

The President's Radio Address November 28, 1998

Good morning. This Thanksgiving weekend we gather in our homes with family and friends to share holiday meals and memories and to give thanks to God for our many blessings. But Thanksgiving is not only a day to give thanks; it is also a time when we renew our commitment to our deepest values and to the duty we owe to one another. Today I want to talk about an important step we're taking to help our neediest citizens.

This year Americans have much to be grateful for: grateful that our economy is the strongest in a generation, offering greater opportunity than ever before for every American; grateful that our communities are safer than they've been in 25 years, giving our families the security they need to thrive; grateful that our air and water are cleaner than they have been for decades, preserving the environment for our children; and grateful that America continues to shine as a beacon of peace, freedom, and democracy all around the world.

We're also grateful this Thanksgiving more Americans will spend this holiday in homes of their own than at any time of our history. But for millions of struggling senior citizens and people with disabilities, the peace and security of a decent home is a distant dream and the threat of homelessness an ever-present nightmare.

Too many of these hard-pressed Americans are warehoused in sterile nursing homes, not because they need to be but because they can't afford to live anywhere else. Too many are trapped in substandard housing, where broken plumbing, inadequate heat and hazardous hallways are a dangerous fact of life. And too many spend more than half of their very modest incomes on housing, often sacrificing basic needs like food and medical care just to pay the rent.

On Thanksgiving Day in 1933, at the height of the Great Depression, President Franklin Roosevelt entreated Americans to help the needy, recalling the steadfastness of those in every generation who fought to "hold clear the goal of mutual help in a time of prosperity as in a time of adversity." Today, at this moment of unparalleled prosperity, we must do no less.

Americans should never have to choose between putting a meal on the table or putting

a roof over their heads. That's why I'm pleased that this month we're awarding nearly \$700 million in Housing and Urban Development grants to make sure no one has to make that impossible choice. These grants will enable hundreds of nonprofit organizations, like the YMCA, Goodwill, and the Salvation Army, to build more than 8,000 new apartments for struggling senior citizens and people with disabilities and to subsidize their rents.

Today I'm also pleased to announce nearly \$130 million for new housing vouchers to help people with disabilities in over 200 communities afford housing in the neighborhood of their choice. Together with our new housing grants, these steps will help nearly 30,000 Americans. And I thank HUD Secretary Cuomo for his tireless efforts to ensure that our neediest citizens have access to safe, affordable housing.

Let me give you just one example of the difference a home can make in the lives of Americans in need. Six years ago Helen Williams lost her husband to cancer and was losing her home. For 3 years she struggled to maintain her dignity and her health as she shuttled between friends' and families' houses, afraid to overstay her welcome but more frightened by the threat of homelessness. Fortunately, Mrs. Williams learned about one of the subsidized apartment buildings funded by HUD's housing program for the elderly.

Today, along with her dog, Mr. B, she's thriving there and giving back to her community. Just this week, at the age of 80, she's been busy working with her church to deliver Thanksgiving turkeys to families in need. That's the kind of Thanksgiving story we need to hear more of, all of us bound together across the generations in a cycle of mutual help, caring for one another, giving back to one another, thanking God for our blessings. With the steps we take today, we'll ensure the same spirit of Thanksgiving is alive every day of the year.

Hillary and I wish you and your loved ones a happy, healthy time of thanksgiving. Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 4:10 p.m. on November 27 at Camp David, MD, for broadcast

at 10:06 a.m. on November 28. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Sec-

retary on November 27 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Remarks at a Conference To Support Middle East Peace and Development *November 30, 1998*

Thank you very much, Secretary Albright, and thank you for your work for peace in the Middle East. Chairman Arafat, welcome back to the United States. We're delighted to see you. I think it's fair to say that both of us have had more sleep than we had had the last time we met at the Wye Plantation, and I'm delighted to have a chance to meet with Chairman Arafat this morning.

I thank all the representatives who are here from Israel, the other countries of the Middle East—of course, the Norwegian delegation, the European Union, our friends from Asia, and Mr. Wolfensohn from the World Bank, and others.

Let me first of all say I had a good meeting with Chairman Arafat this morning. We reviewed both the progress made by both sides since the Wye memorandum was signed and the essential next steps on the road to peace, including the task of this conference, stimulating Palestinian economic growth. Chairman Arafat reaffirmed his pledge to uphold his side of the agreement and to work with Israeli authorities to promote Israel's security. I promised the continuing support of the United States as we move ahead in the next phase of the peace process. That phase begins today with this conference.

Today our purpose is to send a clear signal that this peace is more than a piece of paper, that the promise imagined at Oslo can become a concrete reality—a true peace, a growing peace, good for Palestinians, good for Israelis, good for the region and the world. There are roughly 50 international states and organizations represented here this morning. Most of you have traveled a great distance. I thank you for your persistence and for your generosity. We must convince those who have invested so much in this process that it was a sound investment.

We must look at Gaza and the West Bank in a new light, not as battlegrounds but as energetic places at the crossroads of the Middle East, endowed with well-educated populations,

strongly supported by the Palestinian community around the world, ripe for further development once investors see that the peace agreement truly is taking hold.

For too long, too many young people have turned to terrorism and old hatreds, partly because they had nothing better to do. We must give them a different future to believe in. Every step toward opportunity is a step away from violence. Palestinians have a right to the same things all people aspire to: to be part of a normal, even happy, society where children receive a decent education, where there are jobs to go around and decent health care, where people's memories are reconciled with their hopes for the future and there is no fear.

Despite our best efforts since 1993, an honest assessment would lead us to the conclusion that we have not realized all our intentions. There has been too little tangible improvement in the lives of the Palestinian people. Per capita income is down. Unemployment is too high. Living conditions are extremely difficult.

At the outset of the next phase of the peace process, we must candidly acknowledge that we have to change these circumstances. No peace stands a chance of lasting if it does not deliver real results to ordinary people. Our challenge today, therefore, is to do more to deliver these results and to do it sooner rather than later.

I would like to make just a few more points before I let you move on to the business at hand. First, peace is built on compromise, and with any compromise, it is important to address the genuine needs of both parties. Both sides have made sacrifices to get where we are, including at the recent Wye summit. Both have taken steps since then to keep the process moving forward. There have been bumps in the road, to be sure, but the agreement is on track, and we must keep it on track. By our words