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I say thank you. The rest of America is deeply in your debt. This is a very great project.

Now as we close this formal ceremony, let me say again to each and every one of you: I'm proud of you; I'm grateful to you. What you are doing is building America's future. Because of the nature of the economic and social changes going on in the world today, your work is more important to America's success than ever before.

I ask you to leave here with one idea in mind. I ask you to do what you can back in your hometowns, back in your home districts, back in your home States to make sure that every single school in America works to be a Blue Ribbon school.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:54 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jill Mahler, a student at Mainland High School in Daytona Beach, FL.

Statement on the Appointment of the Special Assistant for Civilian Implementation in Bosnia

May 29, 1996

I am pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. Richard Sklar as Special Representative of the President and the Secretary of State for Civilian Implementation in Bosnia. This appointment underscores that, with success in meeting the principal military tasks under the Dayton Accords, we must give high priority now to making the peace irreversible by accelerating efforts to rebuild the political and economic fabric of Bosnian society.

Mr. Sklar will be the senior U.S. official resident in Bosnia responsible for coordinating the work of all U.S. civilian agencies involved in the reconstruction effort, under the authority of the U.S. Ambassador to Bosnia. His responsibilities will encompass humanitarian assistance, economic revitalization and reconstruction, the resettlement of refugees, the conduct of elections, and strengthening of public security. He will also serve as liaison to his counterparts from other countries and the heads and staffs of all the international institutions engaged in civilian implementation activities.

I can think of no one more qualified to spearhead this critically important endeavor than Richard Sklar. Mr. Sklar has had a distinguished 35 year career in private and public sector management. Prior to accepting this appointment, he has served as president and chief operating officer of O'Brien-Kreizberg Inc. (OK), the oldest and largest ''pure'' project and construction management firm in the United States. OK is now managing over 100 major construction projects in the United States and abroad, from airports and rail systems to facilities for the Atlanta Olympics. Mr. Sklar served on the administration's transition team for the Agency for International Development during the administration's first 3 months, and then became a member of the Board of Directors of the Russian-American Enterprise Fund. He has continued to serve as an adviser to AID Administrator Brian Atwood and to Richard Morningstar, coordinator for assistance to the New Independent States. Mr. Sklar has built and led two businesses, both world leaders in the construction industry. In addition, he served in major public management roles for the city of San Francisco. Mr. Sklar was an officer in the U.S. Army artillery following his graduation as a mechanical engineer from Cornell University in 1956.

I am deeply grateful that Mr. Sklar has accepted this appointment, and for his willingness to serve our Nation in helping to build an enduring peace in Bosnia.

Remarks on Departure for New Orleans, Louisiana, and an Exchange With Reporters

May 30, 1996

Israeli Election

The President. Good morning. My goodness, the sun is out. I'd like to make just a couple of brief comments about the election in Israel last night.

First of all, it was a cliffhanger. A lot of us were up late waiting for the returns, but I want to just make a couple of points. The United States—first, we don't know how—we don't have final returns. We have to wait for the postal ballots to be cast, counted.

Whatever the results, the United States will continue its policy of support for the people of Israel, for the democratic process there, and for the process of peace. And our policy will be the same. If Israel is prepared to take risks for peace, we are determined to do our best to reduce the risks and increase the security of those who do that.

I was especially encouraged in the closing days of the campaign that both parties and both candidates expressed, in different ways, but still a clear commitment to continue the peace process. So that is my hope. That's what I hope will come out of this election, and we'll all just have to sit now and wait until the final ballots are counted.

Q. Do you believe Mr. Netanyahu would not restart settlements in the West Bank, would not go ahead with negotiations with Syria? There's a dramatic difference in his approach.

The President. Well, there's been a difference in what they say their approaches are, but I was actually quite interested in the comments that he made about this, particularly in the last days of the election. I think we have to wait and see.

I would, first of all, say let's wait until all the ballots are in, until we see who voted how and what the final outcome is. But the first big leg of the whole process of peace in the Middle East was completed by one of Mr. Netanyahu's Likud predecessors. So we just have to wait and see.

They certainly have a lively, interesting democracy. And they showed it again yesterday, and the rest of us should support that. And I would hope that we would have that kind of turnout in our country this November. I hope that percentage of our voters shows up. I think they had over two-thirds of the overall voters turn out. And I hope that—and maybe even higher.

They have made their decision. Now we have to wait for a while to see what it is, and then afterward they will have to chart a course and then we'll see where we go from there.

Q. Do you want results that close?

The President. No. I hope they won't be that close, but I hope that we'll have that many people voting. I like the turnout. And I like the vigorous involvement. I like the debate. I thought it—you know, it was a very stimulating thing for them and, you know, it was a difficult, challenging election for the people of Israel and, you know, we'll see.

I think all of us who watched the returns last night and watched the reports coming in, were impressed by the vigor of the democracy and by the determination to participate. And now you know they have a very diverse society, and they're trying to find ways to integrate all the various elements of their society. It was very impressive to me what happened.

And so I'm going to wait for the votes to come in and a winner to be declared and the government to be announced, and then we'll see where we go from there.

Press Secretary McCurry. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you.

Q. Mr. President, does the closeness of the vote make it difficult for anyone to lead? What is the message?

The President. Let's wait a while. Let's see what the vote is, and we'll see what the message is. I don't want to be an instantaneous commentator, but I'll think some more about it and see if I can answer that question.

Q. How late were you up?

The President. Until I found out what all the counted votes were last night, about 1 o'clock.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:20 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Binyamin Netanyahu, Likud Party candidate for Prime Minister in Israel.

Remarks to the Women's International Convention of the Church of God in Christ in New Orleans, Louisiana

May 30, 1996

The President. I'm having such a good time I hate to interrupt it. [*Laughter*] Please be seated.

Audience member. We love you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you. Thank you.

Bishop Owens, you don't have to calm this crowd for me. I like it the other way. Mother Crouch, thank you for letting me come to