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Today, we have a renewed sense of hope in America, a hope based on the idea that our great diversity can unite—not divide—our society. As we rejoice in the rich cultural heritage of the African American community during Kwanzaa, let us work together to ensure that the meaning and energy of this inspiring festival will remain with us throughout the coming year, bringing courage, renewal, and even greater hope for the future.

Hillary joins me in sending best wishes for a wonderful holiday and every happiness in the year ahead.

Bill Clinton

Remarks on the Airline Safety Initiative and an Exchange With Reporters

December 12, 1996

The President. Thank you. Good morning. I will be very brief, but I do want to make a couple of remarks. I want to thank the Vice President, first of all, and the people who have worked with him for their unflagging efforts to improve airline safety. I want to thank Secretary Peña and Mr. Hall and Ms. Daschle and the other members of the administration who have worked on this.

I want to especially thank the airline executives who are here for announcing their plan to ensure that their U.S. carriers have smoke detectors in their cargo holds whenever they leave the ground. This is further proof of what we can achieve when we work together.

This is a critical part of our long-range plan to make Americans more secure and to make sure our skies are safer. After the TWA disaster, the Vice President's commission worked around the clock to develop an action plan for aviation safety. Just a month later, we made nearly every one of their recommendations the law of the land: state-of-the-art bomb detectors in our major airports, a dramatic increase in FBI agents assigned to counterterrorism efforts, background checks and FBI fingerprint checks for airport and airline employees, improved mail and cargo inspection, and more bomb-sniffing dogs.

I said in October that we cannot make the world risk-free, but we can reduce the risks we face. By putting smoke detectors in every cargo hold of these carriers we take another step to make our people and our skies safer.

And again, let me say I congratulate especially the carriers who are here. I thank them for their leadership and for working with us, and I thank the members of the administration, beginning with the Vice President.

Thank you very much.

Director of Central Intelligence-Designate

Q. Mr. President, is Tony Lake in trouble, and will you go to the mat for him?

The President. No, and yes. [*Laughter*]

Q. You don't think he has any problem in terms of the—[*inaudible*].

The President. No. Well, we reviewed that, and I think—I believe the essential facts of the matter have been reported in the press. And the Counsel's Office and others reviewed the facts as they have been presented—I believe they have been accurately presented in the press, although I did not personally read the story this morning, and we believe that it is not a disqualification.

Balanced Budget and Protecting the Poor

Q. Mr. President, your embrace of the political center seems to concern many traditionally liberal Democrats who are afraid this priority of balancing the budget is going to hurt poor people. Yesterday the chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, Representative Donald Payne, was expressing this kind of concern. How do you guarantee that fuel for poor people, subsidies, that housing subsidies, that your determination to balance the budget is not going to come on the backs of the poor?

The President. Well, that's what we're working through right now. We've been working through that for the last 4 years. Every year in the last 4 years we've had to send a budget up to the Hill, and we've worked on a budget that would continue to reduce the deficit in a way that would be fair to all Americans.

And I would just say, first of all, there's some evidence here: After 4 years we've cut the deficit by 60 percent, there are 2.1 million fewer people on welfare and about a million fewer children in poverty than there

were the day I took office. Poverty had the biggest drop among children in 1995 in 20 years. We have the lowest poverty rate among elderly people and African-Americans since the statistics have been kept.

A big part of that is a strong economy. If you want to reduce poverty, you've got to have more jobs being created, you've got to have the economy being stronger.

But secondly, we have to be exceedingly sensitive—I don't want to play games here—we have to be exceedingly sensitive to what policy judgments are made so that we don't do the rest of the work of balancing the budget on the backs of poor children especially, who are essentially defenseless in protecting themselves. We have to be very, very sensitive from here on in. And I assure you we're working on that.

And Congressman Payne, whom I know well and respect very much, I'm sure will be vigorously pressing the interests that he discussed yesterday in all of our budget talks together. But we're working hard on this budget to avoid that.

Airline Safety

Q. Mr. President, with the fire detection systems that you're going to have in these planes, is it not far enough? Don't you need suppression as well, to put out fires when you're at 10,000 feet, simply knowing about——

The President. Would you like to answer that?

The Vice President. I would. There are fire suppression systems installed on all new airlines. And it is true that the original NTSB recommendation was for both detectors and suppression equipment. The difficulties in implementing the retrofit for suppression systems is significantly greater than the difficulty with detector systems. But the industry has agreed to work with us vigorously to find solutions for this challenge, and we're pressing forward on it.

Q. How much will it cost the industry?

The Vice President. A lot. [*Laughter*] About $400 million. And it is a significant commitment that they're making. No one should misunderstand the fact that it was not easy for these companies to make the decision that they are announcing here today. This is a significant step forward. In the absence of a rule, they're doing it voluntarily, and every company here has joined together. And so it's an important step.

Q. Are airline tickets up?

The Vice President. Not because of this.

The President. Thank you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:45 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With the Drug Policy Council and an Exchange With Reporters

December 12, 1996

The President. Good Morning. First, I'd like to thank Director McCaffrey and the other Cabinet and agency officials who are here for the second meeting of the President's Drug Policy Council.

Before we begin the meeting I'd like to make two brief announcements: First, an important step we are taking to break the cycle of crime and drugs in the revolving door between prisons and drug use.

In the last Congress, we pushed for and passed legislation which requires States to drug-test prisoners and parolees as a condition for receiving prison grants from the Federal Government. Today I'm pleased to announce that the Justice Department has developed drug test guidelines for the States that will help them to meet the requirements of the legislation. This law says to inmates, if you want out of jail you must get off drugs. And it says to parolees, if you want to stay out of jail you must stay off drugs. If you go back on drugs, then you have to go back to jail.

The new guidelines call for every State to submit a plan for drug testing, for interventions, for sanctions to the Attorney General within 14 months as a condition of receiving Federal prison funds.

We know this effort will work. A recent report shows that in Delaware, prisoners who got treatment in prison and during work release were 75 percent drug-free and 70 percent arrest-free after 18 months. But 80 percent of the prisoners who did not receive treatment went back on drugs, and two out of three were arrested again. There is a huge