AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

Remarks on the National Performance Review

June 9, 1995

We brought Paul Condit up here as a part of the Vice President and my continuing cultural education of Secretary Rubin. We found out that even though he's very brilliant, there are serious gaps in his knowledge. [*Laughter*] When I met him, he didn't know who Aretha Franklin, B.B. King, or Rod Stewart was. And he had never met a redneck in his life. [*Laughter*] We are correcting that—part of our reinventing Government. [*Laughter*]

Do you know what Paul Condit was saying to me when the Vice President was talking? He said, ''Mr. President, this stuff is great. But you need to reinvent communications; it ain't getting out.'' He said, ''Nobody knows anything about this.'' I said, ''Well, you'd have to be here a while for me to explain it to you.'' [*Laughter*]

The greatest compliment I have received since I have been President was when we were in Montana the other day and—I didn't get it directly—you may have seen the—I went out to a farm to talk about agriculture because we have to rewrite the farm bill as we're trying to reduce spending. And I insisted that we go to a Republican farmer's farm and that we have equal numbers of Republicans and Democrats in the crowd. One of my staff members was standing next to one of these farmers, and we were talking about all this, you know, all this agriculture. And he asked the farmer—he said, ''Well, what do you think about this?'' And the farmer looked at him and said, ''He ain't nothing like they make him out to be, is he?'' [*Laughter*]

You learn to speak maybe in a way that people can understand if you spend more time on a John Deere tractor. And Paul Condit has, and we thank him for being here. I also thank the Vice President for the incredible job he has done on all these projects. And I thank Secretary Rubin and Commissioner Chater, Commissioner Richardson, Deputy Secretary Glynn, and all the people who have worked on this.

We do have an obligation to communicate what we're doing, but we also have an obligation to do the right things and to stop doing the wrong things. And our SBA Director, Phil Lader, is going to—we're going to have this White House Conference on Small Business next week. I'm very excited about it. I hope it is an opportunity to talk to the American people and to talk to the small business community about what we're trying to do. But I hope it's also a chance for us to continue to do more of the right things and to keep changing.

The truth is that—as the Vice President said, I could have listened to that story all day, analogizing what if the Federal Government was running a John Deere dealership. I wish I had thought of that myself. [*Laughter*] The truth is that one of our big problems is that almost everybody who works for the Federal Government is honest, hard-working, well-meaning, and really wants to serve. But we are trapped inside a system that there are some things we can't change, and one is we basically have guaranteed revenues and guaranteed customers, and that means that we change less quickly than the private sector that has neither. But if we don't change, then the voters eventually will try to find a way to get through the elected officials to the permanent Government. And in a way, people's perceptions are not all that specific even if they're generally accurate. We might wind up going from one extreme to the other.

So what we tried to do when we got here was to prove that it was actually possible for the institutional Government to change, something that most people simply didn't believe. Most people believed that politicians would come and go, but the Government would go on forever. And interestingly enough, in the last several years I have noticed politicians beginning to adopt the same rhetoric in an attempt to be popular with the people, so that people would be in control here for 7 or 8 years and still be cussing the Government as if, ''What do you expect me to do, I'm just the President,'' or ''I'm just the Secretary of the Treasury'' or, you know,'' ''What do you expect me to do?''

In the course of that I think that we have been less sensitive than we should have been, as I have said repeatedly—and I'm a guilty party—to treating Federal employees like people. And we must never contribute to this

atmosphere of resentment of the people who work for the Federal Government, because most people who work for the Federal Government are like most people anywhere. Given the choice between productive or unproductive, most people would choose to be productive. Given the choice between being relevant or irrelevant, most people would gladly choose to be relevant. Given the choice between building and tearing down, most people would choose to build.

And what we have tried to do with this national performance review, which the Vice President has doggedly pursued—what we have tried to do, even though we couldn't get it out and we knew there was probably never any way to make it a popular, big headline-grabbing issue, is day by day, week by week, department by department, agency by agency, employee by employee, to chip away at the habits and institutional conduct of the Federal Government that is not good for America and not going to take us into the 21st century in good shape and to flip it around so that our public institutions could do the public's business in a way that maintained the trust of the people who are paying the bill.

And all of you who have been a part of that deserve a lot of credit for what you've done. And I just want to urge you to keep doing it. We'll keep trying to figure out how to get it out, to use Paul's expression. But the main thing we need to do is to keep doing what has been done.

Some of this involves changing laws. You know, I recently signed the Paperwork Reduction Act. Last Congress, we passed the procurement reform which the Vice President was able to popularize on the David Letterman show by trying—by breaking the ashtray. But that broken ashtray was a way of getting out the idea that we were wasting, at a minimum, hundreds of millions of dollars a year with antiquated procurement practices.

The Paperwork Reduction Act, when Paul waves that around, it's a way of illustrating the burden that is on us to make sure that we are not asking people to spend their time, their money, and their resources on fooling with us if they don't have to and if there is no public purpose served by it.

Now, that is one of the things, it seems to me that if you talk to anybody about what they really resent about our Government, if they have any kind of success in life, they'll normally talk about regulation and paperwork, even before taxes. And we are trying to do something about that. Small businesses and big businesses, too, have been screaming at us for years to do something about it, and we are trying to do it.

Now, the Department of Treasury has taken the lead by spearheading the Simplified Tax and Wage Reporting System. Because of that, today we are announcing a plan that should lead to the elimination of the need to file W–2 forms in multiple places. You will only need to file once, and you will have a single point of contact for customer service. This will save time and hassle and about a billion dollars a year, which is real money, even up here, Paul—a billion dollars a year. When we free people from the burden of paperwork so that they can create jobs, opportunity, services, and products for the American people, we have saved much more than that.

In addition, I am going to send legislation to Congress that will remove the legal barriers that keep Federal and State agencies from working together in commonsense ways to ease the paperwork burden on all taxpayers.

Most taxpayers currently have to fill out both a State and Federal income tax form. Depending on where you live and work, you might also have to do a local income tax form. Most of the information on the State and city forms is simply a repeat of what's on the Federal form. So with some teamwork and some modernization of the tax system, the Federal Government is now going to create partnerships with State and city governments to eliminate the need for duplicate filing.

Since we came into office, we have permitted 29 States to have systems in which taxpayers can satisfy both their Federal and State personal income tax filing requirements with a single electronic transmission. More than a million and a half returns were filed this way this year. Next year, 32 States are going to participate. You can imagine what will happen to the paperwork burden as more and more people file electronically, one

time, both State and Federal. The IRS handles 2 billion pieces of paperwork a year.

So we are going to reduce regulation. We are going to speed transmission. We're going to make it easier for the taxpayers. And as an extra added bonus to the Vice President, we're going to save 14 to 15 more forests by the turn of the century by reducing this level of paperwork. This is a big deal. Now, what we have to do is make sure people know they can do it and more and more people do it.

We're going to clear away the barriers to full partnerships with State and local governments for employment as well as for personal tax information. We estimate that with a partnership with 20 percent of the States by the year 2000, we can reduce the burden to taxpayers just on this item alone by $1.5 billion and save the Government millions and millions of dollars in the process.

I invite Governors and mayors all across this country to join us in having businesses and taxpayers file their information just one time. This is the right way to fix the Government. There is no need for two or more filings. We are prepared to do our part in a technical way and in a legal way to make it possible for taxpayers all across America to have fewer piles like this.

This is the kind of service the American people are entitled to expect from a modernized tax system, and frankly, this is the kind of thing we're going to have to do to get the inordinate compliance costs with taxation systems in America down. This is what reinventing Government is all about.

I want to again say to all of you who worked on this project, I appreciate it very much. We now have to sign a memorandum of understanding which requires all these various agencies to work together. And we're going to sign that, and then I'm going to ask Paul Condit to sign it as a witness to make sure that he'll have something to get out when he goes home to Seminole, Texas. [*Laughter*]

So Secretary Rubin, Deputy Labor Secretary Glynn, Commissioner Chater, Commissioner Richardson, please come up here and sign the memorandum of understanding.

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:25 p.m. in the Cash Room at the Treasury Department. In his remarks, he referred to Paul Condit, president and general manager, Texas Equipment Co., Inc.; and entertainers Aretha Franklin, B.B. King, and Rod Stewart.

Remarks at the Faces of Hope Reunion Luncheon

June 9, 1995

Thank you very much. Congratulations, Leslie, that's a—[*laughter*]—Mr. Vice President, that may be your most memorable example of reinventing Government there. [*Laughter*] I promised you a personal service administration, and there's a living example of it.

Let me say, it is wonderful to be here with all of you today. I want to thank the people who have worked so hard to keep this group together and in contact with us. I appreciate Sue Hazzard and Ann Walker and all the rest of you who worked on this. Let me thank you, because these are really very disparate people, living very different lives all over the country, and getting even further and further apart. One of you has since moved to Alaska since we've started—came back. I thank you for being here.

Before we start, I'd like to just say that four of the people who were our Faces of Hope in 1992 have since passed away. Josh Cox, who was mentioned earlier; Sheri Kohlenberg, who came to see me with her husband and her son, Sammy—they're here. And Sammy left me something I thought was a dinosaur. He said it just looks like one, but anyway it's still in the White House over there. Sarah Weber, whose mother and sister are here; and Michael Quercio, whose partner is here. And Michael and I jogged together right before I became President, and I got to see him when I dedicated the new Kennedy Library. I miss them all very much; I know all of you do. And I'd like to ask if we could just have a moment of silence for them.

[*At this point, a moment of silence was observed.*]

Amen.