

June 24 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1998

The President. At the arrival ceremony, which is—well, you know where it is, right off Tiananmen Square. There is no speech, it is just—you know, and by the way, the United States is the only country that I'm aware of where we have little remarks at the arrival ceremony.

Every country I go to, it is the same thing. I get out; you go through the ritual; and then you go in and begin your meetings. But I will say what I have to say in other forums.

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President. We appreciate your time.

The President. I enjoyed it.

Q. And we hope you will wear this hat.

The President. I love this hat. It's quite pretty.

Q. Hey, you look good in it.

The President. Thank you very, very much.

NOTE: The interview was taped at approximately 10:20 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for later broadcast, and the transcript was embargoed for release until 3 p.m. In his remarks, the President referred to President Jiang Zemin of China; and freed Chinese dissident Wang Dan. The journalists who conducted the interview were Arin Basu, Feng Xiao Ming, and Patricia Hindman. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Statement Announcing the Benchmarking Process in Federal Procurement

June 24, 1998

Today I am pleased to announce policies that continue my commitment to expand economic opportunity for all Americans. These new guidelines for Federal procurement are designed to remedy discrimination in a carefully targeted way. These reforms, which continue my promise to mend, not end affirmative action, expand opportunities for small disadvantaged businesses.

These new guidelines allow small disadvantaged businesses to receive a price credit of up to 10 percent in bidding for Federal contracts. The credits will be available only in industries that show the ongoing effects of discrimination. The Department of Commerce identified these industries through a process called benchmarking, which compares the actual share of Federal procurement by small disadvan-

taged firms to the share that would be expected in the absence of discrimination. Limiting credits to these industries satisfies constitutional requirements while targeting our efforts in areas where disparities still exist.

This program is based on authority given the administration by Congress in 1994. These credits will help level the playing field for firms that have suffered from discrimination. However, they do not ensure that any firm will win a contract. Small disadvantaged businesses must compete with all other businesses to win Federal contracts.

The steps we are taking today comply with legal requirements and preserve competition, while serving to remedy discrimination.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Proposed Hate Crimes Prevention Legislation

June 24, 1998

Dear _____:

I am writing to urge the Senate (House) to act quickly this year to pass the Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 1998. This crucial legislation would expand the ability of the Justice Department to prosecute hate crimes by removing

needless jurisdictional requirements for existing crimes and by giving Federal prosecutors the power to prosecute hate crimes committed because of the victim's sexual orientation, gender, or disability.

As you know, there have been a number of recent tragedies across our country that involve hate crimes. I know you were as troubled as I was by the vicious murder in Jasper, Texas, just two weeks ago. This shocking event focused America's attention on the problem of hate crimes. I hope we can join together to reaffirm that no American should be subjected to violence on account of his or her race, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender, or disability.

Whether it is a gay American murdered as he walks home from work or a Jewish American whose synagogue is desecrated by swastikas, such acts are not only examples of bias and bigotry—they are crimes. They strike at the heart of what it means to be an American and at the values that define us as a Nation. That is why I believe now is the time for us to

take strong and decisive action to fight hate crimes.

There is nothing more important to the future of this country than our standing together against intolerance, prejudice, and violent bigotry. The Hate Crimes Prevention Act will lead the way in making all Americans more safe and secure. I implore you to move this vital piece of legislation through the Senate (House) without delay.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives; Trent Lott, Senate majority leader; Thomas A. Daschle, Senate minority leader; and Richard A. Gephardt, House minority leader. An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Peacekeeping Operations

June 24, 1998

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am pleased to transmit herewith the 1997 Annual Report to the Congress on Peacekeeping. The report is required by section 407(d) of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1994 and 1995 (Public Law 103–236).

The report provides an account of how the United States used peacekeeping last year to promote regional stability and to advance U.S. interests. Our support for United Nations and other peacekeeping operations allowed us to protect our interests before they were directly threatened and ensured that other nations shared with us the risks and costs of maintaining stability in the post-Cold War world.

Working together, we brought greater discipline to decisionmaking in national capitals and at the United Nations regarding multilateral peace operations. Tough questions about mandate, size, cost, duration, and exit strategy for proposed missions were answered before operations were approved. Careful attention was also given to ensuring that those responsible for lead-

ing peacekeeping missions—the United Nations, NATO, or a coalition of concerned states—were capable of successfully achieving the intended objective.

I look forward to working with you to ensure that peacekeeping remains a viable option for dealing with international conflicts of interest to the United States.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Floyd Spence, chairman, House Committee on National Security; Robert L. Livingston, chairman, House Committee on Appropriations; Benjamin A. Gilman, chairman, House Committee on International Relations; Jesse Helms, chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; Strom Thurmond, chairman, Senate Committee on Armed Services; and Ted Stevens, chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations.