

Feb. 19 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1998

The President. I believe that the speech I gave at the Pentagon was quite clear about that. We want to significantly reduce his capacity to produce chemical and biological weapons and his capacity to deliver them and to visit them on his people, his neighbors, and people throughout the world. I believe the more the American people learn about the dangers of chemical and biological warfare, the kinds of problems they can present to us now and in the future, the stiffer their resolve will be.

And so I feel that time is on our side. And I believe that 10 years from now, not in the

heat of this moment, 15 years from now, when people look back at this time, they will want to look back at a period when those of us in positions of responsibility fulfilled our responsibility by trying to rid the world of this danger.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House, prior to his departure for Baltimore, MD. In his remarks, he referred to White House Counsel Charles F.C. Ruff.

Exchange With Reporters in Baltimore, Maryland February 19, 1998

Living Classrooms Water Quality Experiment

Q. Tell us, what does it mean?

The President. Well, this water is from here. So they wanted to test the water to see if it could accommodate life. And you had to put this free agent in the water, and then you shake it up, and then you match it up with these colors here, to see which one it's like. So we put it in here, and the color is most like this one—7.5 to 9, and then here's the chart. It's around neutral; this way it will accommodate life. If it's too acidic, obviously it won't. But if it gets way out here, it's too basic, it won't. So anywhere in this range, right, 7 to 10 is okay. And you see the color here is like in between these two.

I learned all that from Brandon here, my science instructor—[laughter]—my marine biology instructor here. You did a great job.

Brandon Hunter. Any time.

The President. And so did you, Aaron.

The Vice President. Aaron did a great job, too.

Brandon. This was fun.

The President. Was it fun for you?

Brandon. Yep.

The President. It was fun for us, too. Thanks.

Vice President's Travel

Q. Mr. President, if you're grounding the Vice President, will you be skipping some of your trips over the next couple of weeks, too?

The Vice President. We're going to go do this event now, and then we'll—

The President. I didn't ground him. Don't get too carried away with the school metaphors here. I just asked him to stay around.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:55 a.m. at the Living Classrooms Foundation. In his remarks, he referred to Brandon Hunter and Aaron Hunt, Middlesex Elementary School students who participated in a water quality experiment. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks Announcing the New Clean Water Initiative in Baltimore February 19, 1998

Thank you very much, Thank you. I don't know about you, but I thought that Larry Simms did a terrific job. Can we give him a hand?

[Applause] I've been in public life long enough to know when a guy throws a sucker punch. When he got up there and said, "Oh, I'm just

this lowly president of”—[laughter]—I thought this guy is fixing to give us a heck of a good talk. [Laughter] And sure enough, he did.

I thank you for providing as much as anything else, Larry, a historic perspective, going back through generations of your family's life, and also reminding us that we all have a stake in clean water one way or another, and all of us who depend upon you and the people like you to provide us with good, clean, safe seafood have sometimes a bigger connection than even we're aware of.

Thank you, Mr. Vice President, for your leadership and your inspiration to me over these last 5 years. Thank you, Secretary Glickman and Administrator Browner. I thank Senator Sarbanes, a truly remarkable person, for all the many wonderful things he has done for Maryland and with our administration. I thank Senator Mikulski, who doubles the energy of any room she is in. [Laughter] Barbara couldn't see me, but I was rolling my eyes when she said, well, she never dreamed she could get the President to come, and maybe it just happened to be—if you believe that—[laughter]. When she makes up her mind to do something—you're just like my dog, Buddy, grabbing a bone. [Laughter] I mean, you might as well go and say yes, because sooner or later you're going to do whatever it is she's decided that you're going to do. [Laughter] So I'm honored to be here.

Congressman Cummings, thank you for your friendship and your leadership. Thank you, Governor. I was especially impressed by how you handled this recent pfiesteria outbreak and by what you said about it. And I thank you for all you've done. And, thank you, Lieutenant Governor Townsend. And, Mr. Mayor, thanks for your long friendship and your leadership here in Baltimore. I want to thank the Secretary of State and the city council members and all the others who are here. But especially I want to thank James Bond and his vice president, Mr. Rockefeller—[laughter]—and the AmeriCorps people and all the others.

The Vice President and I had a wonderful time before we got out here. I know we were late, but we were having a good time. We saw these young people working in a woodworking shop. They made us two beautiful, beautiful rocking chairs. And I love rocking chairs. I got all kinds of different rocking chairs I've collected over the last 30-odd years, maybe more now.

And I'll have theirs up at Camp David this weekend if I can possibly get there. If not, I'll have it at the White House. Anyway, I'm going to do my best to spend the weekend in this rocking chair that I was given today. [Laughter]

And we saw young people testing the water, young people rebuilding the shoreline. We saw a lot of work being done in the classrooms and on the computers following the ship around Cape Horn in South America today. And we saw them playing that computer game, “Who Killed Rocky Rockfish?,” which two of your teachers have developed, which was utterly fascinating to me. I never did find out who did it—[laughter]—but the students promised to let me know when they do.

This whole day has been a wonderful way of illustrating the point I want to make to America, which is that our concern about the environment—our concern for clean water in particular, but environmental matters in general—needs to be folded into the fabric of our daily life. It needs to be a part of how all of our children learn, how they learn science, how they learn about computers. It needs to be a part of how we think about the economy, as the Vice President said. And especially, we need to focus, for the next few years, on this whole issue of water quality.

Now, I grew up in a landlocked State, so I didn't get to see a lot of bays when I was a boy. But I grew up in a town surrounded by three lakes. And when I was a child, some of the happiest days of my life were spent in the remote regions of the Arkansas Ozarks on the Buffalo National River, which was the very first river Congress set aside, over 20 years ago, under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. And the character of our relationship to the water is one of the unique things about America that you can find going all the way back to the beginning and that you can see in the present day. I don't know what the numbers are, but there's this absolutely breathtaking percentage of the American people when they go on vacation every year, go looking for some kind of water.

And the Governor was telling me on the way over here how when this project got started, the Living Classroom got started, one of the most troubling things to him was to see that some of the children in Baltimore had never even been to the bay and how they started—you know, you all say, taking the kids to the

bay—so everybody could see these things. I think that is terribly important.

Some of you know that not very long ago I went home to Arkansas to bury my 91-year-old uncle, a man after who I named my beloved little dog—and I did that because he was an avid outdoorsman. When I ran for Governor of Arkansas, 20 years ago this year, I called my uncle, who had about a sixth grade education and about a 160 IQ, and I said, “What do you think I ought to campaign on?” He said, “Heck, I don’t care.” He said, “All I want you to do is keep the rivers clean enough for me to fish in and for the kids to swim in.” He said, “You fix that, and the rest of it will be all right.”

There are an awful lot of people in this country who still feel that way. You heard what Larry said in his introduction—for 25 years we have made great progress in cleaning our waters. Largely this progress has come by controlling pollution from point sources, from factories and sewage plants. Yet, 40 percent of our Nation’s waters are still too polluted for fishing and swimming—25 years after the Clean Water Act. That is unacceptable.

That’s what I was talking about in the State of the Union Address; that’s what I’m here to talk about today in some greater detail. We must address the largest remaining challenge to cleaning our waters. We must curtail the runoff from farms, from city streets, from other diffuse sources of pollution that get into our waterways and pollute them.

Every child deserves to grow up with water that is pure to drink, lakes that are safe for swimming, rivers that are teeming with fish. We have to act now to combat these pollution challenges with new protections to give all our children the gift of clean, safe water in the 21st century.

Of course, it matters how we do this, but I want to say, every time we have taken a big step like this, always somebody says, “There they go again. They’re going to hurt the environment.” I heard it again last year when we tried to take economy—well, we did take very strong standards—steps to clean the air more. But I would just remind you, in the last 25 years every single environmental step we have taken has unleashed a new round of technological renovation which has helped us to grow the economy more rapidly, with new, higher skilled, higher paying jobs, opening up new careers and new vistas for people. It is simply not true that taking

further steps to clean our water is a threat to the economy. As Larry said in a very immediate way, it is actually essential to ensuring the long-term stability of our economy.

And that is consistent with the approach we are taking. We want to give the American people the tools they need to make the most of their own lives, including to safeguard our national resources. This is the approach the Vice President insisted on back in October when he directed the EPA and the Department of Agriculture to come up with a plan to ensure clean, safe water. And that’s the approach embodied in the clean water action plan we unveil today.

Here’s what we want to do. First, forge partnerships through an innovative approach that gets everybody to focus on entire regions—not just on individual factories or individual sewage plants or individual farms but an entire region—and come up with the most cost-effective way to meet the clean water goal.

Second, we want to work closely with States to identify the areas with the worst pollution problems and give local communities the tools and the resources they need to restore and protect those water resources.

Third, we want to provide incentives to our farmers to take the actions that are needed to reduce polluted runoff from their fields and their pastures.

And fourth, we have to protect public health through new strategies to safeguard the water we drink and the fish we eat. To help meet these goals, I have set aside in our balanced budget an additional \$2.3 billion over the next 5 years, over and above what we were spending before.

Now, if Congress will approve this request, we will be able to finish the job set out in the Clean Water Act 25 years ago, restoring our waterways and providing clean, safe water to every American. I ask the Congress to work with us, as they did in passing the Safe Drinking Water Act, to provide new and more flexible tools to protect our water by reauthorizing an even stronger Clean Water Act this year. We have to do that.

In the last 5 years, one of the most encouraging things I have seen is a willingness on the part of Americans from different walks of life to sit down across the table and try to figure out how they can protect our natural resources in a way that’s good and fair for everybody. The Vice President and I—I spent a day; he

spent 2 days recently in Lake Tahoe, which is one of the two most perfectly blue deep-water lakes in the world—very much stressed now. And we were amazed to see people who just a couple of years ago were barely on speaking terms, people who thought they were conservative, hidebound developers who thought all environmentalists were insane tree huggers, and people who thought they were pure environmentalists who thought all developers were one step short of criminals, had shed all that, were actually—sit down, working with each other, because they finally realized they had a common interest in figuring out a way to preserve the environment.

We've seen it in the Florida Everglades. We've seen it in the attempts to restore various wildlife, including the wolves, to Yellowstone Park. And we know we will have to see it if we're going to end this diffuse runoff problem that is polluting our water resources. We've seen it here in Maryland, where farmers are setting aside tens of thousands of acres to establish buffers between farms and waterways. We have just signed an agreement, interestingly enough, to provide some money to Minnesota so that they can have a program just like you have already implemented here. And in a State with 10,000 lakes, they need to follow Maryland's lead, and it will be good for America when this happens.

I believe the secret to making the preservation and enhancement and restoration of our environment a part of the fabric of life in America is to have more opportunities like the Living Classroom, is to have more people like Larry Simms, who will go and talk to people who don't know what he sees every day, to have more enlightened leadership at the local level. But we in Washington have our responsibility, too. If you want those children who are here working in all these classrooms to live out their promise, then we have to provide a framework within which all these efforts can succeed. We can afford over \$2 billion for clean water. We can do it and balance the budget. What we cannot afford is to walk away from our responsibilities to give all the young people in this audience and all the people out across America they represent the clean water they deserve in the 21st century.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1 p.m. at the Living Classrooms Foundation. In his remarks, he referred to Larry Simms, president, Maryland Watermen's Association; Gov. Parris N. Glendening and Lt. Gov. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend of Maryland; Mayor Kurt Schmoke of Baltimore; Maryland Secretary of State John T. Willis; James Bond, president, and Parker Rockefeller, vice president, Living Classrooms Foundation.

Remarks at a Democratic Business Council Luncheon in Baltimore February 19, 1998

Thank you very much. Governor, I'll take that cuff off your hands, if you want me to. [*Laughter*] Thank you for the introduction. Thank you, Lieutenant Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend. I thank Senator Mikulski and Senator Sarbanes for being a wonderful team for Maryland, for the United States, and for our administration. Mr. Mayor, it's good to be back in Baltimore. To State Democratic Chair Peter Krauser, thank you for your leadership in our party.

I'd also like to acknowledge the presence here of our national Democratic chair, Steve Grossman, and our new national finance chair, Len Barrack, from Philadelphia—this is his first

noon event. He just came on board. Stand up. [*Applause*]

We had a great day today looking at these living classrooms, seeing what the young people of Baltimore are doing, announcing the administration's clean water initiative. I'd like to just talk very briefly—Michael Bronfein was talking about how he had been fooling with me now for 6½ years. That's a big problem, you know, it's hard to give a new speech to a person every time you see him after 6½ years. And maybe that's not necessary.