

update, and then we'll make a decision about what's the most helpful thing I can do. I'm certainly prepared to put in whatever time and effort I can on this to be a constructive force. That's the most important thing.

Thanks.

*Q.* Have you offered to send a U.S. delegation over there if that's necessary, sir?

*The President.* Well, I think—let me just say—I would say on that—let me give you the same answer I did before to the other question. I'm going to be guided very heavily by Secretary Christopher's advice on that.

We are watching these events as they unfold, trying to keep up with them, trying to do what we can to have a constructive impact. And after

I talk to him, if he believes that's the right thing to do, then that's something I would consider. But I do not—I want to do what will be constructive. I do not want to do anything that will not be helpful.

So, we're going to talk again today and see where we are and then see what the next step should be.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:45 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House, prior to his departure for Capitol Hill. In his remarks, he referred to Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority and Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel.

## Remarks on the Legislative Accomplishments of the 104th Congress and an Exchange With Reporters September 26, 1996

*The President.* Thank you very much, Mr. Vice President. Let me join the Vice President in thanking Senator Daschle and Congressman Gephardt for their strong leadership in this session of Congress. Here at the end we have had a real spate of positive legislation coming out: improving our environment through safe drinking water and the pesticide protection act; health care reform; reforms in the pension systems for people who work for small businesses; the raise in the minimum wage. This has been a remarkable, remarkable last few days, and these leaders have worked very hard to gather support for this legislation and to work in a constructive manner with those in the Republican majority.

But they have also done something else. They have protected Medicare, Medicaid, education, the environment, workers' pension funds, the earned-income tax credit for hard-working people and still continued to work toward a balanced budget, and I came here to thank them for that. I believe the American people want a Congress that will fight for the interests of working families, expand education opportunities, balance the budget in the right way and never, ever shut the Government down again. And I am committed to that; I know that they are.

Let me say that the strategy we have been pursuing for 4 years now is clearly working. The strategy of opportunity for all, responsibility from all, and a community which includes all people who are willing to do their part is plainly working. We not only have 10½ million jobs, the lowest unemployment rate in 7½ years, 4 years of declining deficits for the first time since before the Civil War so that now we've got a 60 percent reduction, but we saw the census numbers.

You heard the Vice President's headlines. Let me read you what today's headlines should be: Typical household income up \$898 in 1995, after inflation; family income up over \$1,600; since our economic plan passed the interest rates dropped and the economy started to grow. The largest decline in income inequality in 27 years—the largest decline in income inequality in 27 years; the largest decline in the number of Americans living in poverty in 27 years. These are remarkable turnarounds from a condition that many people thought was inevitable—from the American people growing apart, now we're growing together as we work together.

We had the biggest drop in the poverty rate in over a decade, the lowest poverty rates ever recorded for African-Americans and for senior citizens, the biggest drop in child poverty in

20 years and the biggest drop in poverty in female-headed households in 30 years. This country is on the right track, and we need to bear down and pursue that course.

And these leaders and their Members have helped us to do that, and for that I am very, very grateful.

Thank you.

#### *Budget Negotiations*

*Q.* Mr. President, in terms of the budget, do you feel like an 800-pound gorilla because Republicans have been seemingly willing to give you much of what you wanted, had no taste for a Government shutdown, a continuing resolution? Could you tell us what your feelings about that are?

*The President.* Well, I feel good about it, but that is the way that our Government has traditionally worked. We've gotten together, worked together, and made principled compromises, and we did make principled compromises here. And we're continuing to bring the deficit down and work toward a balanced budget. We must do that. I am for that.

And I am very gratified. I think the American people made it quite clear that they do not support the Government-shutdown way of governing America. They want us to work together, and I'm pleased by that.

*Q.* Are you satisfied with continuing resolutions?

*The President.* Well, we're still negotiating on that. I hope I will be. I'm satisfied with the process so far, but I haven't seen the product. So let me see the product before I tell you that.

#### *Immigration Legislation*

*Q.* Mr. President, are you willing to sign the congressional immigration report or in the conference report can still changes be made? What's your view?

*The President.* First of all, I'm gratified that we got the Gallegly amendment out of the immigration bill. I thought that was the right thing to do, certainly the right thing for children. Every law enforcement group in America supported our position. I feel good about it.

I want to withhold further comments on the immigration bill because it is a subject of intense negotiation now and they're working on how it might be resolved in the context of the continuing resolution and moving to get Congress out of town. So I don't want to say anything that will complicate the work that's being done. I hope some progress can be made there.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:14 p.m. at the Longworth House Office Building, following a meeting with Democratic congressional leaders.

## Remarks in a Telephone Conversation With Astronaut Shannon Lucid

*September 26, 1996*

*The President.* Hello.

*Ms. Lucid.* Hello.

*The President.* Welcome home.

*Ms. Lucid.* Why, thank you so much. It's so kind of you to call.

*The President.* Well, we're all so proud of you. We've been watching you, and I couldn't believe you walked off the shuttle.

*Ms. Lucid.* Well, I'm just really proud to be an American, and I'm just really proud to be part of this cooperative program that we have going with the Russians. It was just a great mission. And I just had a great time.

*The President.* Well, it was wonderful. And as I said, the whole country followed you, but

I appreciate what you said about the cooperation with Russia, too. It really sets the stage for the work on the international space station. And it's very, very important. And I believe the way you captured the public imagination will also help us to build long-term support for the space program.

*Ms. Lucid.* Well, I think so. Of course, I don't know from a political standpoint or from the big boss standpoint, but I just know from the people that are actually working, you know, like the Cosmonauts and the Astronauts working together, that this works out just great. They were just wonderful people to work with.