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In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fourth day of December, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-third.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., December 8, 1998]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on December 9. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

December 5, 1998

Good morning. In 1993 I took office determined to get our country moving again, to provide opportunity for all responsible, hard-working citizens, and to create the conditions of a genuine community in our country.

First, we had to get the economy going. Yesterday we got the good news that unemployment is down to 4.4 percent, the lowest in 28 years, with 17.3 million new jobs. But America needs more than jobs to really work. Our country also has to be safer. And we've worked very hard to make our streets, our schools, our neighborhoods safer places to live, work, and raise families. We've put in place a comprehensive strategy of more prevention, strong enforcement, tougher punishment. We've taken more guns and criminals off the street and put more police on the beat. Crime has dropped for 6 years in a row now, to a 25-year low.

This week America launched a new effort to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and make our streets safer. For the first time ever, the Justice Department, working with the States, conducted computerized background checks on all firearm purchases. In its first 4 days, the new national instant check system reviewed more than 100,000 prospective gun sales to make sure only law-abiding citizens took home new guns. And in just 4 days, we stopped more than 400 felons, fugitives, stalkers, and other prohibited purchasers from walking away with new guns. That's more than 100 illegal gun sales blocked each day. Who knows how many lives were saved.

But within just 24 hours after the instant checks went into effect, the National Rifle Association went to court to stop the new system. The gun lobby's goal is plain. As the NRA's executive director himself put it this week, they want to ''scale back'' the Brady law.

Five years ago, as the Brady bill was nearing passage in Congress, the gun lobby spent more than a million dollars in a desperate effort to kill it. Fortunately, the good sense of Congress and the will of the American people prevailed. The gun lobby lost. But the American people won. Unfortunately, as we saw this week, they'll stop at nothing to gut the Brady law and undermine our efforts to keep more guns from falling into the wrong hands, even though we now have 5 years of evidence that it works.

We can't turn back. In these last 5 years, Brady background checks have stopped nearly a quarter of a million illegal handgun sales. We can't go back to the days when dangerous criminals walked away from stores with new guns, no questions asked.

Police, prosecutors, and the American people they protect have made it clear they want to strengthen, not weaken, the Brady law. That's why, when the new Congress goes into session next month, one of my top priorities will be to pass legislation to require a minimum waiting period before a handgun sale becomes final. This ''cooling off'' period will help prevent rash acts of violence and give authorities more time to stop illegal gun purchases.

I also call on Congress to ban juveniles convicted of violent crimes from owning guns for life. There's no reason why young people convicted of violent crimes should be allowed to buy guns on their 21st birthday. And I want to thank Senator Bob Dole for his recent strong public support of this idea.

Finally, we must make sure that firearms sold at gun shows are not exempt from background checks, that gun shows do not circumvent our gun laws. Last month I asked Treasury Secretary Rubin and Attorney General Reno to find ways to close this loophole.

Reducing crime has been one of the American people's greatest achievements in recent

years. A decade ago no one thought we could do it. But we did. We must not retreat on this hard-won progress. Instead, we must do even more to support the people and the laws that protect our children and families.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 6:54 p.m. on December 4 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 5. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 4 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Remarks at the Memorial Service for William Maurice Smith, Jr., in Wynne, Arkansas

December 5, 1998

Jane, Mark, Murray, Annette, all the members of the family and the friends of Maurice. I stayed up late last night and got up early this morning, and I was trying to think of what I should say. I told Maurice I'd be here, and I figured somebody might ask me to talk. So I thought, well, I ought to start with what he would say to me. Some of it is not repeatable in the church. [*Laughter*] But it would go something like this: Expletive deleted, don't say too much. [*Laughter*]

I think all of our lives we will remember a small man with a craggy face, a gravelly voice, a blunt manner, a keen mind, a kind heart, and powerful emotions; a man who was not always good to himself, but was always good to others; a man who could say more with fewer words, or just a grunt, or the tip of that crazy old hat of his than anyone we ever knew.

Now, I collected stories the last 3 or 4 days, and this was the odds-on winner: Bill Clark reminded me that in 1984 we had our first meeting in the Governor's office about the '84 campaign. And we were sitting there, and I began the meeting by saying that I had been so impressed with Hillary's no-smoking policy at the Governor's Mansion I was going to apply it to the Governor's office. Maurice got his hat, put it on, stood up, and started walking. I said, ''Where you going?'' He said, ''Birdeye.'' [*Laughter*] I said, ''I am applying the no-smoking policy of the Governor's Mansion to the Governor's office the day after this next election.'' [*Laughter*]

He loved to help people. He loved a good fight. But he never sought to destroy his adversary. He loved political campaigns and legislative sessions. He never met a road or a bridge or a levee he didn't like. [*Laughter*] He loved the Fair Board and the University of Arkansas. He loved the land and the water and the people of this State. Most of all, he loved his family and his friends. He loved us. And how we loved him—often more than I think he knew.

Hillary was home a few weeks ago, and she went by to see Maurice in the hospital. And when she came back to Washington, she looked at me, she said, ''I just love that man.'' And she said, ''It seemed to me like everybody else in the hospital did, too.''

I tried to call him over Thanksgiving, and then he called me back, and finally, I got him back. We talked twice in the last week. The first time he said, ''I wanted to talk to you one more time. I don't think I'm going to get out this time, and I just want you to know I'm proud of everything we did together, and I love you.''

Well, all of you know that I owe him a lot. He was the finance chairman of all my campaigns, the master of ceremonies at my inaugurations—ensuring that they would be brief—my chief of staff. He served on the university board; he ran the highway department; and on the side, he always lobbied for Jane's causes for the disabled.

But when I was flying down here on Air Force One today, thinking I wouldn't be on this plane if it weren't for him, I thought of a day 18 years ago, when some of us here were standing on the backyard of the Governor's Mansion after the 1980 elections. And I had just become the youngest former Governor in the history of America—[*laughter*]—a man with limited future prospects. And that's pretty much the way I felt. And he put his hand on my shoulder, and he looked me in the eye, and he said, ''It'll be all right; we'll be back.''

I wrote this before I knew the pastor was going to read to us from Luke today. I was thinking of that day today, as we all say farewell to this small man who had such a large impact on all our lives. We say to him, as