

Apr. 5 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 2000

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization

April 5, 2000

Dear _____:

I transmit herewith the 6-month report required under the heading “International Organizations and Programs” in title IV of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1996 (Public Law 104–107), relating to the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO).

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Jesse Helms, chairman, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., ranking mem-

ber, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; Ted Stevens, chairman, and Robert C. Byrd, ranking member, Senate Committee on Appropriations; Mitch McConnell, chairman, and Patrick Leahy, ranking member, Senate Committee on Rules and Administration; Benjamin A. Gilman, chairman, and Sam Gejdensen, ranking member, House Committee on International Relations; and C.W. Bill Young, chairman, and David R. Obey, ranking member, House Committee on Appropriations; and Sonny Callahan, chairman, and Nancy Pelosi, House Committee on Foreign Operations, Export Financing and Related Programs.

Remarks to Corporate Leaders on the One America Initiative

April 6, 2000

Thank you. Let me begin by welcoming all of you here and thanking our previous speakers. I thank Ben Johnson for making sure I won't be alone to turn the lights out at the end of my tenure here—[laughter]—and for what you can see is his evident passion for his work. I don't know if I've ever heard anybody tell a centipede joke before. [Laughter] I grew up in a place when I was a kid where I could collect centipedes, scorpions, brown recluse spiders, all kinds of snakes. I never thought they were very funny before. [Laughter] But he made it funny.

I want to thank George Fisher for his leadership on this and so many other issues. I have really loved working with him over the course of my Presidency. And I want to thank Duane Ackerman for what he said. We didn't know each other very well until I started on this whole new markets tour, which is an important part of building one America, giving everybody a chance to participate in our prosperity. And I realized that he had come, like me, from pretty modest circumstances to a very high position, and he never forgot where he came from. And he's interested in giving all people a chance to be a part of it, and I am grateful.

I was looking at these two leaders of our business community and looking at many of you out here with whom I had the privilege to work, and it made me feel very proud of my country and very confident of our future success.

I'd like to thank the members of the administration who are here: Secretary of Labor Alexis Herman; our FCC Chair, Bill Kennard; and the front row here has a whole lineup of our White House stars. I thank them for all being here and for their commitment to this work.

As Ben said, this is the third time we have brought key leaders to the White House to talk about the role of specific elements in American society for building one America. Last year we had a distinguished group of lawyers here who answered our call to use the power of the legal profession not only to fight discrimination and empower citizens who want to do the same but to have their law firms reflect the legal causes that lawyers have been fighting for, for decades in this country, and I appreciated that. Last month we had a coalition of religious leaders here who pledged the power of faith in our ongoing efforts. Today we recognize that corporate America is an equally, perhaps even more

powerful force in the movement for building one America.

Dr. King once said, "We refuse to believe there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this Nation." Today, there is a new understanding that actually building one America replenishes the funds in the vaults of opportunity, that this is not an act of charity or kindness or even constitutional obligation but enlightened self-interest.

For the past 7 years, I have tried to unlock those vaults and let the river of opportunity flow to every community and every person. And I am grateful for the chance that we have had to be part of building the longest economic expansion in our history and the lowest African-American and Hispanic unemployment rates ever recorded. I'm proud of the fact that we have an administration that looks like America, with the most diverse Cabinet and staff in history.

But we all know there are still people and places left behind, and there are still places where problems exist even when people try to root them out. And I appreciated George Fisher citing his own company. I am quite sure that any of us, including me, who had any organization of any size have similar experiences somewhere in the operations which we lead.

Now, a part of what we're trying to do is just to get economic opportunity out there. That's what the whole new markets effort is about. We've been to the Mississippi Delta, to Appalachia, to the Pine Ridge Reservation, to inner cities. On April the 16th, I'm going to go out to East Palo Alto, to the Shiprock Native American Reservation in New Mexico, and to one or two other places to try to focus specifically on what technology can do, not to open but to close the digital divide and increase economic opportunity for our people.

But it is also important to put the power of diversity to work for our economy in daily ways. And that means encouraging diversity throughout every single corporate organization in America, from the boardroom to the stockroom, forging partnerships between corporations and others who need them, schools and communities, to promote educational opportunities. It means working with efforts like the Welfare to Work Partnership, the School to Work Partnership, to get more young people on the path to good careers. It means doing more business with small, minority-owned suppliers of all kinds.

It means using the corporate bully pulpit to convince others that an investment in diversity is the right and the smart thing to do.

Yesterday we had a fascinating economic summit here at the White House. It highlighted how the rapid development of information technology in the last years—10 years—has dramatically transformed our economy, giving us unprecedented growth, wealth, and job creation.

We also faced the fact that a lot of people have been left behind in this development. We know that minorities and poor whites have participated at a lower rate in the new economy because they don't have the skills necessary to fill a large number of the high-tech jobs being created every day.

Even though we have a very low unemployment rate, the lowest in 30 years, it's very interesting—to highlight this—where the shortage of high-tech jobs is. The Congress, once again, is debating the need to raise the ceiling on what we call the H-1B visas. Those are visas that people get because they have special skills to come to contribute here. And we will raise it, and we should raise it, because first of all immigration is good for our country, and secondly, these companies need to continue to grow.

But it is very interesting that in the largest center of pure information technology employment, Silicon Valley, right next to it you have East Palo Alto, where I'm going, which has a 20 percent poverty rate and a high unemployment rate. Now, if you believe as I do, that intelligence is evenly distributed throughout the human race, that means some of those people could fill some of those H-1B slots if only they had had the education and training to do it.

The second-largest concentration of high-tech information technology jobs, interestingly enough, is not in New York or on Corridor 128 in Massachusetts, it's here in the Washington, DC, area. The city of Washington, even though the unemployment rate is now—I think we've got it down below 6 percent—is still the second or third highest in the country compared to all the other States. And there's a huge job shortage here.

And if you believe that intelligence is evenly distributed and a lot of these people could be filling those jobs, if more people had had attitudes like those we've had here expressed and more systems in place like those that many of the corporate leaders here have put in place, and they could fill some of those H-1B jobs.

Now, the trick is to do both at the same time, and that is what we're committed to doing. But I think it's worth pointing out.

According to our Office of Science and Technology Policy, African-Americans and Hispanics are less than half as likely, still today, to earn degrees in science and engineering as whites. According to a February issue of Black Enterprise magazine, only 4 of the top 50 blacks in corporate America work in the high-tech industry.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimate that information technology will need 3 million more workers by the year 2008. So, this is just one example of something we need to be doing. And I might say this: This is not just these dot-com companies; information technology is dominating, driving, and making more efficient all kinds of traditional corporations. In that sense, they're just as important as they are to Duane Ackerman's connecting people. They also will create more Kodak moments for George in the years ahead. [*Laughter*]

I'm glad you mentioned that Kodak moment, by the way. I've often thought I should be getting some sort of stock benefit—[*laughter*—]for all the film I use here.

Let me just say, I want to make a couple of announcements today, to put some teeth into this enormously important event. First of all, 25 companies, all of them represented here today, have pledged to commit at least \$1 million a year for the next 10 years to expand diversity in the high-tech work force. That's a \$250 million long-term commitment by American corporations to close the technology skills gap.

A classic example of doing well by doing good will help us to create one America. The funds being pledged today include contributions to strengthen math and science education; to provide scholarships for minorities and women; to train more math and science teachers in our inner cities, a very important thing; to help young people pursue careers in science, engineering, and information technology. This is a very important proposition.

Many other things can be done. And I hope that this meeting today will just be the beginning of a whole new burst of effort by corporate America. And I want to thank George Fisher for saying that you don't want to judge your performance by just whether the numbers look good or whether you've met the minimum or

whether you can't be sued in a court of law. That's not what all this is about. This is not about keeping something bad from happening. This is about making good things happen. And the more I represent you around the world, the more I realize that this effort to build one America is, in a way, the most advanced example of a struggle going on all over the world, which has gone on throughout human history.

I was in this little village in India a couple weeks ago, and I met with this women's dairy co-op. And they showed me how they had some, for them, very high technology to test the fat content of their milk and how proud they were that even in this poor village they had—everything that they did, all their transactions were conducted by computer.

And then I saw, in this little poor village, that the State government there had put a computer up in whatever language the people who would come to it spoke, so that even the poorest village people could get the information they needed that the Government had. And one woman who had just had a baby came in, pulled up the Health Department's page, and found out what she was supposed to do the first 2 months of her baby's life, and then printed it right out. And she went home with information as good as you could get if you had walked out of a doctor's office in Chevy Chase here today. That is the kind of thing we ought to be doing.

But the point I want to make is, what they told me was, all these changes started in 1993 when the Government adopted a new law that said the local governments had to reflect all the tribes and all the castes of India and that women had to be given 30 percent of the positions in local government. And they told me, these people in this poor village—you'd think, well, they'd think, "Gosh, you know, we're so poor we've got to work together." They told me that until this law passed and they all got elected, that people had never had dinner together in this tiny village across the caste lines and the tribal lines. And now that they've been doing it, you know, they know what they were missing, and they can't imagine why they didn't do it all along.

You see these things happen; you all know all the terrible stories from Bosnia to Rwanda, to the continuing strife we have in the Middle East and the struggles we're having in Kosovo. But what I want you to understand is, there's

something endemic in the human condition that both makes us afraid of people who are different from us and beneath that makes us long to reach out and connect with them.

And I think it's important to point out that this whole effort of building one America is not about homogenizing us. Four or 5 years from now, they will be having events like this at the White House, and—certainly within 10 years—it will be impossible to have four speakers and they will all be middle-aged gray-haired guys and three of them will be white. It won't happen. It will change. In my lifetime, I think we will have a woman President and certainly an African-American or Hispanic or an Asian-American President—maybe all three.

But the point is, it won't diminish white guys. It will make life more interesting. *[Laughter]* But the struggle is to understand it that way. This is not a matter of homogenizing this country; it's a matter of celebrating, relishing our differences and somehow finding a way to affirm our common humanity. And the older I get, the more I become convinced that it may be one of the two or three most important journeys in life for all of us—not just as an organization, just individual journeys—figuring out how to understand and respect the differences between people and not feel that in order for you to matter more, someone else has to matter less; in order for you to be secure, someone else has to be insecure; in order for you to win, someone else has to lose.

It is a constant theme throughout all human history, and it is something that, in positive and profoundly negative ways, is being played out all over the world today. And I am grateful that in our country, we are largely dealing with—in spite of the tragedy of the hate crimes against people because of their race or their religion or because they are gay, which we have to try to stamp out—largely, we're playing this out in positive ways today.

But I would ask you to remember as we close—just one last thing—what George said. This is not a matter of getting everybody right with the law. It's not a matter of having the right statistics. It's a matter of making the businesses of America a joy to work in, because they will be more productive, they will be more profitable. People are happy to go to work because they are proud of who they are; they respect those who are different from them; and they are making progress on this very difficult journey of life. Now I think it is a great, great endeavor in which to be involved, and I thank you so much for your support.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:43 p.m. in Presidential Hall in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to George M. C. Fisher, chairman, Eastman Kodak Co.; and F. Duane Ackerman, chief executive officer, BellSouth.

Statement on the Death of Former Tunisian President Habib Bourguiba *April 6, 2000*

Hillary and I are saddened by the death of former Tunisian President Habib Bourguiba. On behalf of the American people, I want to extend our heartfelt condolences to President Bourguiba's family and to the Tunisian people.

President Bourguiba was a historic leader, a pioneer in Tunisia's struggle for independence and for social and economic progress. He also

played a courageous role in efforts to advance peace in the Middle East. He leaves behind a nation that can be proud of its social achievements, particularly the steps it has taken to advance the status of women, and a nation poised to take on the critical challenges of deepening democracy and respect for human rights—and building a better future for all Tunisians.