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Agency, will conduct an investment assessment mission to Afghanistan and that the Commerce Department will lead a private sector mission to Afghanistan to help identify Afghanistan's investment needs and opportunities for U.S. private sector participation in reconstruction. We welcome a U.S. Department of Labor initiative to fund job generation and training programs for ex-combatants and women.

Finally, we pledge to enhance understanding between the citizens of our two countries by promoting people-to-people exchanges and cultural initiatives, including through the Fulbright, International Visitor and Humphrey programs, as well as through non-governmental organizations. Recognizing that the Taliban destroyed several of Afghanistan's great historic statues and cultural sites, we agreed to work together to help restore and preserve Afghanistan's heritage.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters

January 28, 2002

Medicare

The President. I want to thank the Members from both the House and the Senate, both of the political parties, for coming to discuss an incredibly important issue, and that is Medicare. We had good discussions last year, and now it's time to get something done.

We need a comprehensive reform plan that includes prescription drugs for every senior. And the will of the folks around this table is to work together to do just that, is to make sure our seniors have got the capacity to have a—to purchase prescription drugs. That's what we all want.

And I believe that given the right focus and the right efforts, we can achieve that objective. And while we're doing so, we want Medicare to be modernized. We want it to be a system that is relevant for seniors today and for tomorrow. And it's not. It's a system—it's old, and it's tired, and it needs to be looked at in a way that recognizes we've made a commitment to our country's seniors. But we want the commitment to work.

And so, the Members around this table have all come back to town and said, "Let's get something done." And I'm so thrilled to have them here, and I appreciate the spirit. And it's going to require that kind of spirit to get it done.

I'm looking forward to my speech tomorrow night. I will mention Medicare in my speech. We need to make it work; we need for there to be a prescription drug plan in the program.

Thank you all for coming.

Legislative Agenda in an Election Year

Q. Do you think it will be likely in an election year, sir? Is it likely in an election year, sir?

The President. You know, that's why you run for office. Election year or no election year, it's time to get something done. And this is not an issue for the faint-hearted, but it's the right thing to do. And Members around here understand it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:27 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Death of Michael Hammond

January 29, 2002

Michael Hammond was an accomplished conductor, composer, and advocate of the arts. His commitment to excellence and his extraordinary talents will be greatly missed.

Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union

January 29, 2002

Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, Vice President Cheney, Members of Congress, distinguished guests, fellow citizens: As we gather tonight, our Nation is at war; our economy is in recession; and the civilized