

I'd like to encourage more families to follow the example of those we have honored here today, to open their arms, their hearts, to children who need them very much, to give them the futures they deserve, and to make sure that in all of the Thanksgivings to come, we will all be blessed as a nation as more and more of our children come into loving homes.

A very happy Thanksgiving to all of you. And now let me invite all of you to join us to celebrate this special day with a reception in the State Dining Room.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:26 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Charday Mays, adoptee who introduced the President; Jean Oberstar, wife of Representative James L. Oberstar; Mayor Marion S. Barry, Jr., and Mayor-elect Anthony A. Williams of Washington, DC, and Mr. Williams' wife, Diane; Chief Judge Eugene N. Hamilton, Superior Court, Washington, DC; and Wendy's International, Inc., chairman Dave Thomas, founder, Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption.

Memorandum on Using the Internet To Increase Adoptions

November 24, 1998

Memorandum for the Secretary of Health and Human Services

Subject: Using the Internet to Increase Adoptions

Technology will be an ever more important part of achieving our national goals as we approach the new millennium. New technological tools mean new opportunities for progress—helping us to strengthen the global economy, bolster public education, and improve the health of American families. Technology can also assist our continuing efforts to meet our national goal of doubling, by the year 2002, adoptions and other permanent placements from our Nation's foster care system.

As we celebrate National Adoption Month, it is fitting that we reflect on the important steps we have taken to strengthen our child welfare system and, specifically, to improve the process of adoption. Through the Family and Medical Leave Act and tax credits, we

have made it easier for families to adopt children. We have worked to eliminate discrimination and delay based on race and ethnicity. And, last year, I was proud to sign into law the Adoption and Safe Families Act, tightening the time frame for decision-making and affirming that the health and safety of children in foster care must always come first.

We are making progress but there is more work to be done. Because geographic and other barriers to adoption still exist, we must do a better job of informing America's families about the many children that wait in foster care for permanent, adoptive homes. To give those children the future they deserve, to give our families the opportunity to provide them with happy, healthy homes, we must infuse the public child welfare system with the power of technology.

Therefore, I am directing you to work with the States, courts, private agencies, and others to develop a plan for expanding appropriate use of the Internet as a tool to find homes for children waiting to be adopted from the public child welfare system. There are approximately 100,000 children in our country waiting in foster care for permanent adoptive homes. Sharing information through a national Internet registry about children legally available for adoption could shorten the time needed to find adoptive families for such children. To take full advantage of the Internet's potential to promote adoptions while also ensuring appropriate confidentiality safeguards, close consultation with the States will be necessary.

You should report to me within 60 days with a plan to carry out this consultation; identify important issues and strategies to address them; and build on promising existing efforts to create an effective, national registry.

William J. Clinton

Radio Remarks on Disaster Relief for Central America

November 25, 1998

Throughout this week, families in the United States are coming together to give thanks for the blessings we enjoy. As we celebrate, we must remember our neighbors,