years in public service, she gave voice to our national conscience and brought reasoned thought and eloquence to even the most emotional debates. After she left the Congress, she went home to Texas to teach at the University of Texas and to continue her work in public service. I appointed her to chair the United States Commission on Immigration Reform. And Barbara Jordan was very instrumental in the progress we have made in tightening our border to keep illegal immigrants out and securing our workplace for American citizens and legal immigrants.

In developing a comprehensive system to keep us both a nation of immigrants and a nation of laws, her work was pure Barbara Jordan: fair, principled, and strong. Our Nation has lost a great American, a stateswoman, a representative of the people with a powerful voice and a great spirit. And many of us have lost a friend and an inspiration. We, the people, will greatly miss her.

Now I'd like to talk about our efforts to reach common ground on a balanced budget, a balanced budget that also protects Medicare, Medicaid, education, and the environment, and does not raise taxes on working families. The budget talks are suspended now because the Republican congressional leaders walked away from the table. I wish they hadn't done that, and I hope they'll come back and soon, because I believe our goal can be met. After all, we've both agreed on enough savings to balance the budget in 7 years according to the Congress' own estimates, without having to hurt our economy or sacrifice the values that I've talked about.

That's what we ought to do: balance the budget, protect the things we're committed to protect. And we ought not to delay in getting on with the people's business. In less than a week now, the Republican Congress could once again shut down our Government for the third time in 2 months. I urge them not to do that. In the last shutdown alone, the Federal Housing Administration was unable to insure single family home loans for

tens of thousands of deserving applicants. Many, many thousands of citizens couldn't get passports. Some veterans couldn't get benefits. Many Medicare claims couldn't be processed. Small businesses—lots of them—couldn't get loans to create new jobs. Environmental cleanup actions were halted.

The shutdown also put hundreds of thousands of Federal workers with families to support under a horrible strain. Like most American workers, most of them live paycheck to paycheck. They simply cannot afford a third shutdown, and they don't deserve it.

Let's remember, since I've been President we have reduced the size of the United States Government by 205,000 employees. Your Government has closed thousands and thousands of offices, eliminated hundreds of programs. It's now the smallest Federal Government since 1965. As a percentage of our work force, it's the smallest Federal Government since 1933. You probably didn't know that. And one big reason is that the Federal employees who have been left behind are working harder, working smarter, and doing a better job for you. They deserve to be able to do their work and not to be thrown out of work.

Two Government shutdowns so far have cost taxpayers about a billion-and-a-half dollars—a billion-and-a-half dollars. That's not Monopoly money. Shutting down the Government again would be unbelievably irresponsible. So again I say to the Republican Congress, don't do that. We can't afford to bleed money and productivity at a time when we should be putting all our efforts into saving money, serving the American people, strengthening our economy, and moving forward.

I also urge the Congress to deal responsibly with the Federal debt ceiling. Congress should never threaten to default on America's debts. I'm encouraged that Republican leaders have acknowledged that Congress should not put the creditworthiness of the United States at risk in our budget negotiations. And we look forward to working with the congressional leadership to draft a clean debt limit increase, to allow the United States to meet our obligations and maintain our integrity.

I am committed—let me say again, I am committed to finishing the job of balancing the budget. I have gone the extra mile in our talks. The Republicans asked for a 7-year plan to balance the budget; I gave them a plan. They asked that we use the figures from the Congressional Budget Office. Even though I disagreed with them, I did that, too. I tried every way I can to accommodate Republican demands and bargain in good faith. But there are areas of disagreement, and they involve far more than money. They involve our values and different visions about what kind of people we're going to be and how we're going to get to the next century.

The Republicans insist on cuts in Medicare, Medicaid, education, and the environment that I believe are unwarranted. I know they're not necessary to balance the budget. They admit they're not necessary to balance the budget. And I believe they violate our commitment to our children, our parents, and our future. Among other things, their proposals would raise Medicare premiums; repeal Medicaid's guarantee of adequate medical coverage for pregnant women, people with disabilities, children and older Americans; cut our efforts to keep drugs and violence out of public schools and to help schools reach high national standards of excellence in learning; and dramatically cut the enforcement of environmental laws to keep our air and water clean. My budget shows we don't need these drastic steps, and we can still give a modest tax cut to people who need it.

We can end this budget stalemate. Both the Republican leaders and I have already agreed to more than $700 billion in savings. That is more than enough to balance the budget in 7 years. We can give the American people their balanced budget and a modest tax cut. They deserve it, and we ought to do that immediately.

So let me say again to the Republicans: We don't agree on everything, but we agree on a lot. And we agree on more than enough to balance the budget, so let's do it. Come on back to the table. Don't shut the Government down. Don't make America default on its debt. Let's do the right thing. My door is open. Let's talk. Let's get the job done for the American people.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 4:49 p.m. on January 19 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on January 20.

Remarks at the Funeral Service for Barbara Jordan in Houston, Texas

January 20, 1996

Thank you. Pastor Cofield; Bennie and Rosemary and John; and Aunt and Uncle, Mamie and Wilmer Lee; Mr. Mayor, my good friend Governor Richards; all the distinguished Texans who are here; and friends of Barbara Jordan around the country; Members of Congress; members of the Texas State government; the former Members of Congress who served with Barbara who came down with me today; to members of the Cabinet; my fellow Americans.

The last time I saw Barbara Jordan was late last fall when Liz Carpenter talked me into going to the University of Texas to give a speech on race relations on the day of the Million Man March. I was nervous enough as it was. [*Laughter*] And I walked out into that vast arena, and there were 17,000 people there. But I could only see one, Barbara Jordan, smiling at me. And there I was about to give a speech to her about race and the Constitution. [*Laughter*] I think it was the nearest experience on this Earth to the pastor's giving a sermon with God in the audience. [*Laughter*]

Through the sheer force of the truth she spoke, the poetry of her words, and the power of her voice, Barbara always stirred our national conscience. She did it as a legislator, a Member of Congress, a teacher, a citizen.

Perhaps more than anything else in the last few years, for those of us who had the privilege of being around her, she did it in the incredible grace and good humor and dignity with which she bore her physical misfortunes. No matter what, there was always the dignity. When Barbara Jordan talked, we listened.

We listened in 1974 when she said of the preamble to our Constitution, ''We the people. It is a very eloquent beginning, but when the document was completed on the 17th of September in 1787, I was not included in that 'we the people'.''

We listened in 1976 when President Carter asked her to be the first black woman to deliver a keynote address at the Democratic Convention. When she asked and answered one of those great questions with which we still struggle, she said, ''Are we to be one people bound together by common spirit, sharing in a common endeavor, or will we become a divided nation?'' ''A spirit of harmony will survive in America,'' she said, ''only if each of us remember that we share a common destiny.''

We listened in 1992 when she honored me by again giving a keynote address at the convention. ''The American dream is slipping away from too many people,'' she said. She said it would only be changed if we developed an environment characterized by a devotion to the public interest, to public servants, to tolerance, and to love.

After I became President, I asked her to chair the United States Commission on Immigration Reform. And she made us listen again when she reminded all sides on that delicate and difficult issue that we must remain both a nation of immigrants and a nation of laws.

Barbara Jordan's life was a monument to the three great threads that run constantly throughout the fabric of American history: our love of liberty, our belief in progress, our search for common ground. Wherever she could and whenever she stood to speak, she jolted the Nation's attention with her artful and articulate defense of the Constitution, the American dream, and the common heritage and destiny we share, whether we like it or not.

Barbara Jordan loved her family, her loved ones, her friends, her allies, her teachers. She loved Texas and how she loved our beloved country. She reveled in its never-ending struggle to live up to our highest ideals.

She once said this: ''All we are trying to do is to make this Government of the United States honest. We only ask that when we stand up and talk about one Nation under God with liberty and justice for all, we want to be able to look up at the flag, put our right hands over our hearts, repeat those words, and know that they are true.'' Well,