

Morella here. I was just looking at Connie thinking, she's probably got more kids and grandkids than anybody else in this audience—[laughter]—and therefore probably has more standing on this issue than anyone else. And we thank her and all the Members of the House who are here. I thank them.

But mostly, I want to thank you, Dr. Ifenne, for being here. I think you could see what a responsive chord you struck. But when you were speaking and then when Congressman Greenwood got up to speak and he talked about visiting a village in Bolivia, you know, the fundamental problem here, I believe, is that too many people are voting on this issue based on either pressures they receive or personal values they hold dear, genuinely. But they've never actually seen this.

If I hadn't been President, I don't suppose I ever would have gone to those small villages in Latin America and Africa and India and East Asia and met with all those village women who are, I think, the most impressive citizens in the entire world today, changing the whole future.

When Dr. Ifenne was talking, I remembered, when I was in Senegal, I visited with a group of village women who came to see me from their little village. They wanted to come to the capital to see me, because Hillary had gone out to see them. And it was a village where genital mutilation was practiced. And these women organized the village and got rid of it. And so they got up, dressed in their beautiful native dress, and they came to see me, and they even brought along a handful of men who supported them. [Laughter]

When you see these things, when you see people in the most basic ways taking control of their lives, and you realize it is pro-child,

pro-family, pro-every value that any of us ever proposed to espouse, I believe that the United States is—in my budget, I think it's the least we should be doing. And frankly, I only proposed that much because I thought it was the most I could get passed.

But if you were to ask me what I have learned as President about our dealings with other countries, I would say two things. One is, large countries too often forget the little people in other countries. You can't afford it here, because they can vote you out. But we know that the citizens are the strength of this country; the same is true everywhere. The other thing I have learned is that we get far more—that foreign policy is a lot more like real life than most people imagine. You get a lot more, on the whole, out of cooperation than coercion.

So, Doctor, we thank you for coming. It's a long way from Nigeria. I hope your trip will prove to be worthwhile. If every Member of the United States Congress could hear you, I'm quite confident we would prevail. For the rest of us, we have to do our best to add to your voices.

But I hope as you argue this, you will remember to talk to those who have never been to those villages about what we know is true. The empowerment of individuals in difficult circumstances is the ultimate answer to all of our challenges, and this is a very important part of that.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:02 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Ambassadors to the U.S. Petrit Bushati of Albania, Luiz Alberto Moreno of Colombia, and Jibril Muhammed Aminu of Nigeria.

Radio Remarks on the Social Security Internet Retirement Planner April 7, 2000

For more than 60 years now, Social Security has provided a measure of financial security for seniors after a lifetime of work. Beginning today, Americans of all ages can log on to the Internet and find out in seconds the amount of Social Security benefits they can expect in retirement. The new on-line retirement planner estimates

future benefits based on past, present, and projected future income. Just log on to the Social Security website at www.ssa.gov, and click on the new Social Security retirement planner. It's never too early to plan your financial future.

NOTE: The President's remarks were recorded at approximately 3:10 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House for later broadcast. These remarks were also made available on the White House Press Office Actuality Line.

Statement on the Republican Budget Proposal

April 7, 2000

This new Republican budget combines bad fiscal policy and a flawed economic strategy. It undermines our efforts to strengthen Social Security and Medicare, makes it harder to pay off the debt, and rests on dramatic cuts in education, law enforcement, the environment, and efforts to promote peace in national security.

I remain committed to working with any Member of Congress from either party on a budget that will strengthen Social Security and

Medicare, add a prescription drug benefit, eliminate the debt by 2013, expand access to health coverage through Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program, and strengthen education and other key investments. Let's put this empty political document aside and work together to keep America on a responsible fiscal course that meets our Nation's long-term challenges.

Remarks at a Screening of the PBS Documentary Series "The American President"

April 7, 2000

The President. Thank you very much, and welcome. I want to say a special word of welcome to all the voices of the Presidents who are here—and they were supposed to give me a list of them. I don't know what happened; I just saw it. [Laughter] But I know we have Senator Bumpers, Senator Glenn, Senator Simon, Representative Rostenkowski, Governors Weicker and Weld. Bill Ferris, we welcome you here. And a special word of thanks to Sy Sternberg and his family. We appreciate the fact that New York Life has underwritten this.

I also want to thank the coproducers, Philip Kunhardt, Jr., and Philip Kunhardt III and Peter Kunhardt. And there are some other voices here from the series: Ben Bradlee, Walter Cronkite, James Roosevelt, Charlie Rose—I don't know if he's here or not—and Tim Russert.

Tonight this is a fitting way for us to open the first in a series of events celebrating the 200th anniversary of the White House. It is clearly the right thing to do to begin by honoring the lives of individuals who have roamed the halls and carried the burden of the Presidency within the walls of the White House.

This room has not only witnessed historical events, it has played a role in shaping them. It has hosted 42 administrations and 41 different personalities, every President except George Washington. The East Room began as a laundry room for Abigail Adams—an auspicious beginning—[laughter]—reminding us that there are certain basic elements to this job.

Thomas Jefferson and Meriwether Lewis laid maps and animal skins on this floor where you're sitting and charted the Lewis and Clark expedition. Later, in 1814, a banquet was being held here in this White House and in this room when James Madison sent Dolley word that the Army had miscalculated where the British were going to assault Washington, and he told her to cut Gilbert Stuart's painting of George Washington down and get out of the house as quickly as possible. She did, and they had to leave the banquet here. The British came in, ate the food, and then burned the White House. [Laughter]

Later, this house and this room was the headquarters for battle-worn Union troops during the Civil War. President Roosevelt's children roller-skated here. Over the years, this room and this