

Gore earlier in the year. And last December, the Vice President asked the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to develop a plan to increase the representation of adults with disabilities in the Federal workforce.

Today I am pleased to release that plan, *Accessing Opportunity: The Plan for Employment of People with Disabilities in the Federal Government*, and the companion employment guide prepared by OPM. These documents give agencies detailed and practical information on ways to recruit people with disabilities for positions at all levels of government; provide opportunities

for students with disabilities; ensure career opportunities for people with disabilities; collect and maintain data to monitor their success; and provide reasonable accommodations for applicants and employees with disabilities.

I therefore direct you to implement this plan immediately within your departments and agencies and to bring qualified people with disabilities into the Federal workforce. This plan is proof of the Federal Government's commitment to empowering people with disabilities; now is the time for us to fulfill that commitment.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Remarks at a National Italian American Foundation Dinner October 16, 1999

Thank you ladies and gentlemen. First of all, let me thank you for your warm welcome to Hillary and me. Thank you, Frank Guarini, for being my friend for all these years. Thank you, President Joe Cerrell. To all the distinguished guests here and the honorees, the Members of Congress, Gerry Ferraro, Ambassador Foglietta, Ambassador Rosapepe. To our distinguished Italian guests, Maria Bartiromo, Ambassador Salleo, and especially Foreign Minister Dini.

I would like to say a special word of appreciation at this point to the Prime Minister and the Government of Italy for standing with us and working with us for the cause of our common humanity in Kosovo and, before that, in Bosnia. We could not have done it without Italy, and I am grateful.

Justice Scalia and Cardinal Hickey and all the others here—you stole my line about 50 percent of my four Chiefs of Staff being Italian. The other two wish they were. [*Laughter*] I thank you for all the gifts from Campania, including the beautiful flowers for Hillary. We visited there when the 1994 conference of the G-7 nations was held in Naples. And we have been very blessed by our times there. I understand my friend Dick Grasso and the Barnes & Noble CEO, Leonard Riggio, are both from that region of Italy. I'm about to go back to Florence, and I'm only supposed to stay a day, so if I play hooky and stay an extra day I want 3,000 of you to write an excuse for me, just like I used to get when I missed a day of school.

I guess I ought to say, since this is baseball season, that I'm sure of one person who would like to be here tonight who can't be is Joe Torre. Now, I'm not taking sides in the baseball series, but the Yankees do have two Italian-Americans on their team, Joe and the catcher, Joe Girardi. And no city in America has been better to me than Boston, but the Red Sox haven't had an Italian since their pitcher Frank Viola retired. So I think we ought to get the Red Sox an Italian baseball player to balance out our equal opportunity agenda through the country.

You know, from the beginning of our country, Italian-Americans have made invaluable contributions. And I want to say a special word of thanks, not for all those which I could litanize, and you know them, but for the National Italian American Foundation's leadership for our efforts to build one America.

I'm very grateful that this is a country in better shape than it was 7 years ago when I first came here. I am very grateful for the chance that I have had to serve. I'm grateful for the Italian-Americans who have helped to ensure the success of our administration. I'm glad that we have the lowest unemployment rate in 29 years and the lowest welfare rolls in 30 years and the lowest poverty rates in 20 years, the lowest crime rates in 26 years and the first back-to-back surpluses in 42 years.

But I have to tell you that the most important thing we have to do to get ready for the 21st

century, even more important than our efforts to continue to grow our economy, is to build one country out of our diversity. If we do, if the American people really can come to have that wonderful balance which enables us to celebrate our diversity and our unique ethnic and religious traditions, which makes America a very interesting place to live, and still say our common humanity is even more important, we'll figure out how to deal with all the other things.

Last year, one of only 2 years I've missed since I first came here 7 years ago, I was up for 9 days and nights at the Wye Plantation trying to keep the Middle East peace process on track. If you look around the world at how I have spent my time as your President—working for peace in the Balkans, among Muslims and Croats and Serbs, among Albanian Muslim and Serbian Orthodox Christians; for peace in the Middle East, among Arabs and Jews, among Israelis, Palestinians, Syrians, Jordanians, and Lebanese; for peace in Northern Ireland among Catholics and Protestants; to set up protections against the kind of tribal slaughter we've seen in Africa among people who shared the same land, in one case in Rwanda, for 500 years—it is truly interesting that at the dawn of this new millennium, when we're exhilarated by all these technological and scientific advances that are being made—one man told me that when I have grandchildren they may be born with a life expectancy of 100 years; we know that our kids are using the Internet and talking to people all over the world and knowing things we couldn't know—isn't it interesting that, in this quintessentially modern era, our biggest problem is the most primitive and ancient of human failings: the fear of the other, people who are different from us?

And what a short step it is from fearing people to hating them to dehumanizing them, which legitimizes doing away with them. And isn't it interesting that at a time when the crime rate in America is at a 26-year low, we still have these vicious examples of a man shooting children at a Jewish community school and then going out and murdering a Filipino postman; another man saying he belonged to a church that didn't believe in God but did believe in white supremacy, killing an African-American basketball coach in Illinois and then murdering a young Korean Christian as he walked out of his church; and all these other examples: the young gay man, Matthew Shepard, a year ago

this week being stretched out, literally, upon a rack; James Byrd being pulled apart in Texas because he was an African-American? Not because all Americans are like that—almost all of us aren't—but because in each of us there is this fragile scale, like the scale of justice Mr. Scalia must try to balance in his work, and in this scale we wake up every morning with some curious balance of light and dark, of hope and fear, and when the scale gets badly enough out of whack, the easiest thing to do is to strike out against the other.

So I say again to you, Italian-Americans have been subject to discrimination and bigotry in times past in America. You still are subject to stereotypes that I think are unfair and unrepresentative, to be kind about it. But it is because of the values you share with other Americans that we have a prosperous economy and a healing society. And we just have to remember that overall. Yes, I hope a lot of your children make hundreds of millions of dollars by starting Internet companies; yes, I hope that my plans to take care of the aging of America and save Social Security and Medicare will prevail; I hope our plans to elevate the quality of all of our schools will prevail; I hope I can convince both parties in Congress to resist temptation and save enough of this surplus to get us out of debt for the first time since 1835 over the next 15 years. I hope all of that. But remember this: The most important thing is to build one America out of this crazy quilt of all of us who live here.

Last week Hillary and I had the eighth of her millennial evenings at the White House. And we had an expert in the Internet, who helped to design the architecture of the Internet, and an expert in genomics, who talked to us about the human genome project and the miracles it will bring. He says one day the intersection of computers and gene studies will enable us to put digital, microscopic digital pieces in all parts of the human body to do even the repair work on shattered nerves to the spine. And we talked about all the miracles out there.

And the genomics expert said, "But what I want you to understand is that of all the possible permutations among people, with all many, many parts of every gene, 99.9 percent of us is identical to that of every other human being. And the genetic differences among groups—that is, individuals among the Italian community, for example—are more significant and greater than

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the aggregate average genetic differences between Italians and Irish and Africans and Latins.” It’s important to remember. For people of faith, it reflects the wisdom of our Creator.

So I say again, I’m indebted to you for many things: your work ethic, your family ethic, your creativity, your energy, your passion. It made America a much more interesting place, and it fueled this remarkable run we have had. But your commitment to see that neither Italians nor any other human beings are subject to degradation and prejudice because of who they are, that we will learn to honestly and openly express our differences and enjoy our differences, but reaffirm our common humanity, make no mistake about it—just pick up the paper any day; look at the perils of the present day. We are in a conflict between modern possibility and primitive hatred. One America is the only answer, and you’re leading the way.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:37 p.m. in the ballroom at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Frank J. Guarini, chairman, Joseph R. Cerrell, president, and Geraldine Ferraro, board member, National Italian American Foundation; U.S. Ambassador to Italy Thomas M. Foglietta; U.S. Ambassador to Romania James C. Rosapepe; Italian Ambassador to the United States Ferdinando Salleo; Minister of Foreign Affairs Lamberto Dini and Prime Minister Massimo D’Alema of Italy; CNBC journalist Maria Bartiromo, event emcee; Cardinal James Hickey, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Washington, DC; Richard Grasso, chairman and chief executive officer, New York Stock Exchange; Joe Torre, manager, New York Yankees; Vinton G. Cerf, senior vice president for Internet architecture and technology, MCI WorldCom; and Eric Lander, director, Whitehead Institute/MIT Center for Genome Research.

Statement on the 1998 Uniform Crime Report

October 17, 1999

The 1998 uniform crime report released by the FBI today shows that serious crime has continued to fall in every region of our Nation for the seventh straight year. The murder rate is at its lowest since 1967. The overall violent crime rate is down, and gun crimes, rapes, robberies, assaults, and juvenile crime have all dropped to their lowest levels in over a decade. This is good news for America’s families, and it shows we can indeed turn the tide on crime.

My administration’s strategy of 100,000 more police, fewer guns in the hands of criminals, thanks to the Brady law, and more tools for communities to combat crime is working to

make our streets safer and our communities stronger. But tragedies from Littleton to Los Angeles show that we must do more to protect our communities from gun violence. Even as crime falls, we must not let down our guard. That is why we must redouble our efforts to build on what works by fully funding our COPS program to put more police on the street and by passing commonsense gun legislation to keep guns out of the wrong hands. Together we can make America the safest big nation in the world.

NOTE: This statement was embargoed for release until 6 p.m., October 17.

Remarks on Budget Negotiations and an Exchange With Reporters

October 18, 1999

The President. Good morning. I have just completed a meeting with my economic team to see what we can do to reach overall budget agreement with the congressional leadership. In

just 4 days the resolution that temporarily funds the Government will expire, and yet Congress still has not sent me a budget that maintains our fiscal discipline, pays down Social Security,