

in which you'll feel all different kinds of emotions. You may be in shock. You may feel like crying. You may feel angry. And some of the people that are supposed to help you may or may not do as good a job as they should the first time you ask for it or need it.

What I want to say today is that all over this country your fellow Americans are praying for you and pulling for you. And whatever it is within our power to do to help you return to normal lives, we will do.

I have already designated Federal assistance to 34 Florida counties affected by the tornadoes. Twelve will now be able to receive aid to restore public facilities and infrastructure and to take protective measures: Bradford, Citrus, Columbia, Duval, Hamilton, Hardee, Highlands, Marion, Nassau, Osceola, Suwannee, and Union Counties. And we are also providing today \$3 million from the Department of Labor for temporary jobs for workers to assist in the disaster recovery work so that we can complete it more quickly.

My experience has been that the efforts you see going on around you to just clean out the debris and help people look at a place as nearly as possible as it once was before the tornado is psychologically one of the most important things that can be done to help the healing process and to get people back to normal.

We'll also continue under FEMA's direction to provide the resources necessary to meeting the immediate disaster needs. Already FEMA staffers, the SBA, the Department of Labor, the Corps of Engineers, and some of our young AmeriCorps volunteers are here helping in the effort.

Let me say again a special work of commendation not only to the State and local emergency management officials and the search and rescue teams and the volunteers who have been working for 72 hours, but I'd also like to say a word of appreciation to Governor Chiles and to Lieutenant Governor MacKay with whom, unfortunately, I have had the opportunity to work now through more than one disaster. Florida has seen a lot of its natural disaster shares. I think you've used up your quota for the next 20 or 30 years in the last few years. But I've had an opportunity to see a caring team of

State leaders who work hard, work fast, and stay after us at the national level to do our part, and I want to thank them for that.

Let me also just say, for a moment, you may have seen in the news media that California, which has been beset by unusual amounts of raining and flooding because of El Niño, yesterday was badly hit by storms. People died there, and our thoughts are with their loved ones. I've asked Mr. Witt to go with me to California today so that he can go to the impacted area and see what is going on there.

Again, let me say that the thoughts and prayers of the American people are with you. In the Book of Isaiah in the Bible there is this chapter—I'd like to read it to you: "The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with you in stones. The sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars." We want to see you do that, brick by brick, home by home, street by street. You can do it, and we want to be there to help.

God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:56 a.m. at the Ponderosa Park Campground. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Lawton Chiles and Lt. Gov. Buddy MacKay of Florida; State Senators Charlie Bronson and Florida Senate Minority Leader Buddy Dyer; Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives Daniel Webster; Mayor Frank Atkinson of Kissimmee; Chuck Dunnick, chair, Osceola County Commissioners; and Maj. Gen. Ronald O. Harrison, adjutant general of Florida. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report on the Loan Guarantees to Israel Program

February 25, 1998

To the Congress of the United States:

The attached report to the Congress on the Loan Guarantees to Israel Program was completed on December 31, 1997. Since then there have been several key, positive economic developments in Israel that I wanted to communicate to the Congress.

The Israeli Knesset passed its 1998 budget on January 5. The final budget adhered to

the deficit target of 2.4 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) set by the Israeli Cabinet in August 1997, and established a spending target of 46.3 percent of GDP (down from 47.3 percent in 1997), without resorting to additional taxes. Furthermore, due partially to the mid-year spending cuts discussed in the report, the Government of Israel overperformed the 1997 deficit target of 2.8 percent of GDP by a significant margin; the 1997 budget deficit came in at 2.4 percent of GDP. These events demonstrate the commitment of the Israeli government to fiscal consolidation and reform.

Second, the Israeli consumer price index (CPI) for 1997 rose by only 7 percent, at the bottom of the 7–10 percent 1997 target range and a 28-year low. This indicates that the battle being waged by the Bank of Israel and the Israeli government against persistent inflation is succeeding. The Israeli Ministry of Finance is reportedly considering lowering the 1998 inflation target (currently set at 7–10 percent) in order to consolidate the strong inflation performance registered in 1997.

This information will be included in the 1998 report to the Congress on the Loan Guarantees to Israel Program.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
February 25, 1998.

**Remarks at a Democratic
Congressional Campaign Committee
Reception in San Francisco,
California**

February 25, 1998

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen, first for the warm welcome and second, and very importantly, for your support for these fine candidates for Congress.

I think I should begin by expressing my profound concern and support for all the people in California who have been suffering from the effects of El Niño. And tomorrow I'm going to Oakland to have a meeting with a lot of the folks about that. I also want to express my gratitude to the people of California and especially the people of San Francisco for the incredible support that Hillary

and I and the Vice President and Tipper and our administration have received.

When Nancy Pelosi almost drank my water—[laughter]—I thought to myself, she has carried so much water for me, she ought to drink some of it. The thing I find—I really admire Nancy Pelosi, and I like her a lot, even when she disagrees with me—but the thing I find remarkable—and I think this is important—is that after all these years in Washington, every time I talk to her about anything, if I didn't know, I would have thought she came yesterday because her passion, her energy, her intensity never fails. And believe me, even from this far distance, you've seen enough about how Washington works to know that anyone who can work there as long and as hard as she has and never become cynical and never lose their passion or their idealism is a truly remarkable public servant.

Senator Thompson, first, thank you for running. Thank you for running. And thank you for being willing to give up what must be an immensely rewarding career in the California State Senate, and certainly, almost certainly a more congenial lifestyle than the one you are about to embrace—[laughter]—for your willingness to be part of this great national adventure as our country goes through these profound changes into a new century and new millennium. Congratulations on getting your main opponent not to run. I never was very good at that myself—[laughter]—but I certainly am impressed.

And to my good friend Lois Capps, thank you for running. It took a lot of courage and a lot of depth and a lot of conviction. I was standing up here listening to Lois talk about the issues that I'm pushing in Washington in terms of the people who live in her district. That's another thing we need more of in Washington—we need a lot more concern about people and less concern about power. Power is the instrument through which you do things for people, but the power belongs to them. All of us, every single one of us, we're just hired hands for a fleeting period of time in the broad sweep of our Nation's odyssey. And apart from the love and affection I felt for Walter Capps, the enormous admiration that Hillary and I have for Lois, the love we have for Laura who now has the