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viduals, families, and communities determine to help themselves.

These principles reflect an emerging consensus in the decades-long debate over urban policy. These principles are neither Democratic nor Republican: they are American. They will enable local communities, individuals and families, businesses, churches, community-based organizations, and civic groups to join together to seize the opportunities and to solve the problems in their own lives. They will put the private sector back to work for all families in all communities. I therefore invite the Congress to work with us on a bipartisan basis to implement an empowerment agenda for America's communities and families.

In a sense, poor communities represent an untapped economic opportunity for our whole country. While we work together to open foreign markets abroad to American-made goods and services, we also need to work together to open the economic frontiers of poor communities here at home. By enabling people and communities in genuine need to take greater responsibility for working harder and smarter together, we can unleash the greatest underused source of growth and renewal in each of the local regions that make up our national economy and civic life. This will be good for cities and suburbs, towns and villages, and rural and urban America. This will be good for families. This will be good for the country.

We have undertaken initiatives that seek to achieve these goals. Some seek to empower local communities to help themselves, including Empowerment Zones, Community Development banks, the Community Opportunity Fund, community policing, and enabling local schools and communities to best meet world-class standards. And some seek to empower individuals and families to help themselves, including our expansion of the earned-income tax cut for low- and moderate-income working families, and our proposals for injecting choice and competition into public and assisted housing and for a new G.I. Bill for America's Workers.

I am determined to end Federal budget deficits, and my balanced budget proposal shows that we can balance the budget without abandoning the investments that are vital to the security and prosperity of the country, now and in the future. I am confident that, working together, we can build common ground on an empowerment agenda while putting our fiscal house in order. I will do everything in my power to make sure this happens.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
August 3, 1995.

Remarks on Political Reform and an Exchange With Reporters

August 4, 1995

The President. Good afternoon. I have just finished a very productive and stimulating meeting with two outstanding Americans, John Gardner and Doris Kearns Goodwin. In the best tradition of our citizenship, they have set aside their very busy lives and concerns and work to take some time to come to Washington to try to help make political reform a reality.

We discussed how the trust of the American people has been eroded by what they see in Washington, by how the lobbyists hold sway more today then ever before. And the American people don't like it. The hardworking American families of this country know that they did not pay for the kind of influence that they see exercised too often in today's Congress.

When Congress treats telecommunications reform, for example, merely as a joust among would-be monopolists, ordinary consumers lose out. When the NRA hijacks a congressional hearing process, crime victims and police officers lose out. And everybody knows that last week's vote in the House to dramatically undermine our ability to enforce our environmental laws would not have happened if real campaign finance reform and real lobbying reform had been on the books.

For too long these issues have been mired in partisan in-fighting and paralyzed by special interests. We have an obligation to act when we can to move beyond partisanship. I had hoped we had reached such a point several

weeks ago in New Hampshire when I shook hands with Speaker Gingrich on a proposal made to us by an ordinary American in the audience that we create a political reform commission that would work more or less like the base closing commission to make recommendations on campaign finance reform and lobbying reform.

Shortly after I returned from New Hampshire, I sent the Speaker a letter putting forward my ideas on how to do that. That moment of optimism gave way to 5 weeks of silence. When I asked John Gardner and Doris Kearns Goodwin to help me make this happen, I certainly hoped that the respect and eminence that they bring to this process would help move things forward. If there were a commission, these are the kinds of people I would appoint to it.

We continue to hope that the Speaker will live up to his handshake and move forward on this commission. But we shouldn't wait, and Congress shouldn't either.

Today I am announcing that I will use the power of my office to bring the sunlight of full disclosure to the lobbying process in Washington. Right now lobbyists can operate in secret. They can lawfully conceal who they work for, what loopholes or contracts or regulations they are seeking to pass, or what actions they are seeking to stop. And lobbying of the executive branch isn't disclosed at all.

Last week, an overwhelming bipartisan majority in the United States Senate voted for lobbying reform. But the House leadership has made it clear that they will not even schedule a vote on this measure for quite a long while. Delay, debate, and division: that's the same old thing. They won't put lobbyists in their proper place in our governmental structure.

So today I have decided to act on my own within my executive authority. I am requesting the Attorney General to prepare an Executive order that would bar executive branch employees from meeting with any lobbyist who does not fully disclose his or her activities to the public. In other words, if lobbyists want to contact the executive branch, fine, they can. That's an important part of our work here. But they can do it only if they tell the public who they are, what they're working on, how much they're spending, and what policy they are pushing or trying to block. We will, in other words, follow the strict and meaningful standards of the Senate bill. From now on, the executive branch will operate as if the Senate bill had become law.

I have now acted on lobby reform. Now there is no excuse for congressional delay. The Senate has done its work. I urge the House to finish the job. This is really a moment for real bipartisan progress on political reform. In recent days, strong and often growing bipartisan majorities in the United States Senate have voted to preserve, first of all, public funding of Presidential campaigns—something John Gardner here did so much to create—to schedule a vote on campaign finance reform over the objection of the Senate majority leader and to pass a tough gift and lobby reform program in the Senate.

This bipartisan impulse is our best hope for true and lasting reform. But to get there it will have to spread to the House, which has been moving back into the past, not going forward into the future. That is our challenge today.

From the reform victories of the turn of the century progressives to the changes that followed Watergate, moments of national renewal have always called forth people of good will, regardless of party, who were willing to do what it takes to change things for the better. This is part of our national history, and it must be part of our common ground.

I call on Congress to join us here to pass lobby reform and campaign finance reform, to do it in a bipartisan way, and to restore the public trust. In the meanwhile, I am going to establish lobby reform in the executive branch by enacting by Executive order the bill passed by the United States Senate.

I'd like now to invite John Gardner and Doris Kearns Goodwin to say a few words.

[*At this point, John W. Gardner, founder of Common Cause, and historian Doris Kearns Goodwin made brief remarks.*]

Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich

Q. Mr. President, the Speaker today said that the reason he hasn't responded to the handshake is because his priority now is saving Medicare and that you're not doing anything to save Medicare and why not focus in on that as an issue instead of political and campaign finance reform.

The President. First of all, it takes no energy at all. He doesn't have to do anything in the Congress right now. All he has to do is to do what he said he'd do when he shook hands with me. Let's set up a commission. He can

make his appointments, Senator Dole can make his appointments, I'll make my appointments, and Senator Daschle and Congressman Gephardt can make their appointments, and then let the commission go do its work. That is not a persuasive reason. There is nothing to do. That takes about 2 or 3 hours of staff time and about 30 minutes of his time.

So—and let's say this. Our administration has made the Medicare Trust Fund better. Their Medicare cuts are not necessary either to fix the Trust Fund or to balance the budget. Over half of their Medicare cuts—or roughly half of them—are increased costs to beneficiaries of Medicare which will not put one red cent into the Medicare Trust Fund. That is not what this is about.

We have shown you can balance the budget without hurting people on Medicare. And that's what I think the Speaker and the majority in the House and the Senate ought to say they want to do. And when they say that, we can resolve further problems with the Medicare Trust Fund. I have shown I'm willing to deal with that. I proposed some savings to help deal with that. This is not about the Medicare Trust Fund. This is about whether these beneficiaries are going to be soaked for no good reason.

Campaign Finance Reform

Q. Mr. President, why not take the same kind of unilateral action on campaign finance reform as you seem to be doing on lobbying reform, say, with respect to soft money donations to the party? And does the party understand fully, sir, your feelings about them selling access to you to big money donors?

The President. Yes, and we changed that. And we can change that. And I have no problem changing that. That is wrong.

I think—by the way, I think that the President and that any other person in public office ought to meet with his or her supporters, including financial supporters. I think that's important. I would do that anyway. I have always done that; from the time I was attorney general of my State I have done that. But it is wrong to raise money on the promise of guaranteed specific kinds of access. That is wrong, and we stopped that.

Now, the difference is, I can do this lobby reform and hold the executive branch to a higher standard and challenge the Congress to follow suit in a way that does not in any way undermine the public interest. But if I hold the Democrats to a standard which in effect paralyzes them financially, in comparison to the Republicans, I will be punishing the very public interest that I seek to advance because it will make it less likely that there will be competitive elections.

The American people's only chance to make the right choices is when there are genuine competitive elections. I would love nothing better—if I could get an agreement with the Republican Party we could shut this whole thing down tomorrow. We could, by mutual agreement, at least change the party rules on campaign finance reform. And if they would do it, we could do it and we wouldn't have to wait for Congress to act.

Telecommunications Reform

Q. You mentioned the telecommunications bill, sir. Have the changes that have been made to it today made it any more acceptable to you?

The President. Well, I want to wait and see what happens. I know that they acted to try to stop one person from being able to own television stations, newspapers, radios, and cable networks in the same market. That was a very important step forward. I congratulate the House on that. Did the V-chip amendment pass? They're working on that. That's also very important to me.

As you know, I issued a letter on the House bill, which was changed markedly after it came out of committee—that's a very unusual procedure—setting forth the concerns that I have, the Vice President shares, our administration has. We'll just have to review the bill when it gets in its final form.

Bosnia and Croatia

Q. What about the war in Croatia? Are you concerned that that could spread into an all-out war in the Balkans?

The President. Yes—well, I'm concerned that it could spread the war in Bosnia and in the Croatia-Serbia area.

Let me just back up and say the Croatian offensive originally was launched in response to the Serb attack on Bihac, one of the protected areas. And it has largely, apparently, relieved a lot of pressure on Bihac. But because it is so comprehensive, it runs the risk of a wider war. And that is what we have cautioned against in our contacts with the Croats.

Q. So, Mr. President, you're saying that the actual offensive is justified?

The President. I explained that the original Croatian action, which we were told by the Croatian Government they would feel compelled to take, was animated by the Serbian attack on Bihac. But we have asked them to exercise real restraint because we are very concerned about a wider war.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:15 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Statement on the 30th Anniversary of the Voting Rights Act

August 4, 1995

This Sunday, August 6, 1995, marks the 30th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act, guaranteeing the right to vote to all Americans, regardless of race. Passed by a bipartisan majority in Congress and signed by President Lyndon Johnson after years of struggle, the Voting Rights Act has correctly been recognized as the single most important civil rights law our Nation has ever adopted. It was accomplished through the sacrifice of thousands of Americans of all colors who courageously faced down a terrible injustice.

At the time the Voting Rights Act was enacted, people of color in many parts of the country were denied the right to exercise the most fundamental right of American democracy—the right to vote. African-American voter registration was practically non-existent in many areas due to an organized system of disenfranchisement, often backed by brutal intimidation, designed to fence people out of the political process.

In the 30 years since the enactment of the Voting Rights Act, minority registration rates have soared and thousands of people who once could not get elected simply because of the color of their skin are serving in Congress, State houses, and city halls throughout the country.

More important than those results, however, has been the effect of opening our democracy to all Americans. The Voting Rights Act guarantees that no American need ever again be afraid to register to vote, no American need ever again fear the walk to the polling place, no American need ever again fear that their vote is not wanted or will not count.

In signing the law, President Johnson said, "This act flows from a clear and simple wrong. Its only purpose is to right that wrong . . . The wrong is one which no American, in his heart, can justify. The right is one which no American, true to our principles, can deny."

On this 30th anniversary, my administration reaffirms its commitment to the full enforcement of the Voting Rights Act. We must continue to protect the right of every American to fully participate in the electoral process. I challenge Americans of all races and colors to rededicate ourselves to exercising our precious right to vote. Voting is the oxygen of democracy, and millions of Americans have given their last breath to keep that right alive. So, even as we celebrate 30 years of righting a terrible wrong, we must keep working to make sure that 30 years from now, every American over the age of 18 is a voting American.

Statement on Signing the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations and Rescissions Legislation

August 4, 1995

On July 27, 1995, I approved H.R. 1944, the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations for Additional Disaster Assistance, for Anti-terrorism Initiatives, for Assistance in the Recovery from the Tragedy that Occurred at Oklahoma City, and Rescissions Act, 1995. This legislation shows