

Department of Housing and Urban Development under the leadership of Secretary Cuomo, the Columbia National Mortgage Company will offer—listen to this—\$6.5 billion in home mortgages and extra effort to help 78,000 minority and low and moderate income families unlock the door to homeownership. This settlement was made under the Fair Housing Act, which Congress passed just 6 days—just 6 days—after Dr. King was killed. He had worked for years to outlaw discrimination in housing, and many who voted for the measure said they did it in tribute to him. So here all these years later—31 years later, to be exact—we're proud that it's happened on Dr. King's national holiday.

Now let me just say one final thing. Yesterday, in the church that Hillary and I attend, they observed Dr. King's birthday with some special music. They had a wonderful singer from the Army Chorus. They did a lot, but one of the songs they sang that I love so well was one of Martin Luther King's favorite hymns, and it embodies what we are doing here today. The first line of the hymn is, "If I can help somebody," and the last line is, "then my living will not be in vain."

All these people are here not only because they want to help you but because their lives are richer because of it. And we're all learning and growing. And besides that, as the press pointed out, it did the Vice President and me a lot of good to pick up those hammers and crowbars and tear something down. [Laughter] You know, we do this desk work all the time and we do this word work all the time, and

there's not always a beginning, a middle, and an end. There was a beginning to that wall, a middle, and it is no longer; it is over. [Laughter] So we are very grateful that you gave us the chance to be part of this today, and we thank you.

Again I want to say, I hope all across America people will hear this. Look at these young people; they're here with you. They're getting something out of this, too. Their lives will be richer and better. They will be wiser sooner. They will be more sensitive and more understanding more quickly in their lives because of the experience they've had here and the other experiences in AmeriCorps. Every American needs to serve. And remember what Dr. King said: Everyone can be great, because everyone can serve.

Thank you, and God bless you.

Now, I know we're done, but I want to say a special word of recognition to Melody Scales and Beth McCarthy of AmeriCorps who worked with me, and to Donald Stokes, who is a resident here. I'd like for them to come up and be recognized, since they worked with the Vice President and me. Come on up here. [Applause] This is our crew, and if you need a wall torn down, you couldn't do better than this.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:53 p.m. at Regency House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Anthony A. Williams and Ward 3 Councilmember Kathy Patterson of Washington, DC. The Martin Luther King, Jr., Federal Holiday proclamation of January 15 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

## Address on the Observance of Id al-Fitr January 19, 1999

On behalf of Muslim Americans and, indeed, all Americans, I would like to send my best wishes to the Islamic world as the holy month of Ramadan draws to a close, and you celebrate the festival of Id al-Fitr. The month of fasting you have completed demands sacrifice and discipline. But it delivers a profound reward, the chance to teach people of every faith what is precious about Islam: its charity, its generosity, its essential humanity. All people in the world are moved by the observance of Ramadan, by

the devotion and dignity that makes Islam one of the world's great religions.

I fervently hope that the new Moon will stand for a rising tide of peace on Earth, in the Middle East, Asia, Iran, Afghanistan, Africa, every place where devoted people aspire and deserve to lead lives of fulfillment and self-respect. I especially hope we will see the lives of the Iraqi people improve. They have suffered for too long from oppression and war.

*Jan. 19 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1999*

One of the central challenges of our time is to build greater understanding among people who practice different forms of worship. As the leader of a nation of many, many faiths, I pledge that we will do all we can to strengthen relations with the Islamic community around the world in the year ahead. In the United States, we deeply respect the Muslim Americans who observe Ramadan. And we look forward to working with Muslims everywhere, everywhere in the

world, to build a world where faith and friendship can truly flourish.

*As-salaamu alaykum.*

NOTE: The address was videotaped at approximately 5:10 p.m. on January 12 in Room 459 of the Old Executive Office Building for later broadcast on the U.S. Information Agency WORLDNET. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 19.

## Message on the Observance of Id al-Fitr

*January 19, 1999*

Warm greetings to Muslims across America and around the world as you mark the end of the holy month of Ramadan and celebrate the festival of Id al-Fitr.

The month of fasting that you have just completed demands discipline and a spirit of sacrifice. But it also delivers a profound reward: the opportunity to show people of every faith what is precious about Islam—its charity, its generosity, and its essential humanity. All people

in the world are moved by your observance of Ramadan and by the devotion and dignity that make Islam one of the world's great religions.

As you welcome the appearance of the new moon and the close of Ramadan, Hillary joins me in extending best wishes for a memorable celebration and for peace, health, and prosperity in the year to come.

BILL CLINTON

## Statement on Proposed Child Care Legislation

*January 19, 1999*

Tonight, in my State of the Union Address, I will outline my agenda to help parents struggling to meet their responsibilities at work and at home. This agenda includes an ambitious initiative to make child care safer, better, and more affordable for America's working families. Today Senator Christopher J. Dodd (D-CT) and many of his Democratic colleagues in the Senate have taken an important step toward reaching that goal by introducing the "Affordable Child Care for Early Success and Security Act (ACCESS)."

This proposal, like mine, significantly increases child care subsidies for poor children, provides greater tax relief to help low and middle income families pay for child care and to support parents who chose to stay at home to

care for their young children. This plan dramatically increases after-school opportunities, encourages businesses to provide child care for their employees, promotes early learning and school readiness, and improves child care quality.

The "Child Care ACCESS Act" builds on the longstanding commitment of Senator Dodd and the cosponsors of this legislation to improving child care for our Nation's children. I look forward to working with Members of Congress in both parties to enact child care legislation this year that will help Americans fulfill their responsibilities as workers and, even more importantly, as parents.