

Secret Service Testimony

Q. Mr. Clinton, there's been a decision made that the Secret Service will not be allowed to use privilege in the case of the grand jury. Do you feel that by allowing Secret Service agents to testify that it would, in fact, harm future Presidents?

The President. Well, that's the Secret Service position. And President Bush agreed with them.

Q. Do you agree with them?

The President. And I think there's a serious possibility that that could occur, probably in a different sort of context. At least it will have a chilling effect on—perhaps on the conversations Presidents have and the work that they do and the way they do it. But it is true that there is no legal—there's no statute there.

But all these investigations have been carried out over the last 25 years in a climate of intense pro-investigation, and yet I don't think anyone ever thought about it because no one ever thought that anyone would ever abuse the responsibility the Secret Service has to the President, to the President's family. So there are some things that you ought not to have to make a law about, and I think that's basically where

we are, that it never occurred to anybody that anyone would ever be so insensitive to the responsibilities of the Secret Service that this kind of legal question would arise.

What the law would be on appeal or whether the Secret Service will appeal, I don't know because I haven't been involved in it. I don't think it's appropriate for me to be involved in it. But I think—yes, I think it will raise some serious questions and present a whole new array of problems for managing the Presidency and for the Secret Service managing their responsibility. And because previous people have understood that and cared enough about it, I don't think that anybody has ever even considered doing this before. But we're living in a time which is without precedent, where actions are being taken without precedent, and we just have to live with consequences.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Larry Stein, Assistant to the President and Director of Legislative Affairs; and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on Agricultural Research Legislation

May 22, 1998

I am deeply disappointed that today the House did not approve the conference report on the agricultural research bill. This carefully crafted legislation balances a broad range of agricultural and nutrition concerns including: crop insurance, agriculture research, rural development, and food stamps for legal immigrants in need. It provides critical funding to ensure the viability of the crop insurance program as the basis of the farm income safety net; to improve food safety and the competitiveness of our farmers through better research; to restore needed food stamps to children, the elderly, and disabled, and refugees among our legal immigrants; and to improve the quality of life in rural areas.

I am grateful that the House today overwhelmingly defeated a rule that would have stripped the food stamp immigrant provisions from the bill and destroyed the delicate com-

promise in the conference report. Support across the country for these programs and this bill is wide and deep. Today's vote in the House and the Senate's overwhelming vote of 92-8 in passing the conference report is a reflection of the strong backing by farm groups, universities, church organizations, and advocates for the poor.

The House leadership today let down farmers, let down consumers, and let down the children, elderly, and disabled who need the food assistance contained in this bill. I urge the House of Representatives to complete its work and move expeditiously to pass the conference report without change, upon return from the Memorial Day recess.