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every part of the country, from every walk of life, from both political parties. But some people opposed it. And they were powerful, and it took 8 years and two vetoes to make this legislation the law of the land. Now millions of our people will no longer have to choose between their jobs and their families.

The law guarantees the right of up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave per year when it's urgently needed at home to care for a newborn child or an ill family member. This bill will strengthen our families, and I believe it will strengthen our businesses and our economy as well.

I have spent an enormous amount of time in the last 12 years in the factories and businesses of this country talking to employers and employees, watching the way people work, often working with them. And I know that men and women are more productive when they are sure they won't lose their jobs because they're trying to be good parents, good children. Our businesses should not lose the services of these dedicated Americans. And over the long run, the lessons of the most productive companies in the world, here at home and around the world, are that those who put their people first are those who will triumph in the global economy.

The business leaders who have already instituted family and medical leave understand this, and I'm very proud of some of the business leaders who are here today who represent not only themselves but others all across America who were ahead of all of us who make laws in doing what is right by our families.

Family and medical leave is a matter of pure common sense and a matter of common decency. It will provide Americans what they need most: peace of mind. Never again will parents have to fear losing their jobs because of their families.

Just a week ago, I spoke to 10 people in families who had experienced the kinds of problems Mrs. Yandle has talked about today. Vice President Gore and I talked to people all across America who moved us deeply. We were saddened to hear their stories, but today all of us can be happy to think of their future.

Now that we have won this difficult battle, let me ask all of you to think about what we must do ahead to put the public interest ahead of special interest, to pass a budget which will grow this economy and shrink our deficit, and to go on about the business of putting families first. There's a lot more we need to do to help people trapped in welfare move to work and independence; to strengthen child support enforcement; to reward those who work 40 hours a week and have children at home with an increase in the earned income tax credit so we can really say we're rewarding work instead of dependence; to immunize all the children of this country so more parents won't have to take advantage of family leave because their children will be well and strong and healthy.

Let all of us who care about our families, our people, the strength of our economy, and the future of our Nation put our partisan and other interests aside and be inspired by this great victory today to have others when Congress returns to this city and we go on about the people's business.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:22 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Vicki Yandle, whose daughter's illness resulted in both parents losing their jobs. H.R. 1, approved February 5, was assigned Public Law No. 103–3.

Statement on Signing the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993

February 5, 1993

Today, I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 1, the "Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993." I believe that this legislation is a response to a compelling need—the need of the American family for flexibility in the workplace. American workers will no longer have to choose between the job they need and the family they love.

This legislation mandates that public and private employers with at least fifty workers provide their employees with family and medical leave. At its core is the provision for employees to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for the care of a newborn or newly adopted child, for the care of a family member with a serious medical condition, or for

their own illness. It also requires employers to maintain health insurance coverage and job protection for the duration of the leave. It sets minimum length of service and hours of work requirements before employees become eligible.

The need for this legislation is clear. The American workforce has changed dramatically in recent years. These changes have created a substantial and growing need for family and medical leave for working Americans.

In 1965, about 35 percent of mothers with children under 18 were labor force participants. By 1992, that figure had reached 67 percent. By the year 2005, one of every two people entering the workforce will be women.

The rising cost of living has also made two incomes a necessity in many areas of this country, with both parents working or looking for work in 48 percent, or nearly half, of all two parent families with children in the United States.

Single parent families have also grown rapidly, from 16 percent of all families with children in 1975 to 27 percent in 1992. Finally, with America's population aging, more working Americans have to take time off from work to attend to the medical needs of elderly parents.

As a rising number of American workers must deal with the dual pressures of family and job, the failure to accommodate these workers with adequate family and medical leave policies has forced too many Americans to choose between their job security and family emergencies. It has also resulted in inadequate job protection for working parents and other employees who have serious health conditions that temporarily prevent them from working. It is neither fair nor necessary to ask working Americans to choose between their jobs and their families—between continuing their employment and tending to their own health or to vital needs at home.

Although many enlightened companies have recognized the benefits to be realized from a system providing for family and medical leave, not all do. We all as a nation must join hands and extend the ethic of long-term workplace relationships and reciprocal commitment between employer and employee. It is only when workers can count on a commitment from their employer that they can make their own full commitments to their jobs. We must extend the success of those forward-looking workplaces where high-performance teamwork has already begun to take root and where family and medical leave already is accepted.

Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics support the conclusion that American business has been fully responsive to the need of workers for family and medical leave. This data showed that, in 1991, for private business establishments with 100 workers or more, 37 percent of all full-time employees (and 19 percent of all part-time employees) had unpaid maternity leave available to them, and only 26 percent of all full-time employees in such establishments had unpaid paternity leave available. The most recently available data for smaller business establishments (those with fewer than 100 workers) are for 1990, and show that only 14 percent of all these employees had unpaid maternity leave available, and only 6 percent had unpaid paternity leave available.

The insufficient response to the family and medical leave needs of workers has come at a high cost to both the American family and to American business. There is a direct correlation between health and job security in the family home and productivity in the workplace. When businesses do not give workers leave for family needs, they fail to establish a working environment that can promote heightened productivity, lessened job turnover, and reduced absenteeism.

We all bear the cost when workers are forced to choose between keeping their jobs and meeting their personal and family obligations. When they must sacrifice their jobs, we all have to pay more for the essential but costly safety net. When they ignore their own health needs or their family obligations in order to keep their jobs, we all have to pay more for social services and medical care as neglected problems worsen.

The time has come for Federal legislation to bring fair and sensible family and medical leave policies to the American workplace. Currently, the United States is virtually the only advanced industrialized country without a national family and medical leave policy.

Now, with the signing of this bill, American workers in all 50 States will enjoy the same rights as workers in other nations. This legislation balances the demands of the workplace with the needs of families. In supporting families, it promotes job stability and efficiency in the American workplace.

The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 sets a standard that is long overdue in working America. I am very pleased to sign this legislation into law.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
February 5, 1993.

NOTE: H.R. 1, approved February 5, was assigned Public Law No. 103–3.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Brian Mulroney of Canada

February 5, 1993

The President. Hi, Helen [Helen Thomas, United Press International].

Q. Hi.

Prime Minister Mulroney. Hi, Helen. How are you?

Unemployment

Q. What's your reaction to the unemployment numbers, Mr. President?

The President. Better, but still too high: the recession, unemployment was 6.8 percent, lower than it is now. And now we've had 14 months over 7 percent, and I hope it's going down. But until we get it way down, there will still be a lot of unused capacity in the country and a lot of idle people.

Bosnia

Q. Are you going to have a statement soon on Bosnia, Mr. President?

The President. Well, Mr. Christopher is working on it, and we're working on it. I've spent a good deal of time on it in the last 2 weeks. But I don't have anything to say yet. It's a very difficult problem, I'm very concerned about it, and I have spent a good deal of time on it. When I have something to say, I will.

Q. Will that be a topic for this meeting, sir?

The President. We're going to talk about a lot of things. We don't have a typed agenda.

Q. This isn't the first time you've met, is it?

The President. Yes, but we've talked before several times.

Q. On the phone, but not——

The President. This is our first meeting.

Prime Minister Mulroney. And you were probably mentioned in those conversations. [*Laughter*]

[*At this point, one group of reporters left the room, and another group entered.*]

Trade

Q. Prime Minister, will you be seeking some assurances against the winds of protectionism in Congress you mentioned yesterday?

Prime Minister Mulroney. Yes, I will. I think that any time protectionism takes hold in the United States or Canada or elsewhere, it's bad for prosperity. It cripples growth everywhere. And so the President's a free trader, and so am I. And so I expect meeting, but over a period of time. And so I look forward to the meeting. I have been very encouraged by my earlier telephone conversation with the President in regard to trade and other matters.

[*At this point, a question was asked and answered in French, and a translation was not provided.*]

Q. Mr. President, what do you think about the free trade of Canada? Is it important for U.S., do you think?

The President. I think it's very important for both of us. And I think it will have real benefits over the long run. As a Governor, I was one of those who took responsibility for trying to lobby the original agreement through the Congress here. And I hope we can complete the North American Free Trade Agreement, bringing in Mexico, making some changes that I think will be good for the Mexicans and good for the Canadians and the Americans.

But I think that if you just look at the last 50 years, the only way you can have growth within advanced countries over the long run