

Statement on Welfare Reform August 22, 2000

On August 22, 1996, I signed landmark bipartisan welfare reform legislation, transforming our Nation's welfare system into one that requires work for time-limited assistance. Four years later we see strong evidence that this historic change is working: Welfare caseloads have been cut in half; a record proportion of people on welfare are working; and the businesses in the Welfare to Work Partnership alone have hired more than one million people off welfare.

New data released today show that welfare rolls are just half of what they were 4 years ago, and the percentage of Americans on welfare is at the lowest level in 35 years. My administration will send a report to Congress today that shows all States have met the welfare reform law's overall work requirements in 1999. Moreover, individuals remaining on welfare are nearly 5 times more likely to be working than they were in 1992.

I am pleased that since its launch at the White House in May 1997, the Welfare to Work Partnership has enlisted more than 20,000 businesses who have hired an estimated 1.1 million former welfare recipients. As many of these companies have learned, welfare recipients are productive workers who want a hand up, not a handout. With Vice President Gore's leadership, the Federal Government has also done

its part, hiring nearly 50,000 former welfare recipients at a time when the Federal Government is the smallest it has been in 40 years.

In 4 short years, we have seen a new emphasis on work and responsibility, as welfare recipients themselves have risen to the challenge and made welfare what it was meant to be: a second chance, not a way of life. As we celebrate how far we've come, we must not forget that there is still more to do. Working together, we must build on our progress and help even more families become self-sufficient. That is why I am challenging the Welfare to Work Partnership to link even more welfare recipients, community-based organizations, and employers in communities around the Nation—helping more businesses find qualified workers and more welfare recipients and other new workers succeed in our booming economy. I urge State and local officials to use the resources and flexibility provided through welfare reform to invest in supports for both current recipients and low-income working families. And I call on Congress to join me in promoting work and responsibility by enacting my budget proposals to make work pay, encourage savings, promote responsible fatherhood, and expand access to child care, housing, transportation, and health care.

Remarks at a Reception for Senatorial Candidate Representative Debbie Stabenow in Bingham Farms, Michigan August 22, 2000

Thank you very, very much. I want to begin by saying thank you to Brian and Jennifer for opening their home. This is such a beautiful place. And the backyard is wonderful, and the weather has cooperated. It's an omen, Debbie.

I want to thank Senator Carl Levin for being here. I wish I could tell you all the times over the last 8 years that I have seen Carl Levin time and time again stand up on the floor of the Senate and do the right thing, not only for Michigan but for the people of the United

States. He is a magnificent United States Senator, and he deserves a good fight—[inaudible].

I don't know if John Conyers is here. I heard he was coming. Hello, John; it's nice to see you. Let me say that one of the corollary benefits of electing five more, six more Democrats to the House of Representatives is that John Conyers will be the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, and it will be a credit to the United States. And I thank you.

Millie, I'm glad to see you. You look good in that Medal of Freedom. [Laughter] And you