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contained in subsection 599D(b) to the full extent authorized by subsection 599D(c). This waiver shall take effect immediately and shall continue until the expiration of subsection 599D(b).

You are hereby authorized and directed to transmit this waiver to the Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on International Relations of the House of Representatives.

You are authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

William J. Clinton

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 30.

Remarks Prior to Departure for San Francisco, California, and an Exchange With Reporters

November 30, 1999

Parental Leave

The President. Hello. Thank you. Good morning, ladies and gentleman. The people here with me at the podium are, obviously, Secretary Herman, but also Katie and Eric Banks and their son, Collin, of Fairfax, Virginia; Jonathan and Teresa Graham, and their two children, from Baltimore; Darsie Cahall and James Baker, and their three children, from Takoma Park, Maryland.

I'll say a little more about them in a moment. You can see this is a family event. [*Laughter*] We've orchestrated the children.

Before I leave for the World Trade Organization meeting on the West Coast, I want to talk a little about how we're using the strength of our economy to help strengthen working families.

Yesterday I signed a budget that maintains the fiscal responsibility that has given us what will be in February the longest economic expansion in our history and at the same time lives up to the values of the American people. We have no higher value than family, but too many of our families are having trouble balancing the demands of home and work. Today I'm using my Executive order—authority—to give these parents new tools to succeed at home and on the job.

The surging technology and soaring prosperity we currently enjoy are the result of a lot of hard work and very long hours by the American people. In fact, today many working parents are forced to make the unacceptable choice between being good workers and good parents. Too often, in our round-the-world, round-the-clock economy, there just don't seem to be enough hours in the day for parents to do what they need to do. That's why we've worked hard to help parents balance work and family.

Last May I asked Secretary Herman to develop new ways to address this problem. Today I'm announcing a proposed Labor Department rule that lets States use their unemployment insurance to offer paid leave to new parents. This initiative is totally voluntary for States. It helps them empower more working parents, like the ones standing with me today. With this act, the United States joins the rest of the world's advanced economies, all of whom already have some form of paid leave for parents.

When little Collin was born, his mother, Katie, was working as a waitress; his dad was working as a head electrical technician for a small company. Unfortunately, he was born ill and had to be in intensive care for several weeks. Katie took unpaid leave and eventually quit her job to be with her son. Collin's dad, Eric, wanted to take leave but couldn't afford to do so. Once Collin was well enough, Katie looked for and, fortunately, landed another job. But both Katie and her husband would have and should have been able to take paid leave to care for their son. That's what this parental leave initiative is all about.

I believe giving States the flexibility to experiment with paid employment leave is one of the best things we can do to strengthen our families and help new mothers and fathers meet their responsibilities both at home and at work.

State flexibility and the voluntary nature of this effort are key to its success. In our strong economy, we hope States will take advantage of this new option, and we believe those that do will balance this new benefit with the imperative of maintaining a fiscally sound unemployment insurance program.

This effort builds on our commitment to giving working families more tools to help them adapt to the new economy, from expanding the earned-income tax credit to our welfare-to-work efforts, from increasing funding for child care to HOPE scholarships.

In the budget bill I signed yesterday, we fought for and won a doubling of resources for after-school programs to give young people a safe place to study between the end of their school day and the end of their parents' work day.

I'm especially proud that the first bill I signed as President, in 1993, was the family and medical leave law. Since then, millions of Americans—we believe well over 20 million—have used it to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave to care for a newborn or sick relative without losing their jobs. The importance of this benefit has been confirmed by the testimony of experts and parents at the first-ever White House Conference on Early Childhood Development, in 1997, and from groups like the American Academy of Pediatrics. They all reinforce what we already know from common sense, giving parents and primary care givers time to bond with children leads to healthy development including boosting critical language and literacy skills.

But the current law meets just a fraction of the need. And the number one reason families give for not taking advantage of family and medical leave is that they simply can't afford to take time off without a paycheck. The actions we take today will go a long way toward alleviating that burden if the States take up the challenge. I believe it will strengthen parents' bonds with both their children and their jobs.

As I've said, on the eve of this new century, we ought to set a goal that all parents can take time they need for their families, without losing the income they need to support them. The new State authority will move us in the right direction and gives another tool in our national efforts to both strengthen our families and reward the dignity of work.

Thank you very much.

Seattle Round

Q. Mr. President, what do you hope to achieve in Seattle at the WTO?

The President. Well, I hope we'll get a new round launched that will slash tariffs and other trade barriers in agriculture and other areas. I hope that we will agree to keep E-commerce free of unusual burdens and that we will lead to more transparent and open rules among nations so that they believe the trading system is fair.

I also strongly, strongly believe that we should open the process up to all those people who are now demonstrating on the outside. They ought to be a part of it. And I think we should strengthen the role and the interests of labor and the environment in our trade negotiations.

This is not going to be easy to do, partly because some nations, particularly a lot of developing nations, see our concern for the environment and labor standards as a way to sort of keep them down. But that is not true. What we want to do is to make sure that when we open the trading system, that ordinary Americans benefit.

In our country, about 30 percent of our growth has come from expanded trade. We have kept inflation down because we've kept our markets open and other people have been able to sell good quality products at lower prices in our markets. So we've had this huge growth with low inflation. I just want to make sure that ordinary people everywhere are benefited by the trading system and that the economy is not damaged by trading rules that could put short-term economic considerations over long-term environmental considerations.

So I'm very sympathetic with a lot of the causes being raised by all the people that are there demonstrating. And since this has now become a global society with global communications, as well as a global economy, I think it was unrealistic to assume that for the next 50 years, trade could be like it's been for the last 50, primarily the province of business executives and political leaders. I think more people are going to demand to be heard, and I think that's a good thing.

Deaths Due to Medical Mistakes

Q. Mr. President, yesterday a report documented the problem of medical mistakes, and said that 44,000 Americans, at least, are killed every year because of these medical

mistakes. What's your reaction to that, and is there anything that your administration is planning to do about it?

The President. Well, you may remember that we had a task force a couple of years ago, headed by Secretary Herman and Secretary Shalala, which issued, in fact, two reports: One of them recommended the Patients' Bill of Rights; the other set up a quality commission to deal with problems like this.

If you looked at it, to me, one of the most interesting things was that a lot of these hospitals, which are very overcrowded and have people coming in all the time and have doctors seeing all kinds of patients in rapid successions, have people lose their lives because of improper prescriptions of medicine, not knowing about a patient's allergy or not knowing about what other medication they're taking. That's a—and I think that we have an opportunity here to work with the public-private partnership which the task force set up to use modern technology, information technology, and to also do some basic old-fashioned changes in procedures that will save a lot of these lives.

I'm convinced we can do that. I talked yesterday, on the Patients' Bill of Rights, to one of the leading managed care providers in the country and suggested that they ought to be helping, too, and they agreed with that. We've all got to get together. No one has an interest in seeing these kinds of mistakes made. And we know that otherwise competent people are making a lot of these mistakes. So we've got to work through how we can use technology and how we can maybe even slow some of the actions to make sure that mistakes like this aren't made.

But I think we need—this is a very welcome report; we need to study it very carefully. And in order to get something done on it, it's going to take a partnership of everybody involved in health care.

Russia

Q. Mr. President, there's been yet another case of espionage from Russia. Are you concerned that there's some sort of epidemic of spying going on? And what does this say about U.S.-Russian relations?

The President. From where? From Russia? Well, I think what we should do is investigate this like we do all others. But I don't think we should stop our efforts to try to drastically cut nuclear weapons or end corruption in Russia or do all the other things we're supporting. I think this shows the importance of our work that the Congress ratified to continue to reduce the nuclear weapons in Russia and the nuclear threat associated with the decommissioning of nuclear weapons.

And I think that what we have to do is continue—we have to deal with espionage firmly, but we need to try to reduce the consequences of error and mistakes and wrongdoing.

Q. What do you hear about Yeltsin's health?

The President. I think it's a case of pneumonia. That's what they said. I checked on it yesterday, and they believe that he'll be all right.

Mass Graves in Mexico

Q. Mr. President, the Mexican Attorney General is reportedly saying that 22 Americans are among those found in the mass graves. Have you received any official word?

The President. No. I asked about it just before I came out here, actually, and I haven't. It's a horrible example, apparently, of the excesses of the drug dealing cartels in Mexico, and I think it reinforces the imperative of our not only trying to protect our border but to work with the Mexican authorities to try to combat these.

You know, we had a lot of success a few years ago in taking down a number of the Colombian drug cartels, and one of the adverse consequences of that was a lot of the operations were moved north into Mexico. And there are organized criminal operations there, and they are particularly vicious. You may remember that in that same area a couple of years ago, an honest and brave Mexican prosecutor was shot over a hundred times in front of his wife and child. So it's a very violent, dangerous thing, and we have to be on top of it.

Thank you.

Panama Canal

Q. Mr. President, why aren't you going to Panama? I mean, it's a major event in history.

The President. Well, first of all, I have taken, and may have to take—I've already taken, I think, a dozen foreign trips this year. It is a major event. I think my interest in Latin America is well-known, but I may have to take yet another trip before the end of the year, and about that time, which is why I asked President Carter and Secretary Albright to head our delegation.

I think that President Carter deserves enormous credit for his leadership in getting the Panama Canal Treaty through. It was, at the time, as you remember, very controversial, immensely unpopular. A lot of Members in the Senate were—had their seats put in peril over it. And I think it——

Q. So you're not against the turnover?

The President. Oh, no. I supported it at the time, and I still support it. I think it's the right thing to do. I think that the new Government of Panama is committed to maintaining the canal in an appropriate way and keeping it open and working with us to do so, and having good relations.

So no one in Panama or anywhere in Latin America should draw any adverse conclusion. We have a lot of things going on in the world now. I've been out of the country a lot. I need to get ready for the new Congress and the new budget, and I may have to take another foreign trip at about the same time, which is why I have not committed to make the trip. But I think——

Q. What, which one?

The President. I can't talk about it. [*Laughter*] But I think—I do think that Jimmy Carter deserves to lead our delegation down there. He did a historic and great thing in advocating the Panama Canal Treaty. But the people of Panama should know that this President and our Government strongly support both the treaty and the event, which will occur in a few days.

Q. You're not worried about the Chinese controlling the canal?

The President. I think the Chinese will, in fact, be bending over backwards to make sure that they run it in a competent and able and fair manner. This is like them, is like China coming into the WTO. I think they'll want to demonstrate to a distant part of the world that they can be a responsible partner, and I would be very surprised if any adverse consequences flowed from the Chinese running the canal.

President's Possible Visit to Ireland

Q. When are you going to Ireland?

The President. I don't know. You know, I'd like to go once a month.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:20 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Boris Yeltsin of Russia.

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Luncheon in San Francisco

November 30, 1999

Thank you very much. Thank you, Bill; thank you, Sally; thank you, Leader Gephardt; and thank you, Nancy Pelosi, for always being so wonderful to take all of your various charges from the D-triple-C to the DNC to your President into San Francisco and find your friends and help us.

It's good to be back here. I was here, as Bill said, a couple years ago. And we had a beautiful dinner here, and I love this place. But it's even more beautiful in the daylight. And I want to thank all the Members for coming. Chairman Torres, thank you for being here. And I want to thank the mayor for coming.

I am so indebted to California, and particularly to San Francisco, for being so good to me and Hillary and the Vice President and Mrs. Gore. And I've also learned so much. Every time I come to northern California I learn something new, so I'm less technologically challenged. [*Laughter*]

And I've learned a lot from Willie Brown. I've learned how to dress better. [*Laughter*] I never thought I would live long enough to see him in a race where somebody was running to the left of him; this is a great, great day. [*Laughter*] I don't know how there is any oxygen left over there. [*Laughter*] I'm still learning from you, and I thank you, Mr. Mayor.

Let me say also, this is the first opportunity I've had in public to thank Dick Gephardt