

I want to thank the family members who are here. Thank you for your sacrifice. Thank you for the long hours, accepting the long hours that your loved one is about to put in on behalf of the American people. Some of the folks that are here have worked in past administrations. Some of us, this is a new experience. But for all of us, it is an honor of a lifetime, and it is our privilege to share this together.

I am here to lead the executive branch of Government. You all are here because you have my full confidence. And we are here with the same basic purpose, to serve the American people. We have all taken an oath, and from this moment on it is our jobs to honor it.

Today everything is so promising and new. My hope is that the day will never come when any of us take this place for granted and this honor for granted. As we serve, we must always remember three things.

First, we must remember the high standards that come with high office. This begins with careful adherence to the rules. I expect every member of this administration to stay well within the boundaries that define legal and ethical conduct. This means avoiding even the appearance of problems. This means checking and, if need be, doublechecking that the rules have been obeyed. This means never compromising those rules. No one in the White House should be afraid to confront the people they work for, for ethical concerns. And no one should hesitate to confront me, as well. We're all accountable to one another. And above all, we're all accountable to the law and to the American people. My White House Counsel, Al Gonzalez, is my point man on these issues. If you have even a hint of ethical doubt, I urge you to talk to Al.

Second, we must remember that high standards of conduct involve not only obeying the law but showing civility. As we go about our work, there is no excuse for arrogance and never a reason for disrespect toward others. People who work here are highly visible throughout the Government. In many ways, in many of your dealings, you'll be the face and voice of the White House staff. You will be my representative. I expect each of you, as an official of this administra-

tion, to be an example of humility and decency and fairness.

And finally, we must all remember that we are here for a reason. You and I and the Vice President share the same goals for our country and the same commitment to achieving them. We are here to make progress. We are not here just to mark time. The next few weeks, we'll affirm the central policy goals of this administration, beginning this week with education reform.

Everyone will know where we stand. Everyone will know where we're headed. Every morning I want you to remember these goals. Every evening I want you to review the progress we have made. I want it said of us, at the end of our service, that promises made were promises kept.

On a mantelpiece in this great house is inscribed the prayer of John Adams, that only the wise and honest may rule under this roof. He was speaking of those who live here. But wisdom and honesty are also required of those who work here. I know each of you is capable of meeting that charge. This is only our second day, but time moves fast around here. So let us begin the work we were hired to do and leave this a better place than we found it.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:10 a.m. in the East Room at the White House.

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

*January 22, 2001*

#### **Legislative Agenda**

**The President.** Thank you all for coming. It's been my honor to host a working lunch with the Speaker and Members from the House and even Members from the United States Senate. This is the beginning of a series of luncheons and dinners that I will have and the Vice President will have with Members of the Congress. If we're to get an agenda through the Congress, it's best that I be able to personally explain the issues and what I'm attempting to do.

I've told the leadership that they should be expecting a strong education reform package, a tax relief package, and a Medicare and Social Security reform package and a package to help pay the folks in the military more money. And I can't wait to work with them to get the people's business done.

This is not the last time I'm going to see you all over here, nor will the meetings be only Republican; we'll have Democrats come here quite a few times, as well, to get some things done.

So I want to thank you all for coming. I'm honored you're here. It's my first lunch in this part of the White House complex, and it's fitting that it be with Members of the legislative branch. Thanks for coming.

#### **Abortion Funding**

**Q.** Mr. President, are you going to reverse the Executive order allowing abortion funding and counseling—Federal funds for abortion counseling and funding overseas?

**The President.** Yes, I am.

**Q.** When will you do that, sir?

**The President.** Soon.

**Q.** [*Inaudible*—Executive orders reversing President Clinton's?

**The President.** Yes.

#### **Fetal Tissue Research**

**Q.** What about fetal tissue research? What about fetal tissue research?

**The President.** I'll deal with that issue later.

#### **Resolution of President Clinton's Legal Issues**

**Q.** Mr. President, how do you react to the deal that President Clinton entered into with the Independent Counsel, Robert Ray? What's your interpretation of that agreement, and were you considering a pardon should it have come to that?

**The President.** I hadn't considered a pardon because the man hadn't been indicted. And my feeling about the actions of last Friday was, it's finally over with; it's now time to move on. And I think the country is pleased that it's time to move on, and that's exactly what we're going to do.

**Q.** Was it appropriate, sir?

**The President.** Thank you all. The pleasure is mine, Fournier [Ron Fournier, Associated Press]. [*Laughter*]

**Q.** Welcome to the White House.

**The President.** It's an honor to be here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

#### **Remarks at a Reading Roundtable**

*January 22, 2001*

Laura and I have been honored to host a discussion on an incredibly important subject, and that's education and reading. I really appreciate the Secretary of Education for coming, Dr. Rod Paige; and for educators, leaders, from all around the country who've come here to the Roosevelt Room.

Phyllis Hunter coined a phrase that I quote a lot, and that is, "Reading is the new civil right." It's the cornerstone of hope and opportunity in America, and we're going to make sure every child has the opportunity to learn to read. That means we're going to have scientific-based knowledge be the cornerstone of our curriculum. And that's why I appreciate Reid Lyon and others, experts in the field of reading, for being here to help make sure our curriculum reflect that which works.

We're going to diagnose children early and correct problems when we find them. As importantly, I'm going to ask Congress to spend money on teacher training, to make sure that our teachers, the heart and soul of the education system, have got the tools necessary to teach children to read.

I'm excited about working with the pros in the field of education. This is not a Republican issue; it's not a Democrat issue; it's not an independent issue; this is an American issue, and the most fundamental of all American issues. If the mission is to make sure the American experience touches every willing heart, every person in the country, it starts with making sure our children learn to read, and it starts with making sure children learn to read early. And one of the key initiatives that we have been discussing is, how do we make sure that we get science-