

And I want us to focus on the challenges that we face for the 21st century in terms of ordinary middle class people. What can we do to raise living standards and increase security for people who are working harder and harder? How are we going to spread the benefits of economic recovery to the middle class? How are we going to grow the middle class and shrink the underclass and still keep this marvelous environment for entrepreneurs in which so many people are doing better than they ever had before? That is a separate set of questions.

Two years ago when that group gathered, we had to focus on just getting the economy out of the recession, getting the deficit down, getting the overall growth up. That has happened. Now we need to focus on what still needs to be done to make sure we're solidifying and strengthening and growing the middle class instead of dividing and shrinking it.

### **The Republican Party**

**Q.** Mr. President, is the Republican Party being taken over by extreme right-wing, anti-abortion elements? *[Laughter]*

**The President.** Well, I hope not, but that's up to them, isn't it?

### **Surgeon-General-Designate**

**Q.** Do you have the votes for Dr. Foster now, Mr. President?

**The President.** He hasn't even had a hearing yet. I haven't even canvassed them.

**Q.** Do you think you'll have the votes?

**The President.** I think if he's judged on his life's work, on the merits, I think he'll be confirmed. I think that if he gets the kind of hearing I would expect him to get from a fair-minded Senate, I think he'll be confirmed.

### **Border Crossing Fees**

**Q.** Mr. President, are you going to change your border crossing fees? Some Texans saw advisers of yours today and thought—*[inaudible]*—Mr. Panetta was going to take a closer look at it.

**The President.** I certainly think we have to look at it.

### **Presidential Candidates**

**Q.** Are you happy that Speaker Gingrich is not going to run against you for the Presidency?

**Q.** They're dropping like flies, Mr. President.

**The President.** Did he say that today? They're dropping like flies? Is that what you said? I notice there's still a few. *[Laughter]* I wish the absence of Republican opposition was my main worry, but I don't think it is. Somebody will show up, sure as the world. *[Laughter]* Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:23 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

### **Message to the Congress Transmitting the "Middle-Class Bill of Rights Tax Relief Act of 1995"**

*February 13, 1995*

*To the Congress of the United States:*

I am pleased to transmit today for your immediate consideration and enactment the "Middle-Class Bill of Rights Tax Relief Act of 1995." I am also sending you an explanation of the revenue proposals of this legislation.

This bill is the next step in my Administration's continuing effort to raise living standards for working families and help restore the American Dream for all our people.

For 2 years, we have worked hard to strengthen our economy. We worked with the last Congress to enact legislation that will reduce the annual deficits of 1994-98 by more than \$600 billion; we created nearly 6 million new jobs; we cut taxes for 15 million low-income families and gave tax relief to small businesses; we opened export markets through global and regional trade agreements; we invested in human and physical capital to increase productivity; and we reduced the Federal Government by more than 100,000 positions.

With that strong foundation in place, I am now proposing a Middle Class Bill of Rights. Despite our progress, too many Americans are still working harder for less. The Middle Class Bill of Rights will enable working Americans to raise their families and get the education and training they need to meet the

demands of a new global economy. It will let middle-income families share in our economic prosperity today and help them build our economic prosperity tomorrow.

The “Middle-Class Bill of Rights Tax Relief Act of 1995” includes three of the four elements of my Middle Class Bill of Rights. First, it offers middle-income families a \$500 tax credit for each child under 13. Second, it includes a tax deduction of up to \$10,000 a year to help middle-income Americans pay for postsecondary education expenses and training expenses. Third, it lets more middle-income Americans make tax-deductible contributions to Individual Retirement Accounts and withdraw from them, penalty-free, for the costs of education and training, health care, first-time home-buying, long periods of unemployment, or the care of an ill parent.

The fourth element of my Middle Class Bill of Rights—not included in this legislation—is the GI Bill for America’s Workers, which consolidates 70 Federal training programs and creates a more effective system for learning new skills and finding better jobs for adults and youth. Legislation for this proposal is being developed in cooperation with the Congress.

If enacted, the Middle Class Bill of Rights will help keep the American Dream alive for everyone willing to take responsibility for themselves, their families, and their futures. And it will not burden our children with more debt. In my fiscal 1996 budget, we have found enough savings not only to pay for this tax bill, but also to provide another \$81 billion in deficit reduction between 1996 and 2000.

This legislation will restore fairness to our tax system, let middle-income families share in our economic prosperity, encourage Americans to prepare for the future, and help ensure that the United States moves into the 21st Century still the strongest nation in the world. I urge the Congress to take prompt and favorable action on this legislation.

**William J. Clinton**

The White House,  
February 13, 1995.

NOTE: A fact sheet on the “Middle-Class Bill of Rights Tax Relief Act of 1995” was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary.

## **Message to the Congress Transmitting the “Working Wage Increase Act of 1995”**

*February 13, 1995*

*To the Congress of the United States:*

I am pleased to transmit for your immediate consideration and enactment the “Working Wage Increase Act of 1995.”

This draft bill would amend the Fair Labor Standards Act to increase the minimum wage in two 45 cents steps—from the current rate of \$4.25 an hour to \$4.70 an hour on July 4, 1995, and to \$5.15 an hour after July 3, 1996. The pattern of the proposed increase is identical to that of the last increase, which passed the Congress with a broad bipartisan majority and was signed by President Bush in 1989. The first increment of the proposal simply restores the minimum wage to its real value following the change enacted in 1989.

If the Congress does not act now, the minimum wage will fall to its lowest real level in 40 years. That would dishonor one of the great promises of American life—that everyone who works hard can earn a living wage. More than 11 million workers would benefit under this proposal, and a full-time, year-round worker at the minimum wage would get a \$1,800 raise—the equivalent of 7 months of groceries for the average family.

To reform the Nation’s welfare system, we should make work pay, and this legislation would help achieve that result. It would offer a raise to families that are working hard, but struggling to make ends meet. Most individuals earning the minimum wage are adults, and the average worker affected by this proposal brings home half of the family’s earnings. Numerous empirical studies indicate that an increase in the minimum wage of the magnitude proposed would not have a significant impact on employment. The legislation would ensure that those who work hard and play by the rules can live with the dignity they have earned.

I urge the Congress to take prompt and favorable action on this legislation.

**William J. Clinton**

The White House,  
February 13, 1995.