

*Aug. 14 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1999*

Funds. It's a good budget, and it also provides for a modest tax cut.

We have proved time and again that we don't have to choose between growing our economy or preserving our environment. We can do both with discipline. So again I ask Congress, let's put politics aside and continue the common-sense course that is already leading us toward a cleaner environment, a stronger economy, and a stronger America for the 21st century. Let's

work together to give our children the gift of a better, healthier world.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 5:04 p.m. on August 12 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on August 14. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 13 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

## Statement on the Death of Lane Kirkland

*August 14, 1999*

Hillary and I are deeply saddened by the passing of Lane Kirkland, one of the towering figures in the American labor movement. For nearly five decades, he was a guiding force for workplace fairness, dignity, and innovation, and a catalyst for international democracy.

Lane led the AFL-CIO during 15 of the most challenging years in labor's history. With skill, determination, and unparalleled intellect, he reunited the major unions and reaffirmed labor's place at the table of American democracy. With his unflagging support of free trade unionism internationally, especially in Poland, he helped

hasten the fall of the Iron Curtain while showing America that it is possible to stand up to communism abroad while standing up for working men and women here at home. From his days as a merchant marine during World War II to his work on the Board of Directors of the Institute of Peace, he was always ready and willing to serve his country. I valued his friendship, strong support, and keen advice. He was a great American, and he will be greatly missed.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Irena, and his family in this time of mourning.

## Remarks at the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States 100th National Convention in Kansas City, Missouri

*August 16, 1999*

Thank you very much, Commander Pouliot; distinguished officers of the VFW; Congressman Skelton; Congressman Moore; Congresswoman Kaptur; Secretary West and Deputy Secretary Gober; ladies and gentlemen. It is a great honor for me to be here in Kansas City today to help celebrate a hundred proud years for the Veterans of Foreign Wars. You should clap for yourselves. *[Applause]* That's good.

I'd like to begin with just a few reflections of what these 100 years mean for you and for the United States. We are less than 150 days now from the beginning of one century and the end of another, which many have called the American Century. Lately, there have been

a number of looks back at the people and personalities and events that made this 20th century: the leaders who led freedom's triumph over tyranny, like Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Marshall; inventors like the Wright brothers, whose ideas changed the way we lived; moral forces like Martin Luther King and Eleanor Roosevelt, whose ideas and examples changed the world; scientists like Dr. Jonas Salk, whose discoveries liberated a generation of parents from the mortal fear that their children would have polio and be crippled. But if you ask who has been most responsible for making this the American Century, one answer would be at the top of anyone's list after two World Wars and a long

cold war. That answer would be America's service men and women.

Today, as we celebrate your centennial anniversary, we must never forget that tens, even hundreds of millions of people, in the United States and all around the world sleep in peace because hundreds of thousands of Americans rest in peace in graves, marked and unmarked, all across the world, fallen veterans of foreign wars.

It is no accident, therefore, that the American Century also marks the VFW century. For over the last 100 years, America's men and women have sacrificed whatever was necessary, not for territorial gain, nor for the domination of others, but to secure the rights and freedoms of others so that Americans might have their freedom secure. You have made our Nation proud.

Thanks to you, we will begin a new century with a truly historic achievement, for in the last few years, for the first time in all of human history, more than half the world's people live under free governments freely elected. Still, you and I know this is not a world free from danger. There is the potential for major wars, rooted in ethnic and religious hatred. There is the chance that former adversaries will not succeed in their transition to democracy and could become adversaries again. There is the risk that nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons will fall into the wrong hands. There is the risk of terrorist groups with increasing access to money, to technology, to sophisticated weaponry. There is the possibility that global financial vulnerabilities could overwhelm free societies. Therefore, we cannot assume that, because we are today secure and at peace, we don't need military strength or alliances or that, because we are today prosperous, we are immune from turmoil half a world away.

America must still be engaged in the world, working with others to advance peace and prosperity, freedom and security, and America must remain strong. That is what our most recent conflict in Kosovo was all about. I want to thank you profoundly for the support the VFW gave us during the conflict there. I know it wasn't easy for you to do. We were still in the early stages of the longest and most difficult military campaign in the 50-year history of NATO. Critics were convinced from the beginning that we could not succeed. But you stood with us, and more importantly, you stood with our men and women in uniform. NATO and the United

States prevailed. We are all grateful for your support.

Many of you in this room today fought in World War II against the tyrants who preached racial and religious superiority. In Kosovo, innocent men, women, and children were systematically targeted for killing and mass expulsion by their governments simply because of their ethnic heritage or the way they chose to worship God. After World War II, after ending the 4-year war of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, NATO could not accept that kind of behavior on its own borders. It could not stand by, once again, and see people driven from their homes, loaded on railcars, having their history erased.

So, instead, the century ends with a powerful statement by NATO's 19 democracies, reaffirming human life and human dignity, giving us the chance after two World Wars, the cold war, and the Balkan conflicts, for the first time ever to have an undivided, democratic, and peaceful Europe. It shares our values, strengthens our economy, helps us meet our common aspirations, and will not call young Americans to go there to fight and die in the 21st century.

We prevailed in Kosovo because our cause was just, our goals were clear, our Alliance were strong, and our strategy worked, thanks to the performance of our men and women in uniform. In 78 days, they flew more than 37,000 support and strike sorties in the face of constant danger, including surface-to-air missiles. Many times our pilots risked their lives because they would not fire back at the Serb gunners who were positioned in heavily populated areas and they didn't want to kill innocent civilians.

In the end, thank God we had zero combat fatalities and only two planes shot down. That is an astonishing record and a tribute to the professionalism we see every day from our military forces the world over. They are good people. They are good people who are well-trained, well-led, and well-equipped. Rigorous training is critical and, as all of you know, dangerous in and of itself. Indeed, we must always remember our two Army airmen who died in training exercises in Albania during the Kosovo conflict. And we thank God there weren't more casualties in Kosovo, in part because the men and women trained so hard with the world's best equipment. As long as I am President, I intend to keep the commitment I made from the first day of our administration that our men and women in uniform will remain the best trained, the

best equipped, the best prepared military in the entire world.

All of you know we have challenges in keeping that commitment. Thanks to the strength of our economy, in part, we're having a harder time recruiting and keeping some of our best people. And we have a lot of tough decisions to make to maintain the readiness of our equipment and to keep ahead of the latest generation in military developments. I have asked Congress for the support necessary to deal with these challenges. I believe it will be forthcoming, and I ask for your support in making sure that it is.

We also recognize another simple truth here, on your centennial: The troops of tomorrow will only be as good as our commitment to veterans today. Way back in 1903, Theodore Roosevelt said, "A man who is good enough to shed his blood for his country is good enough to be given a square deal afterwards."

One of the great privileges I have had in being President is to work for and with our country's veterans and their organizations. The White House doors have been open to veterans, to help to shape policy affecting veterans, especially when it comes to critical matters like health care. Early in our administration, Hershel Gober recommended that we look for ways to bring health care closer to veterans who needed it. Since then we have opened more than 600 outpatient clinics all across America and have more planned over the next 2 years. We expect to treat 400,000 more veterans this year than last year.

We've also confronted some long-neglected problems head on. We've reached out to more than 40,000 veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange, to tell them about the expanded benefits available to them. I pressed hard for answers to the Gulf war syndrome and proper care for those who suffer from it. We are in the process of building five new national cemeteries, the most since the Civil War. And we are making a special effort to end something I know is unacceptable to all of us here today, homeless veterans. They should be brought back into the society they did so much to defend.

In all these efforts, I want to thank Secretary West, his predecessor, Secretary Brown, and Deputy Secretary Gober and all those at the Department of Veterans Affairs that have worked so hard to reach out to you and to work with you. We know there is more to do.

As Vice President Gore announced last month, we will continue to work with the VFW and others to make sure that all veterans receive the high-quality care they deserve next year and every year, and we expect this year's budget to reflect that commitment.

I would like to make another point today. Standing by our military and standing by our veterans means more than simply preparing people to fight wars and taking care of them after they wear our Nation's uniform. We must also work with equal determination to prevent wars. That means paying attention not only to military readiness but to diplomatic readiness as well. We know that if diplomacy is not backed by real, credible threats of force, it can be empty, indeed, dangerous. But if we don't use diplomacy first to promote our interests, if we rely on our military as the only line of defense, it almost certainly will become our only line of defense.

Of course, international engagement costs money, but the costliest peace is far cheaper than the cheapest war. Ever since I became President, I've been trying hard to convince Congress of that basic truth. It has been a considerable challenge. Our international affairs programs, which fund everything from resolving conflicts to strengthening young democracies, to combating terrorism, to fighting dangerous drugs, to promoting our exports, to maintaining our Embassies all around the world, amount to less than one percent of the Federal budget and less than one-fifteenth of our defense budget. But I regret to say that since 1985 these programs have been cut significantly. This year the House and Senate have passed spending bills that would cut our request for international affairs by more than \$2 billion. In other words, we're cutting the very programs designed to keep our soldiers out of war in the first place.

Underfunding our arsenal of peace is as risky as underfunding our arsenal for war. For if we continue to underfund diplomacy, we will end up overusing our military. Problems we might have been able to resolve peacefully will turn into crises that we can only resolve at a cost of life and treasure. If this trend continues, there will be real consequences for important American interests.

Let me mention just a few, beginning with our interest in peace and stability across the Atlantic. Today, after the victory in Kosovo and in Bosnia, we have an opportunity to invest in

peace so that future wars do not occur there. The people of the Balkans have been crippled by conflict, really, since the end of the cold war. Today, we have a chance to integrate them with each other and into the mainstream of Europe, where they will have strong incentives to maintain democracy and good behavior and avoid conflicts.

To do this, we don't need anything as ambitious as the Marshall plan. And whatever is done, we must insist that our European partners carry most of the load and that Balkan leaders themselves take responsibility for changing their policies. Still, the United States should be a part of this process. If we don't and the effort fails, make no mistake, there will be another bloody war that starts in the Balkans and spreads throughout southeastern Europe. And some day, more young Americans may be asked to risk their lives at far greater cost than our part of the rebuilding of the region.

If we are to succeed in winning the peace, we may see a 21st century—I'll say again—in which we do not have to send the young people of America to fight in another European war. That is a worthy objective. We have seen enough wars in Europe, claiming the lives of their children and America's young people. Now we have a chance to avoid it, and we ought to take the chance.

We also have a responsibility to protect American people from the dangers most likely to surface in the 21st century. The gravest of those may not be another country launching a nuclear weapon but that weapons of mass destruction will fall into the hands of terrorists and their rogue-state sponsors. We have worked to reduce that doomsday scenario. Since 1992, our support has helped to deactivate almost 5,000 nuclear warheads in the former Soviet Union; to eliminate nuclear weapons from three former Soviet republics; to strengthen the security of weapons and materials at over 100 sites; to tighten export controls in Russia and to purchase hundreds of tons, literally hundreds of tons, of highly enriched uranium that otherwise could be used for nuclear weapons that end up in the wrong hands.

This effort has received strong bipartisan support in the Congress for which I am very grateful. Today, the Russian economy is struggling, as we all know. The average salary of a highly trained weapons scientist in Russia—listen to this—the average salary of a highly trained

weapons scientist in Russia is less than \$100 a month.

Now, for a small investment, we can help them turn that expertise to peaceful projects that help the world and draw a living wage doing it. Or we can do nothing and pray that each and every one of those thousands of scientists will somehow resist the temptation to market their expertise to those who wish to do us and the cause of freedom harm. Common sense says to me that we ought to give them something useful and good to do and let them make a decent living.

That's why, in my State of the Union Address, I proposed increasing funding for threat reduction by two-thirds over the next 5 years. I want to work with Congress to make these investments to make the world a safer place.

Another challenge is to create a durable and comprehensive peace in the region that every President since Richard Nixon has considered among the most dangerous in the world, the Middle East. Today, we have a real opportunity to do that. The new Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Barak, formerly the commander of all Israel's military forces, has set forth an ambitious agenda to reach agreement within the next 15 months and to move the process beyond the setbacks of recent years.

Both Israelis and Palestinians now are determined to move forward. But the enemies of peace stand ready to strike to undercut this path. That is why last fall, when the two sides made a commitment to peace at the Wye River talks, we made a commitment to them, as well. As the United States has done ever since the Camp David accords in the late 1970's, we told the Israelis that we would help them minimize the risks of peace and lift the lives of the Palestinian people. We told the Jordanians that we would help promote their safety and their well-being.

Now, I know that's a long way away. But you know if there's a full-scale war in the Middle East, it will affect our interests and our values. The Middle East is home to all three of the world's great religions that hold we are created by one God. We have a chance to see it become a place of peace. If it becomes again a place of war, it will cost us far more than investing in a common, shared, peaceful future. The conflict has gone on for too long. We have a historic opportunity to end it. If the Israelis, the Palestinians, the Jordanians—ultimately, the

Syrians and the Lebanese—if they all are willing to do their part, we must do ours, and we ought to begin by keeping our word to fund the Wye River peace process.

We also have an opportunity, believe it or not, to move beyond a series of cruel conflicts in Africa. In the last 3 weeks, in efforts led not by the United States, although we supported them, but by the African countries themselves, we have seen signs for hope in the resolution of devastating conflicts, especially in the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, which has claimed more than 70,000 lives already. We have seen the most populous country in Africa, Nigeria, hold a democratic election and bring to an end 15 years of misrule. All this is very good news. It means that the largest untapped market for our products in the world, a continent of over 700 million people, that provides nearly as much oil to us as we get from the Middle East, will now have a chance to develop in freedom and peace and shared prosperity with us and other freedom-loving people.

Now, the African countries don't want the United States to solve their problems or to deploy our military. All they've asked us to do, at a small cost, is to support their efforts to resolve conflicts on their own, to keep the peace, to build better lives for their people, and to develop competent militaries. These efforts don't make a lot of headlines. I'll bet most of you don't know much about them. That's good, because the point is to avoid headlines, headlines about famine and refugee crisis and genocide, and to replace them, instead, with stories of partnership and shared prosperity. These are the stories we can write now, again, if Congress will invest only a tiny portion of what we spend on defense on avoiding war in the first place.

Finally, there is the question of the United Nations. One of the great legacies of our victory in World War II is an institution where nations seek to resolve differences with words instead of weapons. Paying our dues to that organization is a legal and a moral responsibility. It ought to be reason enough to do so. If we fail to do so soon, the United States will actually lose its vote in the General Assembly.

But obligation is not the only reason for doing this; so is opportunity. The U.N. helps us to mobilize the support of other nations for goals Americans cherish, from keeping the peace to immunizing children, to caring for refugees, to

combating the spread of deadly weapons. We've been working with growing success to make sure that the U.N. operates better, at lower cost.

But we have to do our part. Unless we want America to pay all the costs and take all the risks to solve the world's big problems, we have to work with others, and that means paying our fair share of dues, like every other country does, to the United Nations.

The bottom line is this: Today, we have a unique opportunity and a real responsibility to advance the values in the world won in the 20th century over the last 100 years by America's veterans. But if we have only one arrow in our quiver, our military, we sacrifice the work of peace and increase the risk of war. We have to do our part to keep the world on a stable path toward democracy, the democracy that every single one of you put your lives on the line to defend.

That's how President Truman felt. Fifty years ago this week he spoke to you at the VFW's Golden Jubilee Convention. Listen to what he said, and you can feel it here, because we're not very far from his hometown. Harry Truman said, "Peace with freedom and justice cannot be bought cheaply. It can only be assured by the combined efforts of the multitudes of people throughout the world who want a secure peace. We must keep them our friends if the world is to be a decent place for our children and their grandchildren to live." Harry Truman was a pretty smart fellow.

Just 2 months ago I visited a refugee camp full of Kosovar Albanians in Macedonia. I wish every one of you could have been there. As I walked through the camp, these young children started chanting spontaneously, "U.S.A., U.S.A., U.S.A.," thanking Americans for giving them a chance to reclaim their lives in their native land. They've all gone home now, by the way; over 90 percent of the refugees from Kosovo are home.

But it reminded me of my trip to Normandy for the 50th anniversary of D-day in 1994. In Normandy, we all heard stories, from our veterans, of French citizens who came up to them, took their hands, and told them that they were very young, 50 years ago, but they would always remember what Americans did for them and what it meant to them. I hope that in 50 years, some of our veterans from the conflict in Kosovo will go back there, and the children from that refugee camp, who will then be in

their middle years, will take their hands and say, "Fifty years ago I was chanting, 'U.S.A., U.S.A.,' with my voice, but I still chant with my heart." We are very grateful to you, all of you.

So on this centennial anniversary, on behalf of a grateful nation and grateful people throughout the world, I say to every soldier, sailor, airman, marine, and coastguardsman, to every man and woman who fought bravely for our Nation and brought dignity to the world, thank you for a job well done. May we look forward

to a century in which all your sacrifice and all your service is honored and redeemed with the greatest peace and prosperity the world has ever known.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:15 a.m. in Hall E at the H. Roe Bartle Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Thomas A. Pouliot, commander in chief, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States; and former Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jesse Brown.

## Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on Elections in Haiti

August 16, 1999

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Pursuant to the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including section 561(b) of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1999 (FOAA), as enacted in Public Law 105-277, I hereby report to the Congress that the central Government of Haiti: (1) has achieved a transparent settlement of the contested April 1997 elections, and (2) has made concrete progress on the constitution of a credible and competent provisional electoral council that is acceptable to a broad spectrum of political parties and civic groups in Haiti. Section 561(b) states that funds appropriated by the FOAA and made available to support elections in Haiti shall not be restricted if I report to the Congress that the central Government of Haiti has met the two aforementioned criteria.

The first criterion in section 561(b) of the FOAA, a transparent settlement of the contested April 1997 elections, was cumulatively met by a public declaration by the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) on June 11 and the promulgation of the Electoral Law, which was published in the national gazette *Le Moniteur* July 19, and republished with corrections July 22. Taken together, these two acts establish that 19 Senate seats will be run in the legislative and local elections projected for late 1999. Included in this number are the two still-contested Senate seats from April 1997. Article 63 of the Electoral Law specifically states "the number of Senators

to be elected in the upcoming elections shall be determined by the CEP." This authority is also provided in Article 16. Article 130 states that the elections are to fill Senate seats vacant by "fact or law."

Pursuant to its authority to determine which seats will be competed, the CEP declared publicly on June 11 that it "has decided to call elections to fill all Senate positions currently vacant, whether *de facto* or *de jure*, without distinction." In a number of subsequent public statements, as well as in private assurances to the Embassy and others in the international community, CEP officials explicitly and unanimously reiterated that because there are presently eight sitting Senators and the Constitution calls for a Senate of 27 Senators, a total of 19 Senate seats will be competed, including the two still-contested positions.

The second criterion, concrete progress on constituting a competent, credible, and broadly acceptable CEP, was achieved March 16 when President Preval announced that nine-member body's composition after consultations with the five-party *Espace de Concertation*. Since that time, the CEP has performed in a competent, even-handed, and credible manner and has been deemed acceptable even by parties and movements who stand in staunch opposition to the government.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON