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legislation will lead to better services, a more responsive government, to safer streets, and to a stronger city for the citizens of this District. All of them deserve that, and America needs that.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:35 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Marion Barry of the District of Columbia and David Clarke, District of Columbia Council president. H.R. 1345, approved April 17, was assigned Public Law No. 104–8.

Statement on Signing the Executive Order on Classified National Security Information

April 17, 1995

Today I have signed an Executive order reforming the Government's system of secrecy. The order will lift the veil on millions of existing documents, keep a great many future documents from ever being classified, and still maintain necessary controls over information that legitimately needs to be guarded in the interests of national security.

In issuing this order, I am seeking to bring the system for classifying, safeguarding, and declassifying national security information into line with our vision of American democracy in the post-Cold War world.

This order strikes an appropriate balance. On the one hand, it will sharply reduce the permitted level of secrecy within our Government, making available to the American people and posterity most documents of permanent historical value that were maintained in secrecy until now.

On the other, the order enables us to safeguard the information that we must hold in confidence to protect our Nation and our citizens. We must continue to protect information that is critical to the pursuit of our national security interests. There are some categories of information—for example, the war plans we may employ or the identities of clandestine human assets—that must remain protected.

This order also will reduce the sizable costs of secrecy—the tangible costs of needlessly guarding documents and the intangible costs of depriving ourselves of the fullest possible flow of information.

This order establishes many firsts: Classifiers will have to justify what they classify; employees will be encouraged and expected to challenge improper classification and protected from retribution for doing so; and large-scale declassification won't be dependent on the availability of individuals to conduct a line-by-line review. Rather, we will automatically declassify hundreds of millions of pages of information that were classified in the past 50 years.

Similarly, we will no longer tolerate the excesses of the current system. For example, we will resolve doubtful calls about classification in favor of keeping the information unclassified. We will not permit the reclassification of information after it has been declassified and disclosed under proper authority. We will authorize agency heads to balance the public interest in disclosure against the national security interest in making declassification decisions. And, we will no longer presumptively classify certain categories of information, whether or not the specific information otherwise meets the strict standards for classification. At the same time, however, we will maintain every necessary safeguard and procedure to assure that appropriately classified information is fully protected.

Taken together, these reforms will greatly reduce the amount of information that we classify in the first place and the amount that remains classified. Perhaps most important, the reforms will create a classification system that Americans can trust to protect our national security in a reasonable, limited, and cost-effective manner.

In keeping with my goals and commitments, this order was drafted in an unprecedented environment of openness. We held open hearings and benefitted from the recommendations of interested Committees of Congress and nongovernmental organizations, groups, businesses, and individuals. The order I have signed today is stronger because of the advice we received

from so many sources. I thank all those who have helped to establish this new system as a model for protecting our national security within the framework of a Government of, by, and for the people.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,

April 17, 1995.

NOTE: The Executive order is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on the Crash of an Air Force C–21 in Alabama
April 18, 1995

Hillary and I were very saddened to learn of the crash of an Air Force C–21 aircraft near Alexander City, Alabama, last night, with the loss of eight lives. The death of these individuals is a tragic loss for the U.S. Air Force and the Nation. Their death reminds us all how much we are indebted to those military and civilian personnel who serve in the defense of our Nation. Our hearts and our prayers go out to the families and friends of those who were killed.

The President's News Conference
April 18, 1995

The President. Good evening. Ladies and gentlemen, before we begin the press conference, I want to express on behalf of Hillary and myself our profoundest condolences to the families and to the loved ones of the eight Americans who were killed in the crash of the Air Force plane in Alabama last night.

Tonight I want to talk about welfare reform. But before I do, I'd like to take just a minute to put welfare reform into the context of what is going on now in the United States Congress. Before the Easter break, the House of Representatives produced a flurry of ideas and proposals. Some of them were good. Some need work. Some should be rejected. My job is to work with people of good faith in both parties, in both Houses, to do what is best for America.

I was not elected to produce a pile of vetoes. And the Congress was not elected to produce a pile of political issues for the next election. My philosophy is that we have to go beyond this kind of politics-as-usual, the old debate about whether there should be more Government or less Government. I think we need a better and different Government that helps people who are helping themselves, one that offers opportunity but demands responsibility.

I have some common goals with the new Republican majority in the Congress. They say they want to reduce the deficit and the size of Government. I support that. My administration has reduced the deficit by $600 billion and is reducing the size of Government by over 250,000 people. In fact, if it were not for the interest we have to pay on the debt run up between 1981 and 1992, our Government's budget would be in balance today. Let me say that again, because I don't think the American people know that. If it were not for the interest we have to pay this year on the debt run up between 1981 and 1992, our Government's budget would be in balance today.

The Republicans say that they want to be tough on crime. Our crime bill is tough on crime, and I want to work with them to build on that. The Republicans are supporting the line-item veto, and so am I. I worked hard to get a version of the line-item veto passed through the Senate, and I look forward to working with them, actually getting agreement in both Houses and having a line-item veto come into law.

As we look ahead, the issue is, what are we going to do on the outstanding matters? I have commented at length on them before the news-