

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With the Close-Up Foundation

January 29, 1993

Gays in the Military

Q. Mr. President, when are you going to announce your policy on gays in the military? What time today?

The President. Well, we're waiting for an analysis of the court decision now and how it affects what we would have to do anyway. So, that sort of—we were here, as you know, last night with Senator Nunn, and I thought it was quite close to an agreement that would give the military what I think ought to be done without anybody agreeing to change their position now—give them a chance to look into what the practical problems are. But this court decision may change that, and we are looking at it. And I will probably have something to say later today.

Q. But do you—decision because—get through now?

The President. Well, we talked about it a little last night, but I wanted to—the staff stayed here quite late. I thought they ought to get a chance to get a little sleep and then think through it. So, as you know, there is virtual agreement on everything but one issue anyway. So, you are trying to figure out how this court case fits, that and whether it changes anything for either side.

So, we'll talk about it this morning and then try to resolve it soon.

Q. Are you concerned, Mr. President, that this controversy this week has given the American people the wrong idea of what your priorities are?

The President. Yes, I do. Of course, I didn't bring it up; people in the Senate did. I just tried—I have not, frankly, spent very much time on it compared to the time I'm spending on the economy, which is what I was elected to do. And we've been working on that hard. So, I'm just going to keep doing what I was elected to do and try to stick up for what I believe and see if we can work through this.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:37 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not

available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Teleconference Remarks on the Family and Medical Leave Bill

January 29, 1993

The Vice President. Ladies and gentleman, can you hear me? This is Vice President Al Gore. I am going to introduce the President to you in just a moment. I want to start by thanking all of you for joining us on this conference call. It's especially important for your point of view to be heard by the Congress and by the Nation because this family and medical leave act will be acted upon next week by the Congress.

What's different this time, of course, is we have in President Bill Clinton a President who is in favor of it and who is prepared to sign it into law. So with the Congress and the President working together in behalf of the American people, we feel pretty good about the chances that this will be enacted. But the main reason for enacting it is you, and we're looking forward to hearing from you.

Before introducing the President, I want to mention some people in the Congress who have worked long and hard on this: Chairman Bill Ford in the House of Representatives; and Pat Williams from Montana; Marge Roukema, a Republican from New Jersey, who's been a real leader on this issue; Bill Clay from Missouri; and Pat Schroeder from Colorado. And then on the Senate side: Chris Dodd, who has fought for this tirelessly, along with Chairman Ted Kennedy; and Kit Bond, a Republican from Missouri; Dan Coats, a Republican from Indiana, both of whom have been very helpful in pushing this idea forward.

But again, what it's all about is you and the experiences that you have had. And with that, I want to turn it over to President Bill Clinton.

The President. Thank you very much, Al. And hello, ladies and gentlemen. I want to thank you for agreeing to join us on this telephone call today and through this telephone