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The President. Well, I am going to stick with my position. Now, it's been several months since I offered an——

Come on in, Mayor Rendell. Sit down. [*Laughter*]

Mayor Edward Rendell. Sorry. Blame it on Amtrak, although Amtrak usually does a great job. [*Laughter*] And we shouldn't be cutting its funding. But they were late today.

The Vice President. We know a cameo entrance when we—[*Laughter*]

The President. That's right. Actually he arrived at 6:30 this morning and was—[*Laughter*].

There will be a lot of things said and a lot of maneuvers made, I suppose, in the next 90 days. I think the important thing is that we balance the budget without destroying our commitment to education, without wrecking Medicare and Medicaid and undermining the security and stability that our elderly people are entitled to have, and without undermining the fabric of the country and the strength of the economy.

I mean, you know, we even have one economic study claiming that the congressional majority's budget would provoke a long-term recession. I mean, presumably, we are balancing the budget to help the American economy, to take the burden of debt off of our children and our grandchildren. That's why I want to do it. I want to do it because I think it'll help the economy, not to give the American people a low-grade infection for 7 years. And so I believe that we need to look at the facts. And I'm going to do my best to avoid a lot of this political rhetoric and a lot of these charges back and forth.

And the thing that has impressed me about the mayors and the county officials that are here is that they really are going to spend a week looking at the facts, trying to make sure that their citizens look at the facts. That's what I want the American people to do. But I'm going to bend over backwards not to get into a lot of political word wars and just keep looking at the facts. And we can——

Q. Lots of luck. [*Laughter*]

The President. Yeah? Thank you. Thank you. [*Laughter*] Let me just say this. I will—I like that so much I will never again criticize editorializing by news—[*laughter*]—that was a wonderful comment. [*Laughter*]

Q. Mr. President, will you be able to avoid this train wreck, however, that you've been talking about, and how can you do that?

The President. Well, I hope so. But I mean, I think, frankly, that's up to Congress. I have been—it's up to the leaders of Congress whether we have a train wreck. I have now had my position out there clear and crystal clear and in great detail for months. That's what they said they wanted me to do, and I did it. I offered them an alternative balanced budget. I offered the opportunity of negotiations. I said what I thought we had to do, that we shouldn't wreck the fabric of health care for seniors. We shouldn't wreck the educational commitments of our country. We shouldn't totally overlook the impact of these budget cuts on the people who actually had to do the work of America, the mayors, the county officials, the Governors of our country, and that we could do this.

And I committed to a balanced budget, and I offered it. So I have done all I can do now. The rest of it is largely up to them, but we should not have a train wreck. There's no reason for a train wreck. You know, we've already done a lot of their work for them. When I became President, we had a $290 billion deficit. Now it's down to $160 billion. We've cut it nearly in half in 3 years, and we did it without any train wrecks. We did it in a more rapid way in the last Congress than had been the case for the previous 10 or 12 years, so we can get a lot of this work done if we'll just do it. There just needs to be a little less talk and a little more action, a little more common sense, a little more working together.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:15 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. Edward Rendell is mayor of Philadelphia, PA.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Business Leaders Supporting Goals 2000 and an Exchange With Reporters

September 6, 1995

The President. Good afternoon. As you can see, I'm about to have a meeting here

with some distinguished American business executives who support the idea that our most important agenda here in Government is to advance the cause of education, and they have in particular been good supporters of the Goals 2000 program in which 48 of our 50 States are now participating and which is the most grassroots-oriented reform program the United States Department of Education has ever promoted for improving the quality of education through reforms at the State, school district, and school level to provide more technology, to raise standards, to have smaller classes, to do a whole range of things that will make education better.

There is a way to balance the budget without destroying the Goals 2000 program. The proposed congressional majority budget would get rid of Goals 2000, and it would deprive 44 million students of the opportunities that they would otherwise have to be in more grassroots reform efforts.

This Goals 2000 project is the result of the recommendations we've gotten over the years from business leaders, as well as educators and, frankly, the result of all of the work that Secretary Riley and I did for more than a decade in our previous jobs. And I very much hope it can be saved, and it is not necessary to balance the budget to back up on the education commitment. I think the partnership we've enjoyed, both the bipartisan partnership between Republicans and Democrats and the partnership between business and government that we've enjoyed in this education reform effort should not be destroyed, because it doesn't have to be to balance the budget.

I'd like to ask Mr. Joe Gorman to make a couple of remarks about the program and then we'll go on with our meeting.

Joe?

[*At this point, Joseph Gorman, chairman and chief executive officer, TRW, Inc., made brief remarks supporting Goals 2000.*]

Q. Mr. President, are you also going to discuss with the CEO's the stagnant wages over the last two decades that you always keep talking about?

The President. Every time I talk to business leaders I talk about that. But let me just say, as I've said on Labor Day, there are a lot of alternative explanations being offered for this, but one of the clear lessons not only for our country but for every wealthy country is that is we want to continue to raise incomes in a global economy, we have to raise the level of education of the work force. We've got to do it.

There are some other things we can do and that I hope we will do and some things they can do and that many of them are doing, but if we don't raise the educational level of the American work force and if we don't set up a system of real reform for excellence in our public schools and then lifetime education afterward, nothing they or we do will achieve that goal.

So I will say again, the purpose of balancing the budget is to remove the burden of debt off of our children and grandchildren and to free up more capital for private investment so that the economy will grow. The purpose of balancing the budget is not to shut the economy down by undermining our fundamental commitment to education. So the question is, how can we meet both objectives.

I've presented a plan which does that, there are lots of ways to get it done, and that's what I think we're all agreed on, again without regard to party.

United Nations Conference on Women

Q. Have you heard from the First Lady, sir?

The President. Yeah, I had a nice talk with her. I've talked to her twice since she left for China. I talked to her after her speech. I told her I thought she had done a great job on the speech. I liked it very much, and she seemed very pleased with it, and she said that the women, the many thousands of women who were there gave it a very good response.

We had a very—we had kind of a brief conversation; the connection wasn't the greatest because I was in an airplane.

Q. Was there any concern about the treatment of Secretary Shalala?

The President. Secretary Shalala spoke for herself on that. I thought what she said was just great. She'll do just fine. [*Laughter*]

Q. Any public relations——

Q. Was there any concern that the First Lady's remarks might have any impact on the U.S.-Chinese relations?

The President. No, I don't think so. You know, she said—what she said was what we have both said many, many times on the issues that affect China, and much of her speech pertained to conditions in other countries, not China, and some of it related to conditions in our country as well. So I thought it was a balanced speech. There was no attempt to single any country out. She stood up for the rights and the potential and against the abuse of women everywhere in the world.

I thought that's what made the speech powerful, that there was no attempt to have a particular political agenda or single any country out. It was a very strong speech.

Q. They know who they are.

The President. I was proud of her.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Welfare Reform

September 6, 1995

Dear Mr. Leader:

I am glad the Senate has finally come to this important debate on welfare reform. The American people have waited a long time for this. We owe it to the people who sent us here not to let this opportunity slip away by doing the wrong thing or by failing to act at all.

Over the last two and a half years, my Administration has aggressively pursued welfare reform at every turn. We proposed sweeping welfare reform legislation to impose time limits and work requirements and promote the values of work, responsibility, and family. We have put tough child support enforcement at the center of the national welfare reform debate: My Administration collected a record level of child support in 1993—$9 billion—and I signed a far-reaching Executive Order to crack down on federal employees who owe child support.

We have put the country on the road to ending welfare as we know it, by approving welfare reform experiments in a record 34 states. Through these experiments, 7 million recipients around the country are now being required to work, pay child support, live at home and stay in school, sign a personal responsibility contract, or earn a paycheck from a business that uses money that was spent on food stamp and welfare benefits to subsidize private sector jobs. Today, my Administration is granting two more waivers to expand successful state experiments in Ohio, which rewards teen mothers who stay in school and sanctions those who don't, and in Florida, which requires welfare recipients to go to work as a condition of their benefits and provides child care when they do.

I am confident that what we're doing to reform welfare around the country is helping to instill the values all Americans share. Now we need to pass a welfare reform bill that ends the current welfare system altogether and replaces it with one that puts work, responsibility, and family first.

That is why I strongly support and urge you to pass the welfare reform bill sponsored by Senators Daschle, Breaux, and Mikulski that is before the Senate today. Instead of maintaining the current broken system which undermines our basic values, the Daschle-Breaux-Mikulski plan demands responsibility and requires people to work. The Work First bill will cut the budget by moving people to work, not by asking states to handle more problems with less money and shipping state and local taxpayers the bill.

I support the Work First plan because welfare reform is first and foremost about work. We should impose time limits and tough work requirements, and make sure that people get the child care they need to go to work. We should reward states for putting people to work, not for cutting people off. We will only end welfare as we know it if we succeed in moving people from welfare to work.

Welfare reform is also about family. That means the toughest possible child support enforcement, because people who bring children into this world should take responsibility for them, not just walk away. It also means requiring teen mothers to live at home, stay in school, and turn their lives around—not