

We need first to identify what we can agree on and move this country forward. And we ought to start with lobby reform and these other reforms. Then we ought to move on to responsible tax reform that I hope will focus on the middle class bill of rights and giving people education deductions because that will build the economy.

This is Mike McCurry's press conference, and I've already said enough.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:46 p.m. in the Briefing Room at the White House.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Agenda for the 104th Congress
January 5, 1995

Dear Mr. Speaker:

We have an opportunity to make historic change in the way that Washington works and the government does the people's business.

This week, the Congress has begun to take important and positive steps to change its operations for the better. Shrinking the number of committees, reducing staff, and other measures are valuable, and long overdue. The passage of legislation that would apply to Congress the laws that apply to the public is only fair, is simple common sense, and is also long overdue. I hope that this time, unlike the last session of Congress, the Senate follows the House's action. I congratulate you on these steps.

But true congressional reform must reduce the power of lobbyists and special interests. The power of organized money in Washington hurts the middle class, bloats spending and the deficit, and blocks needed change. Today, some 90,000 people in Washington are associated with lobbying Congress on behalf of specific interests, which too often are able to manipulate the congressional process to insert spending projects or tax provisions in legislation that do not serve the larger public's interest. Lobby power coupled with the ever-escalating cost of campaigns, which has risen fourfold over the past two decades, gives wealthy interests and wealthy candidates disproportionate influence in decisionmaking.

These are not partisan concerns; they are American concerns. I urge you, as you undertake the task of reforming Congress, to take on these real political reform issues.

First, as you enact legislation to apply general laws to Congress, it is vital that professional lobbyists be barred from giving gifts, meals and entertainment to members of Congress—just as they are now barred from giving these benefits to executive branch officials.

Second, Congress should also quickly enact legislation to bring professional lobbyists into the sunlight of public scrutiny. The current lobby disclosure statute is cumbersome and antiquated. Lobbyists should disclose who their clients are, what bills they seek to pass or block, and how much they are paid.

Third, I am pleased that the Congress wants to pass a line item veto authority for the President, something that I have consistently supported before and during the 1992 campaign and since. The line item veto authority will help us cut unnecessary spending and reduce the budget deficit. It is a powerful tool for fighting special interests, who too often are able to win approval of wasteful projects through manipulation of the congressional process, and bury them in massive bills where they are protected from Presidential vetoes. It will increase the accountability of government. I want a strong version of the line item veto, one that enables the President to take direct steps to curb wasteful spending. This is clearly an area where both parties can come together in the national interest, and I look forward to working with the Congress to quickly enact this measure.

Finally, we must clean up political campaigns, limit the cost of campaigning, reduce the role of special interests, and increase the role of ordinary citizens. Real campaign finance reform, too, should be an area of bipartisan cooperation. Requiring broadcasters to provide time to bona fide candidates would cut the cost of campaigning and ensure that voters hear all arguments, regardless of candidate wealth. Strong proposals for free TV time have been introduced in previous years by Senator Dole and by the new chair of the House Commerce Committee,

Rep. Thomas Bliley; these proposals should be the basis of agreement on reform.

I look forward to working with the Congress to achieve results that are bipartisan, bold, and give the government back to the people.

Sincerely,

Bill Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives; Robert Dole, Senate majority leader; Thomas A. Daschle, Senate minority leader; Richard K. Arney, House majority leader; and Richard A. Gephardt, House minority leader.

Remarks on the Economy Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders January 6, 1995

The President. Good morning, everyone. We are here and anxious to get to work, but I wanted to make an announcement this morning and chart our course for the year ahead.

Two years ago, I formed a partnership for prosperity and opportunity with the Democratic leadership in Congress. Along with then Speaker Foley and Majority Leader Mitchell, the Democrats put together majorities that we needed in both the House and the Senate to make the hardest choices Washington has made in over a generation: to cut Federal spending deeply; to raise revenues, largely from income tax increases on the top 1½ percent of our people and corporations with incomes of over \$10 million; to reinvent and restructure the Government so that it would be much smaller and still work better; and to invest in education, research, and technology, and tax relief for working families of modest incomes.

Most important of all, the Congress chose to do the right thing, rather than the political thing, because they believed it was more important to make real life easier for Americans than it was to make political life more comfortable for people here in Washington. As a result, there was a huge increase in investment and economic growth, building on the productivity of American workers and American businesses.

This morning I am pleased to announce that the recovery of which our economic plan was such a large part has brought paychecks to more than a quarter million more Americans in December alone. And compared with an unemployment rate of over 7 percent when I took office, we now see an unemployment rate in December of 5.4 percent. We have grown the private economy as we have cut Government. That's a real recovery and a real bargain for the American people.

A real recovery means that in 1994 alone our economy created 3.5 million new jobs, the most created in one year by the private sector in a decade. In '93 and '94 combined, our economy has produced 5.6 million new jobs. A real recovery means that after losing 2 million manufacturing jobs in the previous 12 years, in 1994 alone 292,000 manufacturing jobs were added to the economy, and manufacturing jobs grew in every month of last year for the first time since the 1970's. It means working people can look to the future with more hope and more optimism now, especially if we move to protect the economic expansion and to get to work to match the expansion with income growth increases for ordinary American working people.

We're ready to build on the progress we've made in cutting spending and the size of the Federal work force. As I announced last year, the reduction and reinvention of Government will continue with the budget I will submit next month. But I will stand against any effort to roll back or to rock the foundations of the recovery by proposals that explode the deficit or gimmicks that undermine the integrity of the budget we have worked so hard to put in place. And to ensure that incomes grow, which is, after all, the most important thing to ordinary American working families, we have to pair that with the economic growth by arming America's families with the tools they need to increase their own prosperity.

Our middle class bill of rights will do just that by ensuring more investments in better education and more disposable income for hardworking families who deserve some benefits from this recovery. We will do it by rewarding investments in education; in the rearing of children; in paying for education, health care, retirement costs; paying for