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Appointment for Posts at the United States Office of Consumer Affairs
December 21, 1993

The President announced today that he will appoint Polly B. Baca to be Director and Paul Steven Miller to be Deputy Director of the Department of Health and Human Services U.S. Office of Consumer Affairs. The Office of Consumer Affairs is the primary Agency in the Federal Government for consumer affairs and has responsibility to both the White House and the Department of Health and Human Services on this issue.

"We have a responsibility to the American people to ensure that they are treated fairly in the consumer marketplace," said the President. "I am counting on Polly Baca and Paul Miller to run this important office and to represent the needs of consumers throughout the Federal Government."

NOTE: Biographies of the appointees were made available by the Office of the Press Secretary.

Remarks Announcing Grants for Programs for the Homeless
December 22, 1993

Thank you, Reverend Steinbruck. He was so good I kind of hate to spoil the occasion. [*Laughter*] I want to thank all of you for being here, those of you who work in the field of homelessness. I want to thank Senator Riegle and Congressman Vento and Congressman Frank and Congressman Kildee for their support in the Congress. I want to say how good it is to see my friend Mayor Schmoke here who's done so much in the housing area. And I want to thank, too, Secretary Cisneros and Assistant Secretary Cuomo for the leadership they have shown.

I want to try to explain why, 3 days before Christmas, this is an important event not just because of the money involved but because this represents a different approach to what has become our most painful and, as a country, I think one of our most embarrassing social problems.

We have tried to look beyond the issue of temporary shelters to the question of permanent relief from the condition of homelessness. And I congratulate Assistant Secretary Cuomo and all the people at HUD, who worked with a lot of you who labor in housing and have for years for the homeless, a lot of you who've worked with the mentally ill, with people who have other problems, in coming up with an approach that at least gives us a chance to try to go beyond the symptoms to the cause, to try to deal with this problem on a long-term basis.

For years, our Nation's attention has been properly focused on the emergency needs of the homeless and the efforts just to find people a place to stay on a cold night. That's an important thing. Nearly every day when I go out running I run by a group of homeless men who sleep on the grates within two blocks of my back door. And we've developed a kind of a friendly relationship. They say hello to me. I say hello to them. I wish to goodness on the days that are cold and windy, when I find it difficult to find the courage to run, they at least didn't have to spend the night there. But I also know that there are other factors at work inside the minds and hearts of those people which make some of them reluctant to come in and which make it impossible for them to stay in.

So we have tried to ask some other questions with this proposal: What kind of skills and assistance do homeless people need to really move from the streets to places of their own? How do we help maintain their housing in more permanent and stable ways when lives themselves have often never been permanent or stable in any traditional sense?

For some of the homeless we may never find the answers. For whatever sad reason, some people do drift beyond the outer realm of society and never come back. But a lot of others, especially the parents and their children, can be lifted out of their helplessness and hopelessness if we relate to them in the right way.

You heard the Secretary say that yesterday the United States Conference of Mayors said that as much as 43 percent of the homeless population may now be parents and children. The mayors' press conference yesterday was the first one ever attended by an administration official since the mayors formed their task force on homelessness 10 years ago. And I want to thank again the leadership at HUD, starting with the Secretary, for bringing new energy and attention to this.

I didn't have much to do with it except to ask that simple question when my longtime friend Henry Cisneros and I talked about this. I just said, "Will we ever be able to show the American people that there aren't so many people on the streets?"

On Sunday there was a wonderful piece in the New York Times Sunday Magazine about a woman who has transformed an old stereotype of single-room occupancy hotels and replaced it with a new model to help meet the long-term needs we're discussing. She's reinvented this single-room occupancy housing to create well-kept places and integrate services for people with special needs and disabilities. And in so doing, she's helping people regain control over their lives.

None of the initiatives of this administration—strengthening work and family and community—can be done without forming a partnership with people on the front-lines, like that lady and like so many of you in this room, the people who give of themselves not just on Christmas Day but every day. But as Christmas approaches, I hope the American people will, in all their Christmas prayers, save room for a simple one, that all of us somehow might realize the humility to know how blessed we are to be in this country, and still to remember those who are not blessed, though they are among our midst.

This Christmas all many of them wish for is a place to spend the night. But what we know is, if they're going to have a place to spend the night, they have to have a place where they can live and grow and deal with the demons that bedevil so many of us in this country.

I have a list—I won't read it to you but I was—that Henry gave me that kind of is representative of the kinds of people who are getting these grants. Sometimes I think we make them more inaccessible to ordinary Americans by talking about things like support services and transition services and this, that, the other thing. But in plain English, what we're trying to do is take people who are battered and bruised and broken, but who still have a lot of God's grace left in them, and find a way to bring all that back to the surface and put their own lives back more in their control.

I hope this new approach works. If it does, it will be because of a lot of you out there on the front-lines who are making it work, like this fine and funny man of the cloth. If it does, we will have given the American people a good Christmas present.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:55 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Rev. John Steinbruck, pastor, Luther Place Memorial Church.

Message on the Observance of Christmas
December 22, 1993

Warmest greetings to all who are celebrating Christmas in this season of hope.

Each year at this time, we gather together with our loved ones. We teach our children to believe that, with faith and hard work, their dreams can come true. We reach out to each other in caring and fellowship. We look to the future with hope and always with the most earnest of mankind's prayers—the prayer for peace. Thankfully, at this Christmastime, we can joyously celebrate the results of our prayers.

Around the world, people are embracing the promise of the post-Cold War era, throwing off the shackles of tyranny and committing themselves to the ideals of democracy. Old enemies who met for centuries on the battlefield are now meeting on common ground to discuss peace. In our own country, many citizens are