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build a more prosperous future for all our people.

In just 12 days now we will have the first balanced budget and the first budget surplus since Neil Armstrong walked on the Moon in 1969. This remarkable achievement is the product of hard work by the American people, by lawmakers of both parties who put progress ahead of partisanship. We have waited 29 years for this moment. Now we must ask ourselves, what should we make of it.

Above all, I believe we must use this moment of prosperity to honor the duty across generations and strengthen Social Security for the 21st century. Seventy-five million baby boomers will be retiring over the next two decades. We must act now across party lines to make Social Security as strong for our children as it has been for our parents.

In my State of the Union Address I said we should reserve every penny of that hard won surplus until we had taken the steps to save Social Security first. At the same time, I did propose tax cuts for education, for the environment, to help families pay for child care. But not a penny of these cuts comes out of the surplus. Every one is fully paid for in my balanced budget.

My plan also provides tax relief to families while preserving the strength of the Social Security system. That is very important. When all the baby boomers retire, there will only be about two people working for every person drawing Social Security. We can make moderate changes now and make sure that those who retire will be able to retire in dignity, without imposing on, burdening, or lowering the standard of living of their children and grandchildren.

Unfortunately, the Republicans in Congress have a different idea. The black ink in the budget hasn't even had a chance to dry; indeed, it hasn't appeared yet. But they already want to drain the surplus to fund a tax plan before we make the most of our opportunity, our historic opportunity to save Social Security.

I've already made it clear that if Congress sends me a bill that squanders the surplus before we save Social Security, I will veto it. But Republicans in the House of Representatives are proceeding anyway and will try to pass their tax bill next week. I believe strongly that this is the wrong way to give American families the tax relief they deserve, the wrong way to prepare our Nation for the challenges of the future.

So today I say again to the Republican leadership: Go back to the drawing board. Look at the targeted tax cuts for working families I proposed, and we all passed last year: $500 per child; a HOPE scholarship for the first 2 years of college and college credits thereafter; IRA incentives to save for children. They all take effect this year. They'll all be on your tax forms in April, and all of them are fully paid for.

So I say to Congress send me a plan like that, a plan with targeted tax relief while preserving all the surplus until we have saved Social Security. Send me a plan that rebuilds our crumbling schools, that helps working families with child care, and supports small businesses in getting pension plans—and pay for it.

Send me a tax cut that keeps us on the path of fiscal responsibility, that honors our obligations to our parents and our children. If Congress sends me a tax cut plan like that, I'll gladly sign it. This is a time of great hope for our Nation but a time where continued global economic growth demands continued American economic leadership. Fiscal responsibility has created our prosperity, and fiscal irresponsibility would put it at risk.

Let's do the right thing to provide for the security of our parents and opportunity for our children into the 21st century.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks to the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation

September 19, 1998

Thank you very much. Thank you. You know, Maxine Waters would be so much more effective as the chair of the Congressional Black Caucus if she weren't so shy and retiring—[*laughter*]—so reluctant to express her opinion. [*Laughter*]

Thank you, my friends, for years of friendship. Thank you for the work we began back

in 1991. To the chair of the dinner, Congressman Clyburn, and the chair of the Foundation, Congresswoman Clayton—and congratulations on your recent outstanding primary victory—to the dean of this caucus and a great fighter for the American way, John Conyers, thank you.

To two great lions of the century we are about to end, Rosa Parks and Dr. Dorothy Height. To three great friends of mine who have left or are now leaving the Congress, Ron Dellums, Floyd Flake, and Louis Stokes, I echo everything the Vice President said about you.

And to the family of Congressman Charles Diggs, Jr., I thank you for giving the awards to Secretary Herman and Secretary Slater, to Frank Raines and Congressman Rush and the other winners who have given so much to our country.

I thank the members of our administration who are here tonight: Attorney General Reno, Secretary Cuomo, SBA Administrator Alvarez. To the marvelous White House staff members who are here: Minyon Moore, Goody Marshall, Maria Echaveste, Bob Nash, Janis Kearney, Ben Johnson, Al Maldon, Tracey Thornton, Cheryl Mills, Judith Winston, Betty Currie, Janet Murguia, and goodness knows who else is here—they hate to miss this dinner. To all the members of the administration who are here, along with all the members of the caucus, I thank you.

After the speeches which have been given, the outstanding remarks of the Vice President—and let me say one thing about him. I sometimes regret that one of the burdens of being Vice President is having to brag on the President and never getting to brag on himself. Many things will be said, good and perhaps some not so good, about this administration. One thing that will never be in question is that in the history of our Republic no person has ever held the office of Vice President who had more influence on more decisions and did more good in more areas for more people in this country than Vice President Al Gore.

I have a speech I want to give, but first I'd like to say something from the heart. I want to thank you for standing up for America with me. I want to thank you for standing up for me and understanding the true meaning of repentance and atonement. I want to thank you for standing up consistently for people over politics, for progress over partisanship, for principle over power, for unity over division. I want to thank you for standing up, beyond race, for the very best in America. I am very, very grateful.

I am grateful for what the Congressional Black Caucus has done for the past 28 years to expand and enhance the promise of America and to lead our country toward a single shining ideal, perhaps captured best in that wonderful phrase from John Lewis' autobiography, ''the beloved community,'' one that dwells not on difference but instead gains strength from expanding diversity, one rooted in humane laws and generous spirits in which all children's talents are matched by their opportunities, in which all Americans join hands and, in John's words, ''courageously walk with the wind.'' God knows your journey has not been easy. The winds have often blown bitter and cold. But always this caucus has walked with the wind.

Today, because of the long road you have walked, the house we call America is safer and stronger than ever. As I think back on what we have done together in the last 5½ years, I think of these things. We cut taxes for 15 million hard-working families through the earned-income tax credit, and when the Republicans tried to slash it, we said no. We increased the minimum wage to give 10 million Americans a well-deserved raise. And now we're trying to increase it again in a way that would affect 12 million of our fellow citizens, to ensure that people who work full time can raise their children out of poverty and that all people share in the bounty of our present prosperity.

Together we fought for and won the biggest increase in children's health care in more than three decades. It can add insurance—health insurance—to 5 million children in working families across this country. We expanded the Head Start program to help our children get off on the right foot, and we're going to expand it some more. We made it possible for nearly 2 million more women and infants to get the nutritional care they need. With the Family and Medical Leave Act, we gave millions of people the

chance to take time off from work to care for an ailing parent or bond with a newborn child.

We have opened the doors of higher education with the HOPE scholarship, with more Pell grants, with tax credits for all higher education, with the deductibility of student loans. We have done that for every single qualified American who's willing to work for it. Money can no longer be considered an insurmountable obstacle. And you did that. You should be very, very proud.

Together with the Vice President's leadership, we created more than 100 empowerment zones and enterprise communities, established community development banks, doubled small business loans to minorities and tripled them to women. When people wanted to scrap affirmative action we said, ''Mend it. Don't end it,'' because we believe the best investment in America makes us all stronger.

Together we shaped and passed the historic crime bill, overcoming immense pressure with the Brady bill, the assault weapons ban, more police on our streets and, yes, more prevention for our children to keep them out of trouble in the first place.

Now, look what you have done: nearly 17 million jobs, the lowest unemployment rate in 28 years, the lowest African-American and Hispanic unemployment rates in a generation, the lowest African-American poverty rate since statistics have been kept, the fastest real wage growth in 20 years, a record number of new small businesses every year, violent crime down 6 years in a row, and the lowest crime rate in 25 years. None of this could have happened without the leadership, the friendship, the ideas of the Congressional Black Caucus.

And I thank the Vice President for his litany of our African-American appointments and for pointing out—in a phrase I will steal the first chance I get—that we are not successful in spite of our diversity; we are successful because of it. We can never say that enough. That is the truth, and America is better because all Americans can feel a part of this administration.

Now, here's the real question: What are we to do with this treasured moment of prosperity and progress? What are we do to with our resources? What are we to do with the self-confidence it has generated in America? Some people think that now is the time to kick back and relax. Others seem to think they can play games with our future with some of the proposals now before the Congress. I say we can look back a long way to the book of Genesis to see what we should do.

Remember Joseph? What did he do in a time of plenty? He did not rest. When people thought he was too farsighted and too burdensome, he instructed them to stockpile rich bounties of grain like sand to the sea. He knew the times of plenty had to be the busiest, the most productive, the most determined times of all. Wisdom and history teaches us that in times of prosperity we need to be more visionary, more vigorous, more determined to deal with the long-term challenges before us, and that we will only pay a price if we indulge ourselves in idleness or distractions.

I say we cannot rest until we save Social Security for the 21st century. Remember what we are facing today. In 1993, it was projected that the deficit would be about $300 billion and rising. In just a few days, a little more than a week, we'll have the first balanced budget and surplus in 29 years. Ninety-two percent—ninety-two percent of the gap was closed by the votes of members of this caucus and our party without any help. Then we did have a bipartisan balanced budget bill that had, thanks to your efforts, the health care and education initiatives I mentioned.

So now we are going to have a surplus because of the hard work and productivity of the American people. Some say it's just a few weeks before the election, we ought to have a tax cut. I'm not against tax cuts. This year, in the balanced budget bill, the American people will get, most of them, a $500 tax credit for every child at home; the HOPE scholarship and other credits for college education; the right to withdraw from an IRA without penalty for education, for health care, for buying a first-time home. That's a good thing. But they're paid for in the balanced budget.

And in my budget there are more tax cuts. There are tax cuts for education, to build and

repair old schools; tax cuts to help families with the cost of child care; tax cuts to help small businesses take out pensions for their employees who don't have them today. But every one of them is paid for in the balanced budget.

By the time the baby boomers like me—and I'm the oldest of them—that's hard to say. [*Laughter*] By the time we retire, all of us in the baby boom generation, 18 years of us, there will only be about two people working for every one person drawing Social Security if the predictions are right.

Now, we have three choices. Number one, we can do nothing and wait until the crash comes, because the present system is not sustainable, and then we can simply cut the living standards of our seniors. For people like me it will be fine; I'll have a good pension. But don't forget, half the people in this country over 65 today are out of poverty because of Social Security. Or we can wait until that day comes, and we can say, ''We can't do that to our parents and grandparents, so we can just simply raise the taxes a lot on the working families of this country to maintain the system just exactly as it is.'' And in so doing, people like me will have to face the prospect that we've lowered the standard of living of our children and our children's ability to raise our grandchildren. Or we can say, ''If we start now with a sensible, modest proposal, we can save Social Security and save the future for our children and grandchildren.'' I don't think it's even close, and I don't think you do either.

But that means we can't rest. We have to work. We can't rest until all the children in all the communities have a world-class education. We have a budget before the Congress to hire 100,000 more teachers; to take those class sizes in the early grades down to 18; to rebuild or modernize 5,000 schools; to hook all the classrooms in the poorest schools, too, up to the Internet by the year 2000; to reward the school districts that are trying to reform and help kids, like Chicago, where there are so many kids in summer school it's the sixth biggest school district in America and over 40,000 kids get three square meals a day there; to hire 35,000 more teachers by paying their way through college and saying you can pay your student loan off if you'll go into the inner-city or into another underserved area and teach our kids who need it; by passing Congressman Fattah's high hopes proposal so that we can have the ability to mentor kids in junior high school and tell them, ''If you'll stay out of trouble, stay in school, learn your lessons, we will tell you right now you will be able to go on to college and here's how much money you will get to make sure it gets done.'' That's what we have to do. We cannot rest. We have work to do.

We can't rest until we pass the Patients' Bill of Rights. Now, that sounds like a high-flown term. Here's what it means. It means that with 160 million Americans in managed care systems, we still don't think an accountant ought to be making a decision a doctor should make. We believe if somebody walks out of this dinner tonight and, God forbid, is in a car accident, they ought to be able to go to the nearest emergency room, not one 5 or 6 miles away because it happens to be covered by the plan. We believe if somebody needs a specialist and their doctor says they need a specialist, they ought to be able to get a specialist and not be told no. We believe if a woman is 6 months pregnant and her insurance plan changes carriers, her employer, they ought not to be able to tell her to get a different obstetrician until after the baby is born. That's what we believe.

And we believe the other party's bill is wrong for America, because it doesn't guarantee any of these rights. It enables people to invade the privacy of your records even more, and it leaves 100 million Americans out. We cannot rest. We have work to do.

We cannot rest while HIV and AIDS is escalating in the African-American community. Secretary Shalala just announced the first installment of a comprehensive prevention, education, and care plan in the African-American community. Working with Maxine Waters, Lou Stokes, and others in the CBC, we can and we must do more. But we're only 2 weeks away from this budget year, and Congress has still not passed the health budget. We cannot rest. We have work to do.

We cannot rest until we eliminate the unacceptable disparities in health that racial and ethnic minorities experience in America today. We are not one nation when it comes

to infant mortality, heart disease, and prostate cancer for African-Americans. It is nearly double the rate for white Americans.

There are other problems that Hispanics and Asians and other minorities have. That is why I challenged the Nation to eliminate these disparities by 2010, and asked Congress to pass $400 million to achieve this goal. Almost time for the new budget year, it still hasn't passed yet. We cannot rest. We have work to do.

Let me say this. The unemployment rate, the poverty rates, all those rates you hear about the African-American population, they're true. But they disguise a fact that is unacceptable: There are still disparities. We cannot rest until every community, every neighborhood, every block, every family has the chance to reap the benefits of our economic growth. That is why we have to fund the empowerment initiatives that the Vice President and Secretary Cuomo have worked so hard for, to provide housing assistance for those leaving welfare and entering work, to expand funding for the community development banks, to step up enforcement of fair housing laws, to revitalize more urban brownfield areas, and to restore summer jobs for our young people. We're less than 2 weeks away from a new budget year, and that has not been passed yet. We cannot rest. We have work to do.

We cannot rest while any communities are thoroughly segregated by income or by race. The Federal Government should lead the way in word and deed. I have directed Secretary Cuomo to seek a major legislative overhaul in the admission policy for public housing, to deconcentrate poverty, mix incomes, and thereby mix racial balances for Americans.

Tonight I ask all of you to send a clear message to Congress with me: Don't send me a public housing bill that doesn't include our admission reforms, reforms that will make public housing a model of one America in the 21st century. And I might add, we're less than 2 weeks away from a new budget year, and I still don't have the increase I asked for in the budget of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. We cannot rest. We have work to do.

And let me say one or two more words about this census. We can't rest until we have a fair one. Listen to this. In 1990, about 4½ percent of African Americans were not counted. In Los Angeles County alone, nearly 40,000 African-American children were left out. This has enormous consequences for how we distribute the bounty of America, for how we draw our political distinctions, for the policies that we follow. This is a fundamental issue. This is a civil rights issue. Why? Why would the Republican leadership in Congress refuse methods of counting that even—listen to this—that even Republican experts say is the best way to count all Americans. We must count every American for one simple reason: Every American counts. We cannot rest. We have work to do on this census issue.

We cannot rest until we act as leaders to contain the global financial and economic crisis that grips Russia and Asia. Why? Because a third of our own economic growth in these last years has come from our trade with other nations. We have to try to build an adequate trade and financial system for a new century that takes into legitimate account the interests of working people, the interest of the environment, the interest all countries have in avoiding depressions and unusual boom and bust cycles. Why? Because it is in our interest in a world growing ever smaller to keep people free and give them a chance to work their way to prosperity, and because we can't be an island of prosperity in a sea of failure, as Alan Greenspan said so eloquently the other day.

That means we've got to help the International Monetary Fund put out these economic fires across the world by paying our fair dues. It's in our interest to help emerging countries in Africa, in Latin America, in Asia. Hillary and I saw the African renaissance with many of you this past spring, a trip that changed me forever. Across the continent I saw hope rising, business growing, democracy gaining strength. Yes, I saw profound, continuing problems and enormous challenges, but I saw in the bright eyes of children and the stern resolve of their parents the potential of a wonderful future.

We have to work together to see that Africa's children, like America's, have a democratic, peaceful, prosperous future; to expand trade and partnership by passing our Africa trade bill; to deal effectively with the violent conflicts that continue to plague Africa today and threaten its future; to ensure that Africa's hospitality is not used to perpetuate acts of terrorism, as it was so terribly in the bombings in Kenya and Tanzania. I have asked Dr. David Satcher, our Surgeon General, to go to East Africa this month with a team of medical experts to do what they can to help people who are still ailing there.

There is still no action in Congress, after all these months, on the Africa trade bill or on the International Monetary Fund. But world events are not waiting for Congress. My friends, if you believe we have responsibilities in the world and you believe ultimately those responsibilities affect the welfare of your families, your children, and the future of this country, I say we cannot rest. We have work to do.

We cannot rest until we solve the oldest, most stubborn, most painful challenge of our Nation, the continuing challenge of race. Yesterday, for the final time, I met with my Advisory Board on Race and received their report. I am proud of their work, the guidance they have given us for policy, for dialog, for specific practices in every community in this country. But we know we've only just begun a work that will take a lifetime, only just begun to find ways finally to lift the burden of race and redeem the full promise of America.

You know, our Founders knew we weren't perfect, but they always strived for perfect ideals. They built us a country based on a Constitution that was literally made for reconciliation, for the honorable and principled resolution of differences, rooted in the simple proposition that God created us all equal. Therefore, the implicit mandate of the Constitution is that each of us should respect and treat our neighbors as we, ourselves, would like to be treated. It is still our most sure guidepost today. We can build an America where discrimination is something you have to look in the history books to find. But we've still got work to do.

If it takes until my last day on this Earth, I owe it to you, to the American people who have been so good to me for so long, to keep working on guiding our people across all the great divides into that one beloved community. My friends, this is not a time to rest. It's a time to work. Just as God is not finished with any of us yet, we must not be finished with God's work. We must not be finished with seeking peace or justice or freedom, equality, human dignity, and reconciliation.

Foxes have holes, birds of the air have nests; but the son of man has no place to rest his head. There is never going to be an end to this work. And the present moment of promise imposes upon all of us a special responsibility. So let there be no end to your faith, your energy, your courage, and your commitment.

And let me say one other thing. You and I need some help. And this November we'll be given a chance to get it. We have worked hard to make America a better place, and it is. We have worked hard to empower our people, and we have. But now they must use that power to be heard, to say what we shall do and where we shall go. This is a moment of decision for us. Will it be progress or partisanship, people or politics, principle or power?

The scripture says that we should mount up with wings as eagles; we should run and not grow tired; we should walk and not faint. We should not grow weary in doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. For all the many things I am grateful to the Black Caucus for, the most important thing is that I know you have never lost heart and that in your heart there is a longing for the best, not just for African-Americans but for all Americans. We can help them get there, and they can lead us home.

Thank you, and God bless you all. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:17 p.m. at the Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to civil rights activist Rosa Parks; Dorothy Height, chair and president emerita, National Council of Negro Women; and Franklin D. Raines, former Director, Office of Management and Budget.

Statement on the Military Construction Appropriations Act, 1999

September 20, 1998

Today I have signed into law H.R. 4059, the ''Military Construction Appropriations Act, FY 1999,'' which provides funding for military construction and family housing programs of the Department of Defense (DOD).

The Act funds the vast majority of my request for military construction projects, including the military family housing program, other quality-of-life projects for our military personnel and their families, and the DOD base closure and realignment program.

I do have several concerns with the bill. The Congress has chosen to add funds for projects that the DOD has not identified as priorities. In particular, $243 million is provided for 38 projects that are not in the DOD's Future Years Defense Program. The bill also includes a prohibition on the use of any funds appropriated in the Act for Partnership for Peace Programs or to provide support for non-NATO countries. This restriction could impede NATO activities and could adversely affect future NATO-led military operations.

In addition, the Congress has again included a provision that requires the Secretary of Defense to give 30 days advance notice to certain congressional committees of any proposed military exercise involving construction costs anticipated to exceed $100,000. In approving H.R. 4059, I wish to reiterate an understanding, expressed by Presidents Reagan and Bush when they signed Military Construction Appropriations Acts containing a similar provision, that this section encompasses only exercises for which providing 30 days advance notice is feasible and consistent with my constitutional authority and duty to protect the national security.

I urge the Congress to complete action on the remaining FY 1999 appropriations bills as quickly as possible, and to send them to me in acceptable form.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
September 20, 1998.

NOTE: H.R. 4059, approved September 20, was assigned Public Law No. 105–237.

Statement on the Military Construction Appropriations Act, 1999

September 20, 1998

Today I signed the Military Construction Appropriations Act, an important step for the well-being of our men and women in uniform and their families.

This is an example of what we can achieve when we work together—Congress and the President, Republicans and Democrats—for the public good. Unfortunately, with less than 2 weeks to go before the beginning of the new fiscal year, Congress has yet to pass a budget. In fact, Congress has finished work on only one of 13 appropriations bills—bills that are necessary to keep the Government running and to advance the interests of the American people.

I am pleased that the Senate has taken steps to support the priorities laid out in my budget. But on key investments to improve education, provide affordable child care, expand health care coverage, protect our environment, and stabilize the international economy, the House of Representatives is moving in the wrong direction. For example, the House is preparing to deny funding for smaller classes, after-school programs, technology in the classroom, and summer job programs. At the same time, some lawmakers have attached controversial and unrelated provisions guaranteed to mire these bills in unnecessary delay.

The new fiscal year begins on October 1. It is time for Congress to put progress ahead of partisanship and focus on the urgent challenges facing the American people.