

Then the next year we did the Balanced Budget Act, and it has worked superbly. The only problem with it is that the Medicare cuts were too burdensome on certain groups, and we're trying to fix that. But I can tell you that if this tax cut passes, there will be breathtaking cuts in every area of our national life that you would believe is important, over and above what it would do to totally rob us of any chance to stabilize and improve Medicare and save it for the baby boom generation.

We have big tests as a country. How are we going to deal with the aging of America? How are we going to give all of our kids a world-class education, especially since more and more of them come from families whose first language is not English? Those of us who expect to be alive in 20 years, or hope to be, better hope we do a good job of educating those kids. How are we going to deal with all these other challenges? How are we going to bring economic opportunity to people who still haven't felt it? How are we going to stabilize the economy so that we'll still be growing even better 10, 15, 20 years from now? These are big challenges. But they are high-class problems in the sense that nations rarely get these opportunities.

Once-in-a-lifetime you get a chance to stand up with your country in good shape, bring people together, look down the road, and say, yes, these are big challenges, and we're going to check them off—one, two, three, four—because we have the money and the vision to deal with them.

So my appeal today is that we not get into a big fight; we just go back to basic arithmetic. These tax bills the majority is pushing could not get the support of their own Members if we had a chart up on the wall that says, here is what we have to spend just to stay where we are today in education, defense, the environment, medical research; here's what every expert says it takes to stabilize Medicare; here is the interest savings you ought to be putting into the Social Security Trust Fund; here is what we have to do to fix health care. They agree we have to do some more for veterans care. They agree with these things.

The numbers don't add up. We cannot take the vacation without paying the home

mortgage, the car payment, and the college loan bill. We can't do it. We can't eat the cake until the vegetables and the soup are out of the way. And we cannot defy the basic laws of arithmetic. And contrary to some of the debate, we cannot forget the stories.

This is about how millions upon millions upon millions of Americans will live. Will they live in dignity and health, or will they live in want and insecurity, imposing unconscionable burdens on their children, and limiting their children's ability to raise their grandchildren? Or will we use this moment to build a more prosperous, more just, more decent society? This is about way more than drugs and trips to the doctor. This is about what kind of people we are and whether we can look beyond today to the tomorrow we all want for all of us.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:24 a.m. in Presidential Hall (formerly Room 450) in the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Judith G. Cato, member, Maryland Commission on Aging, who introduced the President. The transcript made available by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks on the 25th Anniversary of the Legal Services Corporation

July 27, 1999

Thank you very much. Let me say, first of all, I apologize for being late. I've been over meeting with the Russian Prime Minister, and you would have given me a pass, I think. I was doing good work, I hope.

Lucy, thank you for your statement, and on behalf of all of us, for the award. Let me say, I could just sit here and sort of look at all the people that are here. I hesitate to even call people by name, but I want to thank all the Members of Congress who are here, including Congressman Berman and Congressman Ramstad. I'd also—I see Mr. Conyers and Congressman Cardin, Congressman Allen, Congresswoman Waters, former Congressman Fox, and Father Drinan, we're glad to see you here, sir. Thank you. Sarge and Eunice Shriver; the ABA presidents, Jerry

Shestack, Bill Ide, Roberta Cooper Ramo, William Paul. And I see former Secretary of Commerce and Trade Ambassador Mickey Kantor, who was on the Legal Services board with Hillary.

We all go back a long way, all of us who care about this, it seems like. Doug Eakeley and Tom Allen and I, we went abroad together as young men 30 years ago. We must have gotten infected with a Legal Services virus. [*Laughter*] Judge Broderick, it's good to see you here. And Jim Ramstad said, we were there 36 years ago—is that how long it was? [*Laughter*] They're coming tomorrow; you should come back. Make you feel old, or young, as the case may be.

I want to say that for our family, the Legal Services Corporation has been very important. My wife has done many things I've been proud of, but I have never been more proud of anything than her service on the Legal Services Corporation to which President Carter appointed her, and the work she did as the chair of that Corporation.

You know, here in Washington, everybody's got a lawyer. Whether you need one or not, everybody's got a lawyer, you know? [*Laughter*] We forget what it's like to have a lawyer be the difference between homelessness and having a stable home; between unemployment and the security of a job; between the disintegration of a household and holding a family together in difficult times. The Legal Services Corporation has made equal justice not a political cause, but an everyday occurrence. We have tried to advocate that—I see our former chief advocate, Mr. Dellinger, there—but this is a personal thing for those of us who have experienced it.

Hillary's brother, in the back, was a public defender for many years in Miami. And Janet Reno, as a prosecutor, supported efforts to make sure that everybody had a decent defense—something that I think is a sterling example.

Every one of you in this room has that sort of story. But those of us who are old enough to remember when it was different feel it perhaps the more strongly. And I want to thank Howard Berman and Jim Ramstad for giving voice to the struggles we're now engaged in in Congress. Sometimes I think

that the Legal Services Corporation, even though it's very young—25 years old—is suffering from the infirmity of its success and, perhaps, from the success of our economy at this moment that we have people who may make this decision without the benefit of memory. So I ask you to remember.

It was in 1962, not that long ago, when the Supreme Court had not yet established a constitutional right to counsel in criminal cases. Then the idea of legal assistance in civil cases was a distant dream. Disadvantaged Americans who had a hard enough time just getting through the day found that the legal system was stacked against them, and even if it wasn't, they couldn't possibly know it because they couldn't get a lawyer.

Our country's faith in the law was strained in the hearts of many because of injustice and the stain of racism. But the men and women who founded the Legal Services Corporation knew that educating people about the legal rights they did have was critical in the fight for equal rights; that if people did not know about their rights and could not exercise them, the fact that the Supreme Court had enshrined them was of little practical impact.

Today, thanks in large measure to the efforts of the Legal Services Corporation and the countless lawyers you have inspired, it is clear that a lot of progress has been made. Lucy's story really tells the tale. The doors of opportunity are open wider, and we are fortunate now to be living in a period of unique prosperity, with the lowest minority unemployment in our history and the highest homeownership in our history. We have the lowest crime rates and welfare rolls in a generation. But you and I know there are still a lot of poor folks out there. There are still people in places that have been left behind, even by this great recovery.

I traveled across the country a couple of weeks ago, from Appalachia to the Mississippi Delta, to East St. Louis, to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, south Phoenix, and East Los Angeles. And there are still people out there—most of them, by the way, are working; most of them are working, doing the same thing you and I do every day, for much lesser rewards—who are having enormous difficulties. So we have this.

It is also true that in spite of the progress that we've made in meeting the promise of equal justice, there are still a lot of people out there who don't trust the legal system or the law enforcement system. So there is a need, a crying need for the work of the Legal Services Corporation. And that's idealistic, hard-working lawyers—virtually 100 percent of whom could be making a lot more money doing something else—who believe that the law should be an instrument that benefits us all equally and that the rights that are enunciated in the law books and in the Supreme Court cases should be real in the lives of all Americans.

President Kennedy did call for equal justice here 36 years ago. Last week in this room, with another glittering array of legal talent, from lawyers to judges to scholars of all races and backgrounds in this country, we renewed our pledge to that ideal.

Today I think we have to say again, equal justice is the birthright of every American. It is the obligation of those of us in public life and politics to try to bring the benefits of this economic recovery into every corner of our country. But the Scripture says that the poor will be with us always. But American law says they will not be disadvantaged under the law. And until we close the gap between our principles and our reality, we will need the Legal Services Corporation.

For years now, some in Congress have tried to dismantle it. They have seen it as a political thing. I do not believe it is political to say a poor person should have the same right as a rich person. I do not believe it is political to say we have to bring the law into the real lives of all Americans.

We have stood firm against the opposition to the Legal Services Corporation. I'm proud that every budget we have submitted has requested more funding for Legal Services. Like Congressman Ramstad and Congressman Berman—and by their presence here, all the other Members who are here—I was deeply disappointed that last week the Appropriations Subcommittee in the House voted to cut my request in half, leaving hundreds of thousands of American families without the critical legal protections they need.

But need is the wrong word. Under the law, they are entitled to them as citizens. For 25 years, the Legal Services Corporation has stood above the fray of partisanship, but in the fray of the grimy details of daily life that require legal protection and legal assistance. I ask Congress to put politics aside, to follow on this issue the model of the Legal Services Corporation, and give the full funding and support the Corporation needs. In a very large budget, it is a very small item. But it has an enormous impact.

Think how outraged Americans of both political parties in all political philosophies would have been if this fine woman and all of her fellow tenants had been thrown on the street for failure to pay electric bills that they paid. We could have passed the hat in America and collected the annual budget of the Legal Services Corporation to help them. You know that's true. How then can we walk away from the people who save them, and can save so many like them every day, in every way—in publicized and quiet ways that we will never know?

Thomas Jefferson once said that equal justice is a bright constellation of our political faith. With conscience and conviction, let us get the support for the Legal Services Corporation it needs. We cannot let the bright constellation dim. Twenty-five is too young, and there are still too many people out there who need you.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:08 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Sergey Stepashin of Russia; Legal Services Corporation client Lucy Johnson, who introduced the President; former Representative Jon D. Fox; R. Sargent Shriver, honorary cochairman, Consortium for the National Equal Justice Library, and his wife, Eunice Kennedy Shriver; Father Robert F. Drinan, professor of law, Georgetown University; Jerome J. Shestack, R. William Ide III, Roberta Cooper Ramo, former presidents, and William G. Paul, president-elect, American Bar Association; Douglas Eakeley, chair, Legal Services Corporation board of directors; retired Marin County, CA, Superior Court Judge Henry J. Broderick; former Justice Department Solicitor General Walter E. Dellinger; and the First Lady's brother, Hugh

Rodham. The transcript made available by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Statement on the Death of Dan Dutko

July 27, 1999

Hillary and I are deeply saddened by the untimely death of our good friend Dan Dutko. Dan has been a friend, an ally, and an adviser for nearly three decades. He enriched our lives with his enthusiasm and served his country with distinction. He deeply believed in the cause of the Democratic Party and worked tirelessly to ensure that it would have the ability to communicate effectively with the voters. He was a devoted supporter of Israel and a champion of national service.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Deborah, and their two young children, Matthew and Jonathan.

Statement on House Action To Extend Normal Trade Relations With China

July 27, 1999

I welcome the strong bipartisan vote in the House today to extend normal trade relations (NTR) with China.

Extending NTR is the right way to advance America's interests. Our exports to China have nearly tripled over the past decade to \$14.2 billion. NTR boosts not only America's economy, but also those of Hong Kong and Taiwan, as well as China.

NTR promotes China's integration into the global economy, which in turn strengthens market-oriented reformers within China. Expanding trade can help bring greater social change to China by spreading the tools, contacts, and ideas that promote freedom. Maintaining NTR helps us to move China toward global norms on human rights, weapons of mass destruction, crime and drugs, and the environment, as well as on trade. China clearly has far to go in all these areas, and we will continue to address our differences directly and protect our national interests.

I remain determined to pursue an agreement for China to join the WTO on viable commercial terms—not as a favor to China but as a means of opening and reforming China's markets and holding China to the rules of the global trading system. I remain ready to work closely with Congress to secure permanent NTR status for China in the context of a commercially strong WTO agreement.

Statement on the Organization of African Unity's Framework Agreement for Ethiopia and Eritrea

July 27, 1999

I welcome the announcement by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) that Ethiopia and Eritrea have accepted the OAU Framework Agreement and the Modalities for its implementation, and agreed to steps proposed by the OAU to facilitate implementation of the Agreement. This is a significant step toward peace.

We have worked intensively with the OAU in recent weeks to help bring an end to this devastating conflict. My Special Envoy, Anthony Lake, has just returned from the region, where he met with the leaders of both governments and the OAU. The United States will continue to support the efforts of the OAU under the chairmanship of Algerian President Bouteflika to bring this tragic conflict to a speedy conclusion.

Remarks to the American Legion Boys Nation and Girls Nation

July 28, 1999

Thank you very much. I always look forward to your coming every year because I know we'll have plenty of enthusiasm to light up the old house here. [*Laughter*]

Let me begin by thanking Secretary Riley, who is, I'm almost sure, the longest serving Secretary of Education in American history, and I am quite sure the finest Secretary of Education we have ever had. And I thank him for his service.

I would like to thank the officials of Boys and Girls Nation who are here: the American Legion National Commander, Butch Miller;