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U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

Lee Jackson
Stephen Kaminski
Katherine Kellogg
Technical Sergeant Shelly Kelly
James Lewek
Frank Maier
Charles Meissner
William Morton
Walter Murphy
Lawrence Payne
Nathaniel Nash
Leonard Pieroni
Captain Timothy Schafer
John Scoville
I. Donald Terner
P. Stuart Tholan
Technical Sergeant Cheryl Ann Turnage
Naomi Warbasse
Robert Al Whittaker

Today we bring their bodies back home to America, but their souls are surely at home with God. We welcome them home. We miss them. We ask God to be with them and their families.

God bless you all, and God bless our beloved Nation. Amen.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:20 p.m. in Hangar 706 at Dover Air Force Base.

Remarks at the Annual Easter Egg Roll
April 8, 1996

Where is Bernie? Is he behind me? Oh, here you go.

Well, let me say I always look forward to this every year. And the forecast today, believe it or not, was for snow. But we knew that the Easter Egg Roll wouldn't be spoiled, and just look what a wonderful day we have.

So let me say I want to join Hillary in thanking all of you who have contributed to make this Egg Roll successful. I want to thank all of you for coming and all of those who will come. This is a wonderful day for all the children who come here, and it really belongs to the children. And I love looking out and seeing all these smiling faces of parents with their children. I sometimes think the parents have more fun than the children do, but it really is for the children, so all of you like me, who like this, try to restrain yourselves so that the kids can stay front and center.

It is a great honor for us to be a part of this. It is one of the things that we are really thankful for, the opportunity to live in the White House, to do, because it gives America's children a chance to come here and be a part of this. I hope you have a wonderful, wonderful day.

And I think it is time to start. So I want Bernie to come up here and blow the whistle to start the Egg Roll. He has been doing this every year for a few years—[*laughter*]—and we are honored to have him again. He is as much an institution of this Egg Roll as anything else we do. So let's give him a big hand and let's begin. Bernie Fairbanks, come on.

All right, we've got one track here and one track here. And I'm going to blow the whistle, and both of you start at the same time, okay? All right, one, two, three.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:50 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Remarks on Signing the Line Item Veto Act and an Exchange With Reporters
April 9, 1996

The President. Good morning. I want to welcome Senator Nickles and Congressmen Cardin, Spratt, Goss, and Solomon here; Governor Romer; Ed Lupberger, the chairman of the

United States Chamber of Commerce; Marne Obernauer, the vice chairman of the American Business Conference; David Keating, the CEO of the National Taxpayers Union; Al From, from the Democratic Leadership Council; and Fred Greenstein, a distinguished Presidential historian from Princeton who has also supported the bill I am signing today.

It gives me great pleasure today to sign into law the line item veto. This is a bipartisan achievement that has been long sought by Presidents, long supported by Members of Congress and by Governors. It will help us to cut waste and to balance the budget.

For years, Presidents of both parties have pounded this very desk in frustration at having to sign necessary legislation that contained special interest boondoggles, tax loopholes, and pure pork. The line item veto will give us a chance to change that, to permit Presidents to better represent the public interest by cutting waste, protecting taxpayers, and balancing the budget.

We all know that this is needed because too often, as vital bills move through Congress, they can become clogged with items that would never pass on their own. Presidents often have no choice but to sign these bills because of their main purpose. This new law will give the President the power to cancel specific spending items and specific tax loopholes that benefit special interests. These proposals can then be debated and subject to an open vote on the floor of Congress. A fresh air of public accountability will blow through the Federal budget.

This law gives the President tools to cut wasteful spending, and even more important, it empowers our citizens, for the exercise of this veto or even the possibility of its exercise will throw a spotlight of public scrutiny onto the darkest corners of the Federal budget.

I have advocated the line item veto for a long time. When I was Governor, I used it, and it helped us to balance 12 budgets in a row. Forty-three of our fifty Governors have the line item veto. Governor Romer is with us because so many of the Nation's Governors have supported this measure for so long. The line item veto will help us to bring common sense to our Nation's Capital, just as it has to State capitals all across America.

Let me say, I am particularly pleased that this measure received support from both parties, working together for the public good. That's the way we should meet all of our challenges in America, and it's the only way we can balance the budget in the right way.

I am very proud that we have cut the deficit in half since I took office. The line item veto will help the President cut the budget deficit even further. But we have to pass a 7-year balanced budget and to do it in a way that reflects our fundamental values. The Congress and the executive branch have now identified over $700 billion of savings common to both plans. That is more than enough to balance the budget and have a modest tax cut.

So I hope that we can do what we did with the line item veto: work together and pass a good balanced budget plan. That will bring these interest rates down; it will reassure the financial markets; and it will keep economic growth going in the United States.

Let me say in closing before I sign the bill that it is customary for a President to give the pens he uses to sign a bill into law to those who did the most for its passage. So I am honored today to send the very first four pens that are used here to the former Presidents who also made the line item veto their cause, President Reagan and President Ford, President Carter, President Bush. I thank them, and our country thanks them. Their successors will be able to use this power that they long sought to eliminate waste from the Federal budget, to advance our values and protect our priorities as we move into the 21st century.

Thank you.

[*At this point, the President signed the legislation.*]

Separation of Powers Doctrine

Q. Doesn't this transcend the Founding Fathers' separation of powers and give the President too much power?

The President. I don't think so. We've worked hard to—we anticipate that it will be challenged. We've worked hard to provide for a means for it to be resolved quickly. But this leaves ultimate hands in the authority of the Congress. They can take all these separate issues back and vote on them separately. And I think all of us believe that as long as that is done, that we don't violate the constitutional separation of powers doctrine.

And the constitutions of our various States are modeled pretty closely on the Federal Constitution. They all have separation of powers

doctrines, and the Governors have had this authority in almost all the States and have used it well and without any upsetting of the constitutional framework.

As long as the practical impact of this is to force these matters to be considered separately, I don't think there's any question that it's not a violation of the separation of powers. Now of course, others in authority and the judicial branch will have their opportunity to say differently, but I believe it will be upheld.

Liberia

Q. Mr. President, what's the latest word you have on the situation in Liberia? And will you be forced to order Americans evacuated from Liberia?

The President. Well, let me say, first of all, since the—for the last several days we've been keeping very close watch on it. We have a number of Americans there in Monrovia, and we have put in place the pieces necessary to do everything possible to assure their safety. And we're watching it very closely. We have not made a decision from here. I'm not sure we should make a decision from here on their evacuation. We're working with the Embassy, and we're being guided in significant measure by what they know to be the facts on the ground there. But we have tried to put in place backup measures which would permit us to protect the Americans as quickly as possible, should that become necessary.

Q. Have you received any assurances on their safety?

The President. Well, we've done the best we could. You know, it's hard for anybody to assure their safety in the sense that conflict is going on in the capital. But we believe that we've made the right decision so far with regard to their situation, and we're watching it very closely.

Line Item Veto

Q. Mr. President, the critics of the line item veto have said that it will allow a President to wheel and deal with a Senator or a Congressman or a group of Senators or Congressmen and to threaten them with this power. What could you say—not to question your integrity or whatever—what would you say to the American people that you would not and your successors would not abuse this power?

The President. Well, first of all, every power given to the Congress or to the President or to the courts is, I suppose, susceptible of some abuse, and we have a system of checks and balances there. My argument is, number one, there's obviously some negotiations that go on over legislation all the time now—and almost always, by the way, fully reported by you in the press, whether we like it or not. [*Laughter*]

Number two, keep in mind, the protection—the protection the Members have is that if the President goes overboard and says, "If you don't vote for me on some other bill, or this bill, I'm not going to allow your project in here"—if the President started doing that, and it was unrelated to the real merits of the underlying spending provision, then I believe the Congress would respond by passing these bills separately.

Keep in mind the ultimate protection the Congress has: If the President abuses his authority, the ultimate protection the Congress has is the clear ability to have these bills voted on separately and publicly. And then the President's veto gets singled out. The President could veto that spending bill again, too. Then the President would be ultimately held accountable by the people, through the reporting of the process in the press.

And let me also say that I found—you know, I was a Governor for quite a long time before I came here, and what I found was—and I'm sure Governor Romer could corroborate this—is that once this mechanism is in place and people understand that the Executive is prepared to use it, it becomes necessary to use it less, that its main benefit after a few years is that it exists in reserve, because it changes the whole shape of the budget negotiations and makes these bills less subject to this sort of catch-all spending.

Now, it will take some years, perhaps, for that to happen here, but we are doing this for the long run. None of us who have supported this—and I'm sure the representatives from the business groups, the taxpayers unions, and others would say the same thing—none of us have ever pretended that this was some sort of miraculous cure-all. But we believe it will put discipline into this budget, and it will really help over the long run to give the American people a kind of budgeting process they need, as well as reducing waste and helping to move the budget into balance.

Thank you.

Q. Are you sure you will be using it next year?

The President. Well, that's up to the bosses out there. But I'll tell you this, I was more than happy—the majority in the Congress wanted to wait until January to put it in, for their own reasons, and when I was asked about it, without a moment's hesitation, I said yes. That was a reasonable compromise for me.

I think this is so important that we shouldn't—if they want to take it out of the context of this year's elections and the fall's budget negotiations, I think it is so important to get into the law for the long run it was fine with me. I was very happy to do that. I don't have any problem with it. We did it. It's the right thing to do, and it's been done, and we did it together, and that's the way we ought to do more things.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:15 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Roy Romer of Colorado. S. 4, approved April 9, was assigned Public Law No. 104–130.

Statement on Signing the Line Item Veto Act

April 9, 1996

Today I am very pleased to sign into law S. 4, the Line Item Veto Act.

This new law shows what we can achieve when we put our partisan differences aside and work together for the Nation. Members of both parties have fought for this legislation because they believed that no matter which party has control of the White House or the Congress, the line item veto would be good for the country.

I have consistently supported a Presidential line item veto as a Governor, as a candidate for President in 1992, and as President the last 3 years.

Starting with Ulysses S. Grant, Presidents of both parties have sought the line item veto so they could eliminate waste in the Federal budget. Most recently, Presidents Reagan and Bush called for its passage, as did many Members of Congress.

With this authority, Presidents will have a valuable new tool to ensure that the Federal Government is spending public resources as wisely as possible. It will permit the President to cancel discretionary spending, new entitlement authority, and tax provisions that benefit special interests at the expense of the public interest.

This carefully defined authority is also a practical and principled means of serving the constitutional balance of powers. The modern congressional practice of presenting the President with omnibus legislation reduces the President's ability to play the role in enacting laws that the Constitution intended. This new authority brings us closer to the Founders' view of an effective executive role in the legislative process. The President will be able to prevent the Congress from enacting special interest provisions under the cloak of a 500- or 1,000-page bill. Special interest provisions that do not serve the national interest will no longer escape proper scrutiny.

No one, of course, believes the line item veto is a cure-all for the budget deficit. Indeed, even without the line item veto, we are already cutting the deficit in half—as I had promised to do when I ran for President. But the line item veto will provide added discipline by ensuring that as tight budgets increasingly squeeze our resources, we will put our public funds to the best possible uses.

I call on the leaders of the Congress, in the spirit of bipartisanship reflected in today's bill signing, to join me in continuing to make progress. We should move ahead by reaching an agreement to balance the budget by 2002.

Over the last several months, I have worked closely with congressional leaders to reach such an agreement. In fact, we have about $700 billion in common savings. We should finish our work this year.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON