

Oct. 25 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1999

Statement on Chinese-American Veterans of World War II

October 25, 1999

I am honored to recognize the contributions of Chinese-Americans during World War II. This untold story is one of great patriotism and heroism. Some 20,000 Chinese-Americans served our country during this period as aviation specialists, paratroopers, military intelligence officers, medics, in the Women Army Corps (WAC's) and Women Army Air Force Service (WASP's) and so on. From Normandy to prisoner of war camps, they served this Nation with great pride and courage.

Asian-Americans, as demonstrated by the veterans I met today, have proved over and over again their loyalty to this country. It is intolerable that the patriotism of Asian-Americans continues to be questioned, in the light of the re-

cent allegations of espionage at one of our national laboratories. Asian-American scientists like those who have served proudly in our military have made significant contributions to our national security and have made the U.S. the foremost leader in scientific achievements. Yet instead of our thanks, many have received nothing but suspicion and prejudice.

Racism and stereotyping have no place in our Nation of diverse peoples who trace their ancestry to every corner of the globe. The remarkable men and women that I met today are examples of why our diversity is our greatest strength. Today I honor these Chinese-American veterans of World War II and their service and steadfast loyalty to this country.

Statement on the Election of Fernando de la Rúa as President of Argentina

October 25, 1999

On behalf of the people of the United States, I congratulate Fernando de la Rúa on his victory in Argentina's Presidential election. The Argentine elections were a model of civic participation

and a testament to the strength and vibrancy of Argentina's democracy.

I look forward to working with President-elect de la Rúa and to deepening the partnership between our two nations.

Remarks at a "Broadway for Hillary" Celebration in New York City

October 25, 1999

Now, you all just relax while I get used to my new role. [Laughter] Somewhere between the amen corner for Jimmy Naughton, the straight man for Rosie, and the warmup for Hillary, I'll figure out something to do. [Laughter]

Jim, that was a heck of a speech. It's a good thing you didn't file; Al and Bill would be nervous about that. [Laughter]

I want to thank all of you for being here tonight. I'm profoundly grateful to everyone who conceived and put together this program, and all the people who gave their time. I remember the "Broadway for Clinton" program back in June of '92. And I remember the people who

performed and the people who came, because I was running third in the polls back then. [Laughter] But by the time the convention rolled around, everything had changed.

I want to thank Senator Schumer for his remarks and his support; the New York legislative leaders that are here: Speaker Silver, Majority Leader Bragman, Senator Martin Connor; Judith Hope, the State Democratic chair; our borough president, C. Virginia Fields; the Bronx borough president, Freddy Ferrer; City Council Speaker Peter Vallone; Comptroller Alan Hevesi; and Mark Green, our longtime friend, the public

advocate. Thank you all very much. And thank you, Rosie, and everyone else who performed.

Jim Naughton said most of the stuff I was going to say—[laughter]—and better. So I would just like to say a few things. First, thank you for being so good to us in New York. Thank you for 1992, for the convention, for the vote. Thank you for 1996, the largest margin of victory we had in any State in America. Thank you for welcoming us here when we leave the White House. Thank you for being here tonight, not only as supporters but as friends.

October's a great month for us and our family. First, we celebrate, on the 11th, our anniversary. We just had our 24th wedding anniversary. And then we celebrate Hillary's birthday. And now, thanks to your doing this, and the fact we get back about 2 in the morning, we expect to have like a 24-hour celebration.

We have been very blessed, Hillary and I, and we've been blessed by our family, our friends, and the opportunity to serve in public life. I am very grateful for all the work that we have done together over all these years. I am very grateful that now my wife has a chance to do what I thought she ought to do 26 years ago when we finished law school. And I was really afraid, as I have told many of our friends—and some of our old friends are nodding their heads out there—the only thing that really worried me about our getting married was that somehow she would be denied the opportunity to share her gifts in the most important way. For we have always only cared most, in our work life, about public service. I have watched her for over 30 years give—I've only watched her for 29 years, but for 30 years and more—care passionately about children and give herself to service.

The first job she had out of law school was with the Children's Defense Fund. She could have gone to work for any number of law firms, but she wanted to help kids. Then she became head of the Legal Services Corporation Board, when President Carter was in office. She then became chair of the Children's Defense Fund board. She headed the education reform movement in Arkansas when I was Governor. And as First Lady, she has literally inspired tens of millions of mothers and their children all around the world, trying to get a better deal for young girls and their families in poor villages from Africa to Latin America to Asia.

She has been a major force in the passage of legislation that will enable us to insure over 5 million children with health insurance. It makes it easier for people to adopt children. She has worked on all the things we have done to try to reduce violence against our young people. She has played a major role in all of our reforms in education, early childhood learning, and health care. And in so doing, she has always been willing to do it without getting, really, anything like the credit she deserved for the work she did and the impact she had. Over all these years, I have seen her driven by a personal sense of responsibility to serve, partly because she does believe it takes a village to raise a child or to raise a country.

When we went to Washington in 1992, late '92, about 3 weeks before the inaugural, we had some ideas that we thought would work to turn our country around in a very troubled time. They were just ideas, just an argument. But the country gave us a chance, and the results have been good. Jimmy Naughton listed some of them.

What I want to say to you tonight in bringing Hillary on is this: In my lifetime, we have never had the chance, as a nation, we have today. The country was going in the wrong direction; now it's going in the right direction. We have the lowest unemployment in 29 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 30 years, the lowest crime rate in 30 years, first back-to-back surpluses in 42 years, the lowest poverty rate in 20 years. We're moving in the right direction.

But we all know there are these huge challenges out there: the aging of America, the largest and most diverse group of kids we ever had, the opportunity and the responsibility we have to give poor people a chance to be a part of this prosperity for the first time ever. In my lifetime, this has never happened. In the 1960's, we had an economy that, for a few years, was maybe about like this. But we had the civil rights crisis, and we had the war in Vietnam, and we became divided, and we never got around to doing it. Now all we have to overcome is the politics of pettiness and personal destruction. We have to lift ourselves out of that as one country, one America.

All the things that Jim said a Senator will have to decide are true. But the thing you ought to think about is this: New York has distinct challenges and unprecedented opportunities.

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Your country has the first chance in your lifetime to imagine and then to build the future of our dreams for our children and for our grandchildren. And it will only happen if we are led by the right people.

I have done everything I could do to leave this country in good shape. There is still a lot more we can do in the next 15 months. But fundamentally, the decisions the voters make in the year 2000, the millennial year, will determine whether we do what so many people do when times are good—get distracted, become self-indulgent, make short-term and often foolish decisions; or we seize the chance of a lifetime.

The best I can give the American people now is to do my best to make sure that they know that the person I love most in the world is without any doubt the ablest, most passionate,

most committed, most visionary public servant I have ever known.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:30 p.m. at the Ford Center for the Performing Arts. In his remarks, he referred to author James Naughton, who introduced the President; talk show host and event emcee Rosie O'Donnell; Vice President Al Gore and former Senator Bill Bradley, Democratic candidates for President; Sheldon Silver, speaker, and Michael J. Bragman, majority leader, New York State Assembly; State Senator Martin Connor; C. Virginia Fields, president, Borough of Manhattan; Fernando Ferrer, president, Borough of the Bronx; and Alan Hevesi, comptroller, and Mark Green, public advocate, New York City. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval Appropriations Legislation for Commerce, Justice, and Foreign Affairs *October 25, 1999*

To the House of Representatives:

I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 2670, the "Departments of Commerce, Justice, and State, the Judiciary, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2000."

This legislation should embody the continuing commitment of this Administration on a broad range of fundamental principles. First and foremost amongst these tenets is the notion that the United States of America should be the safest country in the world. Our families must feel secure in their neighborhoods. Since 1993, the progress realized toward that end has been impressive and must not be impeded.

Moreover, America must continue to lead the community of nations toward a safer, more prosperous and democratic world. This guidepost has for generations advanced the cause of peace and freedom internationally, and an erosion of this policy is untenable and unacceptable at this critical moment in history.

This great Nation serves as example to the world of a just and humane society. We must continue to lead by our example and maintain a system that vigorously protects and rigorously respects the civil rights of individuals, the dignity

of every citizen, and the basic justice and fairness afforded to every American.

Unfortunately, this bill fails to uphold these principles.

Specifically, and most notably, the bill fails to adequately fund the proposed 21st Century Policing Initiative, which builds on the success of the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program. I requested \$1.275 billion in new appropriations, and this bill provides only \$325 million. To date, the COPS program has funded more than 100,000 additional police officers for our streets. The 21st Century Policing initiative would place an additional 30,000 to 50,000 police officers on the street over the next 5 years and would expand the concept of community policing to include community prosecution, law enforcement technology assistance, and crime prevention. Funding the COPS program required a bipartisan commitment, and it paid off; recently released statistics show that we have the lowest murder rate in 31 years and the longest continuous decline in crime on record. I strongly believe we must forge a similar commitment to support the COPS program's logical successor.