

America permanently in debt. The bill as a whole would disproportionately benefit the wealthiest Americans by, for example, lowering capital gains rates, repealing the estate and gift tax, increasing maximum IRA and retirement plan contribution limits, and weakening pension anti-discrimination protections for moderate- and low-income workers.

The bill would not meet the Budget Act's existing pay-as-you-go requirements, which have helped provide the discipline necessary to bring us from an era of large and growing budget deficits to the potential for substantial surpluses. It would also automatically trigger across-the-board cuts (or sequesters) in a number of Federal programs. These cuts would result in a reduction of more than \$40 billion in the Medicare program over the next 5 years. Starting in 2002, they would also lead to the elimination of numerous programs with broad support, including: crop insurance, without which most farmers and ranchers could not secure the financing from banks needed to operate their farms and ranches; veterans readjustment benefits, denying education and training to more than 450,000 veterans, reservists, and dependents;

Federal support for programs such as child care for low-income families and Meals on Wheels for senior citizens; on many others.

As I have repeatedly stressed, I want to find common ground with the Congress on a fiscal plan that will best serve the American people. I have profound differences, however, with the extreme approach that the Republican majority has adopted. It would provide a tax cut for the wealthiest Americans and would hurt average Americans by denying them the benefits of debt reduction and depriving them of the certainty that my proposals for Medicare and Social Security solvency would provide as they plan for their retirement.

I hope to work with Members of Congress to find a common path to honor our commitment to senior citizens, help working families with targeted tax relief for moderate- and lower-income workers, provide a better life for our children, and improve the standard of living of all Americans.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,  
September 23, 1999.

## Remarks at a Memorial Service for Lane Kirkland

*September 23, 1999*

Irena, members of the Kirkland family, Father O'Donovan, Monsignor Higgins, distinguished Members of Congress, visitors from other lands, and my fellow Americans:

I am profoundly honored to be here to pay tribute to a person I admired for many years before I ever thought I would have the chance to work with him as President, a man whom I was honored to present the Presidential Medal of Freedom, because he was, in our time, the very embodiment of the cause of freedom, a man who was both brilliant and articulate and still almost irrationally passionate about the things he knew to be right.

Back in 1985 Lane Kirkland went home to South Carolina, to the State university, and gave one of the most eloquent speeches on the role of Government ever delivered. Perhaps the most memorable line was his reflection on the terms "liberal" and "conservative." If you look at who

is here today to pay tribute to Lane, it's a pretty good place for me to start my remarks.

He said, "As one who has been afflicted by both labels, depending on the stance of the afflictor and the foreign or domestic nature of the issue, I doubt their utility in this day and age for anyone except slapdash journalists."

Not only did Lane reject such labels, we all know that he defied the labels, "liberal" and "conservative." In fact, in many ways, he defied all labels.

He was a man of remarkable contrasts. You've already heard others speak about his humility. He was a true five-star general in the global fight for human liberty, but so down to earth, he was offended if anyone called him anything but Lane.

He was such a powerful force for justice, he could lead hundreds of thousands of working people to march on Washington. But for years,

the most powerful force in his own home was a little dachshund named Stanley. He was a man of idealism and strong opinions, but he was genuinely open to people who had the courage to differ with him. He was a gifted intellectual, but on Sunday afternoons, he put his books aside to watch the Redskins on TV. He was a man of the arts, whose perhaps favorite artistry was his harmonica rendition of "Solidarity Forever." For all of his contrasts, there was a remarkable consistency underlying everything he thought and said and did.

Both George Meany and Lane used to say, "The role of the trade unions is to try to keep the big guys from kicking the little guys around." That was his philosophy of life. And believe me, I got my fair share of lectures about it. [*Laughter*]

He lived it when he walked the picket lines with hotel workers in Las Vegas, when he got arrested with miners in Appalachia, when he quoted the fiery words of Zapata to mistreated Latino janitors in L.A. He lived it when he stood in solidarity with the oppressed workers of the Soviet bloc or helped to tear down the Iron Curtain in Poland and elsewhere in the communist world. He lived it when he struggled for racial and gender equality, when he fought to strengthen the Civil Rights Act, when he championed the cause of women and minorities within the America labor movement, when he helped to rescue the NAACP from bankruptcy.

You could see it in his own office, where he always treated even the most junior members of his staff with the same dignity and respect

he demanded for working men and women throughout the world. He stood up for the little guy. It was his ideology. It was also his way of life.

I want to conclude today with a story that was passed along to us at the White House by one of Lane's closest advisers. After he passed away, one of the medics who came to the house took Irena aside and said, "When I first took this call, the name Kirkland didn't ring any bells. But when I arrived, I realized who your husband was. As the shop steward for my EMS unit, I want you to know how grateful I am for everything your husband did for us. He was a wonderful man, and I know that everyone in my unit feels the same way."

Well, Irena, for all the distinguished speakers who will pay tribute to your husband today, I don't think any of us could do better than that. So let me just say that I am grateful for this giant of a man, a true American hero, a man who stood up for the little guy. I hope all of us can be faithful to his admonition to do the same. It is the only way we can give him the legacy he has richly earned.

God bless you and your family.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:30 p.m. in Gaston Hall at Georgetown University. In his remarks, he referred to Mr. Kirkland's widow, Irena; Father Leo J. O'Donovan, president, Georgetown University; and Monsignor George G. Higgins, former director, Social Action Department, National Catholic Welfare Conference (later known as the United States Catholic Conference).

## Remarks Prior to Discussions With Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority and an Exchange With Reporters

September 23, 1999

### *Middle East Peace Process*

*The President.* Let me say, I am delighted to see Chairman Arafat again. We have a lot to discuss, obviously, about our bilateral relations, and especially about the permanent status talks. He and Prime Minister Barak have agreed on a very ambitious timetable to have a framework agreement by February, final agreement by next September. The United States is pre-

pared to do all we can to assist them in coming to an agreement.

I would like to take this opportunity to say that we should first meet our own obligations under the Wye agreement, and I hope the Congress will give me the funding, both for Israel and for the Palestinian Authority, so that we can meet our obligations there. And we're working hard. We're into the final budget legs now, and I'm quite hopeful.