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well be a delay between the receipt of information and the determination that such information is ''credible'', I regard the 15-day period as commencing upon that determination.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
November 8, 1999.

NOTE: H.R. 1175, approved November 8, was assigned Public Law No. 106–89. This statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 9.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Cabinet Members and an Exchange With Reporters

November 9, 1999

Budget Negotiations

The President. Good morning. We're about to begin a Cabinet meeting that will be a briefing on the current state of the budget negotiations. As I think all of you know, our budget negotiators have been meeting with congressional leaders almost around the clock in an effort to complete our work and produce a budget that reflects the values of our people, lives within our means, and looks to the future.

We are seeing encouraging signs of real progress in our efforts to put 50,000 community police officers on our streets and keep the crime rate coming down, in our new markets initiative that seeks to bring investment to areas of our country that have not participated fully in our prosperity, in our efforts to preserve and protect our environment. We are even seeing the first signs of agreement.

But there's still a lot of work to be done, a number of critical priorities yet to be resolved. Most important is the commitment to a quality education and our agreement to hire 100,000 new highly qualified teachers to reduce class size in the early grades. We will keep working with Congress to keep the promise that both of us made to the people of America last year.

The Senate's voting on a minimum wage bill today. I urge them to pass a bill that helps more Americans into the circle of opportunity and to do it in a way that does not give unfair and excessive tax breaks to special interests. Congress also needs to pass a strong hate crimes bill to protect more of our citizens from violence and bigotry.

And I am hopeful that we can resolve these issues and the other remaining issues, especially the one involving United Nations dues, so that we can complete our work. It's still possible that we can complete our work in the next few days and get out of here. And we're working hard—Mr. Lew's working hard particularly, and Mr. Podesta and Mr. Ricchetti and others, and I thank them for their efforts. And I'm going to give the Cabinet an update.

Education Legislation

Q. Mr. President, on education, what is really wrong with the Republican idea of giving the money to the school districts and letting them decide whether to buy computers or hire new teachers?

The President. Well, first of all, we have done a great deal for the school districts on computers, and in 4 years we went from 4 of our school districts wired to 51 percent.

Secondly, there is flexibility—Secretary Riley might want to answer this—but there's flexibility in that bill if the schools get their classes down. But Secretary Riley brought that study with him today, we mentioned yesterday, that gives clear evidence that smaller classes in the early grades have permanent learning benefits. And I think that we need to stay with that.

We don't have enough money to spend, in my judgment, to risk wasting any of it. And when the educators and local school leaders and all the educational research agree that something needs to be done and we allocate the money for it, I don't think we should turn around and break the commitment and just say, ''We'll give you a blank check. We don't really care what happens to the money.'' We can't afford to waste a penny of the money we spend on education.

UnitedHealthcare

Q. Mr. President, what do you think of a major HMO deciding that doctors should say whether you're sick or well?

The President. Good for them. I applaud them. And they're large enough that they

might be really able to do it and have an impact on this.

You know—Secretary Shalala can maybe refresh my memory, but as I remember, when we outlined the principles for a Patients' Bill of Rights in the commission that Secretary Shalala, Secretary Herman headed, I think there were—I don't know—14 or 15 HMO's that agreed right then, but some of them were not big enough to basically withstand the economic competition if they did it and others didn't. So I think it's a wonderful thing they've done, and I hope it's the first step toward a resolution of this issue.

Situation in Chechnya

Q. Mr. President, on Russia and its actions in Chechnya, are you comfortable that they are responding to your appeals for humanitarian concerns, as far as civilian casualties, in that situation there?

The President. I don't think you can use the words "comfortable" and "Chechnya" in the same sentence, in any way. All I can tell you is that we will continue to press for a minimization of civilian casualties and a maximum use of negotiated options to settle this. I think in the end, there will have to be a political solution, and I hope that the end will come sooner rather than later, so fewer people will die.

Q. But are they responding to you, sir, when you ask them not——

The President. Well, I think the United States and the rest of the world, the more we ask, the more likely it is to occur at a sooner date. But I don't know—I think that if I—however I answer that minimizes the chances that we'll have any influence over the decisions, because I think no country wants to be seen as giving in to pressure from another country. But I think they are listening.

Press Secretary Joe Lockhart. Thank you, everybody.

President's Visit to Greece

Q. Are you confident there will be good security in Greece when you go there?

The President. Oh, I think so. You know, I know that Greece has a long and rich history of communists, anarchists, others on the left, demonstrating, and they all disagreed with my position in Kosovo, as you know. But the United States and Greece are allies not only in NATO but in many other important ways.

We want very badly to see a resolution of the tensions between Greece and Turkey in the Aegean and especially over Cyprus. And I think all Greeks share that hope without regard to their political views. So I expect the demonstrations, and I'm not troubled by them, and I think that the security issues will be fine.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:02 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on Presenting Congressional Gold Medals to the Little Rock Nine

November 9, 1999

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Senator Daschle, Leader Gephardt, Senator Hutchison, Senator Lincoln, Members of Congress, Secretary Riley, and members of the Cabinet and administration; a special word of thanks to Congressman Thompson and to my good friend Senator Bumpers.

The great privilege of speaking last is that you get the last word. [*Laughter*] The great burden is that everything that needs to be said has been said. [*Laughter*]

I would like to begin by introducing some people who have not yet been introduced but whose presence here is altogether fitting. The story of the Little Rock Nine, in the end, is the story of the triumph of the rule of law and the American Constitution which was given expression not only by a decision of the United States Supreme Court but by a decision of a President determined to enforce the rule of law.

A couple of hours ago I had the great honor of signing legislation naming the Old Executive Office Building the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. President Eisenhower's son, daughter-in-law, and granddaughter are here, and I would like to ask General John Eisenhower, Joanne, and