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believe, and we make our best efforts to honestly work with them based on what we really believe, there will be some things left on the table next November that we can probably go to the electorate with. And we don't have to be ashamed of that.

But we owe it to our people to make sure that if any of these things that could become law and could change their lives and could make more stories like these three we've heard—that if it doesn't happen this year, we owe it to the American people to make sure that it is not our fault, that we showed up and we did the work here. We owe it to them.

What is the purpose of a political party? I spent a lot of time last year reading about the 19th century and about places in the 1800's, periods of time that most Americans don't know much about anymore. I've spent a lot of time studying the history of our party. I believe the purpose of our Government and, therefore, the purpose of any political party, at every important period in our history, if you look back through it, has been threefold: to widen the circle of opportunity, to deepen the meaning of freedom, and to unify the Nation.

Now, that's what Thomas Jefferson did with the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, the Constitution, and then became President, and he bought Louisiana—thank you very much; it put Arkansas in the Union—[*laughter*]—and sent Lewis and Clark out West. Right? Widened opportunity, deepened freedom, unified the country.

Now, any honest Democrat will say that the Republicans did more of that than we did, from Abraham Lincoln through Theodore Roosevelt. And frankly, I'm sure we had a lot of nice people in our party during a lot of that period, but they were asleep at the switch. But from Woodrow Wilson to Franklin Roosevelt to Harry Truman to John Kennedy to Lyndon Johnson to Jimmy Carter to the present day, through all of our leadership in Congress in the 20th century forward, our party—we haven't always been right; we haven't always been up to date; but we have always been for widening the circle of opportunity, deepening the meaning of liberty and freedom, and uniting and strengthening the United States of America. That is what we ought to be about here. That is what we ought to be about. And if we do it, the American people will respond.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:28 a.m. in the Dirksen Senate Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Barbara Turner, founder, Boscart Construction Co., Inc., and Washington, DC, chair, Women's Leadership Forum; Judith Lee, comptroller, Older Women's League; and Kate Casey, student, Trinity College, Washington, DC.

Statement on the U.S. District Court Decision on the Line Item Veto

February 12, 1998

The line item veto provides an important tool for the President to strike unnecessary spending and tax items from legislation. Congress took the correct step giving the President this authority, and I was pleased to sign the line item veto into law. It has worked well, saving the American taxpayers more than $1 billion already. Although I am disappointed with today's ruling, it is my belief that, ultimately, the line item veto will be ruled constitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Message on the Observance of Presidents' Day, 1998

February 12, 1998

Warm greetings to all Americans as we observe Presidents' Day, 1998.

On this day we remember with pride the history of the American Presidency and the achievements of the many extraordinary leaders who have guided our nation's course over the past two centuries. Each President in his own time has faced unique challenges in striving to fulfill the purpose of our Constitution "to form a more perfect Union."

For George Washington, that challenge meant sustaining and strengthening the fragile Union he had helped to establish. During the eight years of his Presidency, he carried out the awesome responsibilities of his office with such care and wisdom that he confirmed the trust of his fellow Americans and proved to a watching world that our new republic would survive and flourish.

Abraham Lincoln's great challenge was to preserve the Union. Taking the oath of office after seven states had already seceded, President Lincoln resolved to keep our country united, even at the cost of civil war. With courage and tenacity, he led America through four years of bloody conflict and, in victory, reached out to begin the healing that would bring us together again as one nation. "With malice toward none," he said less than two months before his death, "with charity for all . . . let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds . . . to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace . . . ."

Today we face our own challenge to build a more perfect Union, a Union that must now be forged from one of history's most racially and culturally diverse societies. We can do so by widening the circle of opportunity for all our people: opportunity for a good education, opportunity for good jobs, opportunity to reach our own great potential. If we do so, we will keep faith with these great leaders whose memory we honor today and enter the 21st century with our Union stronger than ever.

Best wishes for a memorable observance.

Bill Clinton

Remarks at the Swearing-In Ceremony for David Satcher as Surgeon General and Assistant Secretary for Health and an Exchange With Reporters

February 13, 1998

The President. Thank you very much, Mr. Vice President; Secretary Shalala, thank you for your heroic efforts in this regard. To the Satcher family, Senator Kennedy, Senator Jeffords, Senator Frist, Congressman Stokes, Congressman Waters, to the members of the Satcher family and friends, and all the people who've worked so hard for this nomination, including the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Medical Association, the Association of American Medical Colleges, the National Medical Association. Dr. Sullivan, it's nice to see you back here.

This is a good day for America. It should be a happy day for America, and it bodes well for the health of the American people and, especially, of the American children.

I am very, very grateful to the bipartisan majority of the United States Senate who made it possible for us to swear in David Satcher as the next Surgeon General and Assistant Secretary of Health. Besides being superbly qualified, I can't help noting, he also looks good in his uniform. [*Laughter*]

Only once before has the President had the honor and the opportunity to appoint one person to fill two of the most demanding public health positions in the Nation. Dr. Satcher is more than capable of meeting this challenge. From the overwhelming bipartisan support he received, and the strong support he received from professional organizations, it is clear that we have found the right advocate for America's public health.

He takes on his role at a pivotal time in American health care. Stunning medical breakthroughs, new treatments for some of our most deadly diseases, a rapidly changing health care system make it more important than ever that our Surgeon General truly be America's family doctor and guide us through this time of change.

As Surgeon General, Dr. Satcher will give us plain talk and sound advice about what each of us can do to live healthier lives. He'll guide our Nation on the most important public health issues of our time, from increasing public awareness on how to prevent some of our most devastating diseases, to helping free our children from the deadly grip of tobacco. Later today in Philadelphia, I will be talking to some of America's premiere scientists about what we as a nation can do to protect our young people from tobacco. And I know that Dr. Satcher will continue to lead our efforts.

This is a time of great opportunity and great challenge. We are also going to try this year to pass in the Congress a 21st century research fund to make unprecedented efforts to find cures for diseases from diabetes to Alzheimer's to AIDS. We are going to do our best to deal with the challenge of cloning by securing legislation that would ban the cloning of human beings but permit necessary medical research to go forward. We are going to try to pass a health care consumer bill of rights, increasingly important