

out. But meanwhile, I'm going to do my best to take care of the American people.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

President's Wedding Anniversary

Q. What did you get for your anniversary? [Laughter]

The President. I got a number of things, but one of the most interesting things I got was

from my wife. It was two old pictures of us together 20 years ago blown up.

Q. Show us. [Laughter]

The President. My daughter had unfavorable comments on men's styles in the 1970's. [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:45 a.m. from the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Remarks at a Swearing-In Ceremony for AmeriCorps Volunteers October 12, 1995

If she hasn't made the case, there's nothing for me to say. [Laughter]

Thank you, Michelle Johnson Harvey, for that remarkable statement. And thank you and all of your colleagues here for your dedication to your country, to your community and your participation in AmeriCorps. Thank you, Don Doran, for the work that you have permitted AmeriCorps to do with you and your school in Atlanta.

And I thank Senator Harris Wofford for his willingness to take up this service at this important time in the history of our country and the history of AmeriCorps. We just swore him in—the Vice President swore him in over in the Oval Office with Mrs. Wofford and his entire family and his extended family of friends. And he pointed out that at least I had told him what I expected him to do. He said that once before he was sworn in in the Oval Office, and President Kennedy swore him in and then told him what his job was going to be. [Laughter] So I feel that after 30 years we're at least making some progress in the Government's obligation to fully disclose to its—[laughter]—public servants what they are expected to do.

I want to thank Jim Joseph, the Chairman of the Board, who is about to become our distinguished Ambassador to South Africa, and all the other supporters of the AmeriCorps program and the other volunteer efforts that are here.

And I want to say, of course, a special word of thanks to my friend of 25 years, Eli Segal, for the remarkable job he did in creating AmeriCorps and getting it off to a good start. Thank you for a brilliant job.

I want to thank the supporters of AmeriCorps in the Congress, including those who are here,

Senator Jeffords from Vermont, Congressman Sawyer from Ohio, Congresswoman Karen McCarthy from Kansas City. She got one of her constituents up here, and I saw her bursting with pride. Congressman Green from Texas and Congressman Tim Roemer from Indiana. We're glad to see all of you. And we thank you for your support.

A year ago, in one of my proudest moments as President, I challenged 20,000 citizens to join us in a new American adventure, rooted in our most fundamental values of personal responsibility, educational opportunities, service to others, and commitment to community. I asked those 20,000 Americans to put their values into action through AmeriCorps, because service is a spark to rekindle the spirit of democracy in an age of uncertainty. Well, the times may be uncertain because they're changing so rapidly, but I am certain that the flame of democracy is burning brighter all across America today because of people like Michelle Johnson Harvey and her friends who helped to close those crack houses and give those children safe streets to walk, and because of the thousands and thousands of other AmeriCorps volunteers and the many thousands more whom they recruited to work to build houses, to immunize children, to educate, to help to solve all the community problems that are being faced at the grassroots level.

You know, it is true that this idea was consciously born as a nonbureaucratic, grassroots, community-based, totally nonpartisan idea. I became enamored of the idea of community service because I saw what it could do as a Gov-

error and because I was working with a group in the late eighties and early nineties, the Democratic Leadership Council, and we devised a proposal. And Senator Nunn, who just a couple of days ago announced his retirement from the Congress, and some others, when President Bush was in office, proposed a pilot project. And President Bush was good enough to sign the bill that passed, and we did begin this.

And then when I ran for President, I saw all over America these community groups like the City Year group in Boston, which is now spreading across the country like wildfire. I saw them everywhere, these young people full of energy and ideas, across racial lines, across income lines, people who had never shared any common experiences before coming together and literally creating a new future for people one-on-one and for communities and solving problems that we could never begin to solve here in Washington, DC. And I was determined that if I ever had the chance to do it as President, I would try to create a national commitment to community service all across the country that would give our young people a chance to give something back to their communities and to advance their education at the same time. That is what we are doing.

At a time when, once again, we are asking ourselves whether we are too divided in our perceptions of reality and our attitudes toward all the things that are going on in America to be a real community, the members of AmeriCorps put the lie to all of that. They show us once again that if you can just get good people together, no matter how different their backgrounds are, and you give them a chance to share common values and to work on a common problem or to seize a common opportunity, and you give them a chance to do it together, day-in and day-out, they will change everybody's preconceived notions of what is possible in America. They will prove, once and for all, again in this age, that the American idea is a universal idea, that the notion of personal responsibility, the notion of opportunity for everybody, the notion that we're all better and stronger when we work together than when we are divided, that those things are universal, that they are rooted in a fundamental truth about human nature and that there is no power like it anywhere. That's what these young people in AmeriCorps prove day-in and day-out.

I'm so grateful for all of the things they've done. They've fought forest fires in Idaho. They've helped people after floods in Houston. They've built homes in Miami. They've, as you heard, helped to raise reading scores dramatically in Kentucky, a model I hope will be copied in schools all across America. They've helped to prevent lead poisoning in Portland. They've helped troubled youths to care for people in nursing homes in Boston. They certainly came to the rescue after Oklahoma City, some of them in truly remarkable ways. They simply put themselves on the line to prove that things are still possible in America.

No one could ever meet these young people and listen to their stories and continue to be cynical about the prospect of Americans working together. I met a young woman named Velaida "Cricket" Shepard when we had our economic conference in Portland, Oregon, last June. And she was trying to talk about AmeriCorps, and she began to cry. She almost couldn't get through her statement. Michelle didn't have that problem. [Laughter] I thought she was going to declare for President right here in the middle of her speech. [Laughter] But this young woman talked about getting up at 6 o'clock every morning so she could make sure a young girl she was mentoring got to school on time; so she could make sure that no family problem this child had—nothing would keep that child from school; so she could make sure that no amount of disappointment in her own life, no amount of personal injury that child had suffered, emotional injury, would keep her from becoming what she ought to be.

That young girl, who was troubled, was marked for failure, has now become a role model in her school. And at the same time, Cricket Shepard has gone on to other challenges to help other young people do the same, and AmeriCorps is helping her to get an education at Portland State University.

This is the kind of thing that we ought to be doing, folks. No one knows here in Washington what the really most important problem is in Kansas City, but the people in Kansas City know. No one wakes up every morning in Washington thinking about whether, in a given community, they need most to close crack houses or build Habitat for Humanity homes or keep beaches clean or tutor students. But the people in those communities know.

I have been overwhelmed by the broad and deep support for AmeriCorps from people from all walks of life. We know that it is not only consistent with our values and a good thing to do, it also happens to be cost-efficient and it works. We know that from independent economists, from evaluators, even the GAO says that it more than pays its way and actually costs less than we had originally estimated it would.

So I say to you today that as we debate this great national question of how to balance the budget, we can balance the budget without turning our backs on these young people. We can balance the budget without forgetting the fundamental lesson, which is that if you can create a national movement with no bureaucracy that explodes human energy at the grassroots level, you can put the lie to all this business about how we are bound to be divided by race, by region, by income, by walk of life, just by letting them live and do what they know to do. And that is what we ought to do.

AmeriCorps should be continued for far more than the some 25,000 young people that will be involved in it this year, far more than the 2,000 communities in all 50 States that will be benefited, far more than the many, many tens of thousands of other volunteers, that they will make it possible to work because they will organize them. It should be continued if, for no other reason, that it proves that the American idea is alive and well and can meet the challenges of the 21st century, to restore our values, to strengthen us at the grassroots level. It can

be a shining symbol that there is no need for cynicism, no need for defeatism, and no need for tolerance of division in the United States of America. That's why we should continue AmeriCorps.

So I would like to begin this next year of AmeriCorps by asking all of the members who are here and all of those who are with us via satellite in Kansas City to join me in taking the AmeriCorps pledge.

Please stand and repeat after me, if you're not all standing. Stand up—it'll be good for all of us to do it. [*Laughter*] This would be a good pledge for the citizens of the United States:

I will get things done for America, to make our people safer, smarter, and healthier. I will bring Americans together to strengthen our communities. Faced with apathy, I will take action. Faced with conflict, I will seek common ground. Faced with adversity, I will persevere. I will carry this commitment with me this year and beyond. I am an AmeriCorps member. And I am going to get things done.

[*The AmeriCorps volunteers repeated each line of the pledge after the President.*]

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:40 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Michelle Johnson Harvey, AmeriCorps member, and Don Doran, principal, Benteen Elementary School.

Statement on Signing the Small Business Lending Enhancement Act of 1995

October 12, 1995

I am pleased to sign into law today S. 895, the "Small Business Lending Enhancement Act of 1995." This Act would, among other things, establish new guarantee levels for guaranteed loan programs of the Small Business Administration (SBA).

S. 895, which the Congress passed at my Administration's urging, contains important elements of the Vice President's National Performance Review proposals and SBA's reinvention proposal. The Act is also consistent with rec-

ommendations from this spring's White House Conference on Small Business.

S. 895 reduces the Government's cost of small business financing, thereby enabling even more customers to be served. With the program reforms contained in this Act, SBA will be able to extend up to \$33 million in additional loan guarantees per day with no additional cost to the taxpayer.

I am pleased to sign this measure into law because it reflects my Administration's commit-