

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:25 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Representative William M. Thomas, chairman, House Committee on Ways and Means; and Senator

Charles Grassley, chairman, Senate Committee on Finance. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks in a Meeting With Catholic Charities Leaders *January 31, 2001*

Listen, thank you all for coming. It has been my honor and that of members of my staff and of my Cabinet to have received leaders from the Catholic Church. During my travels around the country, I have been most impressed by not only the quality of leadership of the men and women who make up the great strength of the Catholic hierarchy but also the unwavering commitment to the poor and to the disadvantaged and to those who are unable to defend themselves.

America is a loving and compassionate country, and the leaders here reflect that compassion and that love. Here are folks that have heard the call from the Lord to love their neighbor and have fostered and nourished and led programs all intended to help people, to help people help themselves.

There is no way that Government can create love. Love comes from a higher calling. Love is inspirational. But what Government can do is fund and welcome programs whose sole intent is to change lives in a positive way.

For the last couple of days I've talked about my office's commitment to faith-based programs. I've talked about initiatives, particularly mentoring initiatives and after-school programs that will welcome faith-based programs. Today I do want to talk about one other component of making

sure the initiative is full, and that is that we must reform the Tax Code, not in the way that I'm going to be talking to a lot of Members of Congress about but in an additional way, and that is to allow non-itemizers to deduct charitable giving off their income.

This is a reform of the Tax Code that will encourage giving from people who have received no incentive to do so. There is an independent study out today that will show that giving in America will increase significantly when Congress passes this reform and I have the opportunity to sign it.

Our mission in the White House is to say, we welcome you. We welcome your love. We welcome your finances. We welcome your compassion. And to those heroes who live in the neighborhoods all around America, who are literally transforming our country in a positive way, we say, thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

I'm so honored the leadership came, many of whom I have seen before. I've now met new friends, and we welcome you here to Washington, DC. Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:55 p.m. in the Indian Treaty Room at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building.