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Bridges, co-principals, Frank W. Ballou Senior High School; Mayor Anthony A. Williams of Washington, DC; Arlene Ackerman, superintendent, District of Columbia Public Schools; Angela Lee, director of government affairs for the District of Columbia, AT&T; and Julie Evans, chief executive officer, NetDay.

Statement on the Retirement of Representative Bruce F. Vento
February 2, 2000

I was saddened to learn that Representative Bruce Vento has been diagnosed with lung cancer and will retire from Congress at the end of the year. Since he was first elected to Congress in 1976, Bruce Vento has served the people of his Minnesota district with great distinction. A true champion of the environment, he has steered into law more than 300 bills protecting our natural resources. He has also been a tireless advocate in combating homelessness.

Bruce Vento has made a significant contribution to his country, not only as a United States Congressman but also as a Representative to the Minnesota State House and as a science and social studies teacher for 10 years. He will be greatly missed by his colleagues in the House of Representatives and his constituents in Minnesota. Hillary and I wish he and his family the best as they work to fight this terrible disease. We look forward to his continued public service even after he retires from Congress.

Message on the Observance of Lunar New Year, 2000
February 2, 2000

Warm greetings to all those celebrating the Lunar New Year. I am delighted to join you in welcoming 4698, the Year of the Dragon.

This ancient and joyous festival, marked by parades, dancing, music, and feasting, celebrates the miracle of life, the promise of a new year, and the blessings of family, friends, and community. It also reminds us of the many contributions that Asian Americans bring to our national life and of the many ways in which their customs, history, and traditions have enriched our country's cultural heritage.

Asian Americans play a key role in all segments of our society, from the scientists who have helped to build our national defense and to power our unmatched technological progress to the artists whose talents grace our literature, stage, and screen. America is strengthened by these contributions, and we must work to ensure that Asian Americans are afforded every opportunity to be active and equal participants in our national life.

As people across America and around the world mark the beginning of a new lunar cycle, Hillary joins me in extending best wishes to all for health, happiness, prosperity, and peace in the new year.

BILL CLINTON