

that such reductions will not jeopardize the safety of U.S. armed forces serving in BiH.

My Administration values the Congress' substantial support for Dayton implementation. I look forward to continuing to work with the Congress in pursuit of U.S. foreign policy goals in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,

February 4, 1999.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 5.

Remarks on Presenting the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Microenterprise Development

February 5, 1999

The President. Thank you. Carol, you'd better watch it; before you know it you'll be running for office. [Laughter] What a remarkable statement; thank you so much.

I'd like to take a little—a few moments more than I normally would by way of introduction today. Hillary and I and Bob Rubin are real happy today, because this is one of the things that I ran for President to do, to see these stories, to see the spirit, and to see the potential.

I want to thank Secretary Rubin. You know, I used to tell a joke about Bob Rubin. He's been here a long time now, and he left this fabulous career on Wall Street. And I used to tell everybody that I asked Bob Rubin to come to Washington in 1993 to help me save the middle class, and by the time he leaves he'll be one of them. [Laughter]

Secretary Rubin. That always seems a lot funnier to you, Mr. President. [Laughter]

The President. Yes. I don't know how much it's cost him to stay here these 6 years, but one of the reasons that I really wanted him to come is that when we—even in the beginning, when we began talking about these matters in '92, he always said, "You know, I'd like to get the economy going again and working again, and then we could maybe really do something for poor people in this country. Maybe we could really bring the spirit of enterprise to all these places that have been left behind."

I don't know how many Secretaries of the Treasury in our country's history have ever had that sort of driving passion. But I know we had one, and he's done a magnificent job. And I'm very grateful to him.

I want to thank Senator Harkin, Senator Kennedy, Senator Wellstone, Congressman Oberstar, Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton for supporting this economic vision so strongly. I thank former Senator Riegle, who is here, who was the committee chairman who helped us to make this a critical part, this whole microenterprise, a critical part of our economic strategy way back in 1993.

I welcome Lieutenant Governor Sally Pederson from Iowa; we're delighted to have her here with her honorees. I want to thank our former OMB Director Frank Raines; Mary Ellen Withrow, our Treasurer; Ellen Lazar and others who have supported our efforts here. A special word of thanks to Aida Alvarez and Betsy Myers and all the other members of her team from SBA who are here. And to Brian Atwood and Hattie Babbitt and the others from AID. I believe that under our administration we funded 2 million of these small microenterprise loans, from Africa to Asia to Latin America, last year.

There's one group of people who have not been acknowledged—and Hillary and I were talking about it—who were out there ahead of the Federal Government for years, without whom microenterprise never would have really taken off in America, and that's all the members of the foundation community. I'd like to—all the representatives of the foundations that are here that have supported microenterprise lending, I'd like to ask you to stand, please, and be acknowledged. Thank you. [Applause] Thank you very much.

And I'll say more about this in a minute, but this whole issue has been a passion for the

First Lady for, as she said, about 15 years. We had a friend who was working at the South Shore Bank in Chicago which had a microenterprise loan program. We went there; we saw what they were doing.

Then in 1984 I was able to meet, here in Washington—I was here at a Governor's meeting; I'll never forget it. I got up early one morning and had breakfast with Muhammad Yunus, who had been trained as an economist in the United States and then gone to Bangladesh and set up the Grameen Bank. Hundreds of thousands of loans had been made—market interest rates—very tiny loans, almost all to poor village women. The repayment rate was better than the commercial banks in Bangladesh, and it changed my thinking about this forever.

And then Hillary scrounged up some foundation money and other money, and I squeezed some out of the Arkansas Legislature, and we started a development bank with a microenterprise program in Arkansas. And after I became President, she literally has gone all across the world. She's been in small villages on every continent, where people like her never go.

And I should tell the rest of the story because I don't think President Museveni would object. I have the highest regard for the President of Uganda. He's one of the most intelligent and effective leaders of any developing country anywhere in the world. But when we were walking on this little rocky pathway into this village to see all these village women who now had their own businesses, he looked at me, and he said, "That's some wife you've got." He said, "Until you showed up here, I didn't even know we had these programs in our country." [Laughter]

So, without her we probably wouldn't be here today. And I'm very, very grateful for everything that Hillary has done to champion this cause.

I also want to say a word of appreciation to Carol and all the other small-business owners here. It takes a lot of courage to run a small business. Hillary and I have talked about this a lot. She talked to me about one time when she was a high school girl, she worked in a small business in her hometown, and there were days when no one came in. Every day, if you open a small business, you feel like politicians feel on election day. [Laughter]

I'll never forget—I can't remember, one of the great old Hollywood moguls said, "You know, if you make a bad movie, the people will stay away, and you cannot stop them"—

[laughter]—which I think is great. So I want to thank all of you for having the spirit of enterprise and the vision and the courage.

This whole country is basically built by entrepreneurs, whether they're in Silicon Valley or young investment bankers in Manhattan or people running the street-vending operations out here for the tourists in Washington. The genius of actually being able to have an idea and act on it, and having people respond to it and invest in it and be your customers and, as Carol said, in a way validate your ideas, your character, and your hard work, it's the whole secret of America.

And because of the strength of our economy, I believe we have an obligation to give that opportunity to everyone. Just this morning we learned that what is now the longest peacetime expansion in American history has grown longer. Last month our economy created nearly another quarter-million jobs, and unemployment stayed at 4.3 percent. That's the lowest peacetime rate since 1957. Wages now rising at over twice the rate of inflation. Again, unemployment rates among Hispanic- and African-Americans dropped to their lowest recorded levels ever.

Now, if we cannot expand opportunity into every corner of America now, we will never get around to it. We have an obligation now to spread the spirit and the opportunity for enterprise to all the American people. As you've heard from others, we've been working on this for 6 years now, working to bring opportunities to some of our most distressed communities, with an agenda of empowerment. That's what we celebrate here, not a handout, a hand up. This microenterprise program is the embodiment of empowerment.

We know—and I was so glad to hear what Carol said about self-esteem, because sometimes a crisis of economic distress is a crisis of the spirit as well, a shortage of confidence that is just as debilitating as a shortage of cash. And these stories today—I want all of you to imagine not only the economic success but what it has done to these people's lives. There are stories like this all over America and all over the world.

What does it mean to a single mom's life when she goes to the mailbox in the morning and sees a bank statement instead of a welfare check? What does it mean to a child when he or she can go to school and say, when they ask, "What does your mother do for a living?" "She owns a beauty shop?" What does it mean

to a neighborhood when, all of a sudden, an old building that has been vacant for 10 years has a “help wanted” sign out in front of it?

This is about more than economics. And through our network of community development banks—or CDFI’s, as we call them, community development financial institutions—through the strengthened and streamlined Community Reinvestment Act—and I will say that even though that act has been on the books for more than 20 years now, 95 percent of all the investment under community reinvestment has been done in the last 6 years, in our administration. And I’m proud of that. And the banks are doing quite well. [Laughter] They’re doing well by doing good. And it’s important to remember as the debate develops this year about that. And through these empowerment zones, we’ve seen the steady expansion of opportunity.

Last month, as the Secretary said, I announced this new markets initiative, to spur even more private investment in underserved areas. And we want to reach—building a bridge from Wall Street to Harlem, to Appalachia, to the Mississippi Delta, to south Texas, to Pine Ridge, South Dakota—everywhere there are opportunities still untapped.

Today I am proud to announce that, as a part of our budget, we would more than double our support for microenterprise in America. We would continue our—[applause]—thank you. We also want to continue our efforts to promote microenterprise abroad, especially in the nations that have been hardest hit by the global financial crisis or by our neighbors hit by natural disasters. And I think that is very important, because we are giving courage and awareness to other governments and other countries to do more for their own people in this regard.

First, we recognize that, for the vast majority of microentrepreneurs, good ideas and credit are just the beginning. A little guidance, lessons on accounting, billing, planning, those things are essential for any business to thrive in a complex economy. The budget doubles the Small Business Administration’s capacity to provide such training through its microloan program, triples support for SBA’s one-stop capital shops, which offer microlending advice and other assistance in disadvantaged communities. I’m also proud to support the bipartisan program for investments in microentrepreneurs, the PRIME Act, sponsored by Senator Kennedy and Senator Domenici from New Mexico, and Representa-

tives Rush, Leach, and LaFalce, so that we can expand our technical assistance through the Treasury’s CDFI fund.

Second, we want to make even more credit available to low-income Americans with good business ideas. That’s why I’m proposing to leverage more than \$75 million in new loans by doubling our support for the SBA’s microloan program.

Third, we want to keep encouraging Americans to save some of their own hard-earned money, to start or expand businesses. Last year, I was proud to sign new individual development accounts into law, fulfilling a campaign pledge from 1992, and thanks in no small measure to the leadership of Senator Tom Harkin from Iowa and former Senator Dan Coats from Indiana. We thank you very much, Senators, for that. [Applause] Thank you.

For those of you who don’t know, these individual development accounts, IDA’s, are special accounts that provide Federal matching funds to low-income Americans who save money to invest in their business, buy a first home, pay for a college education. I want to double support for these accounts in our budget.

Next, we will continue to lead the world through USAID to promote microenterprise for millions of families to get out of poverty in other countries. The recent local financial crisis and the hurricanes in Central America and the Caribbean have literally upended the lives of tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of people. As you have heard from the First Lady’s account, we have seen, first hand, how these loans, sometimes in other countries loans as small as \$10, \$15, \$25, \$50 can make all the difference in helping families to get back on their feet.

Our balanced budget will target extra microenterprise assistance to the countries that are in trouble. And to break down the bureaucratic walls that block microenterprise in some developing countries, we’ll continue to work with the World Bank and other financial institutions to reform the regulatory structures so we can make more of these loans available. There is a virtually unlimited potential abroad and at home for this, and I keep hoping if we just keep pushing and keep pushing and keep pushing we will reach a critical mass of investment which will explode it and let the whole world know that this works.

And this ceremony today is a part of letting the whole world know. So we come here not

only to honor you with these Presidential Awards for Excellence in Microenterprise but to say to the world that these six organizations whose vision and commitment have made such a profound difference in the lives of the business owners, their employees, and their customers are but a small beginning of what we could achieve together in the United States and throughout the world if we work harder to make the economy work for ordinary citizens.

And so this, too, is a part of letting the whole world know. And when you come up here and get your awards I hope that you will not only feel enormous pride; I hope that you will not only feel an enormous sense of rededication to further success; I hope you will feel that you are sending a message to people who will see this all over America or read about it in their newspapers. And you may be sparking someone else's conviction either that, A, they ought to set up one of these funds, or B, they ought to find one and get a loan.

And I believe that we will continue to see the steady march of progress here. This has the potential to revolutionize not only the lives of ordinary Americans but the whole way we organize our economy here and around the world.

So, first: For excellence in the category of access to capital, the Microcredit Industry Rural Organization. Since 1987, MICRO has provided some \$5.5 million in loans to more than 1,000 entrepreneurs living in rural Arizona's poorest Hispanic communities. Accepting this award is Executive Director Frank Ballesteros and entrepreneur Maria Jesus Gaxiola, a former migrant farm worker who used a \$1,500 loan to build her own cosmetics business, and I might say, she's a remarkable walking advertisement for her success. *[Laughter]* Please come up here.

[The President presented the award.]

Next, for excellence in developing entrepreneurial skills, the Detroit Entrepreneurship Institute. Founded at Wayne State University, the institute has worked to teach low-income clients the full range of business skills. Clients can also take advantage of a free computer center, a tax preparation service, and graphic design department to help launch and expand their businesses. Accepting this award is Cathy McClelland, the president and CEO; and Jackie Tucker, who started a successful catering busi-

ness after training at the institute. I'd like to ask them to come up now.

[The President presented the award.]

Also for excellence in developing entrepreneurial skills, the Northeast Entrepreneur Fund of Virginia, Minnesota—*[laughter]*—in the Iron Range, north of Duluth. Serving rural communities throughout a 20,000 square mile area, the fund offers one-on-one counseling to clients, helping them to tailor their studies to specific needs. Accepting this award is the fund's president, Mary Mathews; and our star speaker today—*[laughter]*—Carol Willoughby.

[The President presented the award.]

For excellence in poverty alleviation, the Institute for Social and Economic Development of Iowa. One of the earliest statewide microenterprise efforts in the Nation, the Institute—listen to this—has helped 90 percent of its welfare clients free themselves from lives of dependency through self-employment. Accepting this award today is John Else, founder and president; and entrepreneur Rhonda Auten, a former welfare recipient who started her own dance school with help from ISED.

[The President presented the award.]

For excellence in private support for microenterprise development, the Corporation for Enterprise Development. For two decades, through research, public advocacy, and technical assistance to microenterprise organizations, the corporation has fostered so much of the progress we see today, including the success of three of this year's award winners. We are all—including all of us in this administration—profoundly indebted to the awardee, the corporation, and its founder and chairman, Mr. Robert Friedman.

[The President presented the award.]

For excellence in public support for microenterprise development, the Montana Micro-business Finance Program. As part of the Montana Department of Commerce, this program has helped to launch or sustain a dozen micro-lending organizations serving communities throughout that vast and beautiful State. Accepting this award are program officer Robyn Hampton and entrepreneurs Kevin and Heidi Snyder, who used a microloan to start their racquetball and fitness centers. They are two

walking advertisements for what they're doing, as you can see. [Laughter] Come on up.

[The President and the First Lady presented the award.]

Now, don't you feel better than you did when you got up this morning? [Laughter] Isn't this great?

Henry Ford—a small entrepreneur—once said that the best Americans were those with “an infinite capacity to not know what can't be done.” We honor those kinds of Americans, testaments to the power of enterprise and the strength of the human spirit.

I ask you to leave here committed to work in the years ahead to bring this spirit, and this

opportunity, to every corner of every community in our land and on our globe.

Thank you very much, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:37 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Carol Willoughby, owner, Let the Whole World Know, who introduced the President; former Senator Donald W. Riegle, Jr.; Muhammad Yunus, founder and chief executive, Grameen Bank, Bangladesh; and President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni of Uganda. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Message to the Congress Transmitting the District of Columbia Courts' Fiscal Year 2000 Budget Request

February 5, 1999

To the Congress of the United States:

In accordance with the District of Columbia Code, as amended, I am transmitting the District of Columbia Courts' FY 2000 Budget request.

The District of Columbia Courts have submitted a FY 2000 Budget request for \$131.6 million for its operating expenditures and \$17.4 million for courthouse renovation and improvements. My FY 2000 Budget includes recommended funding levels of \$128.4 million for

operations and \$9.0 million for capital improvements for the District Courts. My transmittal of the District of Columbia Courts' budget request does not represent an endorsement of its contents.

I look forward to working with the Congress throughout the FY 2000 appropriation process.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
February 5, 1999.

Remarks at a Gala Honoring Hank Aaron in Atlanta, Georgia

February 5, 1999

Thank you very much, Tom. I want to thank Ted and Jane and you, Tom, and Gerry Levin and all the people from CNN and Time Warner for your role in this magnificent evening—all the sponsors, all the previous speakers.

You know, the truth is, I wanted to come down yesterday just to get ready for this. [Laughter] I saw the list of the baseball players who were going to be here. You know, my job is not always the most fun in the world. [Laughter] I was interested in this.

Governor Barnes told a story about Hank Aaron appearing with him. I want to tell you a story that's even more compelling. In 1992, on the weekend before the Presidential election, I was struggling to prevail in Georgia and Governor Miller said, “You have to come one more time. And if you come, I think Hank Aaron will appear with you.” I forgot about how many electoral votes we had—I forgot, you know, I just—so I came. And we went out to this high