AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

give me this line-item veto, and I will get started right away. This is one area where both parties can and should come together.

I have advocated the line-item veto for a very long time. When I was a Governor, I had a line-item veto and I balanced 12 budgets in a row. I advocated the line-item veto when I ran for President, and I have pushed for it since becoming President because it is a very effective tool for cutting wasteful Government spending and bringing down the deficit.

We have made great headway in cutting wasteful spending. We have already cut the Federal bureaucracy by 102,000 positions, on the way to cutting a quarter million. We are bringing the deficit down by more than $600 billion. My new budget calls for another $81 billion in deficit reduction.

But there is still too much waste in the Federal budget. This year I have proposed eliminating 131 programs altogether and consolidating 270 others. I proposed many of these spending cuts last year and the year before, only to have Congress tell me I couldn't cut their pet projects. I tried to cut $16 million for the Small Business Administration's tree planting program, but Congress put it back in the budget. Congress even spent $12 million for a cattle tick eradication project.

Well, this year, if the Congress gives me the line-item veto, I will cut each one of these programs, and a whole lot more. I also think the line-item veto should be applied to the revenue as well as the spending sides of the budget, so I can curb wasteful tax and spending provisions.

This is really about closing the door on business-as-usual in Washington. If Congress is serious about changing the way Washington works and getting a handle on wasteful spending, they will put politics aside, stand up to the special interests, and pass the bill.

The President, no matter what party, needs the line-item veto to bring discipline to the budget process. I urge the Senate to pass it and make it effective right now.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Welfare Reform
March 20, 1995

Dear Mr. Speaker:

This week, the historic national debate we have begun on welfare reform will move to the floor of the House of Representatives. Welfare reform is a top priority for my Administration and for Americans without regard to party. I look forward to working with Republicans and Democrats in both houses of Congress to enact real reform that promotes work and responsibility and makes welfare what it was meant to be: a second chance, not a way of life.

In the last two years, we have put the country on the road to ending welfare as we know it. In 1993, when Congress passed our economic plan, we cut taxes for 15 million working Americans and rewarded work over welfare. We collected a record level of child support in 1993—$9 billion—and last month I signed an executive order to crack down on federal employees who owe child support. In two years, we have granted waivers from federal rules to 25 states, so that half the country is now carrying out significant welfare reform experiments that promote work and responsibility instead of undermining it.

I have always sought to make welfare reform a bipartisan issue. I still believe it can and must be. Unfortunately, the House Republican bill in its current form does not appear to offer the kind of real welfare reform that Americans in both parties expect. It is too weak on moving people from welfare to work, not as tough as it should be on deadbeat parents, and too tough on innocent children.

Last year, I sent Congress the most sweeping welfare reform plan any administration has ever presented. It did not pass, but I believe the principles and values at its core will be the basis of what ultimately does pass:

* First, the central goal of welfare reform must be moving people from welfare to work, where they will earn a paycheck, not a welfare check. I believe we should demand and reward work, not punish those who go to work. If people need child care or job skills in order to go to work, we should help them get it. But

within two years, anyone who can work must go to work.

This is not a partisan issue: Last year, 162 of 175 House Republicans co-sponsored a bill, H.R. 3500, that promoted work in much the same way as our plan. But the current House Republican bill you will consider this week fails to promote work, and would actually make it harder for many recipients to make it in the workplace. It cuts child care for people trying to leave welfare and for working people trying to stay off welfare, removes any real responsibility for states to provide job placement and skills, and gives states a perverse incentive to cut people off whether or not they have moved into a job. When people just get cut off without going to work, that's not welfare reform. I urge you to pass a welfare reform bill that ends welfare as we know it by moving people from welfare to work.

* Second, welfare reform must make responsibility a way of life. We should demand responsibility from parents who bring children into the world, not let them off the hook and expect taxpayers to pick up the tab for their neglect. Last year, my Administration proposed the toughest child support enforcement measures ever put forward. If we collected all the money that deadbeat parents should pay, we could move 800,000 women and children off welfare immediately.

I am grateful to members in both parties for already agreeing to include most of the tough child support measures from our welfare reform plan. This week, I hope you will go further, and require states to deny drivers and professional licenses to parents who refuse to pay child support. We have to send a clear signal: No parent in America has a right to walk away from the responsibility to raise their children.

* Third, welfare reform should discourage teen pregnancy and promote responsible parenting. We must discourage irresponsible behavior that lands people on welfare in the first place, with a national campaign against teen pregnancy that lets young people know it is wrong to have a child outside marriage. Nobody should get pregnant or father a child who isn't prepared to raise the child, love the child, and take responsibility for the child's future.

I know members of Congress in both parties care about this issue. But many aspects of the current House plan would do more harm than good. Instead of refusing to help teen mothers and their children, we should require them to turn their lives around—to live at home with their parents, stay in school, and identify the child's father. We should demand responsible behavior from people on welfare, but it is wrong to make small children pay the price for their parents' mistakes.

* Finally, welfare reform should give states more flexibility in return for more accountability. I believe we must give states far more flexibility so they can do the things they want to today without seeking waivers. But in its current form, the House Republican bill may impede rather than promote reform and flexibility. The proposal leaves states vulnerable to economic recession and demographic change, putting working families at risk. States will have less money for child care, training, and other efforts to move people from welfare to work. And there will not be any accountability at the federal level for reducing fraud or protecting children. We will not achieve real reform or state flexibility if Congress just gives the states more burdens and less money, and fails to make work and responsibility the law of the land.

While the current House plan is weak on work, it is very tough on children. Cutting school lunches and getting tough on disabled children and children in foster care is not my idea of welfare reform. We all have a national interest in promoting the well-being of our children and in putting government back in line with our national values.

I appreciate all the work that you have done on this issue, and I am pleased that the country is finally engaging in this important debate. In the end, I believe we can work it out together, as long as we remember the values this debate is really about. The dignity of work, the bond of family, and the virtue of responsibility are not Republican values or Democratic values. They are American values—and no child in America should ever have to grow up without them.

Sincerely,

BILL CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard Gephardt, minority leader of the House of Representatives. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 21.

Remarks on the Appointment of Bonnie Campbell as Director of the Office of Violence Against Women

March 21, 1995

Thank you, Sarah, for your wonderful remarks and for the powerful example of your life. I was watching you speak today, thinking of your story, wondering how many other stories like yours there might have been if our society had responded more properly and how many more there will be now because we are going to do the right things.

I thank Attorney General Reno and Secretary Shalala, and of course, Senator Biden and Senator Hatch and Senator Boxer, Senator Harkin, Senator Kerry, Senator Moseley-Braun, Senator Wellstone—we've nearly got a quorum—[*laughter*]—Congresswoman DeLauro, Congresswoman Mink, Congresswoman Morella, Congresswoman Blanche Lambert Lincoln. I thank you all for being here.

This is an important day for me. This is an issue with which I have dealt as President, as a Governor, as an attorney general, as a citizen, going for years with my wife to the shelters in our State for battered women and their children, and as a human being. And I have looked forward to this day for a very long time.

We spend a lot of time in Washington, and we are now having a great and fascinating debate about what the role of this Government ought to be and how we're going to get into the next century and how we're going to create opportunity for all the American people. This is a good thing that we're doing. It's exciting, and I'm having a good time. But you know, let's be honest with each other. If children aren't safe in their homes, if college women aren't safe in their dorms, if mothers can't raise their children in safety, then the American dream will never be real for them, no matter what we do in economic policy, no matter how strong we are in standing against the forces that would seek to undermine our values beyond our borders. This is key to everything else we want to do.

So I applaud the Members of the Congress, and especially those who have been recognized already, especially Senator Biden and Senator Hatch, for recognizing that we had to take responsibility for trying to come to grips with issues that we ordinarily would think of as issues that belong to local law enforcement or local social agencies or even to the privacy of the home.

When we were fighting so hard last year to pass the crime bill, with the emphasis on more police and more punishment and more prisons and more prevention, one of the things that almost got lost was the Violence Against Women Act. I think it almost got lost for a very regrettable reason in this day and time: The Republicans and the Democrats weren't fighting about it. We really had a national consensus that we had to do something. And because we knew we had to do something and it passed, it was almost unnoticed.

But you know, domestic violence is now the number one health risk for women between the ages of 15 and 44 in our country. If you think about it, it's a bigger threat than cancer or car accidents. The incidence of rape is rising at 3 times the rate of the crime rate. The FBI estimates that a woman is beaten in this country once every 12 seconds. And we know, too, that often when a spouse is beaten, the children are beaten as well.

For too long, domestic violence has been considered purely a private matter. From now on, it is a problem we all share. What are we going to do about it? The first thing we have to do is do what we can to prevent violence. One part of the crime bill I am proudest of will help in our efforts to stop repeat offenses against women. It will prohibit individuals with a restraining order against them from purchasing or possessing a gun, no ifs, ands, or buts.

When crimes do occur, we must restore the rights of victims to their proper place. That means giving them the right to speak at sentencing hearings. And above all, it means helping victims rebuild their lives. We'll require sexual offenders to pay restitution to their victims. We must help people who suffer violence put their lives back on track and put the burdens on the criminals where they belong.

To help in prevention and in assisting victims, the crime bill establishes a Violence Against Women Office at the Department of Justice. Today I am pleased to announce that Bonnie