

Weekly Compilation of
**Presidential
Documents**



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WEEKLY COMPILATION OF PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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Week Ending Friday, February 19, 1999

The President's Radio Address

February 13, 1999

Good morning. This week the warring parties in Kosovo have been meeting at a 14th century castle in France, in search of a 21st century peace. They've come together because of the determination of the United States, our European allies, and Russia to help end Kosovo's bloodshed and build a peaceful future there. Today I want to speak to you about why peace in Kosovo is important to America.

World War II taught us that America could never be secure if Europe's future was in doubt. We and our allies formed NATO after the war, and together we've deterred aggression, secured Europe, and eventually made possible the victory of freedom all across the European continent. In this decade, violent ethnic conflicts in the former Yugoslavia have threatened Europe's stability and future.

For 4 years Bosnia was the site of Europe's bloodiest war in half a century. With American leadership and that of our allies, we worked to end the war and move the Bosnian people toward reconciliation and democracy. Now, as the peace takes hold, we've been steadily bringing our troops home. But Bosnia taught us a lesson: In this volatile region, violence we fail to oppose leads to even greater violence we will have to oppose later at greater cost.

We must heed that lesson in Kosovo. In 1989 Serbia stripped away Kosovo's autonomy. A year ago Serbian forces launched a brutal crackdown against Kosovo's ethnic Albanians. Fighting and atrocities intensified, and hundreds of thousands of people were driven from their homes.

Last fall, using diplomacy backed by the threat of NATO force, we averted a humanitarian crisis and slowed the fighting. But now it's clear that only a strong peace agreement can end it. America has a national interest in achieving this peace. If the conflict per-

sists, there likely will be a tremendous loss of life and a massive refugee crisis in the middle of Europe. There is a serious risk the hostilities would spread to the neighboring new democracies of Albania and Macedonia, and reignite the conflict in Bosnia we worked so hard to stop. It could even involve our NATO allies Greece and Turkey.

If we wait until casualties mount and war spreads, any effort to stop it will come at a higher price, under more dangerous conditions. The time to stop the war is right now.

With our NATO allies and Russia, we have offered a comprehensive plan to restore peace and return self-government to Kosovo. NATO has authorized airstrikes if Serbia fails to comply with its previous commitments to withdraw forces and fails to support a peace accord. At the same time, we've made it clear to the Kosovo Albanians that if they reject our plan or continue to wage war, they will not have our support.

There are serious obstacles to overcome at the current talks. It is increasingly clear that this effort can only succeed if it includes a NATO-led peace implementation force that gives both sides the confidence to lay down their arms. It's also clear that if there is a real peace, American participation in the force can provide such confidence, particularly for Kosovo's Albanians. For them, as for so many people around the world, America symbolizes hope and resolve. Europeans would provide the great bulk of any NATO force, roughly 85 percent. Our share would amount to a little less than 4,000 personnel.

Now, a final decision on troops, which I will make in close consultation with Congress, will depend upon the parties reaching a strong peace agreement. It must provide for an immediate cease-fire, rapid withdrawal of most Serbian security forces, and demilitarization of the insurgents. The parties must agree to the NATO force and demonstrate that they are ready to implement the agreement.

NATO's mission must be well-defined, with a clear and realistic strategy to allow us to bring our forces home when their work is done. Anytime we send troops we must be mindful of the risks, but if these conditions are met, if there is an effective agreement and a clear plan, I believe America should contribute to securing peace for Kosovo. And I look forward to working with Congress in making this final decision.

America cannot be everywhere or do everything overseas. But we must act where important interests are at stake and we can make a difference. Peace in Kosovo clearly is important to the United States, and with bipartisan support in Congress and the backing of the American people, we can make a difference.

Thanks for listening.

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

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With President Ernesto Zedillo in Merida, Mexico

February 15, 1999

Senate Vote on Impeachment

Q. Mr. President, do you feel vindicated by the Senate vote? And how do you think you will be able to overcome any damage that was caused in your relations with Republican leaders in Congress?

The President. Well, I have, really, nothing to add to what I said on Friday about that. I think this is a time for reconciliation and renewal. I think what we have to do is to serve the American people. And if we keep that in mind, I think everything will be fine.

We can't resolve the challenges of Social Security and Medicare, education, these other things; we can't keep the international economy going unless we have a level of cooperation. I'm encouraged that we have a number of Republican Members of Congress on this trip, and I intend to do exactly what I said I'd do last Friday. And I think if everybody just keeps our eye on the ball—which is that we are here to serve the public, and not the other way around—I think we'll be fine.

Mexico-U.S. Antidrug Efforts

Q. Mr. President, do you have any problems with the system the United States has for certifying drug cooperation?

The President. Well, first of all, it is the law of the land, and the Secretary of State sometime in the next few weeks will have to make a recommendation. I think the question is, how can we do better to deal with the drug problem? President Zedillo said it's his number one national security problem. Neither country has won the drug war. And the fundamental question is, are we better off fighting it together or separately, and perhaps sometimes at odds with one another?

Under General McCaffrey, who's here, we put in place a very aggressive antidrug strategy. Finally, we've got a lot of the indicators going in the right direction in the United States. And cooperation with Mexico has clearly improved under President Zedillo's leadership. The issue is what is most likely to free our children of this scourge in the new century, and that's what will guide my decisions.

Thank you all.

Hillary Clinton's Possible Senate Candidacy

Q. Have you encouraged Mrs. Clinton to run for the Senate, sir? What have you said to her?

The President. People in New York started calling her. I don't think it had ever occurred to her before a lot of people started calling and asking her to do it. I think she would be terrific in the Senate. But that's a decision that she'll have to make. And for reasons I'm sure you'll understand, she hasn't had anything like adequate time to talk to the people who think she should do this, much less people who think perhaps she shouldn't. I mean, she just hasn't had time to deal with this.

But it's her decision to make. I will support whatever decision she makes enthusiastically. She has a lot of other opportunities for public service that will be out there, and she and I both would like to continue to be useful in public affairs when we leave office. But it's a decision she'll have to make. She'd be great if she did it, but she hasn't had anything like the requisite amount of time to talk to people and to assess it, and I'm sure that

everyone will understand and appreciate that.

Thank you.

NOTE: The exchange began at approximately 11:30 a.m. in Hacienda Temozon. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks to Business Leaders in Merida

February 15, 1999

Mr. President, Mrs. Zedillo, distinguished Mexican officials, members of the Mexican Congress, the Governor and First Lady of the Yucatan, the mayor and the people of Merida: Let me begin by thanking all of you for the wonderful reception you have given to me and to Hillary, to the members of our Cabinet, the Members of Congress, our entire American delegation.

Hillary and I came to Mexico 24 years ago for what I believe you call our *luna de miel*—our honeymoon. And your country has been close to our hearts ever since. I want to especially thank President Zedillo for joining me in building the closest, most candid, most comprehensive relationship in the long history of our two nations.

Merida faces the Caribbean and the interior. It looks north and south. It combines Old World architecture with a thriving indigenous culture. In many ways, therefore, this city symbolizes the new, inclusive community of the Americas, a community of shared values and genuine cooperation. I thank the Members of the American Congress of both parties whose presence here with me today is evidence of America's commitment for the common future we will make together.

Nothing better symbolizes the sea change in our sense of hemispheric community than the partnership between the United States and Mexico. Not so long ago the great Mexican writer, Octavio Paz, said, "The North Americans are outstanding in the art of the monolog." I'm glad to say we have turned the monolog into a dialog—a dialog of mutual respect and interdependence. Today, we speak with each other, not at each other. From different starting points, our courses are converging in our common commitment

to democracy and in the absolute certainty that we will share the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

We honor President Zedillo and all the people of Mexico for the steps you have taken and are taking to deepen your democracy. Now, as your people deliver their votes for democracy, we must all do what we can to make sure democracy delivers for them, for democracy will only endure if we can build the quality of life it promises.

That is the challenge we are addressing here today. I start with the good news: As President Zedillo has said, our economic relationship is strong, and we are making it even stronger. Our decision to let Mexican and U.S. airlines engage in joint sales and marketing will generate many millions of dollars in new revenues, not only for the airlines but for the travel and investment potential of our countries. It will benefit especially tourism regions like the Yucatan. We also agreed today to enable the Ex-Im Bank to provide up to \$4 billion to keep U.S. exports such as aircraft and construction equipment flowing into Mexico and to maintain Mexico's position as Ex-Im's top market.

This year we celebrate 5 years since NAFTA entered into force. There were many doubters then. But look at the facts now: Since 1993, our exports to each other have roughly doubled. In the United States alone, a million jobs depend on this trade; that is up 43 percent since 1993. Of course, we still have work to do on labor, environmental, and other issues. But NAFTA has taught us that we have far more to gain by working together.

We learned that lesson again 4 years ago when the United States was proud to assist Mexico in restoring confidence in the peso. President Zedillo acted decisively and courageously. The Mexican people made tough sacrifices to speed recovery. The United States was right to support you, and you have followed the right course.

More recently, we all agree that our trade relationship has helped to insulate both countries from the global financial crisis that has caused such hardship elsewhere. In 1998, while U.S. exports to the Pacific Rim dropped 19 percent, our exports to each other went up about 10 percent. We must

expand this oasis of confidence and growth in our hemisphere by creating a free-trade area of the Americas. And we must stand by our friends in the hemisphere when they face the difficulties of the moment—particularly President Cardoso of Brazil, whose reforms ultimately will help the Brazilian people, and all the rest of us as well.

Today we did good work to deepen our partnership beyond economics. As the President said, we are joining together to help our Central American neighbors. We're improving public health along our border. We're working hard to protect the natural resources we share. As we learn more about pollution problems along the border, we're better able to respond to them, including through the institutions created by NAFTA.

Today we've agreed to strengthen our cooperation in fighting forest fires and air pollution, in cleaning our water, and in moving against climate change, the greatest global environmental challenge of the next century.

We have also made progress in areas today where, to be charitable, we have not always agreed. Not long ago, we could not have had a conversation about drugs without falling into an unwinnable argument about who is to blame. That has changed. The American people recognize we must reduce our demand for drugs; the Mexican people recognize that ending the drug trade is a national security and public health imperative for you.

We can talk candidly about this now because we have started to speak the same language: the language of parents who love their children; the language of citizens who want to live in communities where streets are safe and laws are respected; the language of leaders who recognize that our responsibility is to protect our people from violence and our democracy from corrosion.

In 1997 President Zedillo and I committed our countries to an alliance against drugs. Alliance is not a word to be used lightly. It means that what threatens one country threatens the other, and that we cannot meet the threat alone. If a town in Mexico lives in fear of traffickers who enrich themselves by selling to our citizens and terrorizing Mexican citizens, that is a problem we have a moral duty to solve together.

We have increased our cooperation. I welcome the plan Mexico announced 2 weeks ago to invest an additional \$500 million in the fight against drugs. The United States is ready to do all we can to support you. I offered our support to Mexico's newly established Federal preventive police force. We will expand consultation on cross-border law enforcement. We agreed to important new benchmarks that will actually measure our mutual success in the war on drugs.

We must also tackle the problem of corruption that bedevils every nation fighting drugs. I want to acknowledge President Zedillo's efforts in Mexico's interests to root out this scourge. Much has been said in my country about the extent of the problem you face. But let us not forget that what we know in America comes largely from Mexico's brave efforts to get to the truth and air it. Mexico should not be penalized for having the courage to confront its problems.

Another sensitive issue that has divided us all too often is immigration. The United States is a nation of immigrants, built by the courage and optimism of those who came to our shores to begin life anew. We continue to accept large numbers of legal immigrants, and we continue to have our borders crossed every year by large numbers of illegal immigrants.

As we welcome new immigrants we must also strive to manage our borders. I say to you that we will do so with justice, fairness, and sensitivity. We will also work to promote safety and human rights at the border. And as we agreed today, we must work together to stop the deadly traffic in human beings into and through our nations.

Ten years ago our relationship was marred by mistrust. Today, we recognize that any complex relationship will have its ups and downs, but we know our differences cannot divide us. President Zedillo and I have invested a great deal in our partnership. We intend to lay the groundwork for the next generation of leaders to follow, people who will build on the legacy all of us have worked hard to create. The way we approach our problems now will define how our successors—not just our leaders but ordinary citizens—in Mexico and the United States will live their lives for decades to come.

Mexico is the largest Spanish-speaking country in the world. Before long, the United States will be the second largest Spanish-speaking country in the world. Almost 15 million United States citizens trace their ancestry to Mexico. Twenty-eight percent of our foreign-born population come from here. Every year our border is legally crossed about 250 million times. With each crossing, we move beyond mere diplomacy, closer to genuine friendship, a human friendship between two peoples who share the same continent, the same air, the same ancestors, the same future.

We are more than neighbors. More and more, we belong to the same American family. Like any family, we will have our differences born of history, experience, instinct, honest opinion. But like any family, we know that what binds us together is far, far more important than what divides us.

Not long after Merida was founded, a Mexican poet described the renewal that comes every year at this time to those who wisely till their fields and plant ahead, in these words: "Here, by the Supreme Giver, one and all, in stintless grace and beauty, are bestowed. This is their dwelling. These, their native fields. And this, the tide of spring in Mexico."

This tide of spring has brought a new season of friendship between Mexico and the United States. President Zedillo, people of Merida and Yucatan, I wish you a happy Carnival. For all of us, I pray that we will reap the full harvest of the season. *Agradezco a los Mexicanos de todo corazón*. Thank you, Mexico.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:45 p.m. in the Teatro Peon Contreras. In his remarks, he referred to President Ernesto Zedillo of Mexico and his wife, Nilda; Gov. Victor M. Cervera of Yucatan and his wife, Amira; Mayor Xavier Abreu of Merida; and President Fernando Cardoso of Brazil. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Memorandum on Waiver of Prohibition on Assistance to the Republic of Montenegro

February 16, 1999

Presidential Determination No. 99-14

Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense

Subject: Presidential Certification to Waive Prohibition on Assistance to the Republic of Montenegro

Pursuant to the authority vested in me by the laws of the United States, including section 1511 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1994 (Public Law 103-160), I hereby certify to the Congress that I have determined that the waiver of the application of the prohibition in section 1511(b) of Public Law 103-160 is necessary to achieve a negotiated settlement of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina that is acceptable to the parties, to the extent that such provision applies to the furnishing of assistance to the Republic of Montenegro.

Therefore, I hereby waive the application of this provision with respect to such assistance.

You are authorized and directed to transmit a copy of this determination to the Congress and arrange for its publication in the *Federal Register*.

William J. Clinton

Remarks on Legislative Priorities for the Budget Surplus

February 17, 1999

She was great—give her a hand. [*Applause*] Great job. Well, thank you very much, Sharon. You did a great job, and I feel better knowing that you're out at NIH, doing great work there.

I would like to thank Secretary Rubin and Commissioner Apfel and Senator Robb and Representative Baldwin. I'd like to thank Congressmen Levin and Hoyer for being here, and the members of the administration;

all of the young people here from your various organizations. We have young people here from City Year and AmeriCorps. We have young people here from the University of Maryland, from the James MacGregor Burns leadership program. We have young people here who are doing other things with your lives, who consented to come.

I want to talk a little today in greater specifics about the nature of the choice facing our country now. For 200 years, the test of each generation of Americans has been not simply how well they did in their own time but whether they left our country in better shape for future generations. Because of the size of the baby boom generation, to which the First Lady and I and a few others in this room belong, we have a special responsibility to the generation represented by most of you in this room and by Sharon in particular, as she spoke.

We have rarely had both a clearer picture of the large challenges facing our future and more resources to meet them. And I don't just mean money although we do have a strong position in that budget. But our country is doing well. We have a lot of confidence. We have a lot of access to information. We have a lot of tools for dealing with our challenges that many of our predecessors did not have. Since we have a pretty good idea of what the challenges are and we have an extraordinary array of opportunities and resources to meet them, I would argue to you that we have an even greater obligation than our predecessors did to do just that.

We now have embarked on a great debate as a result of our surplus, on the one hand, and the evident financial challenges to Social Security and Medicare on the other. We have clearly two different strategies through all the complexities for moving into the future: one offered by our administration and many members of our party and the Congress, on the one hand; and on the other, by the leaders of the majority party in Congress. We're debating how best to seize this moment, how best to provide a better future for you.

This is a truly historic opportunity. And it is very important that as a people we choose wisely. It is a substantive debate. It is an honest debate. It is a debate worth having.

Underlying all the details and all the complexities you will hear this year about how you do the accounting on the surplus, how we should increase the rate of return on Social Security, what exactly we should do on Medicare, how much money will be required in the future for defense, should we also be investing more in medical research and education and other things over the long run, what should be the size of the tax cut and who should get the tax cut—all of these questions are quite complex, particularly when you try to mesh them together in one plan. But underlying all of it, there is fundamentally a very simple choice: Will our first priority be spending the budget surpluses we have worked so hard to create on a terrifically appealing tax cut in the moment? Or, will our first priority be investing whatever the necessary amount of the surplus is for at least the next 15 years to strengthen Social Security and Medicare, to cut taxes in a way that help people not so much today but to save for their own retirement and to pay down the national debt as much as we possibly can, so that we can guarantee longer term prosperity into the 21st century?

That is really what the simple choice underlying all the details will be. What is our first priority? It's no secret what I think it should be. I think we should move forward with the economic strategy of the last 6 years, to put a priority on investing in our people and the future. I do not believe we should go back to a version of the policy that dominated the United States in the 12 years before this administration came to office and gave us a decade-plus of deficits and quadrupling the national debt and underinvestment in our future.

The proposed new tax policy of the majority party in Congress, I believe, would spend too much of the surplus now and invest too little of it for tomorrow. I believe it would target the lion's share of the benefits away from the middle class who need the money the most to prepare for the future of their children and their own retirement. I believe it would reward consumption over savings when we should be doing the reverse.

Our plan would put priority on investing for the future. And I'd like to say, in defense of our plan, I think we ought to be at least

entitled to the benefit of the doubt, based on the last 6 years.

Seven years ago, when I was running for President and going from college campus to college campus, there was a lot of anger, a lot of frustration. There were a lot of young people who felt that they had been betrayed by their parents' generation, because we had just allowed things in this country to get out of hand. The deficit was out of control, the debt had quadrupled, interest rates were high, unemployment was up, social problems were growing worse, and the division—the sense of anxiety and division in the country was intensifying. And there was really a lot of doubt about whether our country was up to meeting these challenges. I didn't doubt that very much because it seemed to me that it just simply required people in positions of responsibility to make a few clear decisions. And remember, in every complex debate the details really matter, but they only matter after you make the big, simple decisions.

We now have the longest peacetime expansion in our history; 18 million new jobs, almost; wages are going up at nearly twice the rate of inflation. We have the highest homeownership in history; the lowest percentage of our people on welfare in history; the lowest recorded rates of our minority unemployment since we've been keeping those statistics, for about 27 years now; the lowest peacetime unemployment in our country since 1957. Last year, for the first time in three decades, as Senator Robb noted, the red ink turned to black with a surplus of \$70 billion. We project a slightly larger surplus this year, with more to come.

Now, of course, over the next 15 or 20 years, there will be fluctuations that we can't predict exactly from year to year. If we have a recession, there will be fewer people paying taxes, and there will be more money going out to the unemployed. But the point that has to be emphasized is that the long-term projections are good because we have eliminated the permanent structural deficit. We now have a permanent, structural balanced budget and surplus.

And that is what has brought us to this moment of decision, that and the evident financial crisis which will be imposed on Social Security when the baby boomers retire and

on Medicare even sooner, because we're living longer and there's more technology and because the older you get, the more it costs to maintain a state of wellness.

Now, I would say again, I realize that the path we have recommended and the path that I personally, passionately, believe in, will not be the most popular one at first hearing. But I ask you to at least look at the last 6 years and say, maybe they ought to be given the benefit of the doubt.

I was very moved when Sharon talked about being a nurse and learning from dealing with all different kinds of people that no one can predict what will happen to you in life. My mother was a nurse, and she used to tell me those stories over and over again. By pure coincidence, less than an hour before I came over here, I got word that a young woman whose family has been close to Hillary and me over the last several years, who has two young children, just found out that she has cancer. Now, she may be fine; there's wonderful treatment available; the tests are just being done. But the point is, a week ago such a thing would have never crossed her mind. She is the picture of health; she is a fitness fanatic; she has no conduct that would indicate propensity to develop it. These things happen.

And the great dilemma for all of us, both in our family and our work lives and in our national life, is that we really have to always be planning for the future as if we're all going to be all right from now on, because as a country and as a people and in our families, most of us are, most of the time. But we also have to plan for a future in which we recognize our shared responsibility to care for one another and to give each other the chance to do well, or as well as possible when the accidents occur, when the diseases develop, when the unforeseen occurs, or when time takes its toll and we get older—which looks younger every day to me. *[Laughter]*

And that is the question. This is—it's hard to imagine a more profound subject, really, with which to be dealing. Tammy was talking about her grandmother and her niece. This is something that affects us all, and as time and chance occurs, and we try to fulfill our responsibilities, we have to make it work out so that, at the end of the day, our families

are stronger and our Nation is stronger and your future is brighter.

Now, what I want you to think about today is what we should do as our first priority with this surplus. When I took office in 1993, we were spending 14 cents of every dollar you paid in taxes paying interest on the national debt—\$200 billion—15 times more than we were spending on education, training, and employment services, just to make the interest payments. By the year 2014, when I took office, it was projected that we'd be spending 27 cents of every dollar you pay in taxes making interest payments on the debt—\$1.28 trillion.

Now, just by eliminating the deficit over the past 6 years and going into these surpluses, we now know that we'll be able to meet our Social Security obligations between now and 2032, because the Trust Fund will be available—actually, it will be in about 14 years that the taxes will not cover the payments on a monthly basis, but the Trust Fund, the savings account, will carry to 2032.

Now, that's a lot of progress. But we've still got some real challenges. Number one, 2032 is not that far away, and when you're dealing with money this big, the sooner you start to deal with the problem, the easier it is to deal with it. And the longer you take to deal with it, the more difficult, the more painful, the more expensive it will be and the more unpleasant our choices will be. Number two, we're still carrying a \$3.7 trillion publicly held debt on our books.

Now, I believe if we were to use the budget surpluses overwhelmingly, to pay down the national debt for 15 years and target that money to Social Security and Medicare, it would dramatically improve your economic future, and it would be a great safety protection against the possibility of adverse economic developments beyond our borders, which could affect us here. We can also save Social Security and Medicare. We can keep the promises that have already been made. We can provide substantial tax relief, targeted heavily to the middle-class families to save for retirement.

You know, half the seniors in this country would be in poverty today if it weren't for Social Security. But the poverty rate among elderly women is still twice the overall pov-

erty rate of our seniors. Women have longer life expectancies than men. They're more likely to—I expect NIH to change that, by the way, with all the investment we put in. [Laughter] They're more likely, therefore, to spend more years alone and more likely to be in poverty.

We need to have a tax relief package that encourages people to save for their own retirement—you, now. And we can increase Government savings and do it in a way that provides tax relief that also increases private savings for your future, which I think is very, very important. And parenthetically, as you pay down the debt, that leads to lower interest payments for college loans, for mortgage loans, for car payments, for credit card payments. It leads to lower interest rates for business loans, which leads to higher investment and more jobs and a brighter future. So you get a two-for-one thing if you do it. But to be fair, the choice is, you have to give up some of the tax cut that the congressional majority would offer you today, which sounds nice.

Now, my proposal is, save 62 percent of the surplus for Social Security for the next 15 years and invest a modest portion in the private sector so we can increase the rates of return on the Social Security Trust Fund. That takes us to 55 years for the soundness of the program.

Next, I want to extend the life of Social Security to 75 years, which is where we have traditionally thought it should be, so that young people living in college today—college students today, if we do that, would be covered well into their nineties. I think we should do more to reduce poverty among elderly women. I think we should lift the limits on what people on Social Security can earn for themselves, without having to give back their benefits, in effect. We can do this if we make some other choices and work together. They're clear, and they're not complicated, really. They'll be somewhat unpopular, but we have to do some things to get this done.

Second thing I want to do is to give another 15 percent of the surplus for 15 years to Medicare. If we do this, we can keep it safe and sound until 2020, and I hope we can go further. I think that we should, at a

very minimum, cover the greatest growing need of seniors, which is for affordable prescription drugs. This is a big deal. Anybody involved in medical research will tell you that we can actually keep seniors out of the hospital and out of trouble and, therefore, lower the aggregate costs of health care over the long run, if we can work Medicare out so we can absorb the front-end investment of a prescription drug benefit.

And by the way, by the time your parents—those of you in your twenties—are on Medicare, it will be more true. And by the time you are there, it will be even more true. So the quicker we get to a health care program that allows people to manage their own health care and stay healthy and use whatever modern medicine develops to do so, the better off we're going to be.

Now, the third thing I propose is that we have a tax cut of over \$500 billion to create USA accounts, Universal Savings Accounts, that would be targeted to middle class families to help them save for their own retirement. Social Security alone is not enough for people to maintain their standard of living. Many people in the years where they're working hard and raising their kids and worrying about sending them to college do not have the resources to save. We want to make it possible through the tax cut to have more people save for their own retirement.

So where are we with all this? The Republican leadership has said that generally it supports setting aside 62 percent of the surplus until we save Social Security. That's good, and I appreciate that. So we have national unity on that issue. Then we can argue about the details about what the best way to do that is. But that's where the agreement ends. And I think it's important—they still really haven't made a commitment to extend the life of the Social Security Trust Fund from 55 to 75 years, and you should demand that all of us do that. Everybody here in your twenties, you should demand that we not walk away from this session of Congress without extending the life to 75 years and doing something about the poverty rate among elderly women and letting our seniors get out from this earnings limitation.

Now secondly, they do not agree that we should set aside 15 percent of the surplus

to save Medicare and to pay down the national debt even further to lower future interest rates even more, to spur even more economic growth. I think this is a terrible mistake. That does not mean that we won't have to make some tough choices to reform the Medicare program. But we're going to be better off saving more of this surplus, paying down the debt more, and saving Medicare along with Social Security.

Third, we differ on the tax relief. I believe that tax relief is appropriate. I don't think that the whole surplus should be retained by the Government, even for Social Security and Medicare. But when you've got a country with a savings rate as low as ours is and when you know right now that working families need to be saving more for their own retirement, it seems to me wrong to have a tax cut where a disproportionate amount of the benefits will go to people in very high income categories, who have taken care of their retirement fine and who have made a good deal of money in the stock market over the next 6 years, and not target even greater tax relief to middle income families who need to do more to save for their own retirement.

So those are the basic differences. But I just want to hammer to the young people here home the following things: You should want us to save Social Security and Medicare, not only for yourselves but for your families. You heard Tammy Baldwin talking about that. I can tell you that the baby boom generation is really worried, as I said in the State of the Union, that our retirement will cause undue burden on our children and on our children's ability to raise our grandchildren.

So if you don't have to worry about that, that is also a direct financial benefit to you. If you don't have to worry about the medical bills of your parents because we save Medicare, it could be worth a lot more to you if your parents get sick than a short-term tax cut would today—a lot more. And if we continue this debt reduction and we go as far as Secretary Rubin said—just think about it—having public debt the smallest percentage of our economy that it's been since before we went into World War I.

I'll tell you what that will mean in 15 years, just 15 years. And believe me, 15 years passes in the flash of an eye. What it means is that

we will only be spending 2 cents of every dollar you pay in taxes on debt service. And 15 years from now, if the Congress wants to give more tax relief, let them do it; 15 years from now, if we're on the verge of a comprehensive cure for cancer and they want to give it to the National Institute of Health, let them do it; 15 years from now, if we have some other big crisis and we want to have a major investment in education, as we did when we got into the space race, let them do it.

We should be willing to give some of these decisions to the future, instead of taking it now, when it looks easy, but we'd be squandering a historic responsibility. I am quite willing to leave a decision like that to the future. A lot of you may be here then. I'd like for you to have the option to do what is necessary.

So again I say, underneath all these complexities, there is a fundamentally simple choice. Should our first priority be an across-the-board tax cut now, of a size which will keep us from dedicating a lot of this surplus to Medicare and will reduce our ability to pay down the debt and keep down interest rates and keep up investments over the long run and tie the hands of future decision-makers? Or, should our priority be to save Social Security and Medicare and have targeted tax relief to help retirement savings be built up in middle class families that have not been doing it or that need more, in a way that maximizes our ability to pay down the debt?

Some people in this room have heard me tell this story too many times, but I want to say it one more time. When I was a freshman in college and I took a course in the history of civilization, in the last lecture of the year, my professor at Georgetown said that the distinguishing characteristic of Western civilization was that we had always, at critical junctures, been driven by what he called "future preference," the idea that the future can be better than the present and that each individual and society as a whole have a personal, moral responsibility to make it so.

Now, that's really what this is about. Their idea sounds simpler, sounds good, even sounds fair: 10 percent for everybody. Our idea will give you a stronger economy, will

save Social Security and Medicare, will stabilize families, will strengthen the ability of the United States to lead the world, and will make you feel a whole lot better 15 years from now when you're dealing with both the opportunities and the pain of time and chance that affects us all.

You know, I see a few of the young people here today with ashes on their foreheads. Yesterday was Mardi Gras; for Christians, today is Ash Wednesday. For people all over the world this is about to be springtime and a season of renewal. This is a time for renewal. I hope we make the right decision, mostly for your sake. And I believe we will.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Sharon Brigner, clinical nurse, National Institutes of Health, who introduced the President.

Statement on Senator Frank R. Lautenberg's Decision Not To Seek Reelection

February 17, 1999

Senator Frank Lautenberg has been a great public servant and a principled champion of the people of New Jersey and the children of America. He has done as much as any other citizen to protect our young people from tobacco, was the author of the national law raising the drinking age, and passed legislation barring those convicted of domestic abuse from owning guns. He has led our efforts to pass a clean environment on to the next generation. With his hard-headed business sense, he has helped bring balance to the books of the Federal Government, working with me to craft a balanced budget that invests in the education and health care of our people. Frank Lautenberg has been tough, tireless, and tremendously effective. And more than that, he has been a great friend. Hillary and I wish him the best.

**Letter to Congressional Leaders
Transmitting a Report on the
National Emergency With Respect to
Iraq**

February 17, 1999

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

As required by section 401(c) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1641(c), and section 204(c) of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, 50 U.S.C. 1703(c), I transmit herewith a 6-month periodic report on the national emergency with respect to Iraq that was declared in Executive Order 12722 of August 2, 1990.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Albert Gore, Jr., President of the Senate.

**Remarks in a Roundtable Discussion
on Long-Term Health Care in Dover,
New Hampshire**

February 18, 1999

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Governor; to our panelists. I'd like to thank the mayor, the numerous State legislators who are here, city council members, and county commissioners and others. I'm delighted to be back here and delighted to have a chance to meet with all of you and to hear from our panelists about an issue that I had a lot of conversations like this about in 1991 and 1992 in New Hampshire.

I came here to talk about the health care needs of our people, what we can do to address them, and the special responsibilities we have now as a result of the aging of America. As all of you know, the number of people over 65 is going up dramatically. When the baby boomers retire, we will have double the number of people over 65 we do today. And that imposes all sorts of challenges on our country, on the Nation as a whole and on the States.

I want to compliment the Governor for the marvelous work that she has done here in New Hampshire, taking full advantage of our

children's health program, which, as she said, was part of the Balanced Budget Act. We think it will enable us to provide health insurance to at least 5 million of the 10 million children in our country who don't have it if the States will vigorously implement it. And New Hampshire has done a terrific job. And I also appreciate the work she's done on health access, disability, and other issues. We'll talk about some of that today.

Our panelists today are going to talk about a number of the health challenges we face, the right of patients to have proper health care, and you talked about the right to sue. As you know, I tried very hard last year, and I'm trying again now to pass Federal legislation which would give people the right to seek redress from HMO's if they suffer wrongfully. We want to talk about how hard it is for small businesses still to provide coverage. We want to talk about the health care needs of the elderly and children and people with disabilities.

As I said, all of these health care needs are going to be complicated by the aging of America. They're going to be complicated by the fact that as we live longer, more and more of us will need some sort of long-term care. And that's why one of the things in our balanced budget is \$1,000 tax credit to help families defray the cost of providing long-term care for elderly or disabled loved ones.

We also, because health care is improving, we'll have larger numbers of people with disabilities who deserve the chance to go to work, if they can work, to have health care, to live to the fullest of their abilities.

I believe that we need to see this in the context of a larger picture. But I would like to say just a word about the discussions that will inevitably be held about a problem that we could—no one would have believed if we had talked about it 6 years ago in New Hampshire or 7 years ago, and that is what to do with the surplus. [*Laughter*] That was an inconceivable discussion in 1991 and 1992 in New Hampshire.

There are all kinds of ideas—let me just say that because we have a challenge with the aging of America, which affects not only those who will be seniors but their children and grandchildren—I can tell you as the oldest of the baby boomers, one of the things

that my generation is most worried about is that our aging will impose unsustainable burdens on our children and, therefore, undermine their ability to raise our grandchildren.

That's why, when we talk about saving Social Security and saving Medicare for the 21st century, we're not only talking about the seniors of our country but also the children and grandchildren of those seniors. And it's an economic necessity not only for the seniors but for all of their children as well. And the same thing is true when you talk about doing something about long-term care. But I'll just say that on the surplus issue, which is not primarily what I wanted to talk about today but the first question—you will hear all kinds of debates in the next year about what to do with the surplus. And they'll all be good ideas, but we have to ask ourselves, what should our first priority be?

My first priority doesn't take all of the surplus, but my first priority is to set aside enough money in that surplus to save Social Security and Medicare for the 21st century, strengthen Social Security by doing something about the extraordinary poverty rate among elderly women, who are increasingly living alone in their later years, and lifting the earnings limit on Social Security to help healthy seniors get what they're entitled to and still be able to work if they choose, to save Medicare and to do something to modernize Medicare that I think is terribly important.

I'll never forget the meeting I had in Nashua at the Moe Arel Senior Center there, with the couple that told me they missed a lot of meals every week so they could pay their medical bills. Medicare should have a prescription drug benefit. I feel very strongly about that. And let me say again, this will cost money in the short run; it will save big money in the long run. If people can get proper medication, particularly with the dramatic advances in medical science, what you will see is there will be fewer trips to the hospital, fewer trips to the doctor, people being able to maintain their own health care.

So I hope these things will be done. If we do that, it would require us to save about 77 percent of the surplus for 15 years, and we project now we will have one now. Of course, it will be off from one year to the

next. Some years we'll have good economies; some years the economy won't be so good. But there is no built-in deficit in your Government anymore, so over any 10 to 15 year period we can pretty well predict, if we have normal economic performance, ups and downs, what the aggregate savings would be.

If we do that, let me tell you something else we can do. We will pay down the publicly held debt in this country, which was 50 percent of our annual income when I took office—now down to 44—we'll pay it down to 7 percent. That's the lowest it's been since 1917, before we went in World War II. What that means is that instead of spending 14 cents of every tax dollar you send to Washington just paying interest on the debt, which is what we were doing in 1993, when I took office, we'll be only spending 2 cents of every tax dollar for interest on the debt.

So we can deal with the aging of America in a way that gets the debt down, brings interest rates down, keeps the economy going, and strengthens long-term economic health and well-being for America.

So I hope that whatever we do on all the other issues and the details of Social Security and Medicare and all that, there will be a common understanding that our first priority needs to be to keep the economy strong, deal with the aging of America, and invest in the future of this country.

Now, meanwhile, let's come back to the present day. In the balanced budget I have presented to Congress, that has nothing to do with the surplus—in other words, whatever this debate is in the surplus is not affected by the budget I presented this year—we do have a \$1,000 tax credit for people to provide long-term care to the elderly and disabled. This has become a bigger and bigger concern of Americans as more and more people provide this because they think it is the right thing to do or because it is the only thing to do. Whether it is the right choice or the only choice, it is rarely an easy choice, and it is never cost-free.

Last summer at their annual family conference in Nashville, Vice President and Mrs. Gore talked about this whole long-term care issue a lot, and we got into the developing this proposal. And now the Vice President

is having forums about this all across the Nation. But the basic problem is that out-of-pocket expenses even for family members providing long-term care can be quite high, and as you know, it's rarely covered by private insurance or Medicare. And for caregivers who hold a job outside the home—which that's the vast majority of caregivers—they may have to take unpaid leave or work fewer hours, which also is a direct drain on them.

Now, we have tried to strengthen Medicare by cracking down on the fraud and abuse; we've saved billions of dollars on that. We've extended the life of the Trust Fund for a decade. But in the next few years, this long-term care challenge for the elderly and for the disabled is going to mushroom, so in our budget we have the \$1,000 tax credit. We also have a caregiver support program to help put caregivers in touch with each other so they can help each other and to provide technical and other support for them. And we also have taken new steps to help Medicaid pay for home and for community-based care. All of this I think is quite important.

I also believe very strongly that we should pass a national Patients' Bill of Rights, like the one Governor Shaheen has been trying to pass here. And it's obvious why more and more people are covered by managed care. You're going to see this year the managed care insurance rates start to go up quite steeply after years of being around the rate of inflation. And I think people in managed care programs can benefit from them as long as they don't have to give up the quality of care. If you need to see a specialist, you ought to be able to see one. If you have to change jobs, you shouldn't have to change doctors in the middle of a treatment, whether it's a chemotherapy treatment or a pregnancy or some other kind of continuing treatment. And you should not be denied the right to sue, in my judgment, if you are harmed.

There are other provisions in our Patients' Bill of Rights. I hope we can pass that this year. I believe this is not a political issue anywhere in the world except Washington, DC. If you took a poll in Dover, New Hampshire, I'll bet you there wouldn't be a nickel's worth of difference in the support for a Patients'

Bill of Rights among Republicans, Democrats, and independents. We all get sick. We all need doctors. We all need health care. This should not be a partisan issue.

There's another bill there we're trying very hard to pass this year that would affect some of the families in this room and many in the State, and that is legislation proposed by Senator Jeffords, Senator Kennedy, Senator Roth, and Senator Moynihan, that would allow people with health—disabilities to keep Medicaid health insurance when they go to work. I think this is very, very important.

I always remind people—by the way, to the younger people in this audience, saving Social Security is an issue not just for seniors; a third of the money from the Social Security Trust Fund goes to payments to disabled Americans and payments to surviving children and other family members of people who die prematurely. So this is something that we should never forget. When you hear all this debate on Social Security, don't forget that, that it's not just a question of what we pay in and what we get out in retirement; it's also we're insuring all of each other against the vicissitudes and the fortunes of life. And I think that's very important, but this bill is incredibly important.

And finally, we've asked Congress to pass a plan that would give tax relief to help small businesses insure their employees and to help them join together and form more pools to buy more economical insurance. That is still a very large problem in our country.

When I came here in 1992, people were very concerned about the number of Americans who did not have health insurance on the job. I can tell you that the number of Americans without health insurance on the job has increased since 1992. Now we are insuring more people than we were then because we've extended the Medicare program, and we want to extend it further for people with disabilities who go to work. We're going to try to get 5 million kids into the program that the Governor talked about. But we have to do everything we can to try to help small businesses to afford health insurance for their employees.

Well, those are the things that I wanted to talk about. I hope that there will be broad support for them here; I hope you will tell

your congressional delegation you think we ought to have a \$1,000 tax credit; you think we ought to have a tax credit for small businesses to get health insurance; you support the effort to let people who are disabled keep their Medicaid health insurance when they go into the workplace; and you support the Patients' Bill of Rights. These are some of the things that I believe we can get done this year, and I'm going to do everything I can to do it.

Now, let's hear from our panelists. I'd like to start with Beth Dixon, who is a mother of four from Concord, who spent the majority of the last year caring for her father who suffered from Alzheimer's and passed away last March. I'd like for her to tell a little bit about her story and what we could do to help people like her.

[Ms. Dixon described her family experience with a disabled child and a father who was an Alzheimer's patient. She stated that her parents moved in with her but that it was so difficult, even with help from the extended family, that her father finally had to be put into a nursing home. She concluded by introducing her son.]

The President. I think we ought to give him a hand. *[Applause]*

You know, I lost an uncle and an aunt to Alzheimer's. And again, it's something we'll have more of as we live longer. The average life expectancy in America is now 76. The young people in this room today, their life expectancy is probably about 83 if the present rates of medical advances continue. But until we find a cure for this—and we're investing a lot of money in it now, in research—we're going to have to deal with it.

I think when we hear somebody like Beth talk, we may have mixed feelings, but I don't know how that woman did that. I mean, that's what we're all thinking. On the other hand, I think we're all thinking, Beth, it's a good thing extended families can stay together for as long as possible. And I consider this tax credit just a downpayment on what I think our country should be doing.

I think over the long run, as we live longer, we have not just three but four generations of families up and around and doing, we will always have a need for our nursing homes,

our boarding homes, our hospitals. But I will predict to you that when my term is over and when people are grappling with this over the next 10 years, that the American people will essentially demand that families get tax relief and other support because you'll have more and more families at least trying to do what Beth did. But this is a big first step because the Government has never done anything to help people in this situation before, and it's high time we did.

I'd like to call on David Robar now, a 34-year-old New Hampshire native who sustained a spinal cord injury which has permanently injured him. Before that, he was a world-class ski jumper, and he's made quite a brave life for himself now, going back to school and learning. I'd like for him to talk about his circumstances and how he might be affected by some of the things I mentioned today.

David?

[Mr. Robar stated that he sustained a spinal cord injury in 1990, but after hospitalization and rehabilitation, he finished his business degree. He said that by working part time, he received personal attendant benefits under the Medicaid program, but if he worked full time, he would make too much money to qualify and would lose the benefit, even though his out-of-pocket cost for personal attendants would be more than his full-time income. He concluded by thanking the President for supporting initiatives to address the long-term care needs of individuals with disabilities.]

The President. I want to emphasize what he said to you. Under present law, he is entitled—and I think all of us are glad he is—to get attendant care services. He will get them if he stayed home and did nothing. He'll get them, and the cost would be the same. He is permitted to work part-time, and he still gets them. If he works full-time, he loses them.

Now, if he worked full-time, it would cost you less. Why? Because the cost for the attendant services would be no more, but he'd be paying more in taxes to defray the cost of his own services. This is a crazy situation, and it's one of those things that hasn't been

done in the past. It's kind of like the prescription drug benefit for Medicare: It cost more money for a year or two because you have to start fronting the money, but over time it obviously will be a big net benefit to us. And not only that, I think our basic respect for human dignity requires us to do everything we can to give people a chance to work.

We worked hard to pass the welfare reform law that said if you're able-bodied and there's a job, you've got to work if you can. When you have people knocking down the doors to work who could get jobs, for us to deny them the right because of some barrier in Federal law I think is unconscionable. And I hope and believe this will pass this year. And you'll be exhibit A. I'm going to talk about you all over America but especially in Washington. And I thank you.

Karen Goddard is a mother of two children and the owner of two maternity and children's clothing stores. She's from Nashua, and she's got an interesting situation with health insurance. I'd like for her to talk a little about them.

[Ms. Goddard stated that she was a single mother who owned two shops, employing four part-time employees. Although she qualified for Medicaid because of her income and her single-parent status, she wanted to get health insurance for her children and her employees, but each time she looked into it she found it too expensive. She noted that she had friends who owned small businesses and that she was not alone in this situation. Gov. Jeanne Shaheen then stated that New Hampshire was trying to pass legislation to allow small businesses to combine to form purchasing cooperatives to lower the cost.]

The President. I think that the two things we're trying to do are complementary. But basically, what we need now under the present state of laws, is the Federal Government should provide some sort of tax break to small business, some financial aid to lower the cost of the premium, as well as facilitate the joining together of small businesses into a larger pool. Because the real problem is, if you've got three or four employees—I know some of them are insured through their spouse's work program—but let's suppose you've got just your one employee who has

a child. It's not only prohibitively expensive now, but if you add one child in any of the groups and you're trying to insure two or three employees, you're out of there. I mean, you can't begin to afford it.

So I think the important thing is for us not only to provide financial assistance but to facilitate small businesses going into bigger groups and to cut the costs and the hassle of all the paperwork involved in that. And we're going to try to do that, and I think it will bear some fruit.

Eventually, some provision will have to be made to do more than that, I think, but this is a very important first step. And there are probably millions of people who could get health insurance if we could have a combined State-Federal effort to give a little break on the premium and then to bring the overall cost level down by letting some people like you go into bigger pools. And that's essentially where we're going with this.

I want to now introduce Christine Monteiro, who has four children who have been insured intermittently for the last 11 years, completely uninsured for the last 5 years, and she discovered the child health program that the Governor passed that we supported back in the balanced budget law. And I'd like her to talk about it, and then I've got a specific question I want to ask.

[Ms. Monteiro stated that she was the mother of four daughters and that she and her husband ran a small business. In the early years in business they had been in and out of insurance plans, due to large deductibles and the rapid growth of premiums, and in recent years had no insurance at all. During a visit to her doctor's office she learned of the Healthy Kids program, without which she would not have been able to afford recent medical bills.]

The President. Tell me again how you found out about this program.

Ms. Monteiro. I took my daughter to the doctor's, and I asked him about a subsidized or a sliding scale, and then they told me about Healthy Kids.

The President. The reason I ask is that one of our big problems in the larger urban areas—I wish this lady were an exception, but she's not. There are 10 million children

out there like her kids—10 million—and any of them can get sick. And one of the problems we've got is really developing a system in a lot of places for people to know.

There are places where people won't even go to the doctor, they're so discouraged. And anyway, if any of you have any ideas about that—I think we have tried—I think most of the States are trying to make sure that the doctors tell people if they actually come to the office that they might be eligible for this, and that's the most practical thing to do. But we also need a lot more outreach because it's conceivable to me that the money we've allocated to this that we're giving the States will cover even more than 5 million kids if we can actually find them and tell them.

And I know this is painful for you to come here, but this is important. The American people need to know this. They need to know, A, this thing, it's here, in New Hampshire, and it's good. And it's in other States. But they also need to know there are a lot of people like you out there that need help that don't have it yet. So thanks for being brave enough to show up. I appreciate it.

I'd like now to call on Stephen Gorin, who is a professor in the social work program, at Plymouth State College, the executive director of the New Hampshire Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, which is the State's most visible patient advocacy organization. He also has a biweekly radio program.

[Mr. Gorin described his encounters with families denied access to specialists, physicians offered incentives to limit referrals, and consumers denied the right to appeal adverse decisions. He noted that due to a loophole in Federal law, an estimated 600,000 New Hampshire residents lacked the means of holding managed care organizations accountable for injury or damages and stated that the Patient's Bill of Rights would close this loophole.]

The President. You know, the Vice President tells this great joke about these two guys that show up at Heaven, and St. Peter asks the first guy, "What did you do on Earth?" And he said, "I was a lawyer." He said, "I don't know about you." *[Laughter]* He said,

"Yeah, but I did all this pro bono work for poor people. I really did; 20 percent of my time, I did it." And he said, "Well, okay, come on in." And the second guy says that he was a media mogul. And he said, "I'm not sure about you." He said, "But I gave away 10 percent of my money to my church and to my charity every year." And he said, "Okay, come on in." And the third guy's just hanging his head. He's so sheepish, and he said, "I ran an HMO." And St. Peter said, "Well, come right in, no questions asked, but you can only stay 3 days." *[Laughter]*

He tells it better than I do. But anyway, I'd like to make this point. The reason we need this Patients' Bill of Rights partly has to do with the structure of these HMO's. Keep in mind—let me take you back to 1992. Costs in health care were escalating at 3 times the rate of inflation. That was unsustainable. We were all going to go broke paying for health care. We were already paying a much bigger percentage of our income than any other country in the world was, so we needed to manage the costs.

The problem is, when you set up a group to manage the costs, unless there are standards everybody has to adhere to—that's why a lot of these HMO's actually support the bill of rights. Some of the really good ones support this, because unless there are standards everyone has to adhere to, they're going to be interested in cutting costs. And a lot of the bigger ones, for example, someone shows up for a procedure, and they need a specialist, or they need a certain special procedure, and the doctor says, "Well, I have to refer it to the HMO." Normally the nurse in the doctor's office will call the HMO. Well, the first person you call is not a doctor, and they just know one thing: They will never get in trouble for saying no, right? So then, they have a certain amount of time they have to appeal. Very often, the person at the same level is not a doctor. They know the second thing: They're never going to get in trouble for saying no. Why? Because they know somewhere up the line there is a doctor, and if they mess up by saying no, then they say, "Well, the doctor will fix it." But if they mess up by saying yes, they'll be told they're not saving money.

The problem is, it's like justice. Health care delayed can sometimes be health care denied. That's one of the biggest problems. And I have heard all these chilling stories, I'm sure you have. By the time people get their procedures approved, it's too late. And the emergency room thing is really unconscionable, particularly—it would apply, like in New Hampshire where most of the communities aren't very big, it would apply more if you were visiting Boston or something and you got hit by a car and you went to the nearest emergency room and they say, "I'm sorry. The emergency room your HMO will reimburse for is 15 miles in the other direction." So we have got to fix this.

Now, the opposition says it will raise the cost of health care. It will but not much, maybe 8 or 10 bucks a year or something. It would be worth it to you; one trip to the emergency room, it would be worth it to you.

So I think—I can't tell you how important I think this is. I think you're going to have more and more and more of these horror stories unless we pass a national bill which will, at a very minimum, protect the State's ability to do what Governor Shaheen wants to do and say everybody has got a right to the nearest emergency room, to a continuation of treatment, to see a specialist, and to know what all their medical options are.

And again I say, this should absolutely not be a partisan issue. It has been in Washington because of the interplay of the organized interest groups up there, but it's not out in America. And it shouldn't be. You just keep plugging; we'll get there this year, I think.

That is our health agenda for this session of Congress. You see it here embodied in these five panelists and then what the Governor has worked to do on the children's health programs and other things. I would very much like to see the spirit in the country and in Washington, DC, that I felt here in New Hampshire so many years ago when I first came here, to take these health care issues and sort of put them beyond partisan politics and put the people and the families of this country and their interests first.

If we succeed this year in doing that, all of you can know that your presence here made a difference and especially the panel-

ists. I think we should give them one more big hand. [*Applause*]

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

NOTE: The roundtable began at 11:30 a.m. in the auditorium at the Dover Municipal Building. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Will Boc of Dover, NH.

Statement on Senator Richard H. Bryan's Decision Not To Seek Reelection

February 18, 1999

Throughout his career, Senator Richard Bryan has been a staunch advocate and tireless champion of the people of Nevada. He has been an ardent protector of Nevada's environment and has been a leader in preserving Nevada's lands and treasures. Senator Bryan has played a critical role in promoting rigorous health and safety standards for America's children and consumers. As a distinguished member of the Finance Committee, Senator Bryan has consistently been recognized for his leadership in promoting fiscal responsibility and has helped ensure a brighter future for Nevadans and all Americans. While his decision to retire must be somewhat bittersweet, I know that he will continue to fight for what he believes in and will continue to be a proponent for America's progress. Hillary and I send our best regards to Dick and his family for every future success and happiness.

Remarks at a State Democratic 100 Club Dinner in Manchester, New Hampshire

February 18, 1999

Thank you. I want to thank you for a typically reticent Yankee welcome tonight. [*Laughter*] It is wonderful to be back. I have very much enjoyed being with Governor Shaheen and with Bill today, and we've had a lot of time to visit. I want you to know that it gives me an enormous amount of pleasure and pride to see the Governor at her task, to know the victories that you have

given her, to know that now she has a Democratic State Senate for the first time in 86 years, and that you made a lot of gains in the House, and that the Democratic Party is moving in the right direction.

I thank Jeff and Sophia and all the other officers of the Democratic Party, all the legislators and other people who are here. I am glad to be back. I'd like to thank the people from New Hampshire who have been a part of our administration. I'm not sure I can remember all of them, so many have been. But I would like to thank Joe GrandMaison and Stephanie Powers, Ricia McMahon, Terry Shumaker—I talked to him today; I called Terry Shumaker and said, "It's just like the Caribbean up here in New Hampshire; you ought to be here"—[laughter]—George Bruno, Dick Swett so many others.

I want to thank—I brought four people back here tonight who slogged through the snows of New Hampshire with me in '91 and '92—Michael Hooley, Jeff Forbes, Paul Begala and Bruce Lindsey—and they are glad to be here, and we thank you.

You know, the last time I was in this building, I believe, was at the Democratic Convention in the campaign of '92. And I remember there were—the center aisle was open, and everything was crowded, and all the candidates got to have a little demonstration. And in my demonstration, there were a bunch of students who carried a banner down the middle aisle for me; I'll never forget it. And to see this vast crowd here today, celebrating the successes of our party and our Nation and your State, is wonderful.

You know, I didn't know exactly what I was going to say today when I got here. I remember when I first started coming here, people kind of laughed at me when I said that New Hampshire was a lot like my home. All the experts expected you to send me home. [Laughter] Instead, you made me feel at home, and I still do. I love it.

In 1992, when I came here, when Hillary came here, amidst all the economic problems and personal turmoil, people whose businesses had been closed because their loans were cancelled, in some cases, people who had never missed a payment; elderly people who were having to choose between food and medicine; young working families who

couldn't buy health insurance because their children had been sick—I remember a young girl who talked to me about the pain in her family because her father could not get over the fact that he was unemployed, and he could no longer take care of his family,

In the middle of that difficult time the people of New Hampshire came out to see me and Hillary and listen to what we had to say. You took us into your homes. You shared your struggles and your dreams. And in so many ways, the story of America in 1991 and 1992 was, for me, the personal histories I heard in New Hampshire.

I saw a lot of people today that I met then, that I've tried to keep up with on all the times I've come back here since then. I think, of all the things that were said to me today, the things that meant the most were—well, there were really two things: First, to know that people are doing better and feel better about their lives, their children's future, our country's future.

I got to check in today with Ron and Rhonda Lee Machos, and I made them the poster family for my struggle for health care access because their oldest child, Ronnie, was born with a heart problem. Today I saw Ronnie and Tristen, his little brother, and Mamma's about to have a third son. But I got a letter from the dad the other day who said, "Little Ronnie is doing exceptionally well. No problems with his heart. Looks like he needs no further surgery. He scored two goals and got one assist in his last hockey game. That's a long way from being born with a hole in your heart. Younger son Tristen is seven this year, and quite a pistol"—I saw him today—"and more startling news, Rhonda Lee is pregnant with our third child." Listen to this; this is the point. "One thing we will experience for the first time is health insurance and pregnancy." Those are the kind of stories I wanted to hear after we had a chance to work together to make America a better place.

The other thing I heard that made me feel so good today was that any number of people in various ways said, "We stuck with you because you came to us with a detailed program, and you did exactly what you said you would do, and it worked." Well, today—I didn't do it. We did it. You did it.

Don't ever forget—I was in Dover today, you know, where I coined that now famous line that “if you would stick with me I would stick with you until the last dog died.” And the people of Dover had any number of humorous things to say about that. [Laughter] We've seen a lot of dogs killed, but at least the last one is still living. [Laughter] This dog is limping but still going. I heard it all. [Laughter] I heard it all.

Here is the point: If you had listened to the political experts, the dog would have died. [Laughter] But instead you held out a lifeline. You decided that the election should go on. You decided that these ideas, that this new direction for our country deserved a fair hearing among the American people. You embraced our cause.

People ask me all the time, well, what if this, that, or the other thing had happened, and you hadn't become President? All I know is, I have never forgotten—as anyone who has worked for me in the White House will tell you—the kindness and the toughness, the humanity and the determination of the people of New Hampshire who would not let our campaign and what we wanted to do together for America die. And I never will.

Now, the point of all that is that every time you hear about something good that's happened in America, you ought to say, “I was part of that.” This is a journey we have taken together. In America, there is not a difference between the Government and the people, between those who govern and those who let them govern. You gave me permission to do this based on a contract I made with you and the rest of the American people. And it's been quite a wonderful journey.

When I came here—7 years ago today, we had the New Hampshire primary. The unemployment rate was 7.3 percent. Today, it's 2.9 percent. In the 4 years before I took office, you lost 41,000 jobs here. In the 6 years since, you've gained 77,500. In 1992, business failures were increasing by 44 percent every single year. In the last 6 years they've dropped by nearly three-quarters. In 1992, your welfare rolls were among the fastest growing in the country. Today, they are half what they were on the day I took office.

We have seen—as a lot of your police officers said to me today, we have seen new po-

lice officers, new teachers, AmeriCorps volunteers, people benefiting from the earned-income tax credit, from the HOPE scholarship—which about 26,000 New Hampshire students will take advantage of this year; 32,000 more are taking advantage of the lifetime learning tax cut to pay for their college education, and on and on. This is what campaigns are really about.

And the test is, do we use the authority and the power and the responsibility given to us by the people to advance their cause. I said over and over and over again in New Hampshire in 1992 and I say again tonight, I was raised to believe that no person can sit on the sidelines and knowingly permit any of his or her fellow citizens to live under burdens that do not permit them to live up to the fullest of their God-given capacity. I always believed if we could create a country in which there was opportunity for every citizen responsible enough to take advantage of it and if we could convince people that we really have to be one community, that we will never be all that we could be unless we care about our neighbors and work together and realize that our welfare is caught up in the welfare of those who may seem very different from us, but underneath it all the diversity of America is our greatest strength, as long as we recognize that what unites us is more important than anything that could divide us. I believe that, and I still believe that tonight.

What I want to say is I believe the reason the Democratic Party is coming back all over America is that more and more Americans believe that—including independents and Republicans—that we ought to be about opportunity, responsibility, and community. We ought to be looking for ways to put people over politics, to put unity over division.

It is not an accident that we've gone from a \$290 billion deficit to a \$70 billion surplus with a bigger one coming this year, that we have the longest economic expansion in peacetime in the history of the country and the lowest peacetime unemployment rate since 1957. This is not an accident. It happened because people like you believed in and embraced certain ideas and then went

out and worked like crazy when the chains were taken off of you to make America work again.

And you should take pride in that, pride not only in your own work but pride in the work you did as citizens, in the work you did in campaigns, in the work you did in talking to your friends and neighbors. This is what makes America work—when the people are put first, when the dreams and the hopes of the American people are put first, and when the problems are tackled instead of just talked about. That's politics at its best, and that's what this building, that convention, all those years ago and this night will always mean to me.

Now, I want to get off this rather passionate political note and say something completely dry and academic, something completely factual, purely historical, wholly non-political. Nobody had more to do with the decisions we made and success we've enjoyed than Vice President Al Gore. I understand he may have been around here recently. He wasn't with me in '92, until I became the nominee. But in '93, as he never tires of telling me, he cast a decisive vote on the economic plan that began to bring our country back. And as he always says, whenever he votes, we win. *[Laughter]*

I do want to say, you know, I have been very fortunate in the people who have served in our Cabinet. I once had a group of Presidential scholars at the White House, and a gentleman who taught at Harvard said, "Mr. President, one of the reasons your administration has been successful is that you have the most loyal Cabinet since Thomas Jefferson's second administration." It was an amazing statement. He said, "I'm a historian. I know."

We have all these people who work in the White House every day, day-in and day-out, whose names you don't know, who never get any glory, who deserve a lot of this credit. We also have a great team of people around the country working. But I have been very blessed by the work especially of the First Lady and the Vice President, and you all know it.

So I came here tonight to say thank you, to reminisce just a little bit, to thank you for Hillary and for me and for all of our adminis-

tration but not just to say, thank you. Because if you remember in '92, every event we did, every home we visited, every town hall meeting we had that were bursting at the seams—that's the first time I knew I had a chance to get elected President, actually. I went to Keene, and they said, "We put you in a place that will hold 150, and if 50 people show up, don't be embarrassed. It's a good turnout. It's New Hampshire, nobody knows who the heck you are." *[Laughter]* And 400 showed up and I said, "Holy moly, something's going on."

Oh, by the way, Mayor Pat Russell and her husband, Ron, are celebrating their 49th wedding anniversary tonight. Let's give them a hand there. Happy anniversary. *[Applause]*

So I wanted to do that. But remember this: We were really worried about making New Hampshire and America and the lives of ordinary citizens work again. I mean, people just wanted things to work. Do you remember, five out of the seven biggest banks had failed? I mean, people wanted things to work.

Okay, things are working now. So here's the most important thing I came here to say. I came to deliver on what I really owe you tonight. When things start working and people have been through all that you have been through, the temptation is to stop at what we've already said and done; pat yourself on the back; feel good about it; kick back; relax; wait for something else to happen. And I came here to tell you tonight that that would be wrong. That would violate the ideas and the principles on which we campaigned, you and I, in 1992 and upon which we were returned to office in 1996.

Why? Because, yes, America is working, but we are living in a very dynamic world where things that happen beyond our borders can affect how you live in every community in New Hampshire and throughout this country, and when, you know as well as I do, that we have large, long-term unmet challenges facing us in the century that is now less than a year ahead.

And so I ask you to think tonight about what we must do not only to celebrate what's been done and think about the next election, but we need to think, if we want to retain the support of the American people, from the Presidency, if we want to get it back in

the Congress, if we want to keep the Democratic Party moving in the right direction in New Hampshire, we have to do a good job for the American people and the people of this State every day for the next 2 years. That is the best politics, to do what is right.

Now, I will not keep you through a whole recitation of my State of the Union Speech—[laughter]—but I want you to know that I worked hard on that for months, and it reflects the thinking that I have brought to this job for years. I prayed in the early years of the Presidency when we were bailing water out of the ship that we would one day right ourselves and America would be working again, and as a people we could be called to think about these large, long-term challenges. And we would be making a terrible mistake as a political party if we played politics with them, looked only to the next election, and forgot that all of us are charged with the responsibility now that America is working to have America moving forward.

What are those challenges? I'll just mention two or three: The aging of America; the challenge of balancing work and family, as more and more people go into the work force and more and more parents are working; the challenge of giving every child a world-class education; the challenge of dealing with our environmental difficulties while continuing to grow the economy and living more at harmony with ourselves and our neighbors on this planet; and the challenge of dealing with America's obligations to lead the world toward greater peace and freedom and prosperity.

I met a lot of people here with Irish roots tonight, like me, who thanked me for the role that I have been honored to play in the Irish peace process. We are struggling today to keep a new conflict from breaking out in the Balkans. We are struggling today to deal with the challenges of chemical and biological weapons so that our children won't have to face them. We are struggling today to help our friends in democratic Russia keep their democracy alive and restore their economic health.

And one of the things that I did when I was in New Hampshire that I tell you I believe more strongly today than I did then is to say, "Folks, there is no longer a dividing

line between domestic policy and foreign policy." The person in the remotest, smallest village in northern New Hampshire cannot be unmindful of America's responsibilities and opportunities in this great wide world. We have to fulfill them and the Democratic Party should lead the way.

So what does that mean? Let me just mention two things. Let's talk about aging and education, the old and the young. The number of people over 65 is going to double by 2030. People are living longer. The average life expectancy in America now is already over 76. By the time the young people in this room who are under 30 tonight reach their later years their life expectancy, in all probability, will be somewhere in the mid-eighties.

Now, what does all that mean? First of all, let's not kid ourselves, this is a high-class problem, and the older I get, the better this problem looks. [Laughter] So I don't understand all this hand-wringing; this is a good deal, you know? This is a high-class problem. It is a tribute to our health system, to healthier behaviors, to scientific discovery, and also a fact of the baby boom.

Now, what we have to do is to figure out how, when the baby boom retires and medical costs escalate in the Medicare program, which will happen before the baby boom retires, we can preserve our obligation to our seniors without bankrupting their kids and grandkids. This is an issue which affects everyone, the aging of America. More and more people will take care of their parents as they get older and may need some help doing it. More and more people, if we don't do our job, will feel the squeeze between their parents' retirement needs and their children's education needs.

That's why I have said my first priority in dealing with this budget surplus we have waited for 30 years, and we have worked for 6 years, after 12 years in which they quadrupled the debt of the country—my first priority is to save Social Security and Medicare and pay down the debt to strengthen America for the 21st century. [Applause] Thank you.

Now, we will have a real policy debate with our friends in the Republican Party on that issue. They will agree with us that we should

save the surplus necessary for Social Security, and then they'll disagree with us on what the best way to spend it is. And that's good. That's a high-class problem. That's the kind of honest political debate we ought to have. But they will not agree that we should also save that portion of the surplus necessary to deal with Medicare, even though it is going to run out of money in 10 years. And we have to save it, reform it, but also, in my judgment—I'll never forget the people I met in New Hampshire who told me this: We ought to add a prescription drug benefit to the Medicare program for the elderly people who need it.

Now, I believe the Democratic position, which is embraced by the leaders of our party in both Houses of Congress, as well as by our administration, is the right one. If we save 77 percent of this surplus over the next 15 years, we can do two things. We can prepare to save Social Security and Medicare; we'll also pay down the national debt.

When I took office, the national debt was one-half our annual income. It had quadrupled in 12 years. I had to spend, the first year I put together a budget, over 14 cents of every dollar you pay to the Federal Government in taxes just to make interest payments. Well, now the debt is down to 44 percent of our annual income. But if you do what I'm recommending here, if the Congress will go along and we save 77 percent for 15 years, we will take it down to 7 percent of our income; the debt service will be 2 cents on your taxes; the rest will go to real things. And within 18 years, the United States of America will be out of debt. This is what we should do.

Now, in addition to saving Social Security and Medicare, we have other health responsibilities. In my balanced budget there's a long-term care tax credit. We have to make sure that we pass a national Patients' Bill of Rights to support what Governor Shaheen is trying to do here in New Hampshire. We have to pass a bill sponsored by Senators Kennedy and Jeffords to make sure people with disabilities can take full-time jobs without losing their health insurance.

And we ought to, while we're helping, deal with the problem of family and work by broadening the number of people eligible for

the family and medical leave law. I met people today who said they took advantage of it and what a difference it made for their families.

We ought to raise the minimum wage, and we ought to pass the initiative I have offered to give \$15 billion in private sector capital to rural areas and urban communities who have not yet felt our economic recovery. If we can't fix the poorest areas of America with free enterprise now, we will never get around to doing it.

Now, we also have to remember our children. I'm proud of the fact that we have more people in Head Start, kids in Head Start than ever before, that we have 90 percent of our children immunized against serious childhood diseases for the first time, that in the balanced budget law of 1997, 5 million children became eligible for health insurance, and thanks to what the Governor has done here with the child health program in New Hampshire, we are finally reaching those children.

But we have more to do. I'm proud of the fact that we have opened the doors of college to everyone with these tax benefits, and greater student loans and work-study programs. No serious person believes that our elementary and secondary education in every State, in every community, in every school, is what is necessary to give a world-class education to what is the most diverse student body our country has ever had.

Now look, this diversity is our meal ticket to the future. In a global economy, the idea that we have children in our schools from every country on Earth, from every culture on Earth, from every religious faith on Earth, all learning what the basic rules of American citizenship are in action every day and being given a chance to be responsible and to participate in our country and to learn to relate to each other in a world that is being torn asunder all across the globe, from Bosnia to the Middle East to the tribal wars of Africa over differences of race and ethnicity and religion—what we are trying to do is a godsend for our future, economically, politically, and frankly, in terms of just the quality and richness of our lives.

But we have to do better with education. We have got to do better with education. We

have to finish the job we started last year of hiring 100,000 teachers. We have to pass the bill Congress turned down last year to build or modernize 5,000 schools. I'm tired of going to these schools that can't even be hooked up to the Internet because they're so old.

We have to finish the job of hooking all our classrooms and libraries up to the Internet. And thanks to the e-rate that the Vice President and I fought so hard for, a billion dollars in discounts will be available this year to our schools, so every school, even poor schools, can afford for their children to hook up to the Internet.

And I believe we have to bring a revolution of accountability to our schools. For over 20 years now, I have spent a lot of time in classrooms. I've listened to teachers; I've listened to principals; I've listened to students; I've listened to parents. I can tell you that every challenge in American education has been met by somebody, somewhere, and that we still, on the edge of a new century, this so-called information age where people learn what everybody else is doing with blinding speed, we are still not very good at copying from others.

The Founding Fathers would be disappointed that school districts still seem to believe that they can't learn as much from others as they ought to. They set up the States as the laboratories of democracy. When I was a Governor for 12 years—as I told your Governor, back when I had a life—when I was a Governor for 12 years and I could actually stay here and sit around and talk around this table half the night and drink coffee with you, I was proud of the things that my State did first, but I was prouder of the things my State did second.

We have got to install, somehow, the best practices in education that educators tell us work. That's why I believe, based on what I've seen in some of the toughest urban school districts in America, we ought to say when we reauthorize all this Federal aid this year, "You can have it, but you've got to stop social promotion. But you can't tell the kids they're failures when the system is failing them. You have to turn around the failing schools. And you have to give the children

summer school and after-school programs and whatever they need."

Look, our kids rank at the top of the world in 4th grade tests in math and science. Then the drop down to the middle in 8th grade tests. And then by the 12th grade, they're ranking near the bottom. Now, the same kids start out—they didn't get dumber as they traveled through life. That is telling us something about ourselves. We can do better. We have to have higher expectations, higher standards, higher accountability for everyone. But we can't tell the kids that they're failing if the system is failing them. We're not doing them any favor passing them along, but we have to lift them up and give them the support they need.

So I ask you to embrace the education agenda, to embrace the saving Social Security, saving Medicare, paying down the debt agenda, to embrace the agenda of bringing economic opportunity to our distressed areas and expanding health care access and doing more to help people balance work and family and dealing with the environmental and other challenges I have outlined. I ask you to do it because the best politics, as has been proven over and over and over again, is doing the right thing for the American people, saying what you're going to do, and if you get elected, doing it, and dealing with the emergencies as they come up, dealing with the challenges as they come up.

In 1998, for the first time since 1822, the party of the President in the 6th year of his Presidency gained seats in the House of Representatives. Now, I believe with all my heart it was because our party went out there with a simple message. They said, "Our concern is you; our commitment is to your future and your children. Vote for us, and we will save Social Security first, before we squander this surplus. Vote for us, and we will modernize those thousands of schools. Vote for us, and we will pass that Patients' Bill of Rights. Vote for us, and we'll get interest rates down, pay the debt down, keep this economy going. We have an agenda. And it's an agenda that will deal with the long-term problems as well as the short-term problems of America."

That's what the Democratic Party represents now: opportunity for all, responsibility from all, a community of all Americans.

We no longer have a country, as I said 7 years ago, where I worry about me, you worry about you, they worry about them. I didn't want that then, and I don't see that today. We know—we know—we are all in this together. We know that we'll all do better if we do the responsible thing, if all our neighbors have opportunities and if we live together as citizens in one community.

You have all helped to make that the new reality of 21st century America. I want you to be proud of it but not to rest on it. Help your Governor. Help your legislators. Realize the dreams of your children. Don't run away from the work of governing. Stay with the real things that real people care about and the politics will take care of themselves.

Thank you. God bless you. And on to tomorrow. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:23 p.m. at the Armory. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire and her husband, Bill; Jeff Woodburn, State chair, and Sophia Collier, State finance chair, New Hampshire State Democratic Party; J. Joseph GrandMaison, Director, Trade and Development Agency; Stephanie Powers, Director, School-to-Work Initiative, Department of Education; Patricia McMahon, Director, Community Outreach and Liaison, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration; Edward E. (Terry) Shumaker III, Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago; George C. Bruno, former U.S. Ambassador to Belize; Dick Swett, Ambassador to Denmark; political consultant Michael Whooley; and Mayor Patricia T. Russell of Keene, NH, and her husband, State Representative Ronald G. Russell.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With President Jacques Chirac of France and an Exchange With Reporters

February 19, 1999

President Clinton. Is everyone in?

Q. Yes, sir.

President Clinton. As you know, we're going to have a press conference at the conclusion of our meetings. But I just wanted to take this opportunity to welcome President Chirac and the members of his delegation back to the White House. We have had a good working relationship and a warm personal friendship. I'm delighted to see him.

We have a lot of important things to discuss, especially the situation in Kosovo, but also the work we've been doing on the international financial matters and many other things. And we'll be able to discuss them later at the press conference.

But mostly, I just want to welcome him here and give him the chance to make a few remarks, if you would like.

President Chirac. I want to say how happy I am to be with you here and with President Clinton, my good friend.

We're going to have a very interesting day's work together. We'll, of course, first be talking about Kosovo and also a number of other important questions, like the international financial monetary situation in preparation of the NATO summit and a number of other subjects.

And I want to thank President Clinton for his welcome.

Kosovo

Q. President Chirac, do you think that there will be a settlement, a peaceful settlement in Kosovo or military action? Do you think that both sides will make an accord by noon tomorrow?

President Chirac. I hope with all my heart that both sides would understand that their intention is to find an agreement, because the side which would not understand that would then have to bear the consequences. And those consequences would be serious for them but also for their country and their people—as the time for peace has come, and every side must make this effort to make peace possible. And we are determined, really determined and firm on this.

Q. President Clinton, does Mr. Milosevic deserve more time and, if not, sir, why not?

President Clinton. We'll answer all the other questions at the press conference.

NOTE: The exchange began at 12:05 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A journalist referred to President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). President Chirac spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

The President's News Conference With President Chirac of France

February 19, 1999

President Clinton. Please sit down. Good afternoon. President Chirac and I, as always, have had a very good meeting. We had a lot to discuss, and we have a lot to do together.

Most importantly, today we are working together to end the fighting in Kosovo and to help the people there obtain the autonomy and self-government they deserve. We now call on both sides to make the tough decisions that are necessary to stop the conflict immediately, before more people are killed and the war spreads.

The talks going on outside Paris are set to end on Saturday. The Kosovo Albanians have shown courage in moving forward the peace accord that we, our NATO allies, and Russia have proposed. Serbia's leaders now have a choice to make: They can join an agreement that meets their legitimate concerns and gives them a chance to show that an autonomous Kosovo can thrive as part of their country, or they can stonewall. But if they do that, they will be held accountable.

If there is an effective peace agreement, NATO stands ready to help implement it. We also stand united in our determination to use force if Serbia fails to meet its previous commitment to withdraw forces from Kosovo and if it fails to accept the peace agreement. I have ordered our aircraft to be ready, to act as part of a NATO operation, and I will continue to consult very closely with Congress in the days ahead.

The challenge in Kosovo and the one we have addressed in Bosnia underscore the central role NATO plays in promoting peace and stability in Europe. Today the President and I discussed the 50th anniversary summit, which will be held here in Washington in April, to admit Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic as new members, and to set NATO's course for the new century.

The conflicts in the Balkans also highlight the need to strengthen stability across south-east Europe. The United States and France are pleased to announce today that we will pursue a new initiative we hope other allies will join, to increase cooperation with south-east Europe's emerging democracies on se-

curity matters, to coordinate security assistance to them from NATO countries, to promote regional cooperation and economic development.

The President and I also discussed our common efforts to reform the global financial system and to support economic recovery in countries that have been so hard hit. Last fall, working with other G-7 nations and key emerging economies, we set out a comprehensive agenda: making financial systems more open and resilient, improving international cooperation on financial oversight. Just this weekend in Bonn, our finance ministers will address these topics, and the creation of a new financial stability forum.

We're moving ahead on promoting sound lending practices and strengthening protections for the most vulnerable members of societies when crisis strikes. We need to do more to reduce the debts of the poorest, most heavily indebted nations, as they seek to meet basic human needs and undertake economic reforms. And I thank President Chirac for championing this cause for such a long time. Our budget makes a significant new investment in that challenge, and we proposed ways to help the IMF, with its existing resources, do the same.

On these issues we're aiming to make real progress by the time of the June G-8 summit in Cologne, Germany. I very much appreciate the President's leadership in this area.

We discussed the continuing challenge of promoting economic recovery in Russia and working with Russia to prevent its weapons of mass destruction, missiles, and technologies from falling into the hands of outlaw nations and terrorists. We will continue our cooperation on securing peace in the Middle East. We talked about the Middle East peace process at some length. We talked about our common determination to restrain Iraq's weapons of mass destruction program.

We want to expand cooperation in Africa, promoting peace in the Great Lakes region, encouraging an African Crisis Response capability. And today we are announcing that we're joining together with African nations in an effort I spoke about first last year in Senegal, building an African Center for Security Studies, to promote peace and democracy.

Finally, Mr. President, I want to thank France for showing leadership by ratifying the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. One hundred fifty-two nations have signed the treaty, which would end nuclear testing forever and make it harder for more nations to develop nuclear weapons. Once again I want to express my hope that our Senate will also provide its advice and consent for ratification this year.

Mr. President, the floor is yours.

President Chirac. Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, first of all, I want to say how happy I am to be once again here in the United States and here in Washington. I'm happy to be in this country, which is where everything is always moving, this country which constantly surprises the world, and a country which for a long time I have been very fond of. And when I feel well, I feel happy, and once again I'm happy to be the guest of President Bill Clinton. And I think everyone knows the regard and the friendship I have and I've had for a long time for President Clinton, and I want to thank him once again for his hospitality.

The President has covered, more or less, all the subjects that were on the agenda of our talks, so I'm going to make two remarks only. The first is to say that our agreement on the present problems in Kosovo is an unqualified agreement. It's complete agreement. We're almost at the end of the time allotted for trying to work things out at Rambouillet, and after President Clinton, I would like to say to the two parties and in particular to President Milosevic, who in fact holds more or less the key to the solution, that the time has come to shoulder all his responsibilities and to choose the path of wisdom and not the path of war, which would bear very serious consequences for people who would make that choice, for themselves and for their people. It's a very heavy responsibility that they would be taking if they were to do that.

I've already had occasion to say that, as far as the Europeans are concerned, it is our continent which is involved here, and we want our continent to be at peace, and we will not accept that situation, such as the present situation in Kosovo, should continue.

My second remark concerns a subject which President Clinton has not mentioned but that we have talked about at some time and that for me it's the big problem, for the big issue for the beginning of the next century, and that is what President Clinton raised himself about a couple of months ago, in a talk he gave—the question of humanizing globalization, making globalization more human. Everyone understands that globalization is both inevitable and also it bears progress, and this can be understood every day, ever more. And this is something that must be—a process that must be encouraged. It's a good thing.

But everyone I think can also understand that there are or can be social consequences of this, and it's really our job to control them. And it's one of the big challenges I think of this society in the years to come. And for we, the Europeans, it was really very gratifying to hear the President of the United States put this issue to the fore of matters that the world has to contend with. And I entirely agree with what he has said. And it's also a question that we have talked about among ourselves.

Otherwise, President Clinton has, in fact, covered everything we have been talking about, so I won't add anything because I entirely agree with him. And of course, I also agree to reply to your questions on these important issues for the whole world.

President Clinton. [*Inaudible*—French and American journalists, beginning with Mr. Hunt [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

Kosovo/Iraq

Q. President Clinton, President Milosevic refused to meet with the U.S. Envoy today, Christopher Hill, and said that he would not give up Kosovo, even at the price of a bombing. Is there any possibility that NATO would extend the Saturday noon deadline for reaching an agreement? And what do you say to President Yeltsin of Russia when he said that, "we will not allow Kosovo to be touched?"

And for President Chirac, did you and President Clinton find agreement today on the issue of Iraqi sanctions?

President Clinton. First, let me say I think it would be a mistake to extend the

deadline. And I respect the position of Russia, and I thank the Russians for supporting the peace process, as well as the proposed agreement. We had many of the same tensions in Bosnia, where ultimately we wound up working together for peace. I believe that is what will happen.

I would like to go back to the—just very briefly—to the merits of the argument that Mr. Milosevic made. He says that if he accepts this multinational peacekeeping force, it's like giving up Kosovo. I personally believe it's the only way he can preserve Kosovo as a part of Serbia. Under their laws, Kosovo is supposed to be autonomous but a part of Serbia. Its autonomy was effectively stripped from it years ago.

We are now trying to find some way to untangle the injuries and harms and arguments that have come from both sides and permit a period of 3 years to develop within which the Serbian security forces can withdraw, a police force, civil institutions can be developed—we can give them a chance to prove that they can function together.

I don't think, unless we do this, there is any way for the integrity of Serbia ultimately to be preserved, because of the incredible hostility and the losses and the anger that's already there.

So I'm not trying to—at least from our part, and I believe President Chirac and all the Europeans feel the same way—we're trying to give this a chance to work, not trying to provide a wedge to undo Serbia.

Mr. President.

President Chirac. Well, I entirely share the position expressed by President Clinton. I would doubt that—I'm convinced that the only possibility for Mr. Milosevic, the only way he can keep Kosovo within internationally recognized frontiers, as of course, planned in the Yugoslav constitution, a high degree of substantial autonomy, substantial autonomy—the only way he can keep the situation is to accept the proposals that are made today. Any other solution, I repeat, would involve for Mr. Milosevic some very serious consequences, indeed.

Q. If everything fails tomorrow, what could then prevent a military strike on the part of NATO? If there is no agreement tomorrow, what would then prevent—

President Clinton. I think there would have to be an agreement before the strikes commence. I don't think there is an option. Because keep in mind, part of what we have asked is that President Milosevic do things that he has already agreed to do, as I said in my opening statement. And we would—the NATO nations have decided and have given the Secretary General authority to pursue a strategy which would at least reduce his capacity to take further aggressive military action against the Kosovar Albanians.

This assumes, of course, that he doesn't accept it and that they do, as we discussed. But that would be my position. I believe that is both our positions.

President Chirac. Without a shadow of a doubt.

President Clinton. Helen [Helen Thomas, United Press International]?

The Presidency/Lessons of Impeachment

Q. President Clinton, what lessons have you learned from your 13-month ordeal? Do you think the office of the Presidency has been harmed? And what advice would you give to future Presidents?

President Clinton. Well, of course, I've learned a lot of personal lessons, most of which I have already discussed. And Presidents are people, too. I have learned, again, an enormous amount of respect for our Constitution, our framers, and for the American people. And my advice to future Presidents would be to decide what you believe you ought to do for the country and focus on it and work hard. The American people hire you to do that and will respond if you work at it and if they sense that you're doing this for them.

Q. And you don't think the office of the President has been harmed?

President Clinton. Oh, I think the Constitution has been, in effect, reratified. And I hope that the Presidency has not been harmed. I don't believe it has been. I can't say that I think this has been good for the country, but we will see. I expect to have 2 good years here.

I think the American people expect the Congress and me to get back to work, expect us either not to have any destructive feelings or, if we do, not to let them get in the way

of our doing their business. These are jobs—these are positions of public responsibility. These are—and the United States has great responsibilities to its own people and to the rest of the world. And I don't believe that any of us can afford to let what has happened get in the way of doing our best for our own people and for the future. And I'm going to do my very best to do that. And I think that we should all discipline ourselves with that in mind.

Banana Trade Dispute

Q. My question is to both Presidents. Have you talked about bananas? Because this is an American-European problem but also a problem for France because of the Caribbean bananas. And have you found a compromise? Could President Clinton explain to me why the United States is being so aggressive on this business? Because to my knowledge, and contrary to France and Europe, the United States themselves don't produce bananas.

President Clinton. Yes, we talked about it. [Laughter] And we're being quite strong about it because we do have companies involved, and there are people involved in other countries, not just the Caribbean—Central America, for example—and because we think the trade law is clear. We won a trade dispute. We won. And we have been trying to—there's been a finding here, and we've been trying to work out a reasonable solution with the Europeans, especially with the British, and others, and there has been no willingness to resolve this.

We don't want to provoke a trade crisis, but we won. And from our point of view—this is one place where we disagree—the Europeans are basically saying, "Well, you won this trade fight under the law, but we still don't think you have a meritorious position. Therefore, we will not yield." Well, when we lose trade fights, we lose them. And if we're going to have a global trading system and a system for resolving disputes—which, most of us believe, normally take too long, anyway—and if we're, all of us, expected to have a reasonable resolution when we lose—and that's what you'd expect the United States to do—then that's what we want from Europe.

We took this matter through the normal chain of events, and we won. And I think most people in Europe believe we shouldn't have won, but sometimes we lose cases we think we shouldn't have lost, too. And therefore, we would like a resolution of this consistent with the finding of international trade law.

President Chirac. I would simply add this, that yes, we did talk about this problem, and President Clinton just said that the United States had companies—corporations involved. And my answer is that we have the actual workers who are involved. And I also added that the banana in the Caribbean was obviously the best, the best banana in the world, and that, therefore, they had to be safeguarded and in the interest of mankind, and I counted on him to understand this. [Laughter]

Hillary Clinton's Possible Senate Candidacy

Q. I wonder if you could share with us some of your thoughts about the pros and cons of—Senate seat in New York—Mrs. Clinton—

President Clinton. Well, first of all, I think it's important that you all understand—I think you know this—this is nothing that ever crossed her mind until other people began to mention it to her. To me, the most important thing is that she decides to do what she wants to do. And I will be strongly supportive of whatever decision she makes and will do all I can to help on this and any other decision from now on, just as she's helped me for the last 20-plus years. If she decided to do it and she were elected, I think she would do a fabulous job.

But I think that it's important to remember this is an election which occurs in November of 2000, and she has just been through a very exhausting year. And there are circumstances which have to be considered, and I think some time needs to be taken here.

I also think that even in a Presidential race, it's hard to keep a kettle of water boiling for almost 2 years. And so I just—from my point of view, this thing is—it's a little premature. And I would like to see her take—my advice has been to take some time, get some rest,

listen to people on both sides of the argument, and decide exactly what you think is right to do. And then, whatever she decides I'll be for.

Kosovo

Q. Mr. President, if it appears that the Serbs—they have to be sanctioned because they refuse the presence of NATO troops in Kosovo, have you the assurance that the Kosovo Liberation Army will renounce its demands on independence?

President Chirac. Well, as I said before, the pressure that we are exerting, legitimately, especially we're exercising on both parties, on both sides. And we replied to a question on Serbia because the question was on Serbia, but let's be perfectly clear: A lot will depend on the personal position adopted by Mr. Milosevic.

But it goes without saying that if the failure, the breakdown, was caused by the Kosovars, their responsibility, sanctions of a different kind, probably, but very firm sanctions would be applied against them. We haven't—there's no choice. I mean, we don't have to choose. We want peace; that's all.

President Clinton. First of all, I can entirely support what President Chirac said. But if I could just emphasize that the agreement requires that they accept autonomy, at least for 3 years and sets in motion a 3-year process to resolve all these outstanding questions. Three years would give us time to stop the killing, cool the tempers. And it would also give time for the Serbs to argue that if they return to the original constitutional intent, that is, to have genuine autonomy for Kosovo, as Kosovo once enjoyed—that that would be the best thing for them, economically and politically. And people would have a chance to see and feel those things.

Right now—after all that's gone on and all the people that have died and all the bloody fighting and all the incredibly vicious things that have been said, you know, we just need a timeout here. We need a process within which we can get the security forces out, as Mr. Milosevic said he would do, before—and build some internal institutions within Kosovo capable of functioning, and then see how it goes. I think that's the most important thing.

And so, yes, to go back to what President Chirac said, yes, both sides have responsibility. Their responsibility would be to acknowledge that that is the deal for the next 3 years, during which time we resolve the long-term, permanent questions.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's 168th news conference began at 3:44 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro); Christopher Hill, U.S. Ambassador to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; and President Boris Yeltsin of Russia. President Chirac spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

February 14

In the afternoon, the President and Hillary Clinton traveled to Merida, Mexico, where they toured the Governor's Palace with President Ernesto Zedillo of Mexico and his wife, Nilda.

February 15

In the morning, the President toured the grounds of the Hacienda Temozon with President Zedillo. In the evening, the President and Hillary Clinton returned to Washington, DC.

February 16

The President announced his intention to appoint Gregory L. Craig to the President's Export Council.

The White House announced that the President proposed \$956 million in disaster assistance for Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and other Caribbean nations struck

by Hurricanes Mitch and Georges in the fall of 1998.

February 17

The President declared a major disaster in Wyoming and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm on October 5–9, 1998.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Tucson, AZ, and San Francisco and Los Angeles, CA, on February 25–March 2, and to Arkansas and Texas on March 12–14.

February 18

In the morning, the President traveled to Dover, NH, and in the evening, he returned to Washington, DC.

The President named Maurice Goldhaber and Michael E. Phelps as the winners of the Enrico Fermi Award, given for a lifetime of achievement in the field of nuclear energy.

February 19

In the evening, at a ceremony in the Roosevelt Room, the President granted a posthumous pardon to Lt. Henry O. Flipper, USA. Later the President attended a reception celebrating the 90th anniversary of the NAACP in the Great Hall at the National Museum of Women in the Arts.

The President announced his intention to appoint Valerie J. Bradley, Joyce A. Keller, John F. Kennedy, Jr., K. Charlie Lakin, T.J. Monroe, Elizabeth C. Pittinger, Michael L. Remus, Jacquelyn B. Victorian, Barbara Y. Wheeler, and Sheryl White-Scott as members of the President's Committee on Mental Retardation. Ms. Bradley will continue to serve as Chair.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

NOTE: No nominations were submitted to the Senate during the period covered by this issue.

Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released February 15

Transcript of a press briefing by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Attorney General Janet Reno, National Security Adviser Sandy Berger, Office of National Drug Control Policy Director Barry McCaffrey, and National Economic Council Deputy Director Lael Brainard on the President's visit to Mexico

Fact sheet: U.S. Support for Fire Prevention and Restoration Through the Mexico Nature Conservation Fund

Fact sheet: U.S.-Mexico Counterdrug Cooperation: Binational Performance Measures of Effectiveness

Fact sheet: U.S.-Mexico Economic Cooperation: New Financing Agreement To Support U.S. Exports to Mexico

Fact sheet: U.S.-Mexico Cooperation in Law Enforcement

Fact sheet: U.S.-Mexico Cooperation Against Border Violence

Fact sheet: U.S.-Mexico Cooperation on Tuberculosis Control

Fact sheet: U.S.-Mexico Civil Aviation Agreement

Released February 16

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joe Lockhart

Transcript of remarks by the First Lady and Tipper Gore on debt relief to Central American countries affected by Hurricane Mitch

Transcript of a press briefing by Assistant Secretary of State Peter Romero; Ambassador Wendy Sherman, Counselor of the State Department; Assistant Director of Aid for Latin America and the Caribbean Mark Schneider; and Office of Management and Budget Executive Associate Director Josh

Gotbaum on debt relief to Central American countries affected by Hurricane Mitch

Released February 17

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joe Lockhart

Released February 19

Statement by the Press Secretary on acceleration of assistance for Jordan

**Acts Approved
by the President**

NOTE: No acts approved by the President were received by the Office of the Federal Register during the period covered by this issue.