

## The President's Radio Address July 4, 1998

Good morning, I've just returned from my trip to China, a great and ancient nation that is undergoing historic change, change I could see in new private businesses that are helping China's economy to grow, in people free for the first time to work in jobs of their own choosing, and in Chinese villages in the first free elections of local leaders.

I was able to speak directly not only to President Jiang and the leaders of the Chinese Government but to the Chinese people themselves about the partnership we hope to build with China for peace and prosperity and about the importance of freedom and what it means to us in America. At this particular moment in history, when for the first time a majority of the world's people live under governments of their own choosing, and when in China the positive impacts of greater openness and personal liberties are already apparent, I'm especially glad to be home for Independence Day, the day we celebrate the freedom our Founders declared 222 years ago this Fourth of July.

And this Fourth of July, even as we celebrate, we should be not only grateful for the freedom we enjoy; we should rededicate ourselves to the work of responsible citizenship. For example, on the Fourth of July, families and friends come together all over America at backyard barbecues and parks for picnics. As they enjoy their meals, I want to report to you about what I'm doing to make sure the food and drinks we serve our families this Independence Day and every day are safe.

Our food supply is the most bountiful and the safest in the world, but we know we can do better. For nearly 6 years, I've worked hard to put in place a modern food safety system for the 21st century. I signed into law legislation to keep harmful pesticides off our fruits and vegetables. We put in place strong protections to ensure that seafood is safe, and we're modernizing our meat and poultry safety system.

Last year we launched a nationwide early warning system to catch outbreaks of food-borne illnesses sooner and prevent them from happening in the first place. But as much as we've done, we know we have to do more to keep our families safe and strong. We know older

people and children are especially vulnerable to contaminated food. That lesson was driven home tragically last year, when apple juice contaminated with a deadly strain of *E. coli* caused the death of a 16-month-old child in Washington State and led to the hospitalization of more than a dozen other children.

Today we're taking two important steps to ensure that our food supply is as safe as we can make it. First, I am pleased to announce a new rule that requires warning labels on all packaged juice that has not been pasteurized or processed to kill harmful bacteria. These warnings will help families make better decisions about the juice they buy, and they will help us to prevent thousands of Americans from becoming ill every year.

Second, I'm directing the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Agriculture to report back to me within 90 days with a plan to create a new national institute for food safety research. This institute will join the resources of the public and private sectors and bring together the talents of the most esteemed scientists in the government, in universities, and in businesses to develop cutting edge techniques to keep our food safe.

I'm doing what I can to protect our families from contaminated food. Congress must also do its part to ensure the safety of America's food supply. First and most important, it should fully fund my comprehensive \$101 million food safety initiative. Among other important programs, this initiative will pay for 225 new food and drug administrators, inspectors, and employees: people who can keep unsafe food away from our borders, out of our stores, and off our dining room tables.

Congress should also give the FDA greater authority to halt imports of fruits, vegetables, and other food products that are produced under safety conditions that simply do not match our own strict standards. It should give the U.S. Department of Agriculture new authority to impose tough fines on businesses who violate those standards and to issue mandatory recalls of unsafe meat and poultry before they reach our

table; and it should confirm a respected, experienced scientist, Dr. Jane Henney, to lead our food safety efforts as Commissioner of FDA.

Food can never be made entirely safe. Therefore, every parent also has a responsibility: a responsibility to handle food carefully, especially during the summer. Meanwhile, we must do everything we can to protect the food Americans eat and to give our families the peace of mind they deserve. That's one important way, on this Fourth of July, we can resolve to keep our Nation strong as we move into the 21st century.

Happy Independence Day, Americans, and thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:18 a.m. on July 3 in the Grand Hyatt Hotel, Hong Kong SAR, China, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m., e.d.t., on July 4. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 3 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to President Jiang Zemin of China, and Jane E. Henney, Food and Drug Administration Commissioner-designate.

## Remarks on Medicare and the Legislative Agenda and an Exchange With Reporters

July 6, 1998

*The President.* Good morning. I'm delighted to be here with Secretary Shalala, Mr. Apfel, and Ron Pollack to make an announcement today. Let me first, by way of introduction, say, as all of you know, the First Lady and I just returned this weekend from our trip to China. It was a trip that advanced America's interests and values in a secure, stable, and increasingly open China by achieving solid progress in a number of areas and an honest, unprecedentedly open discussion with both Chinese leaders and the Chinese people.

We've come back to America at a critical time. We're exactly halfway through the Major League Baseball season, but we're already in the ninth inning of this congressional session. We have to use wisely the remaining 38 working days to make a season of progress.

With an economy the strongest in a generation and our social fabric strengthening, it is, as I have said repeatedly, extremely tempting for all of us to kick back and soak in the good times. But that would be wrong. There are still enormous challenges and opportunities facing the United States on the edge of the 21st century. We must make this a moment of opportunity, not missed opportunity.

First, we have to advance the economic strategy that has brought so much opportunity to so many Americans. In the coming weeks, I will insist that the House join me and the Senate in reserving the surplus until we save Social Security first. We should fulfill our obligation

to America's children, with smaller class sizes, modernized schools, higher standards, more Head Start opportunities, more reading help for third graders, more access to college.

We should strengthen the International Monetary Fund because our prosperity depends upon the stability of our trading partners in Asia and around the world. We should press forward with our reform of Government by passing IRS reform to guard against abuses and extend taxpayers' rights, and through bipartisan campaign finance reform.

And we must further strengthen families and communities across our country with a juvenile crime bill that uses prosecutors and probation officers to crack down on gangs, guns, and drugs, and bars violent juveniles from buying guns for life; with comprehensive tobacco legislation; and with the Patients' Bill of Rights that says critical medical decisions can only be made by doctors, not insurance company accountants.

There is much to do in these remaining 38 days. Congress has a choice to make in writing this chapter of our history. It can choose partisanship, or it can choose progress. Congress must decide.

I stand ready to work with lawmakers of good faith in both parties, as I have for 5½ years, to move our Nation forward. And I have a continuing obligation to act, to use the authority of the presidency and the persuasive power of the podium to advance America's interest at home and abroad. Nowhere is that need greater