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WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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Remarks to the Community in West Memphis, Arkansas

December 10, 1999

Thank you. Was she great or what? Let's give her another hand. [*Applause*] She was unbelievable. That's great.

Well, to Dr. Glen Fenter and your board chairman, my longtime friend Alex Coulter; and to Sandy and all the students from the college and all the faculty members, thank you. Thank you for being exhibit A for the new economy in eastern Arkansas.

Mayor Johnson, Judge Williams, Representative Jones, Representative Steele, I think I speak for all of us when I say we are delighted to be here. I want to thank Lieutenant Governor Rockefeller and the other people from State government who came over to be with us. I thank Secretary Riley for coming down with us; and my longtime friend Carl Whillock, who I'll say a little more about in a minute; and Rodney Slater, who I'll say a little more about in a minute.

I also would like to thank this White House staff who have heard me say now 5,000 times, we have to do more for the Delta. My Deputy Chief of Staff, Maria Echaveste; Lynn Cutler; Lisa Kountoupes—it is their job to monitor everything the Federal Government does that might, in their wildest imagination, have a positive effect on Arkansas and the other States in the Delta. And I thank them.

But I want to say a special word of thanks to Senator Blanche Lambert Lincoln and to Marion Berry, who, long before he was a Congressman, was the farmers' advocate in our administration in Washington, and long before he did that, he used to host all of us at the Gillette coon suppers. [*Laughter*] That's my ultimate trump card with every Congressman or Senator from every other State in America who tells me they know more about rural America than I do. I say, "Well, how many coon suppers have you been to?" [*Laughter*] I haven't lost an argument in 7 years up there. [*Laughter*]

You have absolutely no idea the amount of time and effort and the passion that these two people have put in to trying to help eastern Arkansas and the Delta. You cannot imagine. They have been magnificent. I deal with Members of Congress from all across America. I deal with people who are really good at what they do. There is nobody—nobody—who has done a better job standing up for the people they represent than Blanche Lambert Lincoln and Marion Berry.

I may have a little trouble getting through this speech today. First, I'm a little tired. I talked to Hillary last—about 1 o'clock last night, and we talked three times between 11 and 1. And she was kind of jealous that I was coming down here. And I want you to know she's doing great, and I'm proud of her for what she's doing, and my daughter is doing great.

I woke up early this morning and started thinking about what I wanted to say. It's a little harder now. I look out in this crowd, and I know half of you by your first names. There's old Bobby Glover sitting there, gave me the first contribution I got when I ran for attorney general in 1976. You could have stopped this whole thing if you hadn't done that. [*Laughter*] Mary Louise Poindexter had me to the first revival of the Elaine Christmas parade. I've been colder in Elaine than any public official in the history of America. [*Laughter*] We know east Arkansas—that's not the royal "we," that's all of our crowd here. And we owe eastern Arkansas. Rodney's roots are here. He did such a good job for you as a highway commissioner and at ASU, and he's been a superb Secretary of Transportation. Carl Whillock was the president of ASU, head of the co-ops. When Marion went home, he came to Washington; he thought somebody ought to stick up for the ordinary farmers in the Department of Agriculture. I see Kevin Smith out there. I've

had so many people here. You can't imagine how many people from Arkansas we've got working in Washington. It's sort of a subterranean plot. That's how we stayed in all these years; we had people that showed up and remembered who they were working for.

I was thinking about the first time I came to Crittenden County to John Gammon's wild game dinner when they were still meeting in that—that's before the dinner moved uptown—when they were still meeting in a place that had a tin roof. And the first night, a woman got up, a young woman got up to sing "If I Can Help Somebody," and the darndest rain came up you ever saw. And it was raining on that tin roof and it sounded like a musical background, and she was just beautiful, singing.

Ness Sechrest reminded me that the first time I saw him, I had to traipse all the way out to Horseshoe Lake and fish with him and do other sundry things that he thought were necessary to decide whether he should support me or not. [*Laughter*] He's been making the same mistake for 24 years now.

And I came here today to make another installment on the work we've been doing together for two decades. I'm very proud that I signed the bill when I was in my very first term as Governor to create the vo-tech school here. And then in 1991 I signed the bill that enabled you to convert it to a community college. And since I have been President, the enrollment at this college—the stories like Sandy's—the enrollment has increased by tenfold of accredited students—tenfold. And that's something you can be really proud of, and it will make a difference.

I was thinking when I was coming over here today, all the time I spent in the eighties when the whole State, the whole country, this part of the country was in trouble economically, trying to get plants to come in here and save the ones that are here. When I got reelected Governor in '82, I remember going up to—I think it was Poinsett County, and they closed the Singer plant for the last time. I stood there and shook hands with 600 people when they walked off the job for the last time. That was right before I got inaugurated Governor the second time. I had this emblazoned memory of all these people leaving their jobs for the last time.

I remember going all the way to Japan to try to get the Sanyo people not to close the plant in Forest City, and then working with all the folks in Brinkley and other places to help start this Wal-Mart "buy American" campaign, to get them to buy the TV's from Sanyo and shirts from Brinkley and first one thing, then another.

I have a vivid memory of what you have been through and the struggles you had and the struggles you continue to have. And we're here to try to fulfill our duty, not only to you but to people like you throughout the country. I'm very grateful that I've had the chance to serve these last 7 years. I'm grateful that we're ending the 20th century on a high note.

In February we will have the longest economic expansion in the history of the country—already the longest peacetime expansion. In February it will be longer than the one we had in World War II, when we had to fully mobilize.

Since 1993, we've got over 20 million new jobs. We've got the lowest unemployment rate and welfare rolls in 30 years, the lowest poverty rates in 20 years, the lowest African-American unemployment and poverty rates ever recorded since we kept separate figures for about three decades now. We have the lowest unemployment rate for women in 40 years and the lowest poverty rate for single-parent households in 46 years in America. And I'm proud of that. But you couldn't prove it by some places in this country, because there are still people in places that have been totally left out of this remarkable upswing, and that's what we're here to say. All of you know that. Maybe they're too rural. Maybe they're too undereducated. Maybe they're too this, that, or the other thing. Maybe their power is too expensive or the transportation is too distant.

I've been across America now, doing what I used to come over here and do, county by county. I've been in the hills and hollows of Appalachia. I've been in upstate New York which, interestingly enough, would be 49th in job growth in this country of all the 50 States if it were a separate State. I've been in rural Maine, where it's a long way from everything. The State's 90 percent

timberland. I've been on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, the home of the Lakota Sioux, the tribe of Crazy Horse, where the unemployment rate is 73 percent. So you can go to bed tonight thanking God for small favors. I have seen these inner-city neighborhoods where every other store is still boarded up.

And what I want to say to you is, if we, with this economy, in the absence of foreign threat or domestic crisis, can't bring free enterprise and opportunity to the people and places who have been left behind now, when will we ever get around to doing it?

We are determined to try to convince everybody in America that places like the Delta are the new markets for the 21st century. We sit around in Washington all the time, and Mr. Greenspan sits over at the Federal Reserve all the time, and we have the same debate now. We say, we've already got the—in February we're going to have the longest economic expansion in history, and we didn't even have a war. How did it happen? Can we keep it going? How can we keep it going? How can we keep it going without inflation, because if we have inflation, then, to protect everybody else, they'll have to raise interest rates a lot, and that will kill the recovery.

And I'll tell you one way to keep it going is to get money invested and jobs created and consumers created in the places that have been left behind. That's an inflation-free way to continue to grow the economy. So it is in the interest of every single American—in places like Nebraska where the unemployment rate is 2.4 percent statewide—it's in their interest for us to do what is necessary to bring opportunity to the people in places who have been left behind. And if we don't do it now, we'll never get around to doing it.

So I want to look at this. Now, let's look at Crittenden County. In Crittenden County, unemployment has dropped from over 7 percent in '93 to 5 percent today, but it's much higher in the rest of eastern Arkansas than the Nation as a whole. Wages are up in the Delta, but wages are still way below the national average. Infant mortality rates are better than they were, but they're still much, much higher than the national average.

Now, I want to thank all of you for stepping up to the challenge of trying to change all that. Before I came over here, I was over at the community college meeting with Dr. Fenter and a group of CEO's from some of America's largest transportation companies. They're working together to design a curriculum and to build a facility to train young people for good jobs in the transportation industry.

Now, these jobs pay good money, and there is a shortage today, I learned at our meeting, of 80,000 jobs for entry-level truck drivers and other transportation jobs that would pay an average of $35,000 to $40,000 a year—entry-level jobs.

So what we want to do is train everybody in the Delta who wants one of these jobs here so that they can continue to live in the Delta. You have to travel 3 or 4 or 5 days a week, but you don't have to move away from here to get a job. I mean, you all know you can move away from here and get a job, but you don't want to leave.

So this is the kind of thing that we should be doing. This is one of the most important transportation hubs in the country, and education and training is the key to providing these opportunities.

In August I was here in Helena, and we had kind of a listening session, and in September Secretary Slater had another meeting like that here in West Memphis. In October we invited a delegation from here to meet with senior officials in the White House, and today we want to respond to that.

First of all, to try to address the unacceptably high rates of poverty that still plague the region, I intend to propose in next year's budget more than $110 million to create and fund a new Delta regional authority, as recommended by Senator Lincoln and Representative Berry. This will fund their legislation. It will provide funds for economic development and assistance from Federal agencies to help improve the quality of life. It already has a number of bipartisan cosponsors from throughout the Delta, and I want to work with the Congress, and particularly with all the Members from this region, to ensure that we get quick enactment of this legislation. This should not be a partisan issue. This is about economics.

Second, we're going to help rural communities again access the myriad of Federal programs that already exist. Today I am signing a memorandum directing 14 Federal agencies to provide comprehensive technical assistance to the region in a pilot program we're calling the circuit rider project. You know, preachers and judges used to ride circuits and go from town to town. That's what the Agricultural Extension Service did for decades, seeing people one-on-one.

It is almost impossible for a little town to be able to afford—to find out what kinds of grants they could be eligible for in every conceivable Federal agency, much less how to apply for them and get them. So we want to organize that effort and bring them to you.

I'd like to thank Wilbur Peer and the others at the Agriculture Department who have been involved in our rural economic development issues. I want to thank all the departments for agreeing to do this. We're going to get out there, be aggressive, and try to bring the benefits of the Federal Government that's already being paid for to the people who are paying but not getting, and the circuit rider project will work, I think.

Third, we're announcing the creation of a $16 million fund to provide resources to develop and improve rural health infrastructure in the seven counties served by the Arkansas Health Education Center, including Crittenden County—funds used to make loans to hospitals, clinics, and health providers to help close the health care gaps that are also a problem here and a problem in attracting new investment.

Fourth, we're announcing an award of $1.2 million from the Economic Development Administration to the Blytheville-Gosnell Regional Airport Authority to create a 35,000 square foot mail sort facility out of one of the former hangars at Eaker Air Force Base. This will help create more than 350 new jobs. It will create more than 350 new jobs and protect some that are already there.

Finally, we're expanding trade opportunities in the region by opening a Commerce Department rural export office at Mid-South Community College to help east Arkansas businesses take advantage of export opportunities through E-commerce. This is no idle thing. I was out in Los Angeles the other day, and I went to a training facility where a young man was in a program buying and selling things in South America, in Russia, and you wouldn't believe where else. In this poor inner-city neighborhood, he was making a living. He established a business identifying people in other countries that needed to buy things and identifying people in third countries who had them, and putting them together.

We can sell a lot of the things produced in east Arkansas all over the world if we have the right kind of networks. And one of the things that—we just had last week a conference at the White House, bringing in big executives in the communications business all over America to try to figure out how to close the so-called digital divide, because if you look at the places where not only computer usage but Internet access is roughly as dense as telephone access, they're growing faster.

And one of the things that I am determined to do is to finish the job of getting all of our schools and libraries and hospitals connected to the Internet so that all of our kids will have access to that educational information. But we need to make that available for adults, too, in commercial centers so that no part of the country is denied these opportunities.

I'll bet you there are people here—and I'll just give you one example—I'll bet there are people in this audience who have bought something off the web from eBay. Have you ever used eBay? I see some of you nodding. I'll tell you an interesting thing. I was out with the eBay people in California a couple of weeks ago, and they told me there are now 20,000 Americans, including many former welfare recipients, who are making a living on eBay. They don't work for eBay; they make a living buying and selling on eBay because it's basically America's trading mart now on the Internet.

It is very, very important that we bring the benefits of E-commerce to the poorest parts of America and to teach people how to use it. It's simple. It's getting increasingly user friendly. It's about gotten to where even I can figure it out. [*Laughter*] And I think it is profoundly important.

Finally, I want to ask you one thing that I want you to do for us, for me and for Senator Lincoln and for Congressman Berry. I'm trying to pass a couple of simple bills in Washington. I got two of them actually passed to provide some funds for my so-called new market initiative. But what I'm trying to do is to get money, tax credits, and tax incentives basically so that I can say to anybody in America, we think you should have the same financial incentives to invest in the poor areas of America that you now have to invest in the poor areas of Latin America or Africa or Asia or any other part of the world.

Now, I hope and pray I'll be able to pass that this year. We have more bipartisan support for this endeavor than we've ever had before.

I went to Chicago the other night with the Speaker of the House. And we met with the two local Members of Congress who were there. We had a great joint meeting. And there is a chance we can just totally put this beyond politics. But if you think about it, sure there are some extra risks in going to an extremely rural area where the average education level may not be as high as it is in some other places, but it's not as great as the risk of going thousands of miles from home.

I'm not against asking Americans to help the people of Africa and Latin America and Asia. I'm all for that. We just passed through the Congress a bill forgiving the debt of some of the poorest countries in the world that can't pay it back anyway, and all we're doing is keeping them mired in poverty. We can't educate their kids or make them vaccinate them or do anything else, because they spend all their money paying interest on the debt, and they never make any headway. I'm all for that.

But I think we have areas in the country, as prosperous as we are now, and we still have areas as poor as some of our areas are. It is wrong not to give the same incentives to invest there, whether it is the Delta or Appalachia or the Indian reservations. So I want you to help me do that.

I want you to help make sure every Member of this congressional delegation votes for that legislation. I want you to help make sure anybody you can reach in Tennessee or Mississippi votes for that legislation, and I want you to tell people that the dignity of the job and of a thriving community has nothing to do with party politics, and every American ought to be entitled to it. And if we can't do it now, we will never get around to it, because we are more prosperous now than we have ever been.

We'll keep working at it every day to the last hour of the last day of our term. When I come home and set up my library and public policy center, I'll keep working at it some more. I'll always be doing this. I'll always be indebted to the Delta.

When I was a young college student and I used to drive back home from Washington, I used to take off a day every Christmas vacation and just drive to the Delta and ride around. I never knew I would be Governor, much less President, and I was just fascinated with it. But I always promised myself, if I could do anything about it, I would.

I never will forget the first time I ran for Governor, and I discovered how many communities over here had no water and sewer. And we tried to do something about it. I don't even know if I can tell this story. The most emotional moment I ever had in all the years I was in government in Arkansas occurred when I was running for reelection as Governor in 1982. And there was a big meeting in a barbecue joint in Forest City of all the black leaders in the Delta. And they were trying to decide whether they were going to be for me or not. I had just gotten beat 2 years before, when I had the distinction of becoming the youngest former Governor in American history, with very limited career prospects. [*Laughter*] And no one in Arkansas had ever been Governor and then defeated and then reelected again. It had never happened before.

So they were having this meeting, and an articulate young lawyer, whom I still know well, got up and said—I was there, and one of my opponents had been there, and he had left—so this young lawyer got up and said, "You know, Governor Clinton was a good Governor, but we can't be for him; he's a loser. And we've got to win; we can't afford to lose." And he had a point. [*Laughter*] I

mean, I had lost, and no one had ever been elected, defeated, and reelected again.

I wouldn't be here today if this meeting turned out that way, in the Delta. I'm telling you, my whole life since then was riding on the outcome of what these 85 people in this barbecue joint were going to do.

Wilbur is smiling. He knows all this. I don't know if I can tell this story. And you could feel the tone of the meeting go cold. And all of a sudden, this guy stands up in the back, named John Lee Wilson, who was the mayor of a little town called Haines, Arkansas—150 people. He's not alive anymore. I'd give the world and all if he were here today. John Lee was in jeans and a white T-shirt. He wasn't a lawyer. He weighed about 300 pounds, on his light days. [*Laughter*] He had arms bigger around than my neck. And he said, the young lawyer might have had a point, but all he knew about this whole deal was that before I became Governor the first time, sewage was running open in the streets of Haines and the children were sick. And after I had served, they weren't sick anymore.

And he said, "If we don't stick with people who stick with us, what kind of people will we be?" He said, "Governor Clinton may be going down, but I'd rather go down with him than run off from him." And they all—and the room changed again. And the Delta stayed with me, and the rest is history.

I owe you, and I owe the memory of John Lee Wilson, whom I revered and loved and remember to this day. And I'll do my best to be faithful.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3 p.m. in the Civic Auditorium at Mid-South Community College. In his remarks, he referred to student Sandra Eason O'Sullivan, who introduced the President, Glen Fenter, president, and Alex Coulter, board of trustees chair, Mid-South Community College; Mayor William H. Johnson of West Memphis; Crittenden County Judge Brian Williams; State Representatives Steve Jones, Marvin Steele, and Bobby L. Glover; State Senator Kevin Smith; Lt. Gov. Winthrop P. Rockefeller of Arkansas; Carl Whillock, former president, Arkansas State University; Wilbur Peer, Associate Administrator, Rural Business-Cooperative Service, Department of Agriculture; and John Gammon and N.S. (Ness) Sechrest, long-time friends of the President. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Memorandum on the Arkansas Delta Circuit Rider Pilot Project

December 10, 1999

Memorandum for the Secretary of Agriculture, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Commerce, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Education, the Secretary of Energy, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Labor, the Secretary of Transportation, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Administrator of the Small Business Administration

Subject: Arkansas Delta Circuit Rider Pilot Project

The Delta region of the United States is rich in historical, archeological, geological, natural, and cultural assets. The Delta region also has tremendous human capital in the people who live there and hold strong hopes for the future. The Delta's human, natural, and cultural resources have the potential to contribute significantly to the region's future.

Despite great progress in a wide range of economic and social areas, the Delta region, particularly the Delta communities of Arkansas, still often lag behind the rest of the country. Substandard housing, inadequate transportation systems, limited access to capital, low educational levels, and lack of adequate health care have hindered progress and caused hardship. While nationwide unemployment levels have fallen during my Administration, the Arkansas Delta communities still suffer from disproportionately high unemployment. Furthermore, in the Delta counties of Arkansas, only 55 percent of the adult population has a high school diploma.

While Governor of Arkansas, I chaired the Lower Mississippi Delta Development Commission. In 1990, the Commission submitted an action plan to address the economic development needs of the region. This action plan

has served as a guidepost during my Administration for creating further opportunities for investment in the region.

During my Administration, we have continued to provide resources to the entire Delta region and to the Delta communities of Arkansas to promote job creation, improve transportation and housing, and address environmental needs. In 1998, the Department of Transportation organized a meeting with local Delta leaders at which ten Federal agencies pledged to work together to coordinate a Government-wide review and assessment of the Delta; their review resulted in the recent publication of *The Mississippi Delta: Beyond 2000 (Interim Report)*. My Administration has designated two rural Enterprise Zones (EZ) and seven Enterprise Communities (EC) in the Delta, including two ECs in Arkansas that receive assistance from the Department of Agriculture (USDA)—one in Mississippi County and one in East Central Arkansas. As part of the EZ/EC program, these communities have engaged in extensive community planning and have gained a number of tax incentives to promote investment opportunities. The USDA provides significant resources to the Delta in grants and loans through its rural housing and business programs. The Department of Commerce has provided over $100 million to the Delta from 1993 to mid-1999. Approximately 1100 low-income Arkansas homes were weatherized last year through Department of Energy funding. The Department of the Interior is assisting in the development of the Arkansas Delta Heritage Trail, a new quasi-State park composed of a 78-mile rail corridor that traverses some of the richest natural and cultural resources of the State. The Department of Transportation has provided approximately $140 million to complete highway reconstruction, surfacing, widening, and other projects in Delta counties. However, Federal funding alone is not sufficient to revitalize the Delta region. As part of my July 1999 "New Markets" trip to Clarksdale, Mississippi, I announced nearly $15 million in new private investments in the Enterprise Corporation for the Delta, a nonprofit organization that uses Federal grants to leverage private investment in business.

Other Federal efforts seek to empower the Delta communities by providing information and assistance directly in the communities where they are needed. The USDA and the Environmental Protection Agency provide significant on-the-ground technical assistance to rural communities nationwide through circuit rider programs for both drinking water and wastewater. The Small Business Administration (SBA) also regularly engages in active outreach activities in the Arkansas Delta Region, where SBA staff meet with small business entrepreneurs in the field. These programs have been very successful in assisting communities and individuals, but have been limited in the number of agencies that participate and the topics that are covered.

To build on the success of these circuit rider programs and to address the great need expressed by Delta communities for technical assistance, I am expanding my Administration's efforts in Arkansas' Delta communities by creating a pilot Arkansas Delta Circuit Rider program to provide, for the first time, a concentrated, coordinated effort by 14 Federal agencies to address needs in areas such as housing, economic development, transportation, environment, tourism, cultural resources, infrastructure technology, education, and health care. The Arkansas Delta Circuit Rider program will bring the expertise and resources of the Federal Government directly to communities that need assistance by providing a more integrated Federal response across several agencies and reaching out to the communities to search for solutions. Accordingly, I direct each of you to work with the USDA as lead agency in the development of a pilot program to be based on a circuit rider concept with the goals of helping Delta communities (1) systematically identify needs and priorities in economic and community development; (2) draft strategic plans to leverage both private and public resources for such development; and (3) implement their plans. This initiative should forge a coalition of Federal, State, local, private business, nonprofit, and other interested parties in meeting the unique needs of each community. The investment of resources by each agency will vary depending on the specific needs of each community

but should include providing information; conducting traveling seminars; deploying staff; and staffing regional offices.

I further direct you to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) no later than March 1, 2000, with the specifics of the pilot program, including an implementation framework and schedule; mechanisms to assemble the Circuit Rider team after receiving a community's request for assistance; and details of the types of assistance to be provided. This MOU should establish the Arkansas Delta communities Circuit Rider pilot program for a minimum period of 5 years in order to assist communities in addressing both long-term and short-term needs.

As we look to the new millennium, we should make every effort to ensure that no areas of this country are left behind. This pilot project, taken together and in full coordination with the other resources devoted to community and economic development, will help to build capacity in the communities of the Arkansas Delta and will empower the area's residents to achieve their full potential.

William J. Clinton

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Remarks at the Earle High School Dedication Ceremony in Earle, Arkansas

December 10, 1999

Thank you very much. Wow! Well, this is a wonderful end to one of the best days I've had in a long, long time. We started out this morning in Little Rock, and I spoke at the annual Chamber of Commerce banquet. I talked to them about the library and the public policy center I wanted to build not just for Little Rock but for our entire State. And then I went to West Memphis, to the community college, which I helped to establish, where the enrollment, by the way, has increased by tenfold since I've been President. I'm very proud of them, and I know all of you are.

And I told them that I was going to support the legislation sponsored by Senator Lincoln and Congressman Berry, with $110 million for a Delta commission to invest in the economic future of the Mississippi Delta next year.

Then I got a little barbecue. [*Laughter*] And sidled up here to Earle. Thank you, Secretary Riley, for making this journey with me and the journey of the last 22 years now. Thank you, Secretary Slater, for coming out of the Arkansas Delta and going all the way to become Secretary of Transportation.

I'm not sure you heard the superintendent when he said this, but Secretary Slater's chief of staff and a longtime supporter of mine is a wonderful attorney named Jerry Malone, who graduated from Earle High School. Jerry, stand up. Where are you? There you go.

I want to thank my friend of 30 years, the Lieutenant Governor, Rockefeller, for making this trip with us today. I thank my longtime friends County Judge Brian Williams and Mayor Sherman Smith. We also have the head of the National Endowment for the Humanities, Bill Ferris, who is from the other side of the Mississippi River in Mississippi, here with us today. I thank him for coming.

And I want to introduce the vice president and foundation executive of MCI, Caleb Schutz, who has decided to help this school—I'll explain more about why later, but thank you very much. I'd like to thank all the people from the Arkansas Department of Education who are here, Simon and others. Thank you, Principal Nicks and members of the school board. And thank you, Jimmi Lampley; you were terrific.

I have to tell you, when I met President Kennedy in 1963, I didn't give him a library. [*Laughter*] I didn't even give him one of my Trojan band jackets. [*Laughter*] Now I've got this football jacket, making me an honorary Bulldog.

You won't believe this, but when we were down in West Memphis, we had this meeting about how we could train people in the Delta that don't have jobs to get some of these real good jobs in transportation. There are 80,000 jobs driving trucks and working in terminals, for example, vacant today.

So Secretary Slater was working on that, and he invited the man who runs the USA truckline from Fort Smith, but they train all their truck drivers here in West Memphis.

So the guy's been my friend forever—I mean, he's been my friend for 27 years and, coincidentally, runs this truckline, and he trains all his truckers here in West Memphis.

So right before I come up here to get this jacket and become an honorary Bulldog, he whips—I said, "Have you got any pictures of your wife and daughter?" And he said, "Yes." He takes out this beautiful picture of his wife and his 12-year-old daughter, and they've got a bulldog there. I said, "What's that bulldog's name?" And he smiled, and he said, "Clinton." [*Laughter*]

So I'm going to have a picture taken in this jacket and send it to him, and he'll have two bulldogs in the house. [*Laughter*] And we both respond in the same way. It will be great.

Finally, let me say a word about your superintendent. He has been a friend of mine a long time. I have known him probably since before most of the students here were alive. I have eaten his good food in his former life. [*Laughter*] I have met with his students. I have listened to year after year after year after year of fresh, vigorous ideas and passionate commitment, believing that the children of the Delta were as smart as any kids on Earth and had a right to the best education on Earth and become anything else they wanted to be on Earth.

I've had him sidle up to me with that sort of soft voice—[*laughter*]—you know, the way he kind of does his head like this, you know—[*laughter*]—I know him, man. I know him. I've been there. "Now, Governor, we just need a little money for this little thing here." [*Laughter*] "Now, you know how you love these kids. You don't want to let them get behind here."

Wht are you laughing about, Leon? You do the same thing. [*Laughter*]

So anyway, I was thrilled when he came here. You know, our tenures pretty well coincide. He came here not long after I became President. And I wasn't surprised when you approved that big bond issue, because this guy believes in your kids. He spent a lifetime—a lifetime that happened to coincide with this dramatic change in the economic and social organization of the Mississippi Delta. He spent a lifetime trying to lift up our kids, and I say thank you, my friend, I appreciate that.

Now, I rode over here with my good friend Ness Sechrest from West Memphis today, and we were thinking about all the trips we've taken to Earle. This sort of was an automatic stop for me. Whenever I'd get in a deep funk, I'd come to Earle and get to feel better—[*laughter*]—when I was Governor. And I miss so much—I want to say this before I leave Crittenden County—my man who was always my county coordinator here, Ron Owens, passed away in the last year, and I miss him terribly, and I wish he were making this trip with me today because I loved him like a brother.

But one time we came up here in 1982, and I was trying to get reelected Governor. And we went to the Church of God in Christ, Representative Jones' church. And at the time, Bishop Walker came with me, and at the time, Ron and Carrie Paige were passing the church there, back over there—and I see Finus Jones—thank you for coming, Finus. Bless you.

So first, the choir got to singing, and Carrie got to singing. And then the bishop called my opponent "Old Hoghead" on statewide television. [*Laughter*] And I said to myself, "I'm either in or out after this. I don't know whether I am in or out, but something is going to happen now." There you are. Thank you, Bishop Walker. Thank you.

In the bishop's defense, he only said that after the man I was running against said that African-Americans in Arkansas would vote for a duck if it was on our ticket. So it was a reaction, not an action. And God forgave him for his harshness. And so did the voters, I might add.

Anyway, I've been back to that church many times, and I've been back to this town many times, and I never come here without feeling renewed, because there's so much courage and hope and spirit. And today what I would like to say to you is this: First, thank you. Thank you for all the years we worked together, all the roads we've walked together, all the times you gave me a chance to serve.

I think that because of the times we went through, I was better prepared to deal with America as I found it in January of 1993—high unemployment, social decline, political

division, discredited government. And now, thanks in no small measure to what I learned working with you, we've got the lowest unemployment and welfare rolls in 30 years and the lowest poverty rates in 20 years. We've got 20 million jobs and the first back-to-back budget surpluses in 42 years. We are on our way to taking this country out of debt in 15 years for the first time since 1835. And along the way, we have immunized 90 percent of our children against serious diseases for the first time, and over 7 million young people have already taken advantage of the HOPE scholarship tax cut to go on to college. I think it's been a good 7 years for our country.

And underneath that, we see the beginnings of equality starting to emerge. Nationwide, we have the lowest African-American and Hispanic unemployment rates ever recorded. We have the lowest female unemployment rate in 40 years. We have the lowest crime rate in 25 years.

This is all good news. But I came here today to ask the people of Arkansas, the people of the Delta, and the people of America one more time, what are we going to do with this prosperity? And one thing that I say over and over again is, countries are like—no different from people and families and schools and football teams and businesses. It's easy to concentrate when you're in trouble and your back's against the wall.

The great British essayist Samuel Johnson said, "Nothing so concentrates a man's mind as the prospect of his own destruction." But when things are rocking along pretty good, people lose their concentration. And I've been saying to America, look, we've never had a time in our history when the economy was this strong and the society was coming together, and we don't have an internal crisis or an external threat. This is responsibility time. This is a time to look at those big questions that will affect the future of these children here, to take care of the retirement of the baby boomers now, to give all these kids a good education now, to bring economic opportunity to places like the Delta that haven't been part of this prosperity.

Now, if we can't do this now, we will never get around to doing this. Now is the time to be responsible and think about the long-term welfare of our country. And as I said, earlier today I talked about the economic issues, the thing I was going to try to do for east Arkansas, the entire Delta. And I want to give credit again where credit is due. I have been relentlessly pursued to do more and more and more by your Senator and your Congressman. Now, I get lobbied by 435 Members of the House and 100 Senators. Believe it or not, even the Republicans ask me for things from time to time. [*Laughter*] There is nobody any better or any more passionate than Senator Blanche Lambert Lincoln and Representative Marion Berry, and you ought to know that. They have taken care of you.

Today I want to talk just a little more about education and what we're trying to do and what we need to try to do to help you reach your full potential. In the last session of Congress, we got funds to double the amount of after-school programs that we have in our schools. That's really important for children everywhere.

I don't believe that we should promote people who don't learn, but I don't think we should punish people that the Senate—if the system fails them. We need to give the kids extra help, extra help. And the schools that can't afford it ought to have the resources they need to give that kind of extra help, so everybody can learn.

I think it is important—[*applause*]—thank you—I think it is important that we hook up all of our classrooms to the Internet. First, all our schools, then all our classrooms. When Vice President Gore and I said in 1994 we want to wire all of our schools, including the poorest schools in America, and we're going to get the private sector to help us, and then we're going to make sure we train the teachers because, otherwise, the kids will know more about the computers than the teachers. And then, we're going to make sure that the poor schools can afford it.

And we passed something called the Telecommunications Act. For the first time in 60 years, we revised our communications laws, and the part of that we said we'll have this E-rate, which will give a discount to schools. Now, here, you connected the computers that you got from our technology literacy challenge grant to the Internet with the help of $100,000 in discounts for the E-rate.

That's what it meant to Earle—$100,000 in discounts so you could afford to be on the Internet just like the wealthiest school districts in the United States of America.

In the budget I signed last month there will be another $60 million in educational investments coming to the Delta, including $7 million to hire 200 more teachers for smaller classes in the early grades, which I think is very important.

Now, to give you an idea—I'm kind of proud of this, but when we said—when Al Gore and I started working on this, only 3 percent of the total classrooms in America and 14 percent of the total schools had any Internet hookup. Now, over 50 percent of the classrooms and over 80 percent of the schools in America in just 5 years are hooked up to the Internet and can afford to be, thanks to this E-rate. So you're a part of the future. And I want to thank you for that.

Now, what I'd like to do now is to announce a generous new initiative coming not from the Government but from MCI WorldCom Foundation, to give the teachers at Earle High School and across the Delta region unprecedented access to the kind of world-class educational materials that in the past only the wealthiest school districts could afford. In cooperation with National Geographic and Mr. Ferris' National Endowment for the Humanities, the Foundation—the MCI WorldCom Foundation—has developed a wonderful website called MarcoPolo.

It contains lesson plans and resource materials on everything from history to math to art. These lesson plans for teachers have been developed by some of our finest teachers and academics. And now they're available absolutely free over the Internet, thanks to MCI.

Now, to take advantage—who is here from MCI? Stand up. Everybody from MCI, stand up. Thank you. Give them a hand. [*Applause*]

Now, so that the teachers can utilize the website, the MarcoPolo foundation will train, free of charge, as many as 4,500 district curriculum specialists throughout the seven-State, Mississippi Delta region. They will then train 100,000-plus teachers on how to use the website.

A teacher in Earle, for example, will learn to go to the website, click on humanities, and be guided to a series of lesson plans on, say, the life of Socrates, developed by the experts at the National Endowment for the Humanities. The lesson plan then links to sites containing Plato's writing on Socrates—commentary by leading scholars. Then, it would provide questions teachers can ask students, such as imagining whether Socrates would have chosen to die for his ideas if Martin Luther King had been in a jail cell with him. It's a very interesting question. I think the answer to that is, probably. The site then links Dr. King's letter from the Birmingham jail, where King praises Socrates for being, and I quote, "A tension in the mind, so that an individual could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths." Now, just imagine helping high school students explore the idea of civil disobedience from Socrates to Martin Luther King over a period of 2,500 years, and being able to do it in every single school, no matter how rural, no matter how poor, no matter how distant, anywhere in the United States of America because of the generosity of MCI and this program. We thank them again.

The idea is that you've got to train the teachers, because it is going to be more and more possible every day for every school in America to offer lessons like these, things that would have been undreamed just a couple years ago simply because of technology, if all the teachers can access it and make the most of it and get the students involved in it. The second thing I want to say is we're going to hold two conferences to help rural communities gain access to all the Federal programs that exist today but that are too hard for many small rural towns with part-time mayors and small staffs to keep up with.

On March 9, next year, in Jonesboro, the Department of Education—thank you, Secretary Riley—will host a conference to help law enforcement officers and rural educators learn how to apply for school safety and drug prevention grants to develop safer schools. Then the Department will host a conference in Helena to help rural colleges obtain grants and assistance from Federal agencies so that nobody will ever be denied access to college or a good college education because of where they live or what their income is. These things are very, very important.

Now, let me just say this in closing. We can do all this, but the students have to do the most. You've got to believe that just because you live in a part of the country that had a tough time in the last 15 years when the whole economy changed and the world dumped upside down, you've still got to believe that you're just as smart as anybody anywhere. I believe that, and you've got to believe that.

But you also have to believe what that great genius Sigmund Freud said. He said, "Genius is 90 percent effort." Or, you know, I can't remember which great athlete said, "You know, a lot of athletics is luck, and it's amazing; the harder I practice, the luckier I get."

So the students here have to be committed to this. We can give you the tools of the 21st century; we can give you a chance to dramatically leapfrog the economic as well as the educational prospects that might have otherwise been here for you; but you've still got to show up for work every day. You've got to suit up as students the way you suit up in athletics or in band or anything else. You've got to suit up.

Now, it's more fun with the computers; it's more exciting with these modern programs. But I'm telling you, the future of this country, not just the future of this community and this county and this part of our State, the future of this country is riding on whether all of our children, without regard to their race or their background, can make the most of their God-given abilities. And to do it, you've got to be willing to work; and to be willing to work, you've got to believe. Nobody will pay a price for a goal that he or she believes cannot be obtained anyway.

And the thing that I liked the best about this whole day was Jimmi saying when she got to introduce me and shake hands with me and she thought about me meeting President Kennedy, she realized she could do anything. That's true for the rest of you, so go out and do it.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:40 p.m. in the gymnasium. In his remarks, the President referred to student Jimmi Lampley, who introduced the President, and Ricky Nicks, principal, Earle Senior High School; J.B. Crumbley, superintendent, Earle School District; Leon Phillips, superintendent, Lake View School District; State Representative Steve Jones; Lt. Gov. Winthrop P. Rockefeller of Arkansas; Raymond J. Simon, director, Arkansas Department of Education; Mayor Sherman Smith of Earle; Crittenden County Judge Brian Williams; Robert M. Powell, president and chief executive officer, USA Truck, Inc.; N.S. (Ness) Sechrest, long time friend of the President; Bishop L.T. Walker, Church of God in Christ; and Ron Paige, former minister, Little Rock Church of God in Christ, and his wife, Carrie. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

December 11, 1999

Good morning. The holidays are upon us, and across our Nation families and friends are gathering to celebrate the season. Today I want to talk about the steps we must take to make sure the food at these festivities, indeed, the food we serve every day, is the safest in the world.

For 7 years now, our administration has worked hard to strengthen our food safety standards for the 21st century. We've made significant strides by using the newest research and best technology available. We're using new, science-based standards for meat, poultry, and seafood. We've updated our standards for fruit and vegetable juices. We also established a nationwide early warning system for food-borne illness to catch problems sooner and prevent them from happening in the first place. We're making new advances each year, and are committed to moving forward on all fronts.

But the holiday season is only our latest reminder. When it comes to what we feed our families, there's really no such thing as too safe. We know certain foods carry a special risk for children, for the elderly, for those with weakened immune systems. My Council on Food Safety has identified eggs as one of those foods.

Every year, about 3.3 million eggs are infected with salmonella bacteria. This causes about 300,000 cases of illness. And when infected eggs still make it from the farm to the table, we know we have more work to do. That's why today I am taking new action on food safety to cut in half, over the next

5 years, the number of salmonella cases attributed to eggs. And our goal is to eliminate these cases entirely by 2010. This aggressive action plan permits egg producers and processors to choose between two strategies of safety. The first happens at the farm, where extensive tests and rigorous practices will help prevent infected eggs from ever reaching your local grocery. The second happens at the packing plant, where new technologies like in-shell pasteurization will help keep eggs safe and free of bacteria.

I'm also announcing new steps to keep unsafe food imports outside our borders and out of our marketplace. We Americans are eating more imported food than ever, more than double the amount we consumed just 7 years ago. It used to be that only a dozen fruits and vegetables were available year round. Now it's common to find as many as 400 varieties, whether in the heat of summer or the chill of winter. Now, we have no reason to believe imported food is any less safe than the food we grow at home. But after several outbreaks of illnesses were traced to imported food, I directed the Department of Treasury and the Department of Health and Human Services to take action against unsafe imported food and to better protect our consumers. Today they're responding with a comprehensive plan. It set forth steps to prevent so-called port shopping so unsafe food stopped at one port can't find another way into our country. Customs and the FDA will also stamp rejected food with a clear label—"The United States Refused"—and step up our policy of destroying imported food that poses a serious threat to people's health.

Food safety is part of our citizens' basic contract with the Government. Any food that fails to meet clear and strict standards for safety should not make it to the marketplace; it's just that simple. With the actions we're taking today, our families can have the peace of mind they deserve every holiday season, and, indeed, every day of the year.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 6:35 p.m. on December 10 in classroom 57 at the Earle Senior High School for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 11. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 10 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Remarks to the Florida State Democratic Convention in Orlando, Florida

December 11, 1999

Thank you very much. Thank you. Now, folks, you all sit down now. Can you sit down? I'm a little hoarse, so I can't shout you down, and you won't be able to hear unless you sit down and relax here.

First of all, I want to thank my good friend Charlie Whitehead for inviting me here and for being willing to take the reins of this party again. I came here in 1981, 1983, 1987, 1991; only Arkansas have I visited the Democratic Convention more than I have in the State of Florida, and I thank you very much.

I want to thank Representatives Hastings, Brown, Meeks; former Congressman Smith; the wonderful Lieutenant Governor of Maryland and I think the finest Lieutenant Governor in the United States, Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, who spoke to you earlier today. And I want to say how proud I am that a person who has been a friend of mine a long time is going to be your next United States Senator, Bill Nelson. And Grace Nelson, thank you very much for your interest.

I also asked if Rhea Chiles was still here. It was almost exactly a year ago that Lawton Chiles passed away, and like his family and his friends and his beloved Floridians, I want you to know I still miss him. He was my friend. He was my mentor. He was my ally. His legacy is alive and well in the good things he did in Florida and the good things that we're doing in the United States. And I'm honored to be here.

Now, let me tell you, I know you probably noticed we're about to get into an election season here—[*laughter*]—and you may have noticed that I can't run for anything this year. [*Laughter*] So I want to tell you how come I came down here.

First of all, it was almost 8 years ago exactly when the Democratic Convention of Florida in December of 1991 put my campaign on the map. And I came to say thank you. With

your help, when I was running fifth in the polls nationally, we won a decisive victory over a majority in the straw poll here in 1991. It was the first evidence that Democrats were ready to take America in a new direction. And I got to thinking about that last night and this morning. You were very wonderful to me, but I also want you to know you were a hard sell. [*Laughter*]

I don't know how many times I've talked to Jeff Eller and Craig Smith, who were among those who worked this convention for me, and Hillary and I remember how dog tired we were when we got back to our hotel room after the speech, and then we had to go and visit all these caucuses. We must have gone to a dozen caucuses. And we were asked the most detailed questions over the most wide array of issues, and I just hope you're putting this crowd this year through this. That's all I want to say. [*Laughter*] It was unbelievable.

But I must say, you know, I had been coming here—I remember when then-Governor, now Senator Bob Graham invited me in '81 and '83 and '87—I loved this convention, and I loved that experience in '91. I love your energy, your intensity, your commitment, your caring about the issues and the future of this State and this Nation. And if you can keep this energy—don't forget, we won in '92, and in '96 we won again, and in '96 we carried Florida for the first time in 20 years—you can win again here, and you can do it.

Every time I try to take a walk down memory lane, some of the political press says, "Oh, well, he's thinking about his term being over." Well, I'm not, either. I've got 14 months left, and I'm going to give it to them every day until I go. But since this is an election year, I think it's worth taking a little walk down memory lane.

In the 12 years before Al Gore and I took office, irresponsible policies in Washington piled up deficit after deficit. We quadrupled the national debt in 12 years. We had high interest rates, high unemployment, stagnant wages, growing inequality. By 1991, when I entered the race for President, we had economic distress, social decline, political division, and government was entirely discredited. And don't let anybody forget it.

Now, what a difference 7 years of working for opportunity, responsibility, and community with all Americans make. We are ending the century on a high note. And you can take great pride in it because you had a not insignificant amount to do with it.

Just last week we crossed a truly remarkable threshold: 20 million new jobs since January 1993. And more and more, they're good-paying jobs on which you can support a family, buy a home, take a vacation, save for college and retirement.

So I just want to take a minute here, and I'm going to give you a capsule of the last 7 years. I want you to know it; I want you to take pride in it, because you were a part of it; and I want you to share it with your fellow citizens. The Republicans can have all the rhetoric they want. Let people choose between their rhetoric and our record.

Number one, economically, we have the longest peacetime expansion in our history. In February it will be the longest economic expansion in the history of our country, including that in World War II. We have a 30-year low in unemployment, a 32-year low in welfare, a 20-year low in poverty rates. We have the highest homeownership ever, the largest surplus ever, the first back-to-back budget surpluses in 42 years, with the smallest Federal Government in 37 years.

There's more. We have the lowest Hispanic and African-American unemployment rates ever recorded, the lowest Hispanic poverty rates in 25 years, the lowest African-American poverty rates ever recorded, the highest rate of small business starts in history, the highest rate of minority business ownership in history, the lowest female poverty—unemployment rate in 40 years, the lowest single parent household poverty in 46 years. We're going forward together.

Now, I might say—I was going to save this for later in my speech, but I think we ought to insert it here—and we've done it with the most diverse administration in history, the most diverse appointments to the judgeships, to the Cabinet, to the administration. And I think that the record, not me, the record America has established in the last 7 years proves that Mr. Connerly is wrong in wanting to end affirmative action.

Look, it's interesting, you know, affirmative action actually began under a Republican administration, back when both parties were really committed to civil rights. And like any system that went on for years unexamined, there were some problems with it and it needed to be fixed. And we worked very, very hard on a "mend it, don't end it" policy that I'm proud of. But you cannot look at the record the American people have established in the last 7 years—where we made an effort to include everybody, and we made an effort to make sure our economic policies benefit everybody, our political policies benefited everybody, our social policies benefited everybody—and make a serious case that we'd be better off if we were growing more divided by walking away from one of the tools that has helped to bring us together as a nation. Don't give up on affirmative action, and go out there and defend it.

Wait a minute. We're not done with the record yet. You all just relax. [*Laughter*] I want you to remember this—I'll send a copy of this to Mr. Whitehead, and he can send it out. We have—listen to this—we have the lowest crime rate in 25 years; 470,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers have not been able to get a handgun because of the Brady bill. All the things the NRA—let me tell you—but the NRA was wrong. There's not a hunter in Florida that's missed a day of the hunting season because of the Brady bill, but there are a lot of little kids in the inner city alive because of the Brady bill today. It was the right thing to do.

Wait a minute. Over 20 million people have taken advantage of the family and medical leave law, a bill which was vetoed by my predecessor. And it hasn't hurt the economy. Over 10 million people benefitted from the minimum wage increase. It hasn't hurt the economy. Over 7 million people right now have claimed their HOPE scholarship tax cut to pay for community college or the first 2 years of college so that we can open the doors of college to everyone in the United States of America.

Over 2 million more kids have been insured since the Balanced Budget Act passed in 1997 under the Child Health Insurance Partnership between States and the Federal Government—2 million more kids. Over 90 percent of our children are immunized against serious childhood diseases for the first time in the history of the United States. Over 150,000 young people have served their communities in Florida and throughout the country in AmeriCorps, our national community service program. It took the Peace Corps 25 years to get the number of volunteers we've achieved in 5 years in AmeriCorps.

Now, these are just some of the facts. Let's talk about the environment. The air is cleaner. The water's cleaner. The food is safer. We have the lowest production of waste materials in our country in 20 years, and 20 years ago we had 50 million fewer people. We've cleaned up 3 times as many toxic waste dumps as the Republicans did in the 12 years before we took office—3 times as many. And we have protected more land, from the Florida Everglades to the California redwoods to the 40 million roadless acres in the national forests, more land than any administration in the history of this country except those of Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt.

Along the way, we made a contribution to peace and humanity and democracy in Northern Ireland, in the Middle East, in Bosnia, in Kosovo, in Haiti. We expanded trade with Latin America. We're trying to do so with the Caribbean. We're trying to be a good neighbor to our friends in the Caribbean and to our friends in Africa.

We have reached out to reduce the nuclear threat, from Russia to North Korea; to establish a decent relationship with China, which is important to our future. And the world is a safer, stronger place than it was 7 years ago.

Now, I say this to you to say not how great we were, but that we had good ideas, focused on giving the American people the conditions and the tools to make the most of their own lives; focused on creating opportunity for every responsibility citizen; focusing on creating a community of all people in this country who are willing to work hard and be good citizens. And the American people did it. And I am very grateful. Hillary is very grateful. We are all very grateful.

But I want to say to you, I could not have done it, not any of it, without the Democrats in the Congress. And we need more of them,

not fewer of them. Send Bill Nelson up there.

And I want you to know that it would not have happened without the Vice President. Again, I want you to listen to this—and you can see, I'm a little hoarse, so I can't—this is from the heart. Now, these are facts. From his vote to break the tie on the '93 budget—which is what gave us the ability to balance the budget, got interest rates down, got the economy going—to his vote to break the tie on the Senate's consideration of commonsense gun legislation, to close the loophole in the Brady bill so we could also cover the gun shows, something you voted to do in Florida, from leading our efforts to connect every classroom to the Internet—let me tell you what we've done. Five years ago, when Al Gore and I started working on this and I asked him to take it on, only 4 percent of the classrooms in the country were connected, and they were in 14 percent of the schools—5 years ago. Today, over 50 percent of the classrooms are connected to the Internet in over 80 percent of the schools. I think he's done a good job in helping this to happen.

From running our empowerment zone program—to bring economic opportunity to poor areas—to supporting our policies and developing so many of our policies to strengthen the American family to leading our reinventing Government effort—which has given us, I will say again, the smallest Federal Government in 27 years with a higher level of support for the American people—to supporting every tough decision I have had to make as President, from guns and tobacco to Bosnia and Kosovo, I can tell you that in the history of the country, he is the most effective and influential Vice President who has ever served.

He's got a lot of good ideas for the future, too. And now I want to talk about that. I just signed the first budget of the 21st century. Charlie said we had a do-nothing Congress. Well, that's not quite true. They tried to do something; they tried to pass a tax cut so big that it would have kept us from ever paying down the debt and fixing Social Security and contributing to our children's education. And I vetoed that, and the Democrats stayed with me. That was a major achievement of the last Congress.

And then, when they got ready to go home, that's when the President and the Democrats acquired a little influence in the debate. So when we came out of the budget, even this year, we had a continuing commitment to 100,000 teachers, to 50,000 more police, to 60,000 housing vouchers to help poor people move from welfare to work. We doubled the funds for after-school programs. We got the first money the Federal Government has ever appropriated for States to turn around or shut down failing schools, so that we can help all our kids get a good education and still support the public schools and public school reform.

We had major advances on the environment, and we beat back major assaults on the environment. And we've paid our United Nations dues and agreed to help alleviate the debt of the poorest countries in the world. And we fixed some of the too-severe cuts in the Medicare law from the 1997 balanced budget, restoring funding to hospitals, to nursing homes, to other medical providers, needed to help the 29 million elderly and disabled Medicare beneficiaries.

We also passed a landmark bill, I am immensely proud of, which allows people with disabilities to keep their Medicaid if they move into the work force so people can go to work, because they can't get private insurance.

Now, there's a lot of things we didn't do, and I'm going to be working to get it done. We didn't pass the Patients' Bill of Rights, and we should. It's wrong; everybody should be guaranteed quality care. We didn't raise the minimum wage again, and we should. We didn't close the gun show loophole and require child trigger locks, and we should. We didn't pass the hate crimes legislation or the "Employment Non-Discrimination Act," and I believe we should. We didn't pass my new markets initiative, which would give Americans the same tax incentives and loan guarantees to invest in poor areas in America they get to invest in poor areas in Latin America or Asia or Africa, and I think they should.

I hope that they will agree to let China join the WTO and give them normal trading status. Why? Because you already know

we've got a big trade deficit with China. This bill, this agreement I made gives more options for American farmers, American manufacturers, American investors. All they get out of it—and it's not insignificant—they get to be in the World Trade Organization, where we'll all have to live by the same rules. But we get dramatically greater access to their markets. It means big, big jobs and incomes for farmers and workers in America. And I hope it will pass.

Most importantly, I hope we will find a way next year to protect Social Security and Medicare in the face of the baby boomers' retirement. Now, I want to talk a little more about that. And this is what I want to tell you about the election. We've got a great record. We—you and me, all of us—we've got good ideas. We ought to be winning every poll by 20, 25 points in every race. Why aren't we? Well, they always have more money than we do. And they've been talking to a certain sector of our electorate for so long and telling them how terrible we are, some people probably believe it and forget to think before they vote. [*Laughter*]

But you can change that. So I just want to leave you with this. This I want to be my gift to you. I will do everything I can for the next 14 months, but you have to be good citizens in this election season. And the future of America is riding now on how the Congress' races and the Governors' races and the President's races and these other things come out.

Let me begin with a story. Over Thanksgiving, I got my whole family, my extended family, I gathered them up and took them to Camp David. Then after we stuffed ourselves on Thanksgiving, we had some more of our friends come up, and they had some little kids, too, to play with my two little nephews. And on the Saturday after Thanksgiving, this beautiful little 6-year-old girl looked up at me, and she said, "Now, Mr. President, how old are you anyway?" [*Laughter*] So I said, "Well, I'm 53." And she said, "That's a lot. That's a lot." [*Laughter*] So I said, "Yes, it is a lot."

And let me tell you, from the perspective of those years, in my lifetime, in my whole lifetime there has never been a time when America had this much prosperity, this much social progress, this much national confidence, with the absence of a crisis at home or a threat abroad.

Now, what does that mean? [*Applause*] Wait, wait, wait, wait. We're done with the record. [*Laughter*] I want you to think about this. What that means is that for the first time in my lifetime, on the edge of this new millennium, we actually have a chance to shape the future of our dreams for our children in a way no previous group of Americans in our whole lifetime has had. And that imposes on us a terrific responsibility. You know, anybody can concentrate when their backs are against the wall. The great British essayist Samuel Johnson said, "Nothing so concentrates the mind as the prospect of one's own destruction." Your back's against the wall; you can focus.

When things are rocking along, hunky-dory, it's easy to get distracted. I was so proud of the American people for sticking with me when I vetoed that tax cut. I said, you know, you can understand it if people said, hey, man, we've been working hard out here. The eighties were tough; the nineties were tough. Cut us some slack, here. But they said, "Uh-uh, no; we don't want to go back to those old bad days. We'll stay on the path we're on." That was good.

So I ask you—here's what will determine whether we win this election or not, from the White House to the Senate to all the other elections. What will determine whether we win is, what is it about? And if it is about our common responsibility as a people to meet the big challenges of the 21st century, because we ought to and because we can now, for the first time in our lifetimes, then we will win.

What are they? We've got to deal with the aging of America. The number of people over 65 will double in 30 years. I hope to be one of them. [*Laughter*] It is unconscionable that the baby boom generation will walk away again from the opportunity to take Social Security out beyond the life expectancy of the baby boomers and to push the life of Medicare out there and to add a prescription drug benefit for the people who cannot afford their medicine today.

Second, you look around Florida; we've got the largest and most diverse student population in our history. We cannot walk away from our obligation to give all of these children a world-class education. We ought to pass my initiative to help people build or repair thousands of schools. We ought to keep on going until we connect them all to the Internet. We ought to give every child access to an after-school program. We ought to make sure the teachers are certified and well-trained and well-compensated. We owe that to these kids. Nothing is more important.

Third, we ought to do more to help people balance work and family—more child care; insure all the kids with health insurance; equal pay for equal work for women. We ought to do that.

Fourth, we ought to make sure that we can grow the economy and still improve the environment. The world is in a grip, still, of a very bad idea that's wrong. All over the world, including in Washington, DC, people believe you can't get rich unless you put more coal and oil into furnaces or machines and burn them and pollute the atmosphere. It's not true anymore. It's not true anymore.

The farmers in Florida, I predict to you, within 15 years, will be saving all their waste products for biomass fuel. You'll be able to use a gallon of gasoline to make 8 or 10 gallons of biomass fuel with no greenhouse gas emissions. When that happens, the whole future of that will change. You can buy windows right now that let in 5 times as much light and keep out 5 times as much heat and cold.

We have undertaken to green the White House, and we have saved the equivalent of almost 700 cars on the highway by energy conservation at the White House. And it's working just fine. We're all warm in the winter and cool in the summer. It's a big deal. It will be a bigger deal to the future; you mark my words. If you don't want the Everglades to flood because of global warming, we'd better deal now with this. And we can do it.

Let me just mention one or two other things. We've got the crime rate down to a 25-year low, good; murder rate down to a 31-year low, good. Does anybody think America is as safe as it ought to be? No, of course not. Now, when I took office, most people didn't believe you could drive the crime rate down. We all thought the crime rate just went in one direction, up. So now we know it can be brought down.

So, I say to you, the reason I fight hard for this, these commonsense gun measures and the 50,000 more police in the high-crime areas and more programs to keep kids out of trouble in the first place is I don't think it's good enough to say we've had crime go down 7 years. I think the Democrats ought to say, okay, now we know we can do it; we have a new goal. We want America to be the safest big country in the entire world, and we're going to keep working until we do it.

Now, I want to say something about the economy. I think it is terribly important that we keep our party front and center on keeping this economy going. How are we going to keep it going? Number one is, don't forget what brought us to the dance. We need to keep paying down this debt. You know that we can be out of debt in 15 years if you stay on my budget path. For the first time since 1835 America will be debt-free. And we ought to do it.

Second, we've got to keep working within our party, within our country—with labor, environmentalists, and businesspeople—until we finally get it right on trade because, I am telling you, the world is better off today because there is 50 years of increasing trade. We are only 4 percent of the world's people; we've got 22 percent of the world's income. It just stands to reason that you can't hold that unless you sell something to the other 96 percent.

Furthermore, let me say something about imports. They are unpopular in general and popular in particular. We don't like imports in general, but we all have them: we wear them; we drive them, you know. [*Laughter*] What do they do for you? They keep inflation down with competition. That's why we've got the longest peacetime expansion in our history, because inflation didn't destroy it. So we've got to keep working until we get this right.

The third thing we've got to do—and this is something I feel so strongly about—if we can't bring economic opportunity to the poor

areas of America that have not participated in this recovery now, we will never get around to doing it, never—to Appalachia, to the Mississippi Delta, to the poor rural areas of America, to the inner cities, to the Native American reservations. We've got to do it.

And with economic opportunity we also have to keep our focus on doing everything we can at home and around the world to get people together, to get people over these conflicts they have over race and ethnicity and religion and sexual orientation. It's crazy.

Let me just ask you to think about this. Don't you think it's interesting that whenever you read something about the new millennium, they talk about the wonders of the human computer, the wonders of the human genome? Hillary had some people at the White House the other night, one of the guys that founded the Internet and one of the principal scientists working on the human gene. And the Internet guy actually sent the first E-mail 18 years ago, because he had a profoundly deaf wife, and he wanted to talk to her at work, and she couldn't take hearing aids. And he said, "The intersection of the study of the gene and the study of computers means we can do things that we never could do before." And he had his wife stand up, and she started speaking, and because she has a minor little computer chip stuck way down in her ear, she can hear for the first time in 50 years.

Now, last year we transplanted nerves from the legs to the spine of a laboratory animal for the first time and got movement in the lower legs. Some people think we'll be able to take a picture of spinal cord injuries and just design a computer chip to go in and replace the electronic impulses that the spine used to provide. This is the kind of stuff we're talking about.

In a couple of years, young mothers will come home from the hospital with their babies, and they'll have a little genetic map. And it will be a little scary. It will say, you know, your daughter has one of these genes that are predictors for breast cancer. That's the bad news. The good news is you know it now, and here are 10 things you can do that will cut her risk by 80 percent. A lot of my friends who are experts in the field really believe that sometime early in the next century American newborns will have a life expectancy of nearly 100 years.

Now, a lot of my other friends in the space program think we'll find out what's in the black holes in the universe. A lot of other people believe we'll continue to fight against war because we'll be more connected to the Internet around the world.

Let me ask you something. Don't you think it's interesting that in this most modern of times, the biggest problem in the world today is the oldest problem of human society: We don't trust people who are different from us. We fear them. It's easy to go from fear to dislike, from dislike to hatred, from hatred to dehumanization, and then to violence.

There was a picture yesterday morning in one of the big newspapers of a young gay soldier that was beaten to death with a baseball bat, and right next to him, the young soldier that beat him to death—one 21, one 18. I was looking at these two kids thinking, you know, they're young enough that they could be my children. And both these young men put on the uniform of our country, and I could have sent them someplace to die. They both swore to go wherever I told them to go and do whatever I told them to do. And I was aching for the young man who had died and for the young man whose life is now destroyed—who wasn't born hating that way; somebody had to teach him to do that.

And so I say to you, you want to know what makes us different? The best politics in 2000 is doing right by the big challenges of the country. If people believe the election is about who's got the best record and who's got the best vision for the big challenges, lifting us up and pulling us together, listen, our crowd's going to do fine.

If we talk about the aging of America and Social Security and Medicare, if we talk about the education of our children, if we talk about growing our economy and helping our agricultural and manufacturing sectors while improving the environment, if we talk about balancing work and family, if we talk about bringing economic opportunity to poor people and getting this country out of debt for the first time since 1835, and if we talk about the most important thing of all, which is manifested in the hate crimes in America

and in the continuing conflicts from the Balkans to the Middle East, and thank God, in the peace agreement in Northern Ireland, and we hope there will be one between Israel and Syria soon, because they're coming to meet next week—people have to find a way not just to tolerate but to celebrate their differences, and to be secure in doing it because they believe, down to the core of their being, that what we have in common is even more important. We've got to let a lot of this stuff go. Our party can take the lead in doing that.

So go out there and talk to people about what's happened in this country in the last 7 years. Even more important, go out there and say, do you really believe in our lifetime we've ever been in this kind of shape before? And if you don't, what are we going to do with it? Go up to total strangers on the street and say, you're a citizen; what do you think we ought to do with this time? I think we ought to make the most of it.

And ask them about the aging of America. Ask them about the children of America. Ask them about their parents struggling to balance work and family. Ask them about the economy and the environment. Ask them about bringing economic opportunity to poor places. And ask them about building one America. You make this election season about that, and we'll have another celebration next year.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:10 a.m. in the Empire Room at the Wyndham Palace Resort. In his remarks, he referred to Charles A. Whitehead, chairman, Florida State Democratic Party; Senatorial candidate Bill Nelson and his wife, Grace; Rhea Chiles, widow of former Gov. Lawton Chiles of Florida; Jeffrey L. Eller, former Deputy Assistant to the President and Director of Media Affairs; Craig T. Smith, former Assistant to the President and Director of Political Affairs; Ward Connerly, chairman, California Civil Rights Initiative; Vinton G. Cerf, senior vice president of Internet architecture and technology, MCI WorldCom, and his wife, Sigrid; and Eric Lander, director, Whitehead Institute/MIT Center for Genome Research.

Statement on Turkey's European Union Candidacy

December 11, 1999

It is with great pleasure that I welcome the European Union's offer on Friday to Turkey—and Turkey's acceptance—of EU candidate status. The United States has long supported Turkey's bid to join the EU, in the belief that this would have lasting benefits not only for Turkey but also for all EU members and the United States. On Friday the EU and Turkey took a big step toward bringing that goal to fruition.

I would like to congratulate Turkish Prime Minister Ecevit for his government's decision to accept the EU offer. Under Mr. Ecevit, Turkey has launched an impressive array of political, economic, human rights, and other reforms that demonstrate conclusively its commitment to take its rightful place in Europe.

I would like to express my admiration to Greek Prime Minister Simitis for his statesmanship and groundbreaking efforts with Mr. Ecevit to improve relations between Greece and Turkey, efforts which were key to bringing about this momentous development.

Finally, I want to congratulate all the members of the European Union for their decision and to express my support for their vision of a Europe stronger and more united for its embrace of diversity. In particular, Finnish Prime Minister Lipponen deserves credit for his hard work and skill in helping to bring about this extraordinary achievement.

Remarks at a Reception for Representative Alcee Hastings in Fort Lauderdale, Florida

December 11, 1999

The President. Thank you very much. Whoa! You will have to forgive me, you can hear that I have a cold, and so I can't talk very loud. So if you talk, I can't talk. If you

like my speech very much, I can't talk, because I can't get over all the cheers. But let me say to all of you, first of all, I want to thank the Keiser family and the leadership of this college for welcoming us here. I want to thank the president of the student body, Dean Samuels, who met me and gave me a gift from the students.

I believe in the audience we have, in addition to Representative Hastings, another candidate for Congress on our ticket in an adjacent district, State Representative Elaine Bloom. I think she's here, and there she is. I want you guys to help her.

Let me say to all of you, I have had a wonderful day in Florida. I don't think I ever had a bad day in Florida. This is the first time I've ever been in Florida in my life that I've been sick, and I had a good day in spite of it, because, this morning, I went up to Orlando to the Democratic State Convention. Now, I attended the Democratic State Convention in Florida in 1981 and in 1983 and in 1987, when I was just a Governor and a friend of your Governor's, and they were good enough to invite me. And I always had a big time, and Hillary had two brothers living down here then, and I was always looking for a reason to come and always learning about what was going on in Florida, and thinking, this is the beginning of what will happen in America.

So, anyway, 8 years ago this week—8 years ago—in December of 1991 Hillary and I came down to the Florida Democratic Convention, which was holding the first election of the primary season, a straw poll. I was running fifth—fifth—in the country in the primaries at the time, but I got over 50 percent in the Florida Democratic straw poll. And it's been all uphill ever since, thanks to all of you, and I'm very grateful.

Now, I'm glad to be here tonight with Alcee Hastings, and I'll tell you why and ask you to help Elaine Bloom. Because I know the President sometimes gets the blame when things go wrong, but the President also gets the credit when things go right. And you heard Alcee talking about all those good things. I want to run over them again in a minute for you, but the good things that have happened here to the American people would not have happened had I not had the support of the Democrats in Congress, particularly those that were really strong-willed and outspoken, that had influenced the others, and Alcee Hastings is such a leader in the United States Congress.

And I want you to know that his influence extends beyond the Florida delegation, beyond the Congressional Black Caucus, because he is an intelligent man; because he cares about the rest of the world; because he believes that you can care about the education of our children and saving Medicare and Social Security for our seniors and protecting the Florida environment, and still care about decency and humanity all around the world and the end of not only racism at home but racial and ethnic and religious hatred all around the world. He is one of the most exceptional people in the House of Representatives, and I want you to help him.

Now, I'm going to give a short speech so I don't lose my voice, but you're more likely to remember it. I've got 14 months left, and then you're going to have an election to chart America's course in a new millennium. Here's what I want to say to you about it.

We just passed the first budget of the 21st century. We got 100,000 teachers for smaller classes in the early grades. We got 50,000 more police to keep the crime rate coming down. We got 60,000 more housing vouchers to help poor people move from welfare to work. We've doubled the number of after-school programs to help kids stay in school and learning and out of trouble. We gave States for the first time help to help turn around or shut down schools that are failing our children, because all our schools can do better. We moved forward on the environment. We paid our dues to the U.N. We gave debt relief to the very poorest countries in the world. We are moving forward.

Then, there's a lot of stuff we didn't do that I want to next year—the Patients' Bill of Rights, the minimum wage increase, the hate crimes legislation.

We had a great year in foreign policy. You know, I'm Irish—we saw the completion of the Irish peace process this year, and I'm very happy about that. And just last week, I announced that—earlier this week, a couple of days ago—that next week Israel and Syria

will resume their peace negotiations in Washington, DC, in a couple of days.

So we're going to keep working to the last hour of the last day. But I want you to step back a minute, because what happens in these congressional elections, whether Bill Nelson gets elected United States Senator from Florida, whether Elaine Bloom gets elected United States Representative from Florida, whether we hold the White House—and I believe we will—but it all depends on—I wish I could be more whoop-de-do. I'm doing the best I can. It all depends on what the voters think the election is about.

Now, I want you to remember this. We put in our economic program in 1993, and the Vice President broke the tie in the Congress, and the Republicans said it would be a disaster. Now, we have 20 million jobs, the longest peacetime expansion in history, the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 32 years, the lowest poverty rates in 20 years, the lowest African-American and Hispanic unemployment rates ever recorded, the lowest female unemployment rate in 40 years. Now, that's the first thing.

The second thing I want to say is, we have the lowest crime rate in 25 years; 90 percent of our kids immunized against serious childhood diseases for the first time in history; over 2 million more kids covered under the Children's Health Insurance Program. We've cleaned up 3 times as many toxic waste dumps as the predecessor administrations, both of them. And we now have the lowest output of waste that is terribly damaging to the environment that we've had in 20 years. Twenty years ago we had 50 million fewer people.

We've had 150,000 young people serve this country in AmeriCorps, 7 million young people take advantage of the HOPE scholarship to go on to community college and to other college education. We've had 10 million people get the benefit of the minimum wage, and over 20 million get the benefit of the family and medical leave law. This is a better, stronger, more together country than it was 7 years ago.

But what I want to say—I'll stay the course. I want you to stay the course. And then what I want you to do—wait, wait—what I want you to do is go out here and find your fellow Floridians who may not be Democrats, who may not be voters, and not only do I want you to stay the course; I want you to teach the course.

You know, we had an idea that we ought to have a country with opportunity for all, responsibility from all, and a community of all Americans. And almost everything that we fought for we were opposed by the leaders of the other party. And I've been willing to work with them. And when we've worked with them, I've always given them credit for what they've done. But I think we have proved that we're a stronger country when we go forward together across racial lines.

So what are they trying to give you in Florida? Mr. Connerly wants to come here and try to abolish affirmative action when we've proved that going forward with affirmative action in the right way strengthens the economy and the society and makes us all better off. So I want you to think about that.

So the first thing I want you to tell folks is it's not like we don't have evidence here. It's not like there's no evidence about which approach works. I'll never forget how the NRA went after Congressmen in States like Florida after we passed the Brady bill and I signed it, because my predecessor vetoed it. And they told the awfulest stories about how people are going to lose their guns. Well, 470,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers did lose their handguns, but not a single Florida hunter missed a day of hunting season because of it. They did not tell the truth about that. This is a safer country because of it.

Okay, so here's the issue. What's the election about? What's the election about? In my lifetime—in my lifetime—there has never been this much economic prosperity, social progress, national self-confidence, with the absence of a domestic crisis or a foreign threat. It has never happened. So what's the election about? It's about what we're going to do with that.

What do we propose to do with our prosperity? The Republicans gave us their answer in the last session of Congress when they passed a tax cut so large it would have prohibited us from saving Social Security and Medicare and prohibited us from ever paying down the national debt.

But when I vetoed it, the American people supported me, and Alcee supported me, and the Democrats in Congress supported me—because they said, "No, no, no, that's not what we're going to do with our prosperity. What we're going to do with our prosperity is ask ourselves an honest question: What do we want America to look like in 10, 20, and 30 years? How are we going to build the America of our dreams for our children? What are the big challenges out there?" And let me just tell you what I think they are.

Number one, you've got to deal with the aging of America. You've got to save Social Security and Medicare for the baby boom generation, add a prescription drug benefit, let people over 55 buy into Medicare if they don't have health insurance. We've got to do this. We have got to do this. I'm telling you, every baby boomer I know is plagued by the thought that our retirement will burden our children and their ability to raise our grandchildren. Now, we've got the money now, folks, to take the Social Security Trust Fund out beyond the life of the baby boom generation, and we ought to do it.

Look at these young people. Look at the young people that are here, 18 to 23 or 24, the young people in that age group. Do you really think when they get old enough to have their children and they start raising families that they should be burdened in what they can do for their children because they're having to take care of us, their parents, when there is no earthly excuse for it?

All we have to do is take the savings that we get from paying down the debt with the Social Security surplus and put those interest savings into the Trust Fund, and it will take it out beyond the life of the baby boom generation—no controversy, no heat, no nothing. We ought to do it, and we ought to do it next year.

The second thing we ought to do is to deal with the children of America. Ironically, we're growing at both ends, in our elderly and in our children. We've got the largest number of school children in our schools in our history. They are the most racially, ethnically, and religiously diverse school children in our history, and every one of them deserves a world-class education, and we ought to give it to them.

The third thing we ought to do is take a different approach to crime. Now, you all clapped when I said we had the lowest crime rate in 25 years; we've got the lowest murder rate in 31 years. Does anyone here think the crime rate is low enough?

Audience members. No!

The President. No. Now, when I became President, nobody thought we could get the crime rate down. They thought the crime rate went in one direction only—up. Okay, now we know it goes down. I propose that in the year 2000 we have a decent goal. We say we're going to keep working till America is the safest big country in the world.

I believe there are lots of other things I could say—and I'm trying to save the Everglades, you know—and I just want to say this one thing about the environment. The young people here, if they're going to have the kind of America they deserve, are going to have to accept the fact that you can improve the environment and grow the economy at the same time. And as soon as we—look, since I became President, the air's cleaner; the water's cleaner. We've set aside more land than any administration except those of Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt. We've cleaned up all these dumps. Let me tell you something. We better start thinking that we should be improving the environment as we grow the economy, not destroying the environment as we grow the economy.

But the last thing I want to say is this. I'll just give you one other. You ought to go home tonight and ask yourself what you think the big challenges are. Go home and make your own list. But I'll tell you, if somebody said to me tonight, "Well, Mr. President, you don't have 14 more months; you've got to leave tomorrow. But I'm the genie, and I'll give you one wish. You can do anything for America you want, but only one." What I would choose is for us to be one America, across all the lines that divide us, for two reasons. First of all, we'll never be what we ought to be as long as we still have hate crimes—where some guy in the Midwest that belongs to a church he says doesn't believe in God but believes in white supremacy, goes out and kills in rapid succession an African-American former college basketball coach, and then kills a Korean Christian walking out

of his church. An angry guy out in Los Angeles shoots a bunch of Jewish kids going to a church school, a synagogue school, and then goes out and murders a Filipino postman—and the guy thought he had a two-fer. He had an Asian and somebody who worked for the Federal Government. James Byrd gets dragged to death in Texas. Matthew Shepard gets put on a rack.

Yesterday, all over America, there were gripping pictures of these two young soldiers, one 21, one 18. The 21-year-old, a gay soldier who the 18-year-old beat to death with a baseball bat. And I thought to myself, looking at these two young boys—keep in mind, I look at them in a certain way not only because they're young enough to be my own sons, but because I have a lot of your sons under my command. Those young men, when they put on that uniform—both of them—when they put on that uniform, they basically took an oath that says, "If Bill Clinton tells me to, I will go halfway around the world to fight and die." That's what it means. Let's not kid. That's what it means.

So here are these two kids, they make the same pledge, they've got their whole lives before them—one of them is dead and the other one's life is ruined. And frankly, I ached for both of them. And the young boy that murdered the other one because he was gay, he wasn't born feeling that way; somebody taught him to do that. So that's the last thing I want to tell you.

You guys are smart. That's why I always say what government ought to do is create the conditions—get rid of the debt; give people the same incentives to invest in poor areas we give them to invest in poor areas in Latin America and Asia and Africa; give people empowerment, and they will do the job. But, first and foremost, we must be one America.

That is also the way we can have the biggest influence in resolving the crisis in the Middle East, in Kosovo, in Bosnia, the tribal warfare in Africa, you name it. This old world is still burdened down with people that can't get along without hating somebody who is different from them. And we all know better. We all know better.

So I tell you, if you go out there and you make the subject of the election the record of the last 7 years and what are we going to do with our prosperity—and the answer is, we're going to deal with the aging of America, the children of America, make America the safest big country in the world, put America out of debt for the first time since 1835, bring genuine economic opportunity to the poorest people in the country, and be one America—we will come home next time, too.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:50 p.m. in the auditorium at Keiser College. In his remarks, he referred to Ward Connerly, chairman, California Civil Rights Initiative.

Remarks at a Unity Reception in Coral Gables, Florida

December 11, 1999

Thank you very much. Thank you, Gene. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. I hope you'll forgive me if I'm a little hoarse, I've been battling a big cold today. I've had an amazing few days. A couple of days ago we announced that we were going to start the peace talks again, after 4 years of hiatus, between Israel and Syria. And it's been a wonderful thing. And then I had a very sad duty to go up to Worcester, Massachusetts, to the funeral of those firemen—you may have seen. And then I went home to Arkansas yesterday. So somewhere along the way I caught a cold, and my voice is not the best. And I thank you for indulging me.

I'm always glad to be back here. I love this hotel. [*Laughter*] I love the golf course. [*Laughter*] I love the people. And Gene Prescott has been very good to me and to many members of my family, and I thank him for that. And I thank all of you for coming.

I know there were Members of the Senate and the House who were here earlier, and they've gone to the next event. I do want to recognize State Representative Elaine Bloom, who is running for Congress and who is going to be a Member of Congress if she gets adequate financial support to help her win. And so thank you very much for coming.

Let me say to all of you, this has been a pretty emotional day for me in Florida, because it was 8 years ago this week that I came

to Florida to the Democratic Convention when they were having straw poll. And this straw poll had been mightily hyped because it was going to be the first vote of any kind in the 1992 Presidential season. At the time, as I remember, I was running fifth in New Hampshire in the polls.

And I had been to the Florida Democratic Convention already by 1991, three previous times in the eighties, thanks to Bob Graham and Lawton Chiles. I had been in '81, '83, and '87, and had a wonderful time. But on this special day, we had worked very hard, and the Florida Democrats worked me very hard. They made me go to all of these little caucuses and answer all these questions. I must have answered a thousand questions. I was so exhausted by the time I finished visiting more than a dozen of these caucuses, answering hundreds of questions, I got to where I wondered what I was doing in this business. But we won over 50 percent of the vote in the Florida straw poll, at a time when we were running fifth in the national polls. And a lot of you in this room were a part of that endeavor. I thank you for that.

And I came back today to go up to Orlando to the Democratic Convention just to thank those people who gave me my start on the road to the Presidency; and also to thank Florida for voting for me and for Al Gore in 1996, which is the first time in 20 years this State had voted for a Democratic ticket.

Gene has already said a lot of what he might say about the record. I just wanted to make a couple of points. In 1991, when I decided to run for President, I did so not because I had anything personal against President Bush. I actually like him quite well, and I had often worked as the representative of the Governors, both the Republicans and the Democrats, with the White House, for years and years. I did it because our country was at a time of economic distress, social decline, political division, and the whole enterprise of government was discredited. And I had worked for more than a decade as a Governor to try to bring people together instead of driving them apart and to try to figure out what makes the economy tick in the modern world.

And so I asked the American people to give me a chance to create a society where there was opportunity for every responsible citizen, and where we had a community of all, where everybody could participate. And Gene mentioned a little of this, but you know, I think the interesting thing is—it is true that in February we will have the longest economic expansion in history. We already have the longest peacetime economic expansion in history, but, you know, in wartime, you're fully mobilized, so they tend to last longer. We're going to outdo all the wartime expansions if we keep on plugging until February. And that's a great tribute to the American people.

But it also happened because we made some tough decisions. We got rid of this deficit; we turned it into a surplus. We got the interest rates down. We stopped taking money away from you that you might need to borrow to expand a business or to start a new one or to make a home loan payment or a car payment or a college loan payment. And the strategy has worked.

But I think it's important to point out that we don't just have the lowest unemployment rate—the actual figure is 30 years, the lowest female unemployment rate in 40 years—but our society is coming together. We have the lowest single-parent household poverty rate in 46 years, the lowest Hispanic poverty rate in 25 years, and the lowest African-American poverty rate ever recorded and the lowest Hispanic and African-American unemployment rates ever recorded—we've been keeping statistics for about 30 years, now. So we're coming together as a society.

And we're also beginning to look at things that have been long ignored. We have 90 percent of our little children immunized against serious diseases for the first time in the history of the country. Two million more kids have health insurance now than they did in 1997. Seven million young people have gone to college under the HOPE scholarship, a $1,500 a year tax credit that, in effect, opens the first 2 years of college to all Americans. Ten million got an increase in the minimum wage. More than 20 million took advantage of the Family and Medical Leave Act. These things are important.

In the last legislative session of Congress, we got 100,000 teachers to get the class size down in the early grades. We got 50,000

more police to keep driving the crime rate down. We got 60,000 vouchers to give to people on welfare so they can move from welfare to work and find a place to live where they work. We are moving this country in the right direction.

But I want to tell you why I'm glad you're here tonight, because I'm not much on looking back, except as it's evidence of where we're going. All elections are about tomorrow. I never will forget when I ran for Governor for the fifth time. I went out to the State Fair, before I'd announced—and I used to have Governor's Day at the State Fair. And I'd just sit there at this little booth, you know, a fair booth, and anybody that wanted to come up and talk, could.

This old boy in overalls, who was about 70 years old, came up to me and he said, "Bill, are you going to run again?" I said, "I don't know. If I do, will you vote for me?" He said, "Yeah, I guess so. I always have." I said, "Well, aren't you sick of me?" He said, "No, but everybody else I know is." [*Laughter*] And I got kind of puffed up, and I said, "Well, don't you think I've done a good job?" He said, "Well, sure you've done a good job, but you drew a paycheck every 2 weeks, didn't you?" It's very interesting—"that's what we hired you to do. We hired you to do a good job." So what I want to say to you is, I hope you will go out and share this record. These statistics are stunning. But they are evidence of the direction we need to take.

It's been an honor to serve. And nobody's entitled, none of us—not even the Vice President—none of us are entitled to a vote because we did a good job. And I'm not running for anything. But it is evidence of the job that will be done if we stay going in this direction.

It is not about whether we will change, but what kind of change we'll have. And I want you to know I could not have done anything if I hadn't had the support of like minded Democrats in Congress, people who wanted to change the Democratic Party and change the country. Elaine Bloom is one of those people. She was out here for me in 1991. I'd like to see her have a chance to serve. I think she could make a big difference. And that's why you're here; this is important.

This is the last thing I'm going to say. Tomorrow morning or next week or next month, somebody might ask you why you ponied up the money and came to this thing. And I hope you'll be able to give an answer, and I hope your answer is, number one, there's not much argument about whether these people delivered. They've had 7 great years for our country. The ideas they brought, the direction they changed was right. Number two, the next election should be about America meeting the big new challenges of the 21st century, not about short-term, divisive, narrowminded politics.

And let me just say, in my lifetime—I had a bunch of kids up to the house at Camp David Thanksgiving weekend, and this little 6-year-old girl who is the daughter of a friend of mine said, "Now, how old are you again?" And I said, "I'm 53." And this 6-year-old girl, her eyes got big and she said, "Oh, that's a lot." [*Laughter*] And I have to admit she was right. [*Laughter*] But what I want to tell you is, in these lot of years that I've had the privilege of being on this Earth, never before in my lifetime has our country had this combination of economic success, social solidarity, national self-confidence, with the absence of an internal crisis or an external threat. It had never happened to me before in my lifetime. And what I have learned in these 53 years is that no set of conditions last forever. This is a time of rapid change. We will never forgive ourselves if we do not use this moment to shape the future of our dreams for our children.

We've got to deal with Social Security and Medicare, the aging of America, take Social Security out beyond the baby boomers' lives, lengthen Medicare, add a prescription drug benefit so the 75 percent of the seniors who can't afford the medicine they need can get it.

We've got to deal with the education of the largest and most diverse group of schoolchildren in history, and we've got to do it in a very serious and disciplined way. We have to help people do more to balance work and family. Nearly every parent is working now. We need more investments in child care and health care for children and equal

pay for women. We need to broaden the reach of the Family and Medical Leave Act. We need to do these things.

We need to continue to protect the environment while we grow the economy. I'm convinced, folks that this—I'm not running for anything, and I'm convinced this climate change problem is real. And you could have in five or six decades a substantial part of the Everglades under water if we don't aggressively move to try to reverse this. And what I want to tell you is we can grow the economy even quicker if we do the right things environmentally than if we don't. You don't have to give it up anymore.

Just two other things that I hope you will say. There are still people in places that this economy has left behind—Appalachia, the Mississippi Delta, the Indian reservations, a lot of inner-city neighborhoods. But we have a strategy to try to bring free enterprise—not government jobs, free enterprise—to those places. And keep in mind, that's one way to keep growing this economy and keep this expansion going without inflation. If you invest in a new area, you create new businesses, new jobs, and new consumers. You're not adding to inflationary pressures.

And I will over simplify. Essentially, what we want to do is to give people who can come to political fundraisers the same incentive to invest in poor areas in America we give them today to invest in poor areas in Latin America or Asia or Africa. I'm for that, too, by the way. But I think if we can't give people the incentives to put free enterprise in America in places that are left behind, if we can't do this now, we're never going to get around to it.

You know, the national unemployment rate is 4.1 percent. Do you know what the unemployment rate on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation is in South Dakota, the home of the Lakota Sioux, the tribe of Crazy Horse? Seventy-three percent. I've been there now. There are plenty of intelligent people there. There are a lot of yearning young children who want a good education. There's plenty of things we could do there. And there's 120 years of history that explains why this is so, and I won't bore you with it. But I'm just telling you, I hope that you will say, I came there and I'm still—I'm glad I went, and I'm glad I wrote the check, because they've got a good record, and because they want to take on the big questions of the 21st century—the aging of America; the most diverse group of kids we've ever had; the balancing of work and family; the balancing of the environment and the economy; bringing economic opportunity to poor people. And the last thing I'd say is, creating truly one America.

We had a fascinating time the other night. Hillary had these two guys come to the White House for one of these Millennium Evenings she has that we put out on the Internet all over the world. So this one man, Vint Cerf, was one of the men who created the architecture of the Internet, and he mailed the first E-mail 18 years ago to his profoundly deaf wife, who was so deaf she could not hear with the aid of even the most powerful hearing aids, and he wanted to talk to her when he was at work. That's how the E-mail started.

And the other guy was Professor Lander from Harvard, who's one of the scholars of the human genome, this rapid thing we're doing to—you may have seen, we found 33 million components of one of the chromosomes. Did you see that last week? I mean, we're basically trying to map the whole genetic structure of the human body. So Dr. Lander knows about this.

Well, a lot of what they were talking about was how you couldn't do the science without the computer technology. And how the computer technology was going to amplify the science. For example, last year I was really happy that we transplanted nerves from the legs to the spine of a laboratory animal for the first time and got movement in the lower limbs. They now believe that a quicker answer to the problems of people who have spinal cord injuries, that maybe the development of microchips that are programmed to reflect an individual mapping of every person's injury, and to send out electrical impulses that replicate what the nerves do.

They believe that in 3 or 4 years, every young mother will come home with a baby and a genetic map. That'll be kind of scary; they'll tell you all the things that might happen to your baby, but they'll also tell you all the things you can do to minimize the

chances that they'll happen. And most of my friends in the field believe that some time fairly early in the next century, the average child will live to be 100 years old—have a 100-year life expectancy.

A lot of my friends who are interested in space say that we may find out what's in those black holes in the universe. And everybody knows that we're going to start having a lot more E-commerce and Internet connections, in ways we couldn't have imagined. I'll give you just one little example. You know—did you all ever buy anything on eBay? It's a trading site on the web. There are now over 20,000 people that make a living on eBay. They don't work for eBay; they make a living buying and selling on eBay. And a number of them used to be on welfare. So if you can get Internet access to be as dense in America as telephone access, a lot of these poor people that worked their way out of poverty, they'll figure out how to do it.

So this is, anyway, to put it mildly, a very exciting time to be alive. And I think it is quite interesting that, with all this modern stuff going on, the biggest problem we've got is the oldest problem of human society—with all this racial and religious and ethnic hatred, and hatred of gays. You know, it's just like, okay, so we're living in a modern world, but we can't let any of this stuff go. There are people and groups that don't think they count unless they've got somebody to look down on.

And if you look at what's taking my time as your President around the world—the Middle East, Northern Ireland, Kosovo, Bosnia, tribal wars in Africa, and a lot of things that are indirectly related to that—it's the biggest problem in the world.

One of the worst things you read about—crime rate keeps going down in America, but you've got all these hate crimes: black basketball coach in Illinois, Korean Christian coming out of his church, both killed by a guy who belonged to a church that said they don't believe in God; they believe in white supremacy. An angry guy up in L.A. shoots all these Jewish kids going to their synagogue schools and then goes and kills a Filipino postman. Matthew Shepard, James Byrd.

Did you see the pictures in the paper yesterday of the two soldiers, one 18 and one 21? The 18-year-old beat the one that was 21 to death with a baseball bat because he was gay. I've said this a lot, but my heart broke for both of them.

People have to be taught this kind of stuff. And I'm very proud of the fact that I belong to a political party that believes everybody has a place at the table, everybody ought to have a chance, and we ought to take a little extra trouble to help bring people in that need a helping hand.

I believe that, and I think now you've had 7 years—and I hope you'll think about this when Mr. Connerly comes down here and puts his anti-affirmative action initiative on the ballot—we've now had 7 years to prove that our way works better. America's better off when you help everybody to participate, not worse off.

And if I could have one wish, it would be—just one; if somebody came, you know, one of those little angels came to me at night and said, "I'm sorry, Mr. President, you have to check out tomorrow morning. You can't stay 14 months, but we'll give you one wish. What would you like?" As much as I want to do something about the aging challenge and the children and all these other things, I would say, I'd like to leave America united across the lines that divide us—not just tolerating our differences, but celebrating them; and reaffirming the fact that our common humanity is more important than all these interesting differences.

There's no country in the world as well-positioned as we are for the next 50 years of what's going to happen. But we have to be willing to deal with these long-term challenges. If this election is about that question—what are we going to do with this unique moment in our history?—then our side will win.

And I hope that when people ask you, why are you doing this, you'll tell them about the last 7 years, but you'll also talk about your dreams for the next 20.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:45 p.m. in the Altamira Room at the Biltmore Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Gene Prescott, president, Biltmore Hotel; Ward Connerly, chairman, California Civil Rights Initiative; and Eric Lander,

director, Whitehead Institute/MIT Center for Genome Research.

Remarks at a Unity Reception in Coral Gables

December 11, 1999

Thank you very much. Well, first of all, I want to thank Senator Torricelli for that uncommonly generous introduction. He thwarted one of my rules of politics. Normally, when you get an introduction like that, it's from someone you've appointed to a good office. [*Laughter*] And so he just did it out of the goodness of his heart and a laundry list of what I'll have to do for New Jersey next year. [*Laughter*] And I thank him for that.

I want to thank Congressman Kennedy for his leadership. He's done a wonderful job. And his father, who is a very, very close friend of mine, is actually proud of him, but too proud to admit it—that he has a son as the only chairman in the Kennedy family.

I want to thank Bill Nelson and his wonderful wife, Grace, for making this race for the United States Senate. And I want to thank my longtime friend Elaine Bloom, who was on my committee when I started in Florida in 1991, for making this race for Congress. And she can win this race if she gets the kind of support that I see around this place tonight.

And most important of all, I want to thank Chris and Irene for letting me come back again to this humble abode—[*laughter*]—that makes the White House look like public housing. [*Laughter*] You know, you look out here and you expect Humphrey Bogart and Katharine Hepburn to come up on the *African Queen* any minute. [*Laughter*] I mean, it is amazing. I want to thank them for their generosity. I want to thank Andrew, Kristina, and Angela for being here—their wonderful children.

Thank you, Gene Prescott, for having us over to your and Coral Gables great hotel, which I love so much. And thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for being here.

You might ask yourself, what am I doing here, besides the fact that I would come to see Chris and Irene at the drop of a hat. I'm not running for anything, and I can't. I'm here because, number one, the things that we've done in the last 7 years would not have been possible had it not been for the support of the Democrats in the House and the Senate. And I've worked with the Republicans whenever I could. I think the record will reflect, when all the evidence is in, that I have been far more forthcoming toward them than they have toward me—although we had a pretty good little mutual deal going at the end of the last budget session.

But the truth is that when it came to the '93 budget, which started this economic recovery and started us on the road to getting rid of the terrible deficit, it was only members of my party that voted for it. We would never passed the Brady bill or the crime bill of '94, with its 100,000 police and its assault weapons ban, if it hadn't been for the members of our party. We would have never been able to defend the environment and continue to make the progress we have from the Everglades to the redwoods in California to setting aside 40 million acres, roadless acres, in our national forests, if it weren't for the Democrats.

We wouldn't have 2 million more children with health insurance since 1997 if it weren't for the Democrats. And if we had a few more Democrats—in this last session, we did get 100,000 teachers, 50,000 police, 60,000 housing vouchers for poor people to move from welfare to work. We doubled the after-school programs, and we got money for the first time for States to turn around or shut down schools that are failing. So we had a good run. But if we had a few more Democrats, we also would have gotten a Patients' Bill of Rights, an increase in the minimum wage, hate crimes legislation, and goodness knows what else—something that's very important to Florida—we would have gotten a national effort, the first national effort ever, to try to help school districts build or repair school facilities. This is very important.

You know, I went to Jupiter not very long ago—some of you may remember that—they had 12 housetrailers out behind the grade school. And I was up in Tampa, and there was a woman who was in my high school class, and in my grade school graduating class, who is in the administration of the school district in Tampa. And we were great

pals from the time we were 9 years old. And, you know, I went to Tampa High School, and they had four or five housetrailers out behind the high school. And at a time when we think education is so important, I think it's a good reason for having a few more Democrats.

I want you to understand that, number one, what we have done would not have been possible without them, the people they represent; and number two, the country has a lot more to do.

I've given a lot of speeches today. I started out at the Florida Democratic Convention where, 8 years ago this week, I got the first victory I received in the Presidential primaries, in the Florida straw poll—where we got over a majority of the vote and I went from being an anonymous person who was running fifth in the national polls to somebody who actually had a chance. And then it took us 4 more years of hard work, but we won Florida in the Presidential election in '96, Al Gore and I did. And I'm very grateful for that. So my heart is full of gratitude tonight.

But I want to just say a couple of things really quickly. First of all, people will probably ask you why you came here, and whether it was worth the money. And you need to have an answer other than that you wanted to visit Chris and Irene's house. I'm being serious now.

We are about to have the millennial election. This country has been around here for more than 200 years because more than half the time we make the right decisions.

And I want to tell you a story. One of my brothers-in-law is here. I got my big extended family together, including my two nephews, for Thanksgiving up at Camp David. And then after Thanksgiving, I had some of my friends come up because they had little kids to play with the nephews. And on the Saturday morning after Thanksgiving, this 6-year-old girl came up to me, this beautiful child, and she looked at me, and she said, "Now, how old are you anyway?" [*Laughter*] And I looked at her, and I said, "I am 53." And she said, "Oh, that's a lot." [*Laughter*] Which lamentably is the truth.

But what I want to say to you—and I'd like for you all to remember, search your own memories—in my lifetime we have never had a time like this, where we had this much economic prosperity, this much social progress, this much national self-confidence, and the absence of any overwhelming crisis at home or threat from abroad. It has not happened in my lifetime.

So I'm very glad that I could be President in these last 7 years, and that I've got 14 more months to try to keep chunking away at this, and move this country forward. I think we have built a bridge to the 21st century. I think we have turned the country around. I'm elated by it. And I feel gratified by it.

But the real issue is, what are we going to do now? And I'll bet you anybody here who's lived any number of years can remember a time—in your personal life, your family life, or your work life—when things were going so well you lost your concentration, you thought it would last forever, but you got divided or distracted, and something bad happened; or at least you didn't maximize your opportunities.

Well, countries are no different from that. And this country, while things are going very well—it is true—we have the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 32 years, the lowest poverty rates in 20 years, the highest homeownership in history, 20 million jobs, and, come February, the longest economic expansion in the history of the country. Things are going well for us.

But it is important that we all understand that this country is going to have big challenges and big opportunities early in the next century. And we have never had a chance before, in my lifetime, to shape the future of our dreams for our children.

So when people ask you why you were here tonight. I think you ought to say, well, it's not much of an argument anymore. That crowd did a pretty good job. They've got a good record, but, more importantly, they're focused on the right things.

The outcome of the elections of 2000 will be determined, in my judgment, if we work hard enough not on whether they will have more money than we will—they will; they will have more money than we will. So the question is, will we have enough?

But the real question is, the outcome, in my judgment—I've been doing this a long

time—will turn on what the election is about, which is why you have to be able to say that to people. When people ask you why you were here, you have to be able to give an answer.

And what I think we ought to be focused on—you ought to say, I'm for the Democrats because they've done a good job, and because they will do the best job of dealing with the big opportunities and the big challenges before this country. And I do not want to see us squander the opportunity of a lifetime, at least the opportunity of 53 years.

What are we going to do? You live in Florida. What are we going to do about the aging of America? There will be twice as many people over 65 in 30 years. We have got to run Social Security out beyond the life expectancy of the baby boomers. We've got to run Medicare out and provide a prescription drug coverage for these poor elderly people, 75 percent of them can't afford their drugs.

We've got to do something to give all these kids—we've got the largest and most diverse student population we've ever had—we've got to give all of them a world-class education. One of the things I'm proudest of Al Gore for is that 5 years ago we decided we were going to hook up all the poor schools as well as the rich schools to the Internet. And we got the so-called E-rate, which gives discounts of up to 90 percent to the poor schools. Five years ago, 4 percent of the classrooms and 14 percent of the schools were hooked up. Today, over 50 percent of the classrooms; over 80 percent of the schools have an Internet connection. We're committed to this. But there's a lot to do.

Doesn't it bother you that we've had this great economic recovery, and there are still people in places that have been left behind? How are we going to keep it going?

Well, we ought to keep—first of all, we ought not to have a tax cut so big we can't pay the debt down. Under my budget we'll be out of debt in 15 years, for the first time since 1835. And that means lower interest rates on everything. The average American family today is saving $2,000 a year in home mortgage costs, $200 a year on car payment costs, and $200 a year on college loan costs because we're paying the debt down, not running it up.

Number two, we ought to give big financial incentives, tax credits and loan guarantees, to people who will invest in poor areas in America. I've got a proposal before the Congress that says, look, let's give Americans who have the money to do it the same incentives to invest in poor areas in America they get to invest in poor areas in Latin America, in Africa, in Asia. I think it's very important.

We have Indian reservations where the unemployment rate is over 70 percent. We have lots of counties where the unemployment rate is over 20 percent in rural America. We've got to do that.

And finally, we have to find a way to live together better. You still—all these hate crimes are small examples of the big wars in Bosnia, in Kosovo, the continuing conflict in the Middle East. It's the same thing. People still, in this most modern of all age, define themselves in very primitive ways—they're scared to death of people who are different from them—different race, different religion, different ethnic group. Some are gay; some are straight. They get scared. And once you're scared of somebody, you didn't like them very much; you can't trust them; so it's a short step to dehumanize them, after which it's okay to be violent against them.

The number one challenge this country faces is building one America across all lines that divide us. And in some ways, I'm prouder of the work we've done in that than all the economic prosperity we've had. And if I had just one wish for America, it would be that we would be able to somehow unlock that mysterious set of factors that keep people apart. I wish every one of you had been with me in Kosovo the other day when I was over there with 2,000 kids in a school, and all these little kids coming up to me thanking me because the American soldiers had let them go home. And they had been—800,000 of them—driven out of their homes, ethnically cleansed. It would have made you so proud to be an American.

But just remember, when you see those things going on and then you see an African-American like James Byrd dragged to death in Texas, or a gay man like Matthew Shepard stretched out on a rack in Wyoming, or a crazy person kill a Korean Christian coming out of church in Indiana, right after he shot

down an African-American basketball coach in Illinois, it's the same thing.

So somebody will say, "Well, why did you go there?" Say, "Well, that crowd did a pretty good job, and I'm better off than I was 7 years ago, and the whole country is." But the main thing is, we have a profound responsibility to meet the big challenges of the future: the aging of America, the children of America, the balancing of work and family, growing the economy and the environment, bringing opportunity to poor areas, and building one America.

That's why I came down here tonight. I'm not running for anything, but I haven't done all this work to see it squandered by people who lose their concentration. If the election is about the right subject, we will win. And you have helped us immeasurably tonight. But I ask now for your voice, your compassion, and your consistent commitment all the way to November of 2000.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:13 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks he referred to reception hosts Chris and Irene Korge and their children Andrew, Kristina, and Angela; and Gene Prescott, president, Biltmore Hotel.

Interview With Mark Knoller and Peter Maer of CBS Radio in Orlando, Florida

December 11, 1999

Domestic Challenges

Q. President Clinton, thank you very much for joining us for this special interview with CBS News. Heading into the next century, beyond your immediate goals for the rest of your term, what do you think are the one or two top domestic challenges facing the country?

The President. I think the aging of America and the children of the country. It's ironic that we seem to be growing at both ends. We're going to double the number of people over 65, and yet, we have the largest group of schoolchildren in our country's history in our schools, the first group bigger than the baby boomers, and they're much, much more diverse. They come from more different ethnic and racial and religious backgrounds. And I think that dealing with them are the two biggest things that ought to be on the front burner.

I also believe that, related to that, obviously, as you've heard me say many times, is the challenge of continuing to grow the economy while reaching out into poor areas, continuing to improve the environment, and paying the debt off. I think those are the big, big challenges.

New Millennium

Q. Mr. President, one of the things I've noticed about these celebrations that the White House, you, and the First Lady are planning is that it's propagating the myth that January 1st is the start of the new millennium and the new century. Are you guilty of creating that erroneous impression?

The President. Yes. I mean, I think basically, by common consent, everybody decided that we ought to celebrate the millennium on January 1, 2000, even though most of the strict correctionists say that it's January 1, 2001.

Q. Well, they're right, aren't they?

The President. Well, apparently, that was the prevailing view among the experts, but the people have expressed a different wish, so we're going with the folks. We've got a democracy here, and that's the way we're going. It will be nice for me, maybe I can do it twice, and I'll be a President of two millennial changes.

Power of the Presidency

Q. Well, looking ahead into the next century, whenever it begins, where do you see the power of the Presidency itself evolving? Is it going to change?

The President. Oh, yes, it's always changing. But I think it will always—at least for the future that I can foresee—will continue to be an extremely important office. I think that a lot of the executive actions will be important, along with getting along with Congress. I think that building partnerships with the private sector will become more important. It will become more important to mobilize the American people and to organize them to meet the challenges in the future the way we've done.

For example, maybe a good example would be the way we've worked on wiring the schools, where we did—the main Government thing we did was to change the law so that we have this E-rate now in poorer schools and hospitals.

Q. You mean wiring for the Internet?

The President. Yes, wiring for the Internet. Poorer schools and hospitals can get a discount rate. Then we go out and try to hustle up all the equipment and the Internet connections and get everybody to do that. So I think you'll see a lot more of that.

The other thing I think you will see is, I believe the world is growing ever more interdependent, so I think the President, in order to effectively lead the world, will have to be an increasingly effective negotiator, conciliator, bringing people together, working people together. And I think it will be just as important 30 years from now for America to be involved in the rest of the world as it is now. But I think it will be an increasingly interdependent world that will require powers of persuasion and not just unilateral power.

Final Year of President's Term

Q. Next year is also, as you well know, the final year of your Presidency. Do you find that in any way liberating to try and do things that you weren't able to do in the first years of your Presidency?

The President. I don't know if I find it liberating. I find it—it's concentrated my attention and my energies and, obviously, since I'm not running, I could do things in an election year that might be difficult to do otherwise. But if you go back, I mean, we've taken a lot of controversial decisions. That's one of the reasons we lost the Congress in '94; we took on the gun lobby and the health care lobby and the deficit issue at the same time, and it was more than the system could bear, I think.

But I do think that I am acutely mindful of the fact that I have 14 months left, and that I need to be out there squeezing the most out of every day. And I need to get as much done as I can for the American people, to try to leave our country in the best possible shape so that the next President and the next Congress will be even freer than they are to basically look with a visionary eye to the future and take on the big issues. That's the theme that I had today in Florida; that's the theme that I try to echo everywhere.

I believe that this really is the only time in my lifetime we've had so much prosperity, social cohesion, and national self-confidence, with the absence of internal crisis or external threat. I will get as much done on these big challenges as I can. But after I'm out of office and there is a new team in, I still think it's very important that they keep the American people focused on these big issues in the 21st century, because a society rarely has the luxury of having the tools and the space to deal with these long-term challenges that we now have. And I think it's very important that we seize it.

Gays in the Military

Q. Let me ask you one specific, if I may, on the question of gays in the military. As you no doubt know, the First Lady this past week was critical of the "don't ask, don't tell" policy. She said it just doesn't work. You weren't going to institute that at the beginning of your Presidency, anyway. Why not use the last year of your Presidency to institute an end to discriminatory discharges against gays in the military? And what do you think of what the First Lady said this week?

The President. First of all, I'm quite sympathetic with what she said. I think—that was the position that both of us brought to the White House. But I think there's one thing that may be not clearly understood. The reason that I went for "don't ask, don't tell" is that it's all I could do because I had a clear signal from the Congress that if I implemented my policy, they would reverse it by overwhelming majorities.

I didn't implement "don't ask, don't tell" until the Senate voted 68–32 against the policy that I wanted. So I think it's very important—for me, what's important is that the policy, as implemented, does not work as I announced it and as the leaders of our military at that time in '93 pledged to implement it.

I can only hope this last brutal beating death of a gay soldier will give some sobering impetus to a reexamination about how this

policy is implemented and whether we can do a better job of fulfilling its original intent.

Let me remind you that the original intent was that people would not be rooted out; that they would not be questioned out; that this would be focused on people's conduct, and if they didn't violate the code of conduct, and they didn't tell, that their comings and goings, the mail they got, the associates they had, that those things would not be sufficient to kick them out of the military or certainly subject them to harassment.

So what I would like to do is to focus on trying to make the policy that we announced back in '93 work the way it was intended to, because it's way—it's out of whack now, and I don't think any serious person can say it's not.

Q. How are you going to do that, sir?

The President. Well, we're working with the Pentagon now to do it. I mean, I think there's a greater awareness now that it's just not—it's not being implemented as it was announced and as it was intended.

Now, as for—but I don't have any problem with what she says, because that's—after all, that's what I said back in '93, and if anybody—you know, if there's a sense in the Congress or in the next White House that that ought to be done, then maybe together they'll have enough votes to do it.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. You mentioned earlier the importance of future Presidents becoming even more mediators and conciliators on the world scene. This coming week, of course, Syria and Israel are going to be at the White House. And I know you told us at the news conference you've taken a blood oath to avoid discussing details of those long-stalled talks, the renewal of them, but how do you plan—just in general, since you don't want to go into details—how do you plan to get this process moving and keep it moving when you get these gentlemen sitting down again?

The President. Well, I want to get them together, let them talk, and get them to try to agree on an agenda and a timetable. They know what the issues are, and they know what the options are for resolving the issues. And my experience has been that competent people—and you're dealing with two highly competent people here; I mean, these people are good in what they do in representing the interests of their countries—and that when—they don't go into these negotiations without some idea about where they want to finish and some idea about where they'll have to give, and whether the other person will give, and how it will all play out.

So on the other hand, it is difficult, but not as complex, in my view, as the Palestinian negotiations with Israel. So I would like to see them get together, talk together, get to know each other a little better, and agree on an agenda and a timetable, and then take a couple of days off and go back and meet with their respective teams to decide where they're going to start and where they're going to stop, and come back here and just look to burn through it, just keep going until we get the thing done.

Q. Why is the time right now?

The President. I think because both leaders, for different reasons, finally have this sense of urgency, and I think they should have a sense of urgency. And I think they know that the enemies of the peace process are gearing up; they want to try to derail it, and not just for the Palestinians. I think that they know that there is a sense of hope and possibility now, and I think they believe that Prime Minister Barak is committed to trying to resolve all this, just like he said he was.

Russian Espionage

Q. Mr. President, is there any doubt in your mind, sir, that Russia is responsible for the listening device that was discovered at the State Department? And to what extent are you disturbed by it? Don't we all do the same things, spy on each other?

The President. I think when—we have always taken spying seriously and taken appropriate action, and I think they will take appropriate action in this regard. And I have no reason to believe that the press accounts on this are not accurate.

Q. You must be concerned, though, about this big security breach in the State Department.

The President. Well, I certainly wish it hadn't happened, but I think they learned something about this. I think now they'll figure out how to deal with this technology, and

it won't happen again. And I think we just have to—look, the consequences of all this, while certainly not good, are not as dire as they were in the dark days of the cold war when both of us were spying on each other in a much more sweeping way. And we had ways of dealing with it. And there's sort of an established protocol for dealing with this kind of thing, and I think we ought to do it. And the main thing we ought to do is learn whatever we can from the incident—how did they do this; how did they get away with it; how can we prevent it from happening again?

Q. What effect will it have on American relations with Russia?

The President. Based on what I now know, I think we should proceed where it's in our interest to do so in our relations with Russia; and where we have differences of opinion, we ought to proceed to articulate them. You can't let every spy case affect the larger national interests in the country.

Private Life/Public Record

Q. Mr. President, a couple more reflective questions. Based on your own experiences over the years, going back to your first campaign, to what extent do you think a politician's private life should become part of the public record?

The President. Oh, I don't know. I think I'll let the press and the people decide that. I think—let me say it in a different way—I think that what I have seen too often is that the politics of personal destruction become the preferred option only when people think they can't win the old-fashioned way; they can't win on the issues or whatever.

Now, a person—I'm not talking about whether somebody's robbed a bank or something like that, but I think that the pendulum swung pretty far over in the last three or four elections, and I think it's swinging back now. And I think that's what the voters are saying, and they'll try to get it right. But something ought to be genuinely relevant, and we ought to not just target people for no good reason and just pound on them and use that because they couldn't win the old-fashioned way. I think that both the politicians and the press should be mindful of that.

But it will get sorted out. These things come and go. You know, early in the 1800's, we had several years where this sort of thing was all the rage, completely dominated the political debate. And then it sort of faded away again. And these things come and go, and the underlying health of our democracy and the common sense of our people have always been enough to see us through, and I think they will be here.

Former Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr's Statement

Q. What do you make of the recent statement by Ken Starr that he thinks you ought to get right with the law by admitting in a public way that you were not truthful in your statements under oath?

The President. I'm not sure that I know what to make of Mr. Starr.

Q. You know, he's giving interviews. He's doing talk shows.

The President. No, but it's a free country.

Q. Why do you think he's still pursuing this after he's resigned his office?

The President. I just don't think I can serve any useful purpose by commenting on it now. Maybe I should follow his lead; when I don't have a job, I can comment on it more.

Post-Presidential Plans

Q. Speaking of that, as we wind up here, besides getting your Presidential library off the ground, what is Bill Clinton going to do with the rest of his life?

The President. Well, I hope I'll be a member of the Senate spouses club. That's one of the things I really hope I'll be. And I say that—we're laughing, but I'm dead serious about that. I want to do what I can to help Hillary. And getting this library and public policy center up and going and having it continue the best missions of my Presidency I think will be quite time consuming.

I hope I'll have a little more time for my family and my friends, but I still want to be a good citizen. I really admire what Jimmy Carter's done with his life. I wouldn't necessarily choose the same endeavors, although I've supported Habitat for Humanity, and I certainly believe that if someone needed me in the future to monitor an election or something like that, I ought to be willing to do it.

But the main thing I want to say is that he has said—the life he has lived has been a life of service, and he said—he's also had a very interesting life. I mean, he's had time to go climb up to the base camp of Mount Everest; he goes fishing and does the things that he loves to do, he goes skiing. But he has lived a life of service. And he has recognized that it is an incredible gift to have the chance to be President and that, when you have this gift for 4 or 8 years, you learn things; you know things; you have a perspective that no one else has the chance to develop. And you can't just walk away from it and not at least make yourself available. If people don't want you to do anything, that's one thing. But at least you ought to be available for public service. And Jimmy Carter has lived a life of public service.

I admire that, and I hope that when I leave here, I will be able to do a lot of the personal things I'm interested in but, fundamentally, help in a way. I don't want to be under foot for the next President. I don't want to get in anybody's way, but I do think there's a lot of good things I can do for the world and for our country, and I intend to try to do what I can.

Advice for Future Presidents

Q. Finally, sir, I know it's 14 months away, but what advice do you have for your successor and your successors as the last President of this century? What thoughts do you have to pass on to them?

The President. I think it's very important for a President to have a sense of history and a sense of the future. You have to know where your country is at this moment in our journey. You have to know what the lives of the American people are like. Then you have to have a vision of what you think it ought to be. And once you do that, once you're grounded in the facts and the history and you have a vision of what you think you ought to be, then you need to have a lot of ideas and a lot of energy and a lot of interpersonal skills, and you just need to go to work every day and never forget your mission, because all the pressures, in political life, on the Chief Executive is at the center of the vortex of—all of these things are designed to make you forget your mission. And those who remember their mission and stay on it tend to do very well, even under the most adverse circumstances.

You know, Lincoln once said in the Civil War, he said, "My policy is to have no policy; I am controlled by events." And to some extent that was true. He was being very flexible and the Government was a much more rudimentary enterprise than it is today. But to some extent, he was being disingenuous, because his policy was: "I am going to save the Union; if I have to burn every wheat field in this country and if I have to give up my own life to do it, we will not be split."

Okay, so he knew where he was in history—you know, if you listened to him, he talked about George Washington a lot; he had this sense of—he knew about the future. He signed the moral Land Grant Act. He was all for the railroads and the public improvements. He had a lot of imagination about the future, Lincoln did, and he said there won't be any future unless we hold together, no that's my policy, and I'm willing to try anything or anybody or any general to get it done.

The thing that made him great was he never forgot what his mission was. He was grounded in history. He had the vision of the future. He used to say he kept regular office hours—my office in the White House on the second floor is in Lincoln's waiting room, which was later the Office of the President through Theodore Roosevelt. But Lincoln used to keep regular office hours with people that wanted a job in a post office or something, because he said he wanted to be reminded on a regular basis of what the daily concerns of people were, and he wanted the war to be over so everybody could be restored to pursuing those daily concerns.

So anyway, that's one specific, very big example of what I think the general rule is. You've got to understand your country's history, have some idea of your country's future, have a vision of where you want it to go, come up with a set of ideas and a good team, and just pursue it with all the energy and focus you can and have a good time doing it. That's my advice. Don't forget the mission; don't forget who you work for.

Q. We're honor bound to break this off, sir, but we're very grateful for your time.

Q. Thank you very much for doing this.
The President. I've enjoyed it. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview began at 11:25 a.m. in the Human Resources office at the Wyndham Palace Resort on December 11 but was embargoed for release until 12:01 a.m. on December 13. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel; and Minister of Foreign Affairs Farouk al-Shara of Syria. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Statement on Signing the Deceptive Mail Prevention and Enforcement Act

December 12, 1999

Today I have signed into law S. 335, which contains the Deceptive Mail Prevention and Enforcement Act. Too often, consumers—especially the elderly—either understand sweepstakes mailings to mean that they have won large prizes or else spend their savings on unwanted merchandise and publications in the hope of increasing their chances of winning. Too often, mailing and sweepstakes practices seem designed to mislead.

This legislation will protect Americans against those who use sweepstakes and mailings to deceive and exploit the unwary. It will establish standards for sweepstakes mailings, skill contests, and facsimile checks; restrict "government look-alike" documents; and allow individuals to have their names and addresses removed from sweepstakes mailing lists if they choose. Disclosures will make clear that no purchase is necessary to enter a sweepstakes and that a purchase will not improve a consumer's chances of winning a prize. The legislation also creates strong financial penalties for companies that do not disclose all terms and conditions of a contest. Individuals will be able to request a stop to certain mailings that come to their homes, and companies will face liability if they do not honor these requests. The United States Postal Service will have enhanced authority to investigate and stop deceptive mailings, and companies will face greater penalties for failing to comply with a Postal Service "stop order."

I am proud to sign S. 335 into law today to establish a "right to know" for sweepstakes mailing recipients and protect Americans against misleading mailing and sweepstakes practices.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
December 12, 1999.

NOTE: S. 335, approved December 12, was assigned Public Law No. 106–168. This statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 13.

Telephone Remarks to a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Dinner in Houston, Texas

December 13, 1999

Well, I'm glad I got to hear the last of B.A.'s speech, and let me say to all of you, I'm jealous of you. I wish I were there tonight. I had looked forward to being there very much, but I got quite sick with the winter flu, and I've got the Israelis and the Syrians coming in this week, and I have to be well for them. So the doctor said I couldn't get on the airplane.

So I wanted to call and just, first of all, thank all of you for honoring Lloyd and B.A. and for raising so much money for the Democrats in Texas. I think we're going to win the House back in the next election. And I'm doing everything I can to do my part.

But I also want to thank you because of the career and the public service of Lloyd Bentsen, that you honor tonight, because there is a reason we're trying to win the House back—because of the direction we want the country to take in the new century. And everything he has done in his entire career embodies that.

So Lloyd, I miss you, and I love you. And I love you, B.A. I'm sorry I couldn't be there. I'm sick I missed Ann Richards' jokes. [*Laughter*] And you all owe me a raincheck, just like I owe you one.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:17 p.m. in the Residence at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Senator Lloyd Bentsen and

his wife, B.A.; and former Gov. Ann Richards of Texas.

Proclamation 7260—Bicentennial Commemoration of the Death of George Washington

December 13, 1999

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Few individuals in history have had a more profound and lasting effect on a nation and its people than has George Washington. His character, convictions, and vision shaped our Republic in its crucial formative years and started us on the great American journey that continues to this day.

At every moment of challenge or peril in the early history of our Nation, George Washington emerged as a leader of uncommon wisdom and steadfast dedication to the ideals of service. A brilliant warrior, he held together a small, undisciplined army with the force of his personality and the trust he inspired in his men, ultimately leading them to victory in the American Revolution. When the Constitutional Convention began in Philadelphia in 1787, the delegates turned to George Washington to lead their efforts to create a Constitution for the American people. Elected unanimously to preside over the Convention, Washington helped to craft the blueprint for our democracy that has inspired freedom-loving peoples across the globe for more than 2 centuries.

As the first President of the United States, George Washington used his power wisely and with restraint, recognizing that his actions would set enduring precedents and traditions for the leaders who would follow him. He set a steady course for our fledgling Nation, keeping us free from entanglement in foreign conflicts, laying the foundations for financial stability and economic prosperity, maintaining a strong defense to preserve our independence and security, and ensuring above all the protection of Americans' rights and freedoms. And, in relinquishing his office at the appointed time, he established by example the peaceful transition of power that has become the hallmark of our democracy.

Near midnight on December 14, 1799, America's great warrior, statesman, and leader took his final breath. His last words were, "'Tis well." Due in large part to the early guiding hand of George Washington, it has been well for our Nation ever since. Now, 200 years later, as America continues its journey into a new century, it is fitting that we acknowledge our enduring debt to this great man.

The Congress, by Senate Concurrent Resolution 83, has requested the President to proclaim December 14, 1999, as a day to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the death of George Washington.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, by the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and laws of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim December 14, 1999, as the Bicentennial Commemoration of the Death of George Washington. I call upon the people of the United States to mark this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities, paying tribute to the life and achievements of George Washington and his contributions to our Nation. As a further mark of respect, I hereby order that the flag of the United States shall be flown at half-staff upon all public buildings and grounds, at all military posts and naval stations, and on all naval vessels of the Federal Government in the District of Columbia and throughout the United States and its Territories and possessions on Tuesday, December 14, 1999. I also direct that the flag shall be flown at half-staff on that day at all United States embassies, legations, consular offices, and other facilities abroad, including all military facilities and naval vessels and stations.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this thirteenth day of December, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., December 16, 1999]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 14, and

it was published in the *Federal Register* on December 17.

Remarks on the Lands Legacy Initiative

December 14, 1999

Thank you very much. Secretary Babbitt and George Frampton and all the members of our administration are glad to welcome the environmental leaders who are here today.

At the dawn of this century, Theodore Roosevelt defined America's great central task as "leaving this land even a better land for our descendants than it is for us." This is the vision of environmental stewardship that has inspired our lands legacy initiative, the historic plan I unveiled earlier this year to protect America's threatened green and open spaces.

Two weeks ago I had the great honor of signing into law the funding for this lands legacy initiative. Although much of the news of that day concentrated on budget victories for education and public safety, it was also a remarkable day for the environment. With one stroke of the pen, we made it possible to add hundreds of thousands of acres to our children's endowment of natural wonders, places like New Mexico's Baca Ranch, home to one of North America's largest herds of wild elk.

Today, I will be sending to Congress a list of 18 additional natural and historic sites we propose to protect with new lands legacy funding. Our list includes sections of Hawaii's Hakalau Forest, which supports hundreds of species of rare plants and birds. It includes critical habitat on Florida's Pelican Island, where Theodore Roosevelt established the Nation's very first wildlife preserve. It includes the birth home and burial place of Martin Luther King, Jr.

We now have funding to protect all these places. We have willing sellers, and we look forward to speedy review by the appropriate committees in Congress.

I'm also pleased to report on the status of yet another effort to protect the lands we hold sacred. A year ago I asked Secretary Babbitt to report to me on unique and fragile places that deserve to be protected as national monuments. This morning, Secretary Babbitt presented me with his recommendation that I use my executive authority to create three new national monuments in Arizona and California and to significantly expand another in California. Each of the sites already belongs to the American people, and no land purchases would be required. But giving these lands national monument status would ensure they will be passed along to future generations, healthy and whole.

The first of the proposed new monuments is located on the northern rim of the Grand Canyon, and it consists of stunning canyons and lonely buttes shaped by the hand of God over millions of years. The second, a desert region in the shadow of rapidly expanding Phoenix, is an archaeological treasure trove containing some of the most extraordinary prehistoric ruins and petroglyphs in the American Southwest. The third, off the coast of California, would encompass thousands of small islands and reefs that serve as essential habitat for sea otters and sea birds forced from the shore by extensive development. Finally, this proposal calls for expanding California's Pinnacles National Monument, the site of the spectacular volcanic spires and mountain caves.

Secretary Babbitt's recommendations come as a result of careful analysis and extensive discussions with local citizen, State and local officials, and with Members of Congress. And I will take them very seriously. I expect to make a decision on the sites early next year.

Like Theodore Roosevelt, I believe there are certain places humankind simply cannot improve upon, places whose beauty and interest no photograph could capture, places you simply have to see for yourself. We must use this time of unparalleled prosperity to ensure people will always be able to see these places as we see them today.

There is no greater gift we can offer to the new millennium than to protect these treasures for all Americans for all time.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:52 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Remarks on Signing the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999

December 14, 1999

Thank you. Thank you, please be seated. At this moment, about all I can think of is Merry Christmas. [*Laughter*]

Senator Rockefeller, Senator Collins, Representative Cardin, thank you all for being here. And Senator Chafee, thank you for being here, and with you, the spirit of your father, for all his great work on this.

I want to say a special word of thanks to our mayor, Tony Williams, and his mom, Mrs. Virginia Williams. He has become America's exhibit A of the potential for foster care success. He is a good man, and she is a magnificent woman, and we thank them for being here. Thank you.

I thank Secretary Shalala and all of her staff, and I thank Alfred Perez and Kristi Jo Frazier and the other young people behind me, for whom they spoke. They spoke so well and so bravely and so frankly. What they have achieved in their own lives is truly heroic, and we should all be very grateful that they are determined to make that kind of difference in the lives of other young people.

I want to thank the groups that have done so much to champion the cause of foster children, the Child Welfare League of America, the Children's Defense Fund, the Annie Casey Foundation, the Casey Family Program. I want to thank especially—I won't mention them, but they know who they are—the people who have come up to me personally and lobbied me on this issue over the last couple of years. [*Laughter*]

I've got a cousin that's been a friend of mine over 50 years, all my life; we were little kids together. She runs a public housing program in the little town in Arkansas where we were born. And she came up here to a HUD conference on kids aging out of foster care, and she spent the night with me at the White House. I got up the next morning—I never know, you know, what's on her mind—this is about a year ago. And she said, "Bill, you have got to do something about these kids that are aging out of foster care." She said, "It's a huge problem in New York and California, but believe it or not, it's a problem at home, too. And nobody's doing anything about it." I want to thank all those people, and they know who they are.

And most of all, I want to thank Hillary. When we were in law school, she worked at the Yale Child Studies Center. Her first job was with what became the Children's Defense Fund. When I became Governor, in my first term she founded the Arkansas Advocates for Families and Children. She has always cared more about the welfare of all of our children than anything else and our mutual responsibilities to them. And she challenged us a long time ago not to forget those foster children who leave the system each year with no financial or emotional support, no one to turn to. She put a lot of herself into getting this bill passed.

Hillary likes to quote the Chilean poet and teacher Gabriela Mistral about our responsibility to children: "Many things we need can wait. The child cannot. Now is the time his bones are formed, his mind is developed. To him, we cannot say 'tomorrow.' His name is 'today.' "

We are here today because all of you, and especially the Members of Congress from both parties, stood as one to say that America's foster children can finally have the name "today."

The Foster Care Independence Act expands access to health care, education, housing, and counseling for young people who must leave foster care when they turn 18. For the very first time, States will be able to pay housing costs and health insurance for people under 21.

The bill also gives States more resources and flexibility to help former foster children finish high school and go on to college, to help young people get jobs and vocational training, to provide counseling for young people learning to live on their own—you've already heard how important that is—and above all, to make sure young adults leaving foster care know they are not out there alone.

The bill makes $700 million available to the States over 5 years under very flexible conditions. I challenge the States to use every penny of it, and I know I can depend upon the advocates here—[*laughter*]—to make sure they do.

You also have to help the States, though, to design good programs, to implement them

so the money will be spent with maximum impact. We simply cannot afford to have our high school students sleeping in metro stations, as some of these young people had to do.

We cannot afford to lose our future entrepreneurs and teachers and lawyers to the kinds of obstacles the young people behind me have faced. We can't afford to give up on the future, and these young people are a big part of our future and our shared responsibility.

We have tried to help America's most vulnerable children grow up healthy and safe, to make the transition into happy, productive adults. We've tried to encourage adoption so that we can end the sadness of young people shuttling from house to house and never knowing a home. We've made adoptions easier and more affordable, given States more flexibility, passed incentive programs for States to promote adoption. These worked so well, we actually ran out of money to reward the States. [*Laughter*]

I'm pleased that this bill also authorizes additional funds that program needs, because it is working. Our most recent figures show that adoptions are up 29 percent, the first significant increase in two decades.

Now when we get to the end of the session, sometimes we have to combine a bunch of things in bills, just to get all our work done. And I want to mention one other thing this bill does that is unrelated to young people aging out of foster care or to adoption. This bill includes a provision to honor and assist veterans from other lands who fought with and as a part of the United States Armed Forces during World War II. It creates a special cash benefit under Social Security for veterans who want to leave the United States and return to their homelands.

We have 10 such veterans, 10 Filipino veterans, who are here with us today. I want to thank them for their service, and I ask them to stand and be recognized. We thank you.

So this bill keeps a promise to our children and a promise to our veterans. It was passed with overwhelming support from both parties, proving that we can put partisanship aside, and when we do, it's good for America.

I hope that we will see more of this in the new year. I hope that we can use the historic millennial year to take the rest of the steps we need to deal with the aging of America, by securing Social Security and Medicare; to give our children health coverage; to raise the minimum wage; to pass the commonsense legislation on gun safety and hate crimes; to do the things that we need to do to support working family, including the Patients' Bill of Rights.

These young people here should give us all a lot of courage and a lot of heart. They represent, out of the most difficult circumstances, the very best not only of our country but of what is at the core of human nature. And in this special season for so many of the world's great religious faiths, we should be very grateful for the gifts they have given us, the gifts they will give us, and the gifts so many other children will be able to give because of this legislation.

Thank you very much.

Now, I'd like to ask the Members of Congress to come up here. We'll sign the bill.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:45 p.m. in Presidential Hall (formerly Room 450) in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Lincoln D. Chafee, son of the late Senator John H. Chafee; Mayor Anthony A. Williams of Washington, DC; Alfred Perez and Kristi Jo Frasier, who as children were in the foster care system; and Myra J. Irvin, section 8 program manager, housing authority, Hope, AR. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady. H.R. 3443, approved December 14, was assigned Public Law No. 106–169.

Statement on the Transfer of the Panama Canal to the Republic of Panama

December 14, 1999

Today we commemorate the transfer of the Panama Canal from the United States to the Republic of Panama. The official transfer will take place on December 31 in fulfillment of the Panama Canal Treaties of 1978. I am delighted that President Carter, under

whose leadership the canal treaties were concluded and ratified, is heading a distinguished delegation of Americans to today's historic event.

To this day, the Panama Canal remains one of the great engineering marvels of the world. The canal played a critical role in the development of global commerce and contributed to the rise of the United States as a great power. As we look back on this century, we should pay tribute to the skill, vision, and tenacity of those who conceived and built this magnificent waterway.

The decision made in the 1970's to transfer the canal to Panama, ratified by treaty and supported by a broad bipartisan consensus, demonstrated the good will of the American people. It reflected the wisdom and foresight of American leaders who saw that our national interests at the end of the 20th century were best served by transferring the canal to Panama, that this act could help improve relations between the United States and it neighbors. Since that time, the United States has worked to strengthen democracy, prosperity, and cooperation in our hemisphere, and thereby, benefit our citizens at home. At the age of a new century, the canal, long a symbol of American power and prestige, now also symbolizes the unity and common purpose of the democratic nations of the Americas.

Today's ceremony underscores our confidence in the Government of Panama and the Panamanian people's ability to manage this vital artery of commerce. It also signals our continuing commitment to the security of the canal, as enshrined in our treaty obligations, and our determination to work with Panama and the many other countries that use the canal to ensure that it remains open to the world's shipping and commerce.

I commend the government of President Moscoso for its leadership and spirit of cooperation. The United States will continue to work closely with Panama to safeguard the canal and promote the well-being of our citizens and people around the world.

Statement on the Office of Management and Budget's Report on the Federal Government's Readiness for the Year 2000

December 14, 1999

With the end of the year in sight, I am pleased to announce that OMB's final quarterly report shows that the Federal Government is ready for the year 2000. As of today, 99.9 percent of the Government's mission-critical computer systems are Y2K compliant. They have been fixed, tested, and certified as ready for operation on January 1, 2000. We have met the challenge of making sure that the Federal Government can continue to serve the American people as we enter the next century.

Three years ago when we started our intensive work on Y2K, only one-fifth of the mission-critical systems was ready. Many said that the Federal Government was not up to the job, that the deadline would not be met, and that the price tag would be exorbitant, as much as $50 billion.

Today, the facts are clear: We have done our job; we have met the deadline; and we have done well below cost projections. I want to thank the thousands of dedicated men and women of the Federal Government, who spent long hours, late nights, and many weekends getting us ready for the new year. Many of these same people will be mobilized and working throughout the New Year's weekend. Thanks to them, we have every reason to approach the changeover with confidence about the operations of the Federal Government.

However, no amount of preparation can prevent glitches. For this reason, there are backup plans, so that the critical functions of the Federal Government can continue.

For many others, including smaller businesses and local governments, there is still work to do between now and the end of the year. I urge them to make every effort possible to fix as many computer systems as they can and to develop contingency plans if they are needed.

As we turn our thoughts to a new year, Americans have every right to be proud of the work of their Government and its employees. They will continue to work vigilantly through the holidays and into the new year so that America may celebrate the arrival of a new millennium.

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

December 14, 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 (IEEPA), 50 U.S.C. 1703(c), I transmit herewith a 6-month periodic report on the national emergency with respect to Burma that was declared in Executive Order 13047 of May 20, 1997.

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 Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel and Foreign Minister Farouk al-Shara of Syria

December 15, 1999

Middle East Peace Process

The President. Good morning. It is an honor to welcome Prime Minister Barak, Foreign Minister Shara, and the members of the Israeli and Syrian delegations here to the White House.

When the history of this century is written, some of its most illustrious chapters will be the stories of men and women who put old rivalries and conflicts behind them and looked ahead to peace and reconciliation for their children. What we are witnessing today is not yet peace, and getting there will require bold thinking and hard choices. But today is a big step along that path.

Prime Minister Barak and Foreign Minister Shara are about to begin the highest level meeting ever between their two countries. They are prepared to get down to business. For the first time in history, there is a chance of a comprehensive peace between Israel and Syria and, indeed, all its neighbors.

That Prime Minister Barak and Foreign Minister Shara chose to come here to Washington reminds us of one other fact, of course, which is the United States own responsibility in this endeavor. Secretary Albright and I and our entire team will do everything we possibly can to help the parties succeed, for a comprehensive peace in the Middle East is vital not only to the region; it is also vital to the world and to the security of the American people, for we have learned from experience that tensions in the region can escalate, and the escalations can lead into diplomatic, financial, and ultimately, military involvement, far more costly than even the costliest peace.

We should be clear, of course, the success of the enterprise we embark upon today is not guaranteed. The road to peace is no easier, and in many ways it is harder, than the road to war. There will be challenges along the way, but we have never had such an extraordinary opportunity to reach a comprehensive settlement.

Prime Minister Barak, an exceptional hero in war, is now a determined soldier for peace. He knows a negotiated peace, one that serves the interests of all sides, is the only way to bring genuine security to the people of Israel, to see that they are bound by a circle of peace.

President Asad, too, has known the cost of war. From my discussion with him in recent months, I am convinced he knows what a true peace could do to lift the lives of his people and give them a better future. And Foreign Minister Shara is an able representative of the President and the people of Syria.

Let me also say a brief word about the continuing progress of the Palestinian track. Chairman Arafat also has embarked on a courageous quest for peace, and the Israelis and the Palestinians continue to work on that.

We see now leaders with an unquestioned determination to defend and advance the interest of their own people but also determined to marshal the courage and creativity, the vision and resolve, to secure a bright future based on peace rather than a dark future under the storm clouds of continuing, endless conflict.

At the close of this millennium and in this season of religious celebration for Jews, for Muslims, for Christians, Israelis, Palestinians, Syrians, Lebanese, all have it within their power to end decades of bitter conflict. Together, they can choose to write a new chapter in the history of our time. Again, let me say that today's meeting is a big step in the right direction, and I am profoundly grateful for the leaders of both nations for being here.

We have just talked and agreed that it would be appropriate for each leader to say a few brief words on behalf of the delegation. We will take no questions, in keeping with our commitment to do serious business and not cause more problems than we can solve out here with you and all your helpful questions.

But I will begin with Prime Minister Barak.

[*At this point, Prime Minister Barak and Foreign Minister al-Shara made remarks.*]

The President. Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. We're going to work.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:12 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Hafiz al-Asad of Syria; and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Prime Minister Barak and Foreign Minister al-Shara.

Remarks on Action by Germany To Compensate Nazi Regime Victims of Forced Labor and an Exchange With Reporters

December 15, 1999

The President. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I want to make a statement about the very important work that Stu Eizenstat has been involved with. I have just received a letter from Chancellor Schroeder confirming that the German Government and German industry are prepared to commit 10 billion deutsche marks, the equivalent of more than $5 billion, to a fund for those who were slave and forced laborers and suffered other injuries under the Nazi regime.

We believe this satisfies the requirements of those representing the victims. We close the 20th century with an extraordinary achievement that will bring an added measure of material and moral justice to the victims of this century's most terrible crime. It will help us start a new millennium on higher ground.

Those who will benefit are elderly survivors. Sadly, they're passing away at a rate of almost 10 percent a year. Some are living here in the United States, many are living in central and eastern Europe, double victims who endured the Holocaust first and then a half-century of communism. They have been waiting a long, long time, and nothing can fully compensate their searing loss.

But we can accept our generation's responsibility to remember and to redress the injustices they suffered. We owe that to them and to future generations. I've been working with Chancellor Schroeder for some time to reach this point. We could not have done this without his truly remarkable leadership.

Germany already has made more than $60 billion in payments to Holocaust survivors and to other victims of Nazi persecution. But this is the first important gesture made to those who were forced and slave laborers working for private industry, to those whose insurance policies were not honored, and those whose property was confiscated.

This was not an easy step for the German Government to take, but it reaffirms its commitment to human dignity, reinforces its partnership with the United States, and strengthens its ties with neighbors in central and eastern Europe. I want to thank the companies involved in the settlement for acknowledging their moral and historic responsibility.

I will do everything I can to provide legal finality for them and to remove the potential cloud hanging over German companies doing business here in the United States. I also

thank the plaintiffs in this case for their persistence in a just cause and their patience in reaching a just solution. Given the age of the survivors, it was vital to reach this agreement now rather than wait for the outcome of lengthy litigation.

Finally, let me say I am deeply grateful to Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Eizenstat for the truly remarkable job he has done to bring us to this day. He has already done so much to help us shed light on this cruel period in human history and to bring justice to its victims. I know of few people who combine his commitment to doing the right thing with his actual skill at getting things done.

I'm sending Stu and his team to Berlin to meet with all the parties to finalize the agreement so that it can be implemented as soon as possible. After I complete this statement, he will go to the briefing room and answer your questions. Again, my deepest respect and appreciation to Chancellor Schroeder and the German Government, as well as to Deputy Secretary Eizenstat. This is a very good day for the cause of freedom and a good day for the United States.

Thank you very much.

Q. Mr. President, what kind of compensation do you think the lawyers, if any, deserve who negotiated this deal?

The President. We're all going to get a cold if we stay out here. Stu can answer all those questions. Let's go in the Briefing Room and he can answer them. Thank you.

Israel-Syria Talks

Q. Mr. President, before you go, could you give us a sense of how the Mideast talks are going today?

The President. They're going pretty well. But it's hard going and we've got work to do, so I'm going back to work. Thanks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:52 p.m. on the South Grounds at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany.

Statement on the Retirement of Cartoonist Charles M. Schulz

December 15, 1999

Like all readers of "Peanuts," I was saddened by the news that Charles M. Schulz will retire his beloved comic strip on January 4. But every one of his fans understands that this difficult decision is the right one for Mr. Schulz's health and for his family.

The characters Charles Schulz created are more than enduring icons. Charlie Brown, Linus, Snoopy, Pig Pen, and Lucy taught us all a little more about what makes us human. Virtually every day for a half-century, Charles Schulz has shown us that a comic strip can transcend its small space on the page. It can uplift; it can challenge; it can educate its readers even as it entertains us. "Peanuts" has done all of these things. I wish Charles Schulz a speedy recovery and a fulfilling retirement.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on the Deployment of United States Military Personnel as Part of the Kosovo International Security Force

December 15, 1999

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

In my report to the Congress of June 12, 1999, I provided information on the deployment of combat-equipped U.S. military personnel as the U.S. contribution to the NATO-led security force in Kosovo (KFOR) and to countries in the region to serve as a national support element for them. I am providing this supplemental report, consistent with the War Powers Resolution, to help ensure that the Congress is kept fully informed on continued U.S. contributions in support of peacekeeping efforts in Kosovo.

The U.N. Security Council authorized member states to establish the international security presence in Kosovo in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1244 of June 10, 1999,

for an initial period of 12 months. The mission of KFOR is to provide a continued military presence in order to deter renewed hostilities; verify and, if necessary, enforce the terms of the Military Technical Agreement (MTA) between NATO and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY); enforce the terms of the agreement of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) to demilitarize and reintegrate itself into civil society; provide operational direction to the newly established Kosovo Protection Corps; and contribute to a secure environment to facilitate the work of the U.N. Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) by providing, until UNMIK assumes these functions, for public security and appropriate control of the borders.

Currently, the U.S. contribution to KFOR in Kosovo is approximately 8,500 U.S. military personnel. This number is higher than previously reported due to normal personnel rotations and will return to approximately 7,000 U.S. military personnel when those rotations are completed. In the last 6 months, all 19 NATO nations and 15 others, including Russia and Ukraine, have provided military personnel or other support to KFOR.

In Kosovo, the U.S. forces are assigned to a sector principally centered around Urosevac in the eastern portion of Kosovo. For U.S. KFOR forces, as for KFOR generally, maintaining public security is a key task, and U.S. forces conduct security patrols in urban areas and in the countryside throughout their sector. Approximately one-half of KFOR's total available personnel is directly committed to protection tasks, including protection of ethnic minorities. The KFOR forces are under NATO command and control and rules of engagement.

In addition, other U.S. military personnel are deployed to other countries in the region to serve in administrative and logistics support roles for the U.S. forces in KFOR. Specifically, approximately 1,500 U.S. military personnel are operating in support of KFOR in Macedonia and Greece and, on occasion, in Albania.

Since my report to the Congress of June 12, the FRY, in accordance with Resolution 1244 and the MTA, withdrew its military, paramilitary, and police forces from Kosovo. The KLA agreed to June 21, 1999, to a ceasefire, to withdraw from the zones of conflict in Kosovo, and to demilitarize itself. On September 20, 1999, KFOR Commander Lieutenant General Sir Mike Jackson accepted the KLA's certification that the KLA had completed its demilitarization in accordance with the June 21 agreement. The UNMIK thereafter established a civil emergency services entity known as the Kosovo Protection Corps that is intended to provide civic assistance in emergencies and other forms of humanitarian assistance. The UNMIK is in the process of considering applications from former KLA personnel for service in this Corps.

The UNMIK has made progress in establishing the international civil presence to provide an interim administration for the people of Kosovo. The KFOR, within its means and capabilities, is providing broad support to UNMIK. As UNMIK is still developing its structures in Kosovo, KFOR continues to support UNMIK at all levels, including public administration, and is represented at the Kosovo Transitional Council and the Joint Civil Commissions. The KFOR personnel provide a security presence in towns and villages. Checkpoints and patrols are organized in key areas in Kosovo to provide security, resolve disputes, and instill in the community a feeling of confidence. In addition, KFOR is providing assistance in the areas of demining, humanitarian relief, international civil police training, and the maintenance of civic works resources. Ethnic tensions in Kosovo, however, remain a concern, particularly in areas where Kosovar Serbs and Kosovar Albanians live in close proximity. Until UNMIK is able to field a full complement of civil police, public security remains principally a KFOR responsibility.

NATO has planned for the KFOR mission to be formally reviewed at 6-month intervals with a view to progressively reducing the force's presence and, eventually, withdrawing. Over time, KFOR will incrementally transfer its security and policing responsibilities as appropriate to the international civil administration, local institutions, and other organizations.

I have taken these actions pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive. I appreciate the continued support of the Congress in these actions.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Strom Thurmond, President pro tempore of the Senate.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting the Report on the National Emergency With Respect to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro)

December 15, 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 the Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) emergency declared in Executive Order 12808 on May 30, 1992, and with respect to the Kosovo emergency declared in Executive Order 13088 on June 9, 1998.

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.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Lapse of the Export Administration Act of 1979

December 15, 1999

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

As required by section 204 of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1703(c)) and section 401(c) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1641(c)), I transmit herewith a 6-month periodic report on the national emergency declared by Executive Order 12924 of August 19, 1994, to deal with the threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States caused by the lapse of the Export Administration Act of 1979.

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 at a Democratic National Committee Gay and Lesbian Luncheon

December 16, 1999

Well, thank you very much. First, I want to thank Mark and Peter and Andy and Charles for co-hosting, chairing this. And I thank all of you for being here.

You said some very kind things in your introduction. I'd like to thank you for being my personal friend for many years and for all the issues we've discussed and all the things we've talked about, including before I became President. I'd like to thank the people here from the White House who have helped me to make this the most inclusive administration in history. And I want to thank all of you for all the issues that we've fought on.

We actually had a very good year last year in many ways, and I got most of what I wanted in the budget at the end. But we didn't get the hate crimes legislation, so I ask you to stay with me and to make a good effort. I think we've got a much better chance to pass it in 2000, and I hope you will help me with that.

I also think we should keep trying to get a vote on the "ENDA" legislation, which I strongly support. And one final thing—Sandy Thurman's here; we talked about this on the way in—while we've made remarkable progress with HIV and AIDS in the United States, it is still raging out of control in much of Africa and increasingly in parts of Asia. And I think we ought to do more on that

around the world, and we're going to try to do more.

But I want to ask for your support as we go to the Congress, and ask them to take a strong stand on that. Otherwise, you're going to see whole countries collapse under the weight of AIDS-related death, AIDS orphans, and managing the situation. Those are three issues I wanted to mention.

The last point I'd like to make is this. I've said this a lot of times, and all of you have heard me give this speech, so I won't give the whole speech. But if we have enjoyed any success in these last 7 years—and I think we've had quite a lot of it—part of it was because I had an idea of what I wanted America to look like at century's end and at the beginning of the new millennium.

It is very important to have a vision and to pursue it and very important not to forget your mission when things happen which are designed to make you forget your mission. I think it is—now, in this election season, I think it's very important for us, not only as Democrats but as citizens, to get the American people to focus on the importance of doing that all over again, of having a vision for the first couple of decades of the 21st century, of imagining what we want America to be like, what we want the world to be like, and developing a strategy and a set of ideas to get there.

We have never before, ever, in my lifetime and perhaps never in our history, enjoyed as much economic and social progress and national self-confidence with the absence of domestic crisis or foreign threat. Therefore, we have the greatest opportunity in our lifetime and perhaps ever to shape the future for our children. We ought to spend a lot of time defining and debating what that future should be.

And when the next administration starts in the new century and the next Congress sits, they ought to sit and start with a mandate from the American people based on those big questions.

Now I have been through enough elections to believe that the primary determinants of the outcome of the election are the quality of the candidates and the subject of the campaign, assuming that both sides have enough resources to get their message out. The other guys will always outspend us, and we know why they've got more money than we do. And it's okay as long as we have enough. But assuming we have enough, an election's outcome is determined by the quality of the candidates and the subject of the election. I believe if the subject of the election is, what are the big issues we have to deal with between now and the end of the next decade, we win, because the American people agree with us about the big things. And we just have to keep pushing forward.

The public opinion—the people of this country nearly always get it right if they have enough time and enough information. That's why we're still around here after 200 years. We wouldn't be if that weren't true. And just on the issue of equal rights and the absence of discrimination, there's been a sea change in public opinion in this country in the last 7 years. We're a long way from where we were in '92, when, to put it mildly, there were some fairly visceral responses to the positions that I took in the campaign. It's a very different world out there now.

So I ask you not only for your money—I'm grateful for that—but I ask you to think about all the various ways in which we can make sure that the American people use this moment to be responsible dreamers, instead of just to fritter the election away in some distracted, indulgent, or mean-spirited or shortsighted way, because if this thing is about the big issues and the long-time vision, we're going to do just fine. And you can have a big impact on that.

The only other thing I would say is, I think there is a very great deal we can accomplish next year. Conventional wisdom is, in election years you don't get much done. That's not necessarily so. I can remember we got a great deal done in 1996 in the election. In '98, we got a lot done in the 11th hour, simply because Congress wanted to go home. [*Laughter*]

So stay with me, keep focused on this, too. We can get quite a lot done next year if we have the discipline to do it and the will.

The last thing I want to say is, I am very grateful for having had the chance to serve and to work with you and to be President at this particular moment in history, when

doors were being opened and a new chapter in the civil rights history of America was being written, and I hope we can do more and do better.

But I'm very grateful for having had the chance to do this, and I have said many times I wish we could have done more, but I'm glad we did what we did. And I feel very fortunate just to have had the chance to serve at this moment, thanks in no small measure because of the progress we've made on these issues, and I thank you for that, too.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:55 p.m. in the Colonial Room at the Mayflower Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to luncheon cochairs Peter Amstein, software developer, Microsoft Corporation; Mark Fox, finance strategy adviser, FOX Group; Charles Nolan, fashion designer; Ellen Tracy, Inc.; and Andy Tobias, treasurer, Democratic National Campaign Committee, who introduced the President. The President also referred to ENDA, the proposed "Employment and Non-Discrimination Act."

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Barak of Israel and Foreign Minister al-Shara of Syria

December 16, 1999

Middle East Peace Process

Over the past 48 hours, Israel and Syria have taken a critical step in the journey toward peace. That journey will be a difficult one, but with courage and perseverance on both sides, the result will be deeply rewarding to the people of Israel and to the people of Syria.

In the course of their meetings with Secretary Albright and with me, Prime Minister Barak and Foreign Minister Shara agreed to make every effort to reach peace between Israel and Syria as part of a just, lasting, and comprehensive Middle East peace, based on United Nations resolutions 242 and 338, and the Madrid terms of reference. To that end, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister agreed to return to Washington to continue their negotiations on an intensive basis beginning January 3, 2000, about 2 weeks from now.

They have requested the United States to participate in these negotiations, and we are honored to do so. They agreed to take steps to ensure that these negotiations will be conducted in a productive and positive atmosphere.

We are witnessing a new beginning in the effort to achieve a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. With Syrian-Israeli negotiations off to a good start, Israeli-Lebanese negotiations expected to begin soon, and the Palestinian track well underway, we can truly set our sights on a new and different Middle East.

As I emphasized from the outset, the journey will be tough. Nothing in the past 48 hours should lead us to believe otherwise. But the parties are embarked on this path. They have agreed there should be no looking back, for the sake of our generations and generations yet to come.

I thank the Prime Minister and his team. I thank Foreign Minister Shara and his team. I thank Secretary Albright and those on the American team. All of them have worked hard. And I want Israel and Syria to know they can count on the United States every step of the way.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:40 p.m. in the West Portico at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel and Foreign Minister Farouk al-Shara of Syria.

Proclamation 7261—55th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge

December 16, 1999

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

By the winter of 1944, the United States and our Allies had turned the tide of the Second World War. Allied forces had liberated

the Italian peninsula and were gaining ground in France and the Low Countries. In mid-December, in a desperate attempt to halt this steady advance, Adolf Hitler launched a furious and massive counteroffensive. On December 16, 29 German divisions flooded the Allied line in the Ardennes Forest region of Belgium and Luxembourg. The Battle of the Bulge had begun.

Facing superior enemy numbers, rugged terrain, and bitter weather, the American troops at first fell back. But their determination to defeat the Nazis never wavered. For 6 weeks, U.S. soldiers responded to fierce German offensives with equally determined counterattacks, refusing to succumb to the Nazi onslaught. The siege of Bastogne in Belgium remains an enduring symbol of their indomitable spirit. At that strategic crossroads, a small detachment of the 101st Airborne Division and other attached troops were encircled. When called upon to surrender by the much larger German force, Brigadier General Anthony McAuliffe dismissed the demand with his legendary one-word reply: "Nuts." Against all odds, he and his men held firm during the siege until reinforcements arrived and helped halt the German offensive at a critical point in the Battle.

Inevitably, the spirit, toughness, valor, and resolve of the U.S. forces led to victory. By late January of 1945, the American and Allied counterattack had succeeded in pushing back the Nazi forces, eliminating the threat of further German offensives and ultimately sealing the fate of the Nazi regime. But this victory was costly. At the end of the Battle of the Bulge, some 19,000 Americans lay dead, and thousands more were wounded, captured, or missing in action.

Now, more than half a century later, we still stand in awe of the courage and sacrifice of the more than 600,000 U.S. soldiers and airmen who fought that epic battle. These seemingly ordinary Americans achieved extraordinary things. Leaving their homes, their families, and their civilian lives behind them, they stepped forward to wage a crusade for freedom. They laid the foundations of the peace and security we enjoy today and planted the seeds of democracy that now are bearing fruit throughout Europe. Many of these heroes and patriots have gone to their final rest; but their service, their sacrifice, and their achievements will live forever in the memories and hearts of their fellow Americans.

The Congress by House Joint Resolution 65, has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation honoring the veterans of the Battle of the Bulge.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the period of December 16, 1999, to January 25, 2000, as a time to commemorate the 55th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge. I call upon the people of the United States to express our profound gratitude to the veterans of the Battle of the Bulge and to honor them with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this sixteenth day of December, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 10:59 a.m., December 20, 1999]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on December 21.

Proclamation 7262—Wright Brothers Day, 1999

December 16, 1999

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

We stand at a rare moment in human history: the end of a century and the birth of

a new millennium. The arrival of the 21st century presents all Americans with an opportunity to reflect on where we have been as a Nation and to dream about where we will go in the future. At the dawn of this century, Orville and Wilbur Wright found themselves poised at such a moment. Behind them lay years of painstaking effort and experimentation, trial and failure, in their pursuit of the dream of powered human flight. Ahead of them stretched the sands of Kitty Hawk in North Carolina and yet another attempt to fly in the aircraft they had built by hand. On December 17, 1903, for 12 seconds and 120 feet, they achieved their dream and forever changed the destiny of humankind.

That first brief flight showed that the sky was no longer a limit but a new horizon; it ignited new dreams in our people. Each succeeding generation of Americans, building on the Wright brothers' achievement and fired by the same vision, energy, and determination, has refined the science of flight, increased the range, efficiency, and safety of aircraft, and created a modern air transportation system and aviation industry that have energized our economy and helped transform the world into a truly global community.

And, while they could never have foreseen it, the Wright brothers also brought us to the threshold of space. A scant six decades after that first flight, Americans left the Earth's atmosphere and orbited our planet. By 1969, Neil Armstrong had left the first human footprint on the dusty surface of the Moon. Today's astronauts fly space shuttle missions that are helping us meet the challenge of global climate change, bringing the International Space Station closer to completion, and expanding our knowledge of Earth and the universe. Yet even now the Wright brothers' achievement continues to fire our dreams and beckons us to make new discoveries.

The Congress, by a joint resolution approved December 17, 1963 (77 Stat. 402; 36 U.S.C. 169), has designated December 17 of each year as "Wright Brothers Day" and has authorized and requested the President to issue annually a proclamation inviting the people of the United States to observe that day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim December 17, 1999, as Wright Brothers Day.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this sixteenth day of December, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 10:59 a.m., December 20, 1999]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on December 21.

Remarks on Signing the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999

December 17, 1999

Thank you. Senator Kennedy, Senator Jeffords, we thank you for your leadership and your remarks today. And Senator Roth, we thank you very much. We know this couldn't have happened without you. And Senator Moynihan, Representative Lazio, thank you, sir. And Representative Waxman and Representative Brown who are here, and Representative Dingell who isn't here—I want to thank all of you for your leadership in the House. Give them all a hand. [*Applause*]

I also want to thank the members of the administration who were particularly active in supporting this bill: Secretary Herman, the cochair of my task force on the employment of adults with disabilities; Secretary Shalala; Secretary Summers; Social Security Commissioner Apfel. I'd like to thank, in the White House, my Chief of Staff John Podesta, Chris Jennings, and Jeanne Lambrew, who had a lot to do with this bill, as all of you know.

I want to thank Senator Dole, especially, and through him all the citizens who came forward and made it possible for this to be a genuinely American bill. I want to welcome the members of the Roosevelt family who are here today, particularly Jim and Ann Roosevelt, my longtime friends. And now Jim is a member of this administration, something I'm very proud of.

I want to thank you, Justin Dart, and the members of the disability community who are here, for this and every other issue that

we've worked on for over 7 years now. And I want to acknowledge—James Sullivan really spoke for three others who are here—Donna McNamee, Paul Marshall, and Wesley Vinner. I thank them for being up here, because every one of them represents a different, slightly different story of someone who will benefit from this bill. and I thank them for sharing their stories with us.

I think it's kind of interesting, don't you, that Mr. Sullivan, from New Hampshire and Senator Jeffords, from Vermont, are the only two people up here without coats on? [*Laughter*] This is a warm December day in New England. [*Laughter*]

Senator Jeffords, you made that remark that President Roosevelt never carried Vermont. You know, my family communes with the Roosevelts on a regular basis—[*laughter*]—you may remember that. And Eleanor told Hillary last night you're forgiven, all is forgiven now. [*Laughter*] This wipes the slate clean—this bill does. [*Laughter*]

John Sweeney, we thank you for being here. And we thank the labor community for their support of this legislation, as well.

I think it is wonderfully fitting that this is the last piece of legislation a President of the United States will sign in the entire 20th century. We do it at this magnificent memorial to Franklin Roosevelt, who from his wheelchair lifted our Nation out of depression and led the free world to victory in World War II, who laid the building blocks for world peace and security that we enjoy today, and accomplished it all as an American with a disability.

In his time, as we all know—and we've had a lot of debates about that in this memorial context—Roosevelt felt he needed to keep his wheelchair from public view. Most people believed being disabled meant being unable, though he proved them very wrong every day. Today, in the spirit of his leadership and the wake of his accomplishments, we move further along on our Nation's marvelous journey of equal opportunity for all.

This is a good time for our country. We're ending the century on a high note, with 20 million new jobs since 1993, the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 32 years, the lowest poverty rate in 20 years, in February, the longest economic expansion in our entire history. But in spite of this good economic news, we know that three out of four people with significant disabilities are not working. They're ready to work, they're willing to work, and they are very able to work. But as we have heard, they face the daunting barrier of losing their Medicare or Medicaid coverage if they get a job.

For many Americans with disabilities, medical bills, as you just heard from our previous speaker, may cost thousands more than what is typically covered by an employer's private health insurance. For some, including some on this stage, those medical bills, because of the attendant care services, may add up to more than any reasonable salary a person with disabilities could ever hope to earn.

And yet, quite beyond the human cost of denying people the dignity of work, this defies common sense and economic logic. It doesn't make sense for people to be denied the dignity of work and for the taxpayers to pay the bills, whether they're working or not, and therefore, losing the benefit of the productivity, the contributions to our economy and society, and as you just heard, the tax receipt of working Americans.

Secretary Summers is here. You wouldn't believe how much time we spend arguing over how much longer this economic expansion can go on. How can we keep it going without inflation? How many expansions in the past have been broken because inflation finally burst through and had to be taken down and that led to a recession?

Well, one way we can keep this economic expansion going is to take it to people and places who aren't part of it. That's what our new markets initiative to poor areas of America is all about. And make no mistake about it, that will be one big objective of this bill. This is an inflation-free way to keep America's economy growing. You are helping every single American—not just Americans with disabilities—every single American will be helped by this legislation today.

But of course, even more compelling than the economic argument is the human one. Today, we say with a simple but clear voice, no one should have to choose between taking a job and having health care.

This legislation reorients our policy by saying health care ought to be a tool to getting a job, earning a salary, paying taxes, and living up to one's God-given potential. You don't have to worry about losing Medicare or Medicaid anymore.

This landmark measure will also make a real difference to people who are facing the early onset of diseases like AIDS, muscular dystrophy, Parkinson's, or diabetes. Right now, they may be able to work, but their work conditions are not deemed severe enough to qualify for Medicare. In other words, they may only become eligible for health care when they're no longer able to work. Now the problem is they're uninsurable because of the condition they have, even though they're not disabled. So they're also in a different kind of double-bind.

With this bill—thanks again to bipartisan support in Congress and to the fact that the Senate Finance Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee found a way to fund it—we are going to have a $250 million demonstration program that will allow these Americans to buy into the Medicare program, so they can stay on the job and don't have to give it up to get health care when they're perfectly capable of working. This is also a very important feature of this bill.

And finally, both Senator Kennedy and Senator Jeffords mentioned the Ticket to Work legislation that's a part of this bill. This creates long-overdue reforms of the job-training program, so people with disabilities can make their own choices about vocational rehabilitation services, the ones that are best for them.

Taken together, clearly, this is the most significant advancement for people with disabilities since the Americans with Disabilities Act almost a decade ago. It continues our administration's efforts to replace barriers to opportunity with policies based on inclusion, empowerment, and independence.

That's why we reformed welfare, to reward the dignity of work, why we doubled the earned-income tax credit for low-income working people, particularly those with children, raised the minimum wage, enacted the family and medical leave law. This bill takes us another huge step in the right direction of both liberating and rewarding the creative energies of all Americans. But our task isn't done.

I often think it's ironic that, when we have these bill signings, the Presidents get to make the speeches and sign the bills, but the Members of Congress must be sitting out there thinking they did all the work. [*Laughter*] And in truth, they did the lion's share, and I was proud to support them.

But now it's our turn. We have to make it work in the lives of real people. I have instructed Secretary Shalala, Secretary Herman, and Commissioner Apfel to take immediate action to implement this legislation, to team up with the States advocates, businesses, and others who are crucial to make this bill work.

Now, all of you here who had a hand in this know that the way it's set up, States have a vital role to play. We want to take every opportunity to help every single State in America take maximum advantage of the new options provided under this legislation. We want to encourage employees to reach out and tap the talented pool of potential workers that are now available. We want to work with all of you to ensure that we effectively get the word out to people who have disabilities so they actually know about the benefits of this legislation.

This is about more than jobs or paychecks—I'll say it again—it's about more than keeping our recovery going. It's fundamentally about the dignity of each human being, about the realization of a quality of opportunity, about recognizing that work is at the heart of the American dream.

In the end, the counsel of Franklin Roosevelt that's etched in the walls of this memorial guides us still. He said, "No country, however rich, can afford the waste of its human resources." That is ever more true as we cross the threshold into the new millennium.

I think Mr. Roosevelt would be proud of all of you today. I think we have honored his life and his legacy. In the new century, America will realize even more of it's promise because we have unleashed the promise of more Americans.

Congratulations, and God bless you all.

I'd like to ask the Members of Congress and the administration to come up for the bill signing now.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:55 a.m. at the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial. In his remarks, he referred to James Sullivan, Hudson, NH, who introduced the President, Donna McNamee, Cleveland, OH, Paul Marshall, Wheaton, MD, and Wesley Vinner, Riverdale, MD, citizens who will benefit from the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act; Representative Sherrod Brown; former Senator Bob Dole; Justin Dart, Jr., chairman and founder, Justice For All; Jeanne Lambrew, Senior Health Policy Analyst, National Economic Council; and John J. Sweeney, president, AFL–CIO. H.R. 1180, approved December 17, was assigned Public Law No. 106–170. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

United States-European Union Summit Statement on Chechnya

December 17, 1999

The United States and the European Union are deeply concerned about the situation in Chechnya. We recognize Russia's right to uphold its territorial integrity and to defend its citizens from terrorism and lawlessness, and we condemn terrorism in all its manifestations. But we believe that Russia's military tactics in Chechnya are undermining its objectives, creating a humanitarian crisis, endangering innocent civilians, and jeopardizing stability throughout the Caucasus region. A military solution to the conflict is not possible. We call for an immediate and lasting cease-fire throughout Chechnya and a political dialogue that can lead to a durable solution to the crisis.

The indiscriminate use of force against civilians is unacceptable. Providing for the safety of innocent civilians is a fundamental obligation of all states. We call on Russia to respect this principle unconditionally.

We stress that the respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of neighboring states is a fundamental principle of the international system. We are concerned by the impact of the Chechnya conflict on security throughout the Caucasus and stress the importance of avoiding steps that would further undermine regional security.

Displaced persons should be allowed full freedom of movement. Russian and regional authorities must provide for their well being. The United States and the EU strongly support the courageous efforts of international relief organizations, including the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), to provide humanitarian assistance to displaced people and others affected by the conflict. We ask Russia to work constructively with these organizations and ensure security for their personnel and access for their operations.

The OSCE Istanbul Summit Declaration noted that the OSCE could contribute to finding a political solution to the conflict. We are encouraged that OSCE Chairman-in-Office Vollebaek was able to visit the North Caucasus. We support his efforts to promote a political dialogue as well as the continuing role of the OSCE in finding a lasting solution to the conflict. We believe that an office of the OSCE Assistance Group should be opened in neighboring Ingushetiya to monitor the humanitarian situation. We call on Russia to respect all of the commitments it has made in the framework of the OSCE. In that regard, we acknowledge Prime Minister Putin's statements that he has held talks with representatives of Chechen President Maskhadov and urge continuation of meaningful discussions with responsible Chechen leaders.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

United States-European Union Summit Statement on Southeast Europe

December 17, 1999

We reaffirm our commitment to the emergence of a secure, democratic and prosperous Southeastern Europe. We agree on the central importance of promoting democratic change in Yugoslavia and will remain engaged in enhancing the security of the region until that happens. We will therefore work together with Yugoslav democratic forces, including the Government of Montenegro, to promote such change. We support the efforts of the freely elected government of Montenegro to advance political and economic reform within the FRY. We will also

continue our support for the full implementation of Security Council Resolution 1244 and for UNMIK and KFOR's efforts to establish in Kosovo a safe environment for all individuals regardless of their ethnic, religious or other affiliation. We will lay the foundations for an effective administrative and judicial system, just as we will continue our strong support for the work of SFOR and the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We call upon Croatia to take steps to ensure that its parliamentary and presidential election processes are free and fair, in accordance with democratic principles and OSCE standards.

We are further strengthening our cooperation with all the countries of Southeastern Europe in fulfillment of the goals and commitments of the Stability Pact. Led by the European Union and strongly supported by the United States, the Pact has achieved much since the Sarajevo Summit last July, including specific steps to improve the investment climate, fight corruption, control small arms and light weapons, implement commitments on weapons of mass destruction, and advance democracy and human rights throughout the region. The countries of the region will play an essential role in implementing the Pact and have recognized the importance of accelerating overall economic and political reforms. There is now much work to do in the months ahead to transform the commitments of each country into concrete progress and to prepare for a Regional Funding Conference to be held in the first quarter of 2000. The European Union and the United States have made clear their readiness to provide assistance for regional reform efforts and to fight corruption and organized crime, build sound public institutions, mobilize private investment, and expand trade. We intend to work closely with Southeastern Europe to take full advantage of the opportunity before us at the verge of a new century to forge greater stability and advance the region's integration into the Euro-Atlantic mainstream.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

United States-European Union Summit Statement on the World Trade Organization

December 17, 1999

The United States and the European Union consider the multilateral trading system one of the world's principal bulwarks of peace, sustainable development, and economic growth; and a primary engine for rising living standards and broad-based prosperity in the future. As we approach the new century, we must ensure that the trading system retains its dynamism and ability to respond to changing needs of an increasingly diverse membership.

Accordingly, both sides note their disappointment at the failure to reach agreement on a new Round of trade negotiations at Seattle, but they agree it is now important to find a way forward. In this context, the EU and the US both pledge continued readiness to work with Director General Mike Moore and our partners to launch an inclusive new Round as soon as possible. A new Round has to be definitively different from its predecessors. It should encompass the built in agenda of agriculture and services, further and effective market access liberalization, support our efforts to harness globalization by strengthening and extending WTO rules, and address the concerns of both developing countries and civil society.

With the Director General and all other members of the WTO, we need to take full account of the lessons of Seattle. In particular, work should be directed towards a set of measures that will: provide better opportunities for wider participation by all members (including developing countries) in the decisionmaking processes of the WTO; offer greater transparency (both within the organization and vis a vis the outside world); and improve public access, including through broader access to WTO documents and enhanced consultation procedures with civil society. This work should also consider

measures to improve the efficiency of the WTO, and to boost overall public support for the organization. We should also seek agreement by all members on the separate review of WTO dispute settlement procedures, including measures to enhance transparency.

The US and EU are committed to maximizing the benefits developing countries gain from being in the WTO. We agreed to take forward a preferential market access initiative for least developed WTO members, initially with our Quad partners. We will work with other WTO Members to establish as soon as possible a new, revitalized program for capacity building and technical assistance undertaken by the WTO, beginning with the Integrated Framework established in 1996, and in cooperation with other international institutions. We also agreed to consider what we would do to address the concerns of a number of developing countries with implementation of existing multilateral trade agreements.

On issues of interest to our civil societies, we agreed that changes to global economy have brought new challenges to the trading system. Nowhere is that evident than the debate that is now joined regarding the relationship between trade and labor. The US and EU are committed to working with our partners to engage the WTO and ILO in a constructive dialogue, including consideration of the relationship between core labor standards, further liberalization, trade policy and social development, in order to foster understanding and consensus. And on trade and environment, we will work together to ensure that trade rules support and do not undermine the ability of governments to establish and achieve high levels of environmental protection.

The cooperative relationship between the US and the EU has been crucial to the development of the multilateral trading system over the past 50 years. We recognize our shared responsibilities to continue this work, but also the need to involve all our WTO partners more directly. This will pave the way for continued prosperity, sustainable development, and long-term growth for the 21st century.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

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.

December 11

In the morning, the President traveled to Fort Lauderdale, FL.

In the evening, the President traveled to Miami, FL, and later, he returned to Washington, DC., arriving after midnight.

December 12

In the evening, the President and Hillary Clinton attended the annual "Christmas in Washington" celebration at the National Building Museum.

December 14

In the afternoon, the President met with Filipino veterans of World War II at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

The President announced his intention to appoint Gus Weill as a member of the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board.

December 15

In the morning, the President met separately with Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel and Minister of Foreign Affairs Farouk al-Shara of Syria in the Oval Office.

The President announced his intention to appoint Amanda Aguirre, Jeffrey Brandon, Carlos Rene Gonzales, Rosemarie Marshall Johnson, Laurance N. Nickey, Blair Sadler, Catherine Torres, and Paul Villas as members of the U.S. section of the United States-Mexico Border Health Commission.

December 16

In the morning, the President had an interview with Peter Jennings of ABC News in the Diplomatic Reception Room.

In the afternoon, the President met separately with Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel and Minister of Foreign Affairs Farouk al-Shara of Syria in the Oval Office.

December 17

In the evening, the President attended a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee dinner at a private residence.

The President announced his intention to appoint Paul LeClerc as a member of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities.

The President announced the recess appoint of Sarah M. Fox as a member of the National Labor Relations Board.

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 December 11

Statement by the Press Secretary: Official Delegation for Panama Canal Turnover

Released December 14

Transcript of a press briefing by Council on Environmental Quality Chairman George Frampton and Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt on expansion of the national park system

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joe Lockhart

Released December 15

Transcripts of press briefings by Press Secretary Joe Lockhart

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Stuart Eizenstat on action by Germany to compensate Nazi victims of forced labor

Released December 16

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joe Lockhart

Transcript of a press briefing by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on the Israel-Syria peace talks

Released December 17

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joe Lockhart

Transcript of a press briefing by NSC Senior Director for European Affairs Antony J. Blinken on the United States-European Union Summit

Acts Approved by the President

Approved December 12

S. 335 / Public Law 106–168
To amend chapter 30 of title 39, United States Code, to provide for the nonmailability of certain deceptive matter relating to sweepstakes, skill contests, facsimile checks, administrative procedures, orders, and civil penalties relating to such matter, and for other purposes

Approved December 14

H.R. 3443 / Public Law 106–169
Foster Care Independence Act of 1999

Approved December 17

H.R. 1180 / Public Law 106–170
Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999