

**Remarks on the Budget Agreement**  
*October 16, 1998*

Good morning. Please be seated. I am delighted to be here with the Vice President and Senator Daschle, Congressman Gephardt, Mr. Bowles, who's got a great closing act here—[laughter]—the terrific representation from Congress and the administration, especially our economic team, and all of you.

**Northern Ireland Recipients of Nobel Peace Prize**

Before I make some remarks on the budget, I'd like to first say how very pleased I was, personally and as President, that the Nobel Prize Committee has awarded the courage and the people of Northern Ireland by giving the Nobel Peace Prize to John Hume and to David Trimble today. I am very grateful for that.

For 30 years, John Hume has been committed to achieving peace through negotiations, not confrontation and violence. He has been an inspiration to the nationalist community, to all the people of Northern Ireland and, indeed, all around the world. David Trimble, as Unionist leader, took up the challenge of peace with rare courage, negotiating and beginning to implement the Good Friday accord. Both have earned this award.

But I believe there are others, too, who deserve credit for their indispensable roles, beginning with Gerry Adams, the Sinn Fein leader, without whom there would have been no peace. Prime Minister Ahern, Prime Minister Blair, Mo Mowlam, their predecessors, without whom there would have been no peace. Other Irish leaders, like Seamus Mallon, and I would like to say a special word of thanks to Senator George Mitchell for his role in the peace talks. The American people appreciate the recognition the Nobel committee gave our Nation in the citation, and we thank all these people for their continuing work for peace.

**Budget Agreement**

Yesterday our administration and the Democrats in Congress reached agreement with the Republican leadership on a fiscally responsible balanced budget that seizes this moment of prosperity and wisely invests it

in the future. By standing together, we were able to achieve historic victories for the American people.

We fought for and won vital new investments, especially for our children. By hiring 100,000 new teachers, we will reduce class size in the early grades to an average of 18. We will enhance individual attention, increase student learning and, as we learned yesterday at the school violence conference, find more kids who are in trouble and need help early, and prevent more bad things from happening while more good things happen.

We're also making very important investments in child literacy, college mentoring, after-school programs, and summer jobs, all of them at risk until the people behind me stood firm and united. We fought for and won emergency relief for our hard-pressed farmers and ranchers who are suffering not only from the collapse of world markets but from crop diseases and drought and floods. And we fought for and won an impressive package to deal with this emergency only because the people behind me were willing to sustain my veto of the first bill, and I thank them for that very much.

We fought for and won a substantial increase in funding for our clean water initiative to help restore the 40 percent of our lakes and rivers still too polluted for fishing and swimming. We won substantial increases in funding to head off the threat of global climate change which disrupted weather patterns in America—have warned us about in the last couple of years. We fought for and won the ability to protect precious lands in America, and we struck down the worst of the anti-environmental provisions the Republicans had put into the budget bill because of the people who are standing behind me.

And we worked and worked and worked for 8 long months until, finally, we were able to persuade the Republican majority to join with us in funding America's responsibility to the International Monetary Fund so that we can protect the American economy and fulfill our responsibility to stabilize the global economy. It is a critically important thing to our future; it could not have happened if the people behind us hadn't stood strong and united for months and months.

Let me say, I am especially proud of the way we fought and won the right to reserve every penny of the surplus until we save Social Security first. Despite the efforts of the majority, particularly in the House of Representatives, to squander the surplus on election-year tax plans, we are still now well positioned to save Social Security. Although we can take justifiable pride in these accomplishments, let's not make any mistakes here. Eight days of progress cannot totally erase 8 months of partisanship.

We all know that in those 8 months of partisanship, too many dreams of too many families were deferred. The Republican majority is now leaving town to campaign, but they're also leaving a lot of America's business unfinished. Partisanship killed the Patients' Bill of Rights. Rest assured, as my first legislative priority, I will ask the next Congress to guarantee your right to see a specialist, to receive the nearest emergency care, to keep your doctor throughout your course of treatment, to keep your medical records private, to have medical decisions made by doctors, not insurance company accountants. That's unfinished business because of partisanship.

Partisanship killed our efforts to help students stuck in crumpled and overcrowded schoolrooms. We fought and fought and fought and won the right for the 100,000 teachers. Now we've got to fight to give the teachers someplace to teach and to give those smaller classes someplace to meet. This is a battle our children cannot afford to lose.

You know, I must say, of all the things that we disagreed with the Republicans on this year, this one mystified me the most. I would have thought they would like this program, not a Government spending program but a targeted tax cut, fully paid for in the balanced budget, that wouldn't take a dime from the surplus, wouldn't add an inch of redtape to the Government's rules, but would build or repair 5,000 schools. We were right to fight for it, and we ought to take it to the American people and ask them to put progress over partisanship.

Republican partisanship killed an increase in the minimum wage. You can't really raise a family on \$5.15 an hour anymore. If we value work and family, we ought to raise the minimum wage. You know, all those argu-

ments against the minimum wage were wrong the last time we did it. We kept on growing, and unemployment now and inflation now are lower than they were the last time we raised it. Only partisanship killed it. I hope we can take that to the American people and come back here in January and raise the minimum wage.

And partisanship killed our best chance at bipartisan campaign finance reform. We had a handful of Republicans who did agree with us on this, but the majority was able to defeat us. Senator Daschle produced a unanimous vote from the Senate Democratic caucus—absolutely unanimous—but partisanship defeated us. It said yes to soft money, yes to the status quo, no to reform. The next Congress must strengthen our democracy and finally reform these outdated campaign finance laws, and people will do it who are here with me.

And finally, let me say that partisanship killed the comprehensive anti-tobacco legislation which would have saved millions of young Americans from painful and premature death. I still can't believe—I think about it every day—I still can't believe that the tobacco interests were able to persuade the Congress, with the majority in Congress, to walk away from this. It didn't have anything to do with the tobacco farmers; Senator Ford back there took care of that. *[Laughter]* This was about whether we were going to take appropriate action to save our children, and pure, old-fashioned partisanship killed it. The people behind me will save more of our children's lives when the voters give them a chance to do so next January. We're going to do that.

So let me say again, by way of thanks to all of them and to all of you who worked on this, we can be justifiably proud of the hard work and hard-won gains that this budget represents, of the 100,000 teachers, of the after-school programs, the saving the surplus for Social Security, of protecting the environment and advancing the cause of clean water, and a safer global environment, of keeping our economy going strong. But 8 days of progress cannot replace or make up for 8 months of partisanship, to protect our patients, to modernize our schools, to raise the

minimum wage, to look out for the 21st century and reform Social Security and Medicare in the right way. We need a Congress that will put people before politics, progress ahead of partisanship.

I will always remember these last 8 days. I will always remember what our caucus, united, was able to achieve. And I will always be grateful to them for what they did for the American people. Thank you very much.

Now, I want to introduce the Vice President and the other leaders. Thank you very much.

*[At this point, Vice President Al Gore, Senator Thomas A. Daschle, and Representative Richard A. Gephardt made brief remarks.]*

**The President.** Let me say, as we close, how very grateful I am to all those who have spoken and those who have not spoken, those who are here and those who stood with us who are not here, for giving us a chance to, in the last 8 days, have some very important victories for the American people and, today, for giving us a chance to make it absolutely clear what is at stake in the next 2 years.

When we leave here, I am going to take a brief trip to Chicago to stand with Senator Carol Moseley-Braun. And I think it is worth pointing out today that she is the very first member of our caucus who stood up for the idea that the National Government had an opportunity and an obligation to do something to promote the building and the repair of school facilities for our children's future. I say that to make this point: Every one of us here, standing here, except Mr. Bowles, and he may be about to take the plunge—*[laughter]*—every one of us here is here because of the judgment of the American people. The jobs we hold are not our jobs in any fundamental sense; they belong to the American people.

And in 18 days, after a blizzard of advertisements—probably 2 or 3 times as much from the Republican side as from ours, maybe even more when you count the third party committees and all that—they will make a decision. The first decision they'll have to make is whether to go and vote in a midterm election, which always, always seems to have lower turnout than the presidential elections.

If we have accomplished nothing else here today, even when our voices reach those who disagree with us, who think we're making a mistake to put 100,000 teachers in the classroom, who think we're making a mistake to fight for a Patients' Bill of Rights or a rise in the minimum wage or better school facilities, if we have done nothing else, I hope we have reminded the American people that, in the end, every one of us gets to raise our voice, to cast our vote, to wield our sign-or-veto pen because of their judgments. And in 18 days, they will be given a chance to render another judgment.

Between now and then, they will have to sort their way through all the conflicting claims and the blizzard of advertisement. But I think that, in the end, many will agree that it is worth going to vote to ratify those who fought for 100,000 teachers and a clean environment and a strong American economy and an America playing a responsible role in the world economy. And perhaps most important of all, people who voted to save the surplus until we save Social Security and honor the compact with generations and keep our country strong when the baby boomers retire.

In 18 days they'll have a chance not only to support those people but to say, "With my vote, I choose to go back and build world-class school facilities. I choose to say, 'yes, we're going to have managed care, but even people in managed care deserve the right to have medical decisions made by medical doctors, not accountants,' to choose to give people the minimum wage, to choose to save Social Security in the right way, to choose these things."

That's the message. I hope the American people know that the people standing behind me earned their pay the last 8 or 9 days. They were worth every penny of tax dollars they got. And they did it the last 8 months because they fought and waited and stood in storm after storm until the time came when they could stand up and do something right for America. And in 18 days I hope the voters of this country, the citizens, will exercise their power to say, "This is the path I choose." Staying home is not a very good option when so much is riding on a trip to the ballot box.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:36 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to John Hume, leader, Social Democratic and Labor Party, and David Trimble, First Minister, Northern Ireland Assembly, Nobel Peace Prize Laureates; Sinn Fein leader and Northern Ireland Assembly member Gerry Adams; Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland; Prime Minister Tony Blair and Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Marjorie Mowlam of the United Kingdom; Deputy First Minister Seamus Mallon of the Northern Ireland Assembly; and former Senator George J. Mitchell, who chaired the multiparty peace talks in Northern Ireland.

**Statement Announcing the Award of the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany**

*October 16, 1998*

I am very pleased to announce my intention to award the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Helmut Kohl, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. The Medal of Freedom is this Nation's highest civilian honor, and it is a fitting tribute to the extraordinary accomplishments of Chancellor Kohl.

Throughout his 16-year tenure as leader of Germany, Chancellor Kohl has made historic contributions to the cause of peace and freedom in Europe and around the world. With uncommon vision and unstinting courage, he led the reunification of Germany while pushing deeper European integration, bolstered transatlantic solidarity, and promoted the cause of democracy everywhere. Americans are grateful for the untiring efforts of this inspiring leader, who will rank among those who changed the course of history.

Helmut Kohl has been a lifelong friend of the United States and has personally committed himself to the enduring partnership of our two countries. On behalf of all Americans, it is my profound pleasure to honor him with this symbol of our Nation's high esteem and deep appreciation.

**Proclamation 7142—National Forest Products Week, 1998**

*October 16, 1998*

*By the President of the United States of America*

**A Proclamation**

Our Nation has been blessed with abundant natural resources, and among the most precious of these are our forests. Because forests cover about one-third of the land area of the United States, their splendor is not limited to one region, but is shared by our entire country. All Americans can experience the variety and beauty of our forests, parks, and woodlands and share the joys of hiking, camping, bird watching, and other recreational activities. Likewise, all Americans benefit from the essentials for life that forests provide: clean water, clean air, soil stability, pollution reduction, and a rich habitat for plants and animals. Forests also supply us with products vital to our society and economy, from building materials to paper products to medicines.

Maintaining the health of our Nation's forests is an important and delicate task. As we continue to grow, both in terms of population and in land developed, we put increased pressure on our forests and woodland areas. In the past, such growth occurred without regard to its impact and often threatened the very existence of our forests and the diverse wildlife they support. Learning from our mistakes, today we use wise forest management strategies and careful stewardship to ensure that our forests will remain both healthy and productive.

Such management requires strong cooperation among private citizens, government agencies, and the forestry industry. Half of our Nation's forestlands belong to private landowners, the Federal Government and State governments own 40 percent, and the forest products industry owns the remaining 10 percent. All three groups have been working together to ensure the sustainable development of our forests and woodlands. State Foresters and Cooperative State Extension Agents, with assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, play a vital