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just up to me, if I could sign an Executive order and let them have a sanctioned election, I would do it today. And I view this compromise as an empowerment of the people of Puerto Rico and, to that extent, a ratification of their longstanding grievances.

But the people of Vieques should be able to decide this. And I don't think that—just as I don't think the Pentagon should impose it on them, I don't think the demonstrators should stop them from having a vote either. I think they ought to be able to make a judgment.

Thank you very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's 186th news conference began at 2:25 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Nicholas Kunselman and Stephanie Hart, students at Columbine High School, Littleton, CO, who were murdered in a Subway sandwich shop on February 14; Gov. George W. Bush of Texas; Gov. George H. Ryan of Illinois; former Senator George J. Mitchell, who chaired the multiparty talks in Northern Ireland; Gen. John de Chastelain, Canadian Defense Forces, chair, Independent International Commission on Decommissioning; David Trimble, leader, Ulster Unionist Party; Gov. Pedro Rosselló of Puerto Rico; and Mayor Manuela Santiago of Vieques, PR. Reporters referred to Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani of New York City; Judge Susan Webber Wright, U.S. District Court for Arkansas, who presided over the Paula Jones suit against the President; and former Senator Bill Bradley. The President also referred to LIHEAP, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Action Concerning Imports of Steel Wire Rod

February 16, 2000

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

I am pleased to provide to the Congress documents called for by section 203(b) of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended, pertaining to the safeguard action that I proclaimed today on imports of steel wire rod.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Albert Gore, Jr., President of the Senate. The proclamation and memorandum of February 16 on action concerning imports of steel wire rod are listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education Dinner

February 16, 2000

Thank you very much. Dr. McClure, my mother is up in heaven smiling at that introduction. And she's probably the only person who heard it who believes every word of it. [*Laughter*] But I liked it, and I thank you. [*Laughter*]

I thank you so much, all of you, for welcoming me. To your chair-elect, Joann Boyd-Scotland, who sat with me for a few moments; your CEO, my long-time friend Dr. Henry Ponder; Dr. Earl Richardson, who welcomed me to Morgan State not too many years ago, and then Vice President Gore yesterday; to Dr. Iris Ish and all the members of my Board of Advisors on Historically Black Colleges and Universities; to my president, the Arkansas Baptist College president, Dr. William Keaton, my long-time friend.

I want to also have a special word of acknowledgement to your vice president, Dr. Wilma Roscoe. Her daughter, Jena, works in the White