

people with disabilities from going to work. All those things can be done in the next few weeks, and we intend to work hard to see that they are done.

But let me close again with the subject that brought us here today. Colleen Kayden came here and spoke about her experience as a pharmacist. She also spoke for every pharmacist and every community pharmacy in America. Stephen Callus came here and talked about his life. He could have been speaking for millions upon millions of seniors.

Time is passing here, and I want to get back to the point I made at the beginning. I hope to be one of those baby boom seniors one day—and it's getting there in a terrible hurry—[laughter]—but I have lived, already, quite a good number of years. Never in my lifetime has this country had the opportunity we now have—free of war, free of internal discord—to chart a course for the future that will embrace all Americans and that will consciously deal with the great challenges before us.

Only once in my lifetime have we had an economy that approximated this economy. That was in the early sixties—but we had to deal with the civil rights challenge and with the Vietnam war. We have never had an economy like this and, basically, the freedom within our own hands to just chart a course for the future. And there are some things that we know are going to be out there, including how many kids we're going to have and what their different backgrounds are; and how many seniors we're going to have and what their absolutely certain health challenges will be. And we absolutely have no conceivable excuse for walking away from the chance of a lifetime to build the century of our dreams.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:55 a.m. in Presidential Hall (formerly Room 450) in the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Medicare recipient Stephen Callus, who introduced the President; and pharmacist Colleen Kayden.

Remarks on Departure for New York City and an Exchange With Reporters

October 25, 1999

Federal Budget

The President. Last February I sent to the Congress a balanced budget that maintains our fiscal discipline, pays down the debt, saves Social Security, strengthens and modernized Medicare with a prescription drug coverage, and meets our most pressing priorities—putting 100,000 teachers in the classroom, another 50,000 community police on our street, protecting the environment, and strengthening our national security. And everything in the budget I sent is paid for without touching a penny of the Social Security surplus.

Unfortunately, the congressional majority has rejected the approach I recommended. And so, in the 8 months since I sent them the balanced budget, they have failed to produce a budget of their own that meets our Nation's priorities and values. Instead, they have tried one thing after another, one unsuccessful scheme after another, to meet the budget priorities.

Now the majority wants an arbitrary across-the-board cut in all Federal investment. The plan would cut military recruiting and, according to the Department of Defense, would cut as many as 70,000 men and women from our Armed Forces. Their plan would cut off thousands of children from the benefits of Head Start, cut childhood immunizations and our cleanup of toxic waste. It would do something they have pledged not to do. With all these cuts, it would still spend the Social Security surplus, as their own Congressional Budget Office has said it would do.

And yet, in spite of this, Congress has seen fit to fund its own pork-barrel projects, like a ship the Pentagon says it doesn't need and aircraft it didn't ask for. They've found a way to fund corporate welfare for oil companies and other special interests and to fund their own pay raise.

Now, the American people sent us here to make tough choices. But these are the

wrong choices. I will not allow Congress to raise its own pay and fund its own pork-barrel projects and still make devastating across-the-board cuts in everything from education to child nutrition to the FBI. I will not sign any budget that puts special interests above the national interest.

Now, this week I may be forced to veto several of the appropriations bills because they fail to meet our most pressing national priorities. I have decided to sign into law the Department of Defense appropriations bill, and I have just done that, because in good conscience I cannot allow our national security needs to be held hostage to this budget battle. This legislation provides funding for our most critical military needs, including weapons procurement and modernization, research and development, and, importantly, a much needed pay raise for our men and women in uniform.

I had proposed the first sustained increase in defense spending in a decade, and this bill will help to maintain that. Still, what Congress sent me is far from perfect. The legislation is loaded with things the Pentagon didn't ask for and doesn't need. It applies accounting gimmicks to important areas.

For example—listen to this—Congress designated the \$7.2 billion for base operations and basic training, something our military needs and depends upon every year, year-in and year-out, as an “unforeseen emergency” expense.

Despite my reservations, I am signing this bill—I have signed it—because it's crucial to our national security and our military readiness, because the troops that defend our interests abroad deserve the strongest support we can provide here at home.

The second action I have just taken is on the appropriations bills for the Departments of State, Justice, and Commerce. Today I vetoed that bill. I vetoed it because it fails to fund the additional 50,000 community police we need to keep crime going down in our communities. We have the lowest crime rate in 30 years, but we can't stop until America is the safest big country in the world.

This bill fails to provide the funding to give the American people their day in court against the tobacco companies. It fails to take a strong stand, indeed, it fails, inexplicably,

to take any stand, whatever, against hate crimes. And by failing to provide for our obligations, including our U.N. dues in arrears, it imperils not only our vote in the United Nations but the ability to meet our obligations and, therefore, to maintain our national security.

The appropriations bill for the Interior Department is no better. If Congress sends it to me in its current form, with provisions that weaken, rather than strengthen our environmental programs, I will have to veto that, too.

On Friday the temporary resolution that keeps the Government running again will expire. That's the second such measure to have come and gone—another week, another deadline—and still we don't have a budget like the one I proposed that pays down the debt, saves Social Security, reforms and modernizes Medicare, and meets our most important national priorities.

They have not lived up to their obligations and the commitment they made last year to put 100,000 teachers in our classroom. They have not provided for another 50,000 community police to keep crime going down in our community. They have not done what is necessary to protect our environment.

Now, even though time is short, we still have a good chance to meet these goals. Today my budget negotiators are continuing to work with Congress to finish the job. I hope that the Members of Congress will work with us in good faith to make this a season of progress. And I remain committed to that end.

Thank you very much.

Learjet Crash in South Dakota

Q. Mr. President, was there a possibility you might have had to order an attack on that plane, the Learjet, as it was flying north?

The President. Well, let me say, first of all, I am profoundly sorry for the loss of Payne Stewart, who has had such a remarkable career and impact on his sport, and a remarkable resurgence in the last couple of years; and the members of his group, including the two pilots and two others who were with him. This is a very sad day.

I am very grateful for the work the FAA did and for the two Air Force pilots and the

others in the Air Force that monitored this plane and made every effort to try to make contact with it. They did everything that could humanly be done, and they were looking out for the safety of everyone involved. And I'm just sorry that it crashed and what happened, happened.

Candidacy of Pat Buchanan

Q. Mr. President, Pat Buchanan announced today he will run for the Reform Party nomination. Any comments from you, sir?

The President. No. [Laughter]

Defense Department Appropriations Bill

Q. Mr. President, on the defense bill, sir, given your strong objections to it, why couldn't you have vetoed the bill and gotten the provisions which you wanted by negotiating with Congress? Did you not have the Democratic votes to sustain your veto?

The President. Well, I think we could have sustained a veto, although it would have been a close call. I'm fairly confident we could have sustained it. But I didn't think it was fair, frankly, to put the Democrats in the position of being attacked by the Republicans for being against the defense budget that the Democratic Party has basically pursued.

The core of this budget is the policy of our party—not just me as President, and not just our administration, the President, the Vice President, the Secretary of Defense—it's the policy of our party to give the military a chance, after 10 years of defense reductions, to have the pay increase, to have the improvements in quality of life, and to have the military modernization.

The pork barrel that is in this defense bill is not unknown to Capitol Hill. But what is unknown, of course, that we've never seen anything like before, is declaring daily operations to be emergencies so that they can appear not to be spending the Social Security surplus when they are.

But I felt, on balance, given the urgent need to get the pay increase out and to begin the modernization programs, it was the right thing to do. I also thought it would show good faith with the Members of Congress.

But I think it is—I will say again—I also felt, as a practical matter, that we should focus on the bills where the substantive deficiencies are, in the teachers, in the police officers, in the environmental programs, in the absence of hate crimes legislation, in the failure to pay the U.N. dues. I think we should focus on the bills where the real flaws are.

And I think—and I have made it clear that insofar as I proposed increased investments over and above what the Congress has recommended, I am prepared to pay for them, and I think they ought to do the same with theirs. And we need to work together and get this worked out. We can do this. This is terribly important, and we can do it.

But the idea of just saying, "Well, we'll have an across-the-board cut, and using some percentage term that makes it seem smaller than it is without considering the consequences," I think, is terrible.

And let me point out, just on the defense bill, if they put in this across-the-board cut, after having mandated that so much money to this plane or this boat or this depot or this reconstruction project, the Pentagon will have no choice but to lay off, the DOD says, up to 70,000 people.

So I don't think that's an acceptable resolution to this, and I hope that we can work together and work through this. But I am determined to keep fighting for something that we can all be proud of. And we can still do it.

Yes, ma'am.

Alternatives in Budget Negotiations

Q. Mr. President, you've made clear you oppose across-the-board spending cuts, and the Republicans have made clear they don't support your revenue proposals. Would you be willing to find common ground in spending bills that are based on a combination of OMB and CBO scoring?

The President. Well, they're already doing—they've used a few OMB scoring devices when it worked to their advantage, but I have no objection to that, because we think we're right and on balance. Over the last 7 years, our scoring has been quite accurate. So I will work with them on that.

I also think there are other alternatives here. There are alternatives between turning every ordinary expenditure into an emergency and their adopting my proposal for a 55 cent cigarette tax. There are lots of other ways that we can bridge these gaps.

What I have recommended in investments, in the Middle East peace talks, in reducing the nuclear threat, in paying our U.N. dues, in the 100,000 teachers—what I've recommended in this coming year does not amount to a great deal of money. I can offer them ways to pay for that. And then they need to find ways to pay for some of their extra spending. And if we'll work together, we can do this. We can do it in a timely fashion, and we won't have to have a whole series of other continuing resolutions.

And I hope we can do it. I think we can do it in the next couple of weeks if we put our minds to it.

Third Continuing Resolution

Q. Mr. President, are you prepared to sign another continuing resolution, sir?

The President. Of course. I think—let me say, I have serious problems with a lot of this, as I've said. But I can also tell you, we are making some progress. I see the progress being made, and it's just a question—they will have to decide if they want to work with me to get this resolved. But I think I owe it to them, because we committed to work in good faith, to sign another continuing resolution, and I will do that.

Thank you.

Q. In weeks? Days?

The President. Well, I don't know how many days it will be. But it ought to be an appropriate amount of time for us to finish. And it shouldn't be too long, but there needs to be enough time for us to finish. And I'll keep working with them.

Thank you.

Legislative Agenda

Q. Mr. President, on the hate crimes situation and Pat Buchanan, may I just try one more on that? Do you think his campaign at this time is going to further incite racial and ethnic hatred?

The President. Well, I hope not, but that's more up to him than it is to me. And

it's also a matter of how we respond to it. All I'm saying is, after all we've been through in this country in the last couple of years and all the hate crimes we've seen, I just don't see how we can possibly walk away from this session of Congress and not pass this.

And I guess I ought to say, in reaction to the previous question about the continuing resolution, we should remember that in addition to the budgets, the fact that there is a continuing resolution and the Congress will stay in session gives us the chance to pass the bill that would enable more disabled people to go to work. It gives us a chance to pass the Patients' Bill of Rights. It gives us a chance to pass the minimum wage. We've got a chance to do a lot of other good things to end the year on a very high note and a very positive note for the American people. So we have to just keep plugging away.

And I think all of us have an obligation to try to minimize racial, ethnic, and other kinds of discrimination, and we just have to keep working at it. And I'm going to do that.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:03 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Statement Honoring Chinese-American Veterans of World War II *October 25, 1999*

I am honored to recognize the contributions of Chinese-Americans during World War II. This untold story is one of great patriotism and heroism. Some 20,000 Chinese-Americans served our country during this period as aviation specialists, paratroopers, military intelligence officers, medics, in the Women Army Corps (WAC's) and Women Army Air Force Service (WASP's) and so on. From Normandy to prisoner of war camps they served this Nation with great pride and courage.

Asian-Americans, as demonstrated by the veterans I met today, have proved over and over again their loyalty to this country. It is intolerable that the patriotism of Asian-Americans continues to be questioned, in the light of the recent allegations of espionage at one of our national laboratories. Asian-American scientists like those who have