

made. So I implore you again, I don't want to sound like a broken record, but talk to the Members of Congress. Tell them you know all about insecurity, but you know that we can compete and win if we have enough customers to sell to.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:20 a.m. at the Smithsonian Museum of American History. In his remarks, he referred to Manuel Silva, founder, Pan American Engineering, and Richard Harris, president, Pulsair, Inc.

Statement on the Outcome of the Puerto Rican Referendum

November 15, 1993

I fully support the determination of the citizens of Puerto Rico to continue their commonwealth status.

I am especially gratified by the high level of participation in Sunday's referendum, and I look forward to maintaining the relationship of friendship and mutual respect that the United States enjoys with the people of Puerto Rico.

Appointment of Members of the Federal Council on the Aging

November 15, 1993

The President announced today that he will appoint four new members to the Federal Council on the Aging, a 15-member panel that advises and assists the President on matters relating to the special needs of older Americans. The President appoints one-third of the Council's members, three of whom must be more than 60 years of age.

"The senior citizen community, our parents and grandparents, is one of our great resources," said the President. "It is important that we ensure that Government policies are helpful to them and that we make sure to seek their wisdom as we decide on those policies."

The members appointed today are Alice B. Bulos, William B. Cashin, Olivia P. Maynard, and Myrtle B. Pickering.

NOTE: Biographies of the appointees were made available by the Office of the Press Secretary.

Letter to House Republican Leader on NAFTA

November 15, 1993

Dear Mr. Leader:

On more than one occasion I have been asked whether the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) might become a divisive issue in the 1994 Congressional elections. Each time I have been asked this question I have expressed the hope that this issue would continue to be viewed in a spirit of bipartisan cooperation befitting an issue of such historical importance.

Since I have sought the support of all members of the House of Representatives for the NAFTA implementing legislation as a matter of compelling national interest, I hope to discourage NAFTA opponents from using this issue against pro-NAFTA members, regardless of party, in the coming election.

After our shared success later this week, when I will have the pleasure of sending thank you letters to at least 218 House members, I will reaffirm my position on the inappropriateness of fighting NAFTA again in the 1994 election.

As always, you have my respect and appreciation.

Sincerely,

Bill Clinton

NOTE: This letter, sent to Representative Robert H. Michel, was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 16 but was not issued as a White House press release.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on NAFTA

November 15, 1993

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. Leader:)

As we approach the end of an intense debate over the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), I want to share with you my reasons for believing Congressional approval of NAFTA is essential to our national interest.

We share a commitment to ensuring that our country has the world's strongest and most competitive economy, to maintaining and creating jobs for our workers, and to making sure that opportunities are there for our children as they join the workforce of the future. That is why I am fighting for the approval of NAFTA. I am convinced that it will help strengthen our economy—in the near term and in the long run.

Our nation's prosperity depends on our ability to compete and win in the global economy. It is an illusion to believe that we can prosper by retreating behind protectionist walls. We will succeed only by ensuring that we have the world's most competitive companies, productive workers, and open markets in which to sell our manufactured goods, services, and agricultural products.

I understand that NAFTA is, for many, a reminder of the economic hardships and insecurities that have grown over the past 20 years. Obviously, NAFTA did not cause those problems. In fact, it is part of the solution. We are world-class producers of everything from computers and automobiles to financial services and soybeans. We can compete anywhere, but we need to ensure that markets around the world are open to our products.

Mexico represents an enormous opportunity for our businesses, our workers, and our farmers. Exports there have already soared since 1986, when Mexico began to open its market and lower trade barriers. But the status quo in the trading relationship—in which Mexico's trade barriers are far higher than ours—is still unacceptable. NAFTA represents both free and fair trade. It changes the status quo by wiping away the Mexican barriers.

NAFTA provides us preferential access to the Mexican market: 90 million people, in

one of the most dynamic growing economies in the world, who look to us for consumer goods, agricultural products and the infrastructure needed to build a modern economy. It is the gateway to the fast growing markets of Latin America, which are also opening, where we have a natural advantage over Japan and the European Community. Turning away from this opportunity would be a serious self-inflicted wound to our economy. It would cost us jobs—in the short and long term.

Many opponents of NAFTA say that they don't oppose a trade agreement with Mexico. They say they just oppose this NAFTA, and suggest that it be renegotiated. We should be under no illusions. This is a far-reaching and fair agreement. It was negotiated painstakingly over three years with input from a broad array of groups, and it is in the best interest of the United States, Mexico and Canada. It represents an unprecedented effort to include in a trade agreement provisions to enhance environmental protection and workers rights. It was negotiated by a Republican President, and endorsed and strengthened by a Democratic President. If it were defeated, no government of Mexico could return, or would return, to the negotiating table for years to come. Mexico would turn to others, like Japan and the European Community, for help in building a modern state—and American workers, farmers, and businesses would be the losers.

Of course, NAFTA is not a magic bullet for all our economic problems. But there is no question that NAFTA will benefit every region of our country. It is no accident that NAFTA has the support of more than two-thirds of the nation's governors and Members of Congress from every part of the nation. They understand the benefits that will flow to their states, regardless of region.

My main reason for supporting NAFTA is that it will be good for the competitive U.S. economy that we are trying to build. But there is another critical issue that I ask you to consider. After World War I, the United States chose the path of isolation and protectionism. That path led directly to the Depression, and helped set the world on the path to World War II. After World War II, we chose to engage with the world, through col-