AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

uncertainties: Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.).

D.A.R.E. was developed jointly by the Los Angeles Police Department and the Los Angeles Unified School District and continues to draw its strength from partnerships among law enforcement officials, schools, parents, and communities. Under the program, specially trained police officers conduct classroom lessons designed to teach children from kindergarten through the 12th grade how to make healthy choices, overcome negative influences, avoid destructive behavior, and resist the lure of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.

The D.A.R.E. curriculum has several components designed to meet the changing needs of students as they mature. From the visitation program for children in kindergarten and the early elementary school years to the core curriculum for highly vulnerable fifth and sixth graders to reinforcement programs for middle school, junior high, and senior high students, D.A.R.E. helps young people of all ages develop the skills and self-confidence to recognize and resist negative influences. And this year, D.A.R.E. has pledged to use a specialized curriculum to reach out to thousands of parents and help them talk to their children about drugs.

My Administration is also taking forceful measures to help our young people make the decision to reject drugs. We are continuing to expand the unprecedented National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign in order to change the attitudes of an entire generation of young people; a campaign that is working across all race, gender, grade level, and income lines. The campaign is already paying dividends for American families: studies show that growing numbers of parents are talking to their children about the dangers of drug use, and youth drug use is down 13 percent in just one year. We have also expanded the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program and the Drug-Free Communities program.

Through efforts like these and the commitment of programs like D.A.R.E., we can ensure that America's children have the skills, self-esteem, and guidance they need to reject substance abuse and violence and to create for themselves a bright and healthy future.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 13, 2000, as National D.A.R.E. Day. I call upon our youth, parents, educators, and all the people of the United States to observe this day with appropriate programs and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twelfth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand, 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., April 19, 2000]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on April 20.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With the American Society of Newspaper Editors

April 13, 2000

The President. Thank you very much, Chris. And thank you for asking me again—I think. [*Laughter*] I want to say I am delighted to be here. And I'm glad you said it was the sixth time. I knew I had been here more than half the time, but we were talking on the way in about how, when you live a busy life, how memory fades. And I've enjoyed these six occasions, or at least the previous five, and I think I'll enjoy this one.

I was asking myself on the way over here, why am I doing this? I'm not running for anything. [*Laughter*] And I read the Vice President's speech to you and the jokes that he made, the joke he made about Chris and the Orange County Register. I was so delighted to carry Orange County, I didn't care whether the newspaper was for us or not. [*Laughter*] And surprised.

But I am delighted to be here. And I want to talk primarily today about the present debate over the budget and tax proposals on Capitol Hill. But I would like to say one thing very briefly at the outset about the census and to ask for your help.

Because the census is, at its core, information about who we are as a democracy, I would imagine everyone in this room is particularly interested in it. The information especially from the long form helps hometowns do everything from design mass transit systems to provide 911 emergency services. The census helps us to calculate cost of living increases for Social Security, military retirement, veterans' pensions. It serves as a foundation for a variety of economic surveys, including the monthly jobs reports, and it's important in the calculation of the Consumer Price Index.

So far, about three of five census forms have been returned. That means about 40 percent have not. We want everyone to count, and we hope that you will help us to reach them. So I would just say, anything you can do to help encourage the people who read your papers to fill out their census forms, every one of them, would be very much appreciated.

More than 35 years ago, President Johnson spoke before the American Society of Newspaper Editors, at a time, superficially, not so unlike this time. Unemployment was low; inflation was low; growth was high. The economy was humming in the middle of what was then the longest—to prove to be the longest economic expansion in our history. It lasted from 1961 to 1969.

President Johnson spoke of our obligation to look beyond the moment, to think of America as what he called "a continuing community," to see how decisions affect not only today's citizens but their children and their children's children. "To build for tomorrow," he said, "in the immediacy of today." I think that's a good way of capturing what it is I believe we should be doing today—building for tomorrow in the immediacy of today.

It was very different 7 years and 3 months ago when I came to office. The economy was in trouble; the society was divided; the politics appeared to be paralyzed here. I had a vision of 21st century America and a roadmap I thought would help get us there. I saw an America where the American dream of opportunity was alive for every person responsible enough to work for it; an America strong, of strong communities with safe streets, good schools, a clean environment; and a national community, which not only respected but celebrated our diversity and found even greater hope in our common humanity. And I saw an America still leading the world toward peace and freedom and prosperity.

We had a strategy to achieve that vision, one rooted in opportunity, responsibility, and community. The roadmap included economic reforms, education reforms, welfare reforms, health care reforms, reforms in criminal justice, reforms in environmental policy; greater efforts to strengthen the combined roles of work and family in the modern world; efforts to support our American community through community service; and initiatives in foreign policy against wars rooted in racial and ethnic conflicts, against terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, and for peace processes all across the world; efforts to build new partnerships in Asia and Latin America, to advance the cause of world health, and to relieve the debts of the poorest countries in the world.

We also had an idea to reform the role of the Federal Government, to make it smaller but more empowering and more aggressive in creating the conditions and the tools within which people could make the most of their own lives.

Strengthening the economy, of course, was key to realizing our vision. Doing that made all the rest of this possible. Our strategy was quite simple: We wanted to pursue a course of fiscal discipline, the greatest possible investment in education and technology, science, and other things that would advance our objectives, and to expand trade in American products and services around the world.

Now, we are in the midst of the longest, strongest economic expansion in history, with 21 million new jobs, the lowest poverty rate in 20 years, the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 30 years, the lowest female unemployment rate in 40 years, the lowest African-American and Hispanic unemployment rates on record, the highest homeownership in history. We also have the lowest crime rate in 25 years. Gun crime is down 35 percent since I took office. We have cleaner air, cleaner water, fewer toxic waste dumps, greater land preservation

in the lower 48 States than in any other period, except the Presidencies of Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt. Twenty-one million people have received the benefits of the family and medical leave law; 150,000 young Americans have earned money for college by serving in AmeriCorps. Two million children, with 2 million more on the way, have been given health insurance under the Children's Health Insurance Program. Ninety percent of our children are immunized against serious childhood diseases for the first time in our history. In our schools, test scores are up, college-going is up. And America has been a source of support for peace and freedom in the Middle East, Northern Ireland, the Balkans. We have done it with the smallest Federal Government in 40 years.

In the course of all this, the nature of the economic debate has changed radically. If I had come here the first time I spoke with you and said, "Give me a few years and we will eliminate the deficit, run three surpluses in a row for the first time in half a century, double our investment in education, and we'll have tax relief for middle class and lower income working people, including the earned-income tax credit, the HOPE scholarship tax cut, the child tax credit, and we'll actually lower the tax burden on average American families"—and according to the Treasury Department, income taxes for a typical family of four are the lowest percentage of income they have been since 1965. If I had said that, and I had said, "Now, give me a few years and the main question we will be debating is, what are we going to do with our surplus?" you would have been forced to write editorials complaining that the new President was slightly deranged, but he seemed like a pretty nice fellow. [*Laughter*]

Now, nonetheless, that is now the subject of debate in Washington—what do we do with the surplus? The question really, I think, is a larger one: What do we make of this moment? Do we believe, as President Johnson believed when he came here in the early sixties, that we should plan for tomorrow in the immediacy of today?

To me, the answer to that question is clear. We should be looking at our long-term challenges and opportunities, the ones I outlined in the last State of the Union Address, the challenge of the aging of America. The number of people over 65 will double in the next 30 years. There will be only two people working for every one person drawing Social Security at present rates of Americans maturing and immigration and retirement.

We can extend the life of Social Security beyond the expectancy of the baby boom generation, and we can extend the life of Medicare and add a prescription drug benefit so that baby boomers, when they retire, are not a burden to our children and their ability to raise our grandchildren.

We have the challenge of expanding opportunity for all the children of America, the most racially and ethnically and religiously and linguistically diverse group of children ever in our schools. We can give every child a world-class education and, now, unlike 15 years or so ago, when we started the education reform movement of the late 20th century, we actually know how to do it. And we know that all children can learn; we know what strategies work, and we have evidence, abundant evidence all across the country.

We have the challenge of securing the long-term health of America. I believe to do it, we ought to continue to pay down the national debt and make America debt-free for the first time since 1835. And I believe we have a challenge to extend economic opportunity to people and places that have not been part of this recovery even yet, which is the heart of my new markets initiative.

We have the challenge of continuing to help people balance work and family, and eliminating what is still a scourge of child poverty in the United States. We have a challenge of proving that we can meet our environmental challenges, including global warming, and still grow the economy; a challenge of making our country the safest big country in the world; a challenge of accelerating our leadership in science and technology, and spreading the benefits of it, not only across America but to every corner of the Earth; the challenge of continuing to lead the world toward peace and freedom and continuing to build one America here at home. Now, I think that's what we ought to do with this magic moment of possibility.

In large measure, the decision about what to do and whether we continue on that course is what the budget debate in Congress is all about and what the election of 2000 is all about. There are those who say, "Well, even if the tax burden is a percentage of income, is the lowest it's been in 35 years for most Americans, we still ought to give some of this money back to the American people." We can do that, but I believe the tax cuts should be responsible and targeted, to help working families raise their children, provide for long-term care for their parents, tax deductibility for college tuition and better child care.

I think there should be incentives to wealthier Americans to solve our common problems, for example, to invest in new technologies, to help us combat global warming and promote environmental protection, and to invest in our global vaccine initiative to help eradicate AIDS, TB, and malaria from the world, and especially to invest in the poor areas of America which have not yet fully benefited from our recovery.

We can do all that, and it will actually reinforce our efforts to meet our long-term challenges. But I believe the budget now being debated in Congress and put forward by the majority takes us in the wrong direction and risks safeguarding this unique moment in our history, primarily because the tax cuts that are proposed in the aggregate would take us back to the policy that I have worked for over 7 years to reverse.

I vetoed their tax bill last year because it would have ended the era of fiscal discipline that has served our economy so well. This year Congress is working on last year's tax bill page by page, piece by piece. In separate measures, it is already voted to spend in the aggregate nearly half a trillion dollars, more than half the surplus. And we don't know how much is on the way because their budget, unlike the projections I try to do, only covers the next 5 years rather than 10 years.

Last year their tax cut cost about $150 billion over 5 years, but it would have exploded to nearly $1 trillion over 10 years.

This year, from Capitol Hill to the campaign trail, we're hearing positive statements about investing in health care and prescription drug coverage and education. But after a $1 trillion tax cut—and I believe the one they're running on this year is even bigger—there will be no room left for these investments or for saving Social Security and Medicare, unless we're prepared to go back to the bad old days of deficits.

Congress has a responsibility now to show us how all these separate proposals add up; how the choices made today will affect our ability to meet the challenges of tomorrow. Before we talk about massive tax cuts that would derail our hard-won economic prosperity, I say again, we should put first things first.

First, we should strengthen the solvency of Social Security and Medicare. These two programs represent the bedrock of our commitment to seniors and to millions of Americans with disabilities. Fiscal responsibility has been the foundation to keep these programs strong.

When I came to office, Medicare was projected to go broke last year, 1999. We have taken action to put Medicare and Social Security on a better path to the future. Just last month the Social Security trustees announced that the economy has now added 3 years to the life of the Social Security Trust Fund; it is now solvent until 2037. The Medicare trustees announced that Medicare is now solvent until 2023, 24 years beyond where it was projected to be in 1993. That's the strongest Medicare has been in 25 years.

Now, to be fair, there is a consensus in Congress that we should use all the Social Security surplus for debt reduction, and that is a good thing. But my budget goes one step further. It's an easy step, I believe, but one the congressional majority has not yet embraced. Debt reduction produces interest savings. Rather than using those savings to pay for an exploding tax cut or a spending increase, my budget locks away the interest savings from the Social Security surplus to lengthen the life of Social Security to at least 2054. This would cover all but the most fortunate baby boomers. I'd have to live to be 108 to run out the Social Security Trust Fund.

My proposal also lengthens the life of the Medicare Trust Fund to at least 2030, by investing a significant portion of the surplus

while also making Medicare more competitive and efficient. For example, we'd allow seniors to shop around for health plans that meet their needs. If they find a plan that saves money, they'd pay a lower Medicare premium. This would increase competition, give us better quality and lower costs. We would also modernize Medicare by creating a voluntary prescription drug benefit, something we plainly would provide if we were creating Medicare in the first place today.

Medicare was created at a time when it was basically designed for acute care, for hospital and doctor costs. Today, the average person who lives to be 65 has a life expectancy of 83. And the crying need is for chronic and preventive care. And today, unlike 35 years ago, pharmaceuticals can very often dramatically increase not only the length but the quality of life.

So one of my problems is that the budget pushed by the congressional majority this year would not extend the life of Social Security or Medicare by a single day. It is very important that everybody understands it. It's one thing to say you're saving the Social Security surplus and you're not spending it. That does not add a day to the life of the Trust Fund. It does help you pay down the debt, and I like that. And I'm glad we've got bipartisan, virtually, unanimous support for it. But if you really want to solve the problem of the aging of America, you have to take the interest savings that come from paying down the debt from Social Security taxes, which all of you are paying in excess of what we're paying out every month, and put it into the Trust Fund so we can take Social Security out beyond the life of the baby boom generation.

The second thing we ought to do, I believe, is to stay on course to eliminate all of our publicly held debt by 2013. By the end of this year alone, we will have repaid $300 billion in our national debt. This is having a real impact.

For our economy, it's set in motion a virtuous cycle of reduced interest rates, more capital for private investment, more people investing in new businesses and new technologies. For families, debt reduction has meant more money on average, $2,000 less in home mortgage payments every year for the typical family, $200 less in car payments, $200 less in student loans, than would have been the case had we not reduced the debt. That amounts to a sizable tax cut for American families. We need a fiscally responsible budget, not one that risks economic growth and makes it impossible for us to continue to pay down the debt.

Third, we need to continue to invest in key priorities that are clearly essential to our future—education, health, law enforcement, science and technology. The budget proposed by the Republican majority has nearly a 10 percent average cut in virtually all domestic priorities. This would lead to serious cutbacks in everything from reducing class size to cleaning up toxic waste dumps to putting more police on our streets.

Furthermore, the budget is based on the assumption that the cuts will grow even deeper over time. This is very important for all Americans to understand. It is one thing to go out and propose all these programs that cost money, and quite another to say, "But we have to have a tax cut first. And somehow, I'm sure it will work out."

We tried it that way before, and it didn't work out. So if you have $1-trillion, or even a larger, even bigger than a $1-trillion tax cut over a decade—plus, keep in mind, their defense spending increases proposed are even bigger than the ones I have proposed, and I proposed an increase in defense every single year I've been here, and they've never failed to do that, to fund that—then you're either going to have to drastically cut all these programs—education, health, the environment—or go back and start running deficits or have a combination of both.

In other words, as I found out the hard way when I put together the budget in 1993, if you're going to be fiscally responsible, sooner or later arithmetic intrudes on politics. [*Laughter*] And this is very important. Far be it from me to tell you how to do your job, but I hope that arithmetic will be part of this year's campaign debate as well.

The proposal, from my point of view, defies common sense. I think the argument is over. We had a test run. We had 12 years of their proposals—do the big tax cuts first, and it will all work out—and we had 8 years of arithmetic in public policy. And I think

if you compare the results, the argument should be over. Our commitment is to fiscal discipline and to investment to move the country forward.

Still, in spite of all this hard evidence, later today the Republican majority will vote on a budget resolution that is loaded with exploding tax breaks and untenable cuts in critical investment. It will take us back to an approach that failed before and will fail again; back to ideas that didn't work before and won't work now; back to putting Medicare and Social Security on the back burner, instead of up front where they belong.

So I say again, we cannot afford to veer from the proven path onto a trail of unmet obligations, unrealistic cuts, and unnecessary giveaways. We can't squander the moment by squandering the surplus. We can't go back to the rosy scenario of the 1980's. The new scenario bases tax cuts we can't afford under the assumption that unrealistic spending cuts will be made at the very time they're out there in the election season telling us that they want to spend more on education and health care and the environment.

But the bottom line is this: The choices Congress will make this spring are fundamentally the choices that Americans will make this fall. What are our priorities? Will we maintain our commitment to fiscal discipline? In a larger sense, what is our vision? There is room in the vision I have outlined for the best ideas from both parties. When we have determined to do it, we have worked together—in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, which passed both Houses by big majorities from both parties; in the Welfare Reform Act of 1996, which passed both Houses by big majorities in both parties; in the fundamentally education budgets of 1998 and 1999, which passed both Houses by big majorities in both parties. We can do this, but we have to make up our mind to stay within the framework of what has served us so well for the last several years.

When I started, I quoted President Johnson, who said, "We should plan for tomorrow in the immediacy of the moment." And I told you that when he spoke those words in the early sixties, it was in the full flush of what was at that time the longest economic expansion in history.

In February, when we celebrated the longest economic expansion in history, I asked my economic team when the last longest expansion was. And they told me, it was '61 to '69. And I got to thinking about that. We tend to think about yesterday, I suppose, as we get older. But while I think we should keep focused on the future, we shouldn't forget the past.

There is a tendency, when you're in the middle of a boom like this, to think that you have to do nothing to shore it up, that it will last forever, and that there are relatively few consequences to whatever you decide to do or not to do. So indulge me just for a moment before I take your questions. And let me remind you of what happened to the last longest economic expansion in history.

Johnson was here, speaking to this group in the early sixties, about the time I graduated from high school in 1964. Unemployment was low; inflation was low; growth was high. Vietnam was somewhere in the outer range of our consciousness. No one really doubted that we would win the cold war because our ideas were superior and our values were superior, and no one expected the country to be rendered by that conflict. And at the time, we had a serious civil rights challenge, but most people believed then in the optimism of the moment that it would be solved in the Congress and in the courts in a peaceful manner.

A year later, we had Bloody Sunday in Selma. Two years later, we had riots in the street. Four years later, I was here in Washington, graduating from college 2 days after Robert Kennedy was killed, 2 months after Martin Luther King was killed, 9 weeks after Lyndon Johnson said he couldn't run for President anymore because the country was split right down the middle over the Vietnam war. And so we had a Presidential election with three candidates amidst all the turmoil of the moment, and in a few months, the longest economic expansion in American history was over.

If I seem insistent about this, it's because not as President, but as a citizen, I have waited for 35 years for my country to have the chance to build the future of its dreams for our children and to have the kind of positive role in the world I believe we can now have.

I have worked as hard as I can to turn the situation around and get us pointed in the right direction. And I just don't want us to do anything to squander this moment, as it was once squandered before in my youth.

We have a chance that none of us may ever see again in our lifetimes. And we have to make the most of it for our children.

Thank you very much.

N. Christian Anderson III. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President's time is very limited, but he has graciously agreed to take three questions. So, following our usual—well, I don't need to give you the rules, because I see who's at the microphones. So let's begin with Margaret [Margaret M. Sullivan, Buffalo News], please.

Possibility of Pardon

Q. Mr. President, first of all, as a New Yorker, although Chappaqua is a few miles from Buffalo, where I'm the editor of the Buffalo News, I wanted to say welcome to the neighborhood. [*Laughter*]

Yesterday Vice President Gore, before this group, answered a question about whether he would, if elected, use the power of the Presidency to pardon you in relation to the investigations being pursued by the independent prosecutor. He said you had said that you would not accept such a pardon by your successor. It turns out you didn't exactly say that yourself, not publicly. So we seem to have a rather public forum here. Would you request or accept such a pardon?

The President. Well, the answer is, I have no interest in it. I wouldn't ask for it. I don't think it would be necessary.

I think it's interesting that you would ask that question without going through the facts here. Let me remind you that there was a truly independent review of the whole Whitewater matter, which was concluded 4 years ago, in 1996, by a predominantly Republican law firm for the Resolution Trust Corporation that said neither my wife nor I did anything wrong.

If you want to know what's really been going on, you have a good book here, Mr. Toobin's book; you have the Joe Conason and Gene Lyons book, which explains how this all happened. There are independent counsels and then there are special counsels. The independent review was over in '96. So I won't be surprised by anything that happens. But I'm not interested in being pardoned.

We had—if you remember, during the House Judiciary Committee hearings, there were five prosecutors, former prosecutors, including two Republicans, who said that no prosecutor would even entertain bringing any kind of criminal charges against an ordinary citizen like this.

But there is something fundamentally changed in the last 7 years about how the counsels were appointed and who they were and what their priorities were. And no one has yet written the full story. I can imagine why you wouldn't—particularly given the way a lot of this has been covered.

But the answer is, no. I don't have any interest in that. I don't want one. And I am prepared to stand before any bar of justice I have to stand before. But I would like just once to see someone acknowledge the fact that this Whitewater thing was a lie and a fraud from the beginning and that most people with any responsibility over it have known it for years.

Next question.

Presidential Library

Q. Mr. President, Brian Stallcop from the Sun in Bremerton, Washington—over here in the middle. You spent the last several minutes talking about what I think you hope will be your legacy as President. And I wonder if you could think ahead 5 years from now, when you open your Presidential library and all the living Presidents are there with you. Will there be a wing in your Presidential library to your impeachment trial and to that whole era of your Presidency?

The President. Yes, we'll deal with it, and I will deal with it—we'll have to deal with it. It's an important part of it. But I have a slightly different take on it than many of you do or at least than the Washington media does. I made a terrible personal mistake. I think I have paid for it. I settled a lawsuit that I won. I won that lawsuit, remember. I won that lawsuit. I settled it anyway because of the political nature of the people that were reviewing it, and because—so I gave away half of my life's savings to settle

a lawsuit I had won because I wanted to go back to work being President. And we now know that the questions asked were asked in bad faith, because they knew the answer and they knew it had nothing to do with the lawsuit—something hardly anybody ever points out.

So I think I've paid quite a lot. I struggled very hard to save my relationship with my wife and my daughter. I have paid quite a lot.

But on the impeachment, let me tell you, I am proud of what we did there, because I think we saved the Constitution of the United States. I think—first of all, I had to defeat the Republican revolution in 1994, when they shut down the Government, and we beat back the contract on America. Then we had to beat it in the impeachment issue. Then we had to beat it when I vetoed the tax cut last year. Then the voters had their verdict in the 1998 election and in the 1996 election.

But as a political matter, you have no idea—I'm not ashamed of the fact that they impeached me. That was their decision, not mine. And it was wrong. As a matter of law, the Constitution, and history, it was wrong. And I am glad I didn't quit, and I'm glad we fought it. And the American people stuck with me, and I am profoundly grateful.

That has nothing to do with the fact that I made a terrible mistake, of which I am deeply regretful. But I think that an average, ordinary person reviewing the wreckage left in that would say that I paid for that. And I should have paid for it. We all pay for our mistakes.

But I'll deal with the impeachment. But you have to understand, I consider it one of the major chapters in my defeat of the revolution Mr. Gingrich led, that would have taken this country in a very different direction than it's going today and also would have changed the Constitution forever, in a way that would have been very destructive to the American people.

Elian Gonzalez

Q. Mr. President, Edward Seaton, the Manhattan, Kansas, Mercury. I want to turn to the news events of today. The Attorney General has set a 2 p.m. deadline for the Miami relatives to turn Elian Gonzalez over to his father. Is your administration prepared to send Federal marshals in if that happens?

The President. Well, first of all, let me say this. Attorney General Reno has done her best to try to resolve this in a peaceable way. This has been a very painful situation for her, personally, because she was the prosecuting attorney in Dade County for 12 years. She knows a lot of the people involved in this. And she went there to try to handle this personally. And she hopes, and I still hope, it won't come to that.

Since she's on-site and events are unfolding almost by the minute, I think I should let her address what we're going to do and when we're going to do it from the site. I think that's the best thing to do, because I haven't talked to her today about it.

Let me just say, I think the issue here for me is the rule of law. We have a system. The system has—if you don't think it's right, then you can say, well, we ought to change the laws. But we have a legal system, and it has been followed. And the decision that was made that Elian Gonzalez's father was a devoted and fit father and could proffer to speak for his son and, therefore, to make decisions for his minor son, was ratified in a district court and is now on appeal to a court of appeals. But none of the courts have granted any kind of interim relief which would justify opposition to the plain rule of law. So, to me, this case is about the rule of law.

I've done everything I could to stay out of it to avoid politicizing it. But I do believe that it is our responsibility to uphold the law, and we're doing our best to do that.

Constructive Criticism of the Press

Q. Mr. President, I'm Tom Koenninger, editor of the Columbian at Vancouver, Washington. This organization, ASNE, takes pride in receiving constructive criticism from its readers. As a reader of America's newspapers, I would like to offer you the opportunity now to provide your constructive criticism. And I'm speaking of newspaper and wire service coverage, not broadcast media.

The President. Well, the only difference in me and somebody writing a letter to the editor to give you constructive criticism is

that what I'll get from my constructive criticism is a bomb on the head. [*Laughter*] I know I'm not running for—I realize I'm not running for anything, but I'm not totally dumb here. [*Laughter*]

Q. Well, this is your last opportunity, though, to address us.

The President. No, it's not my last opportunity, it's just the last opportunity I'll have when anybody will pay any attention to me. [*Laughter*] It's ironic, you know, when I can say what I think and nobody will care anymore. [*Laughter*]

I think the most I should say—first of all, I think it's interesting—I think it's hard to run a newspaper today in an environment in which you're competing with television news, Internet news sources, radio news, and entertainment which abuts on the news, and all the lines are being blurred, both the technological lines and the categorical lines.

And I think the—but I think there is a special role for the old-fashioned newspaper in daily life, although I think it's interesting—the papers that are being made smaller or more readable or also put on the net and all that—I think that's very good. I think you ought to maximize that.

But it seems to me that one of the things that you have to fight against—I've often felt happened here over the last 7 years—is sort of getting stuck in a place that amplifies the sensational and the emotional, which carves out a certain market share in the short run, but may undermine the fundamental and the purpose of a newspaper over the long run.

And I think that—but I think that it's very hard—I mean, I think it's really quite challenging to run a good, old-fashioned newspaper, where you've got the news stories on the front page, and the editorial opinion on the editorial page, and you don't really mix the two, and you don't try to get caught up in sort of a given point of view on a big story, and then have to keep grinding it and pushing it, no matter what, because that's what's driving the place you've marked out for yourself in an increasingly competitive market.

I don't know what the answer to that is. But I believe—and I'm an old-fashioned person—I don't even—I hate to say this, it will get me in trouble with the networks because—and I need the exposure still. [*Laughter*] But because of my schedule, usually my only source of news is the newspaper. I'm sort of a troglodyte media person, I actually sit down and read the papers. Normally I'm not home at the time of the evening news, but I watch CNN a lot because I can get it anytime of the day or night.

But I have thought about their dilemma. The networks also have real challenges. And I think this whole communications revolution, which I think on balance is an exceedingly positive thing, runs the risk of giving people more information than they have ever had before without adequate perspective or framework or balance or background or back-and-forth.

I still think the editorial page and the op-ed pages of newspapers, where the editorial pages may be consistent and forthright, but you've got people on the other pages with different opinions or even writing about subjects different from the ones that the editors have time to write editorials about—I think that is a great thing. I think it's very helpful.

The thing I worry most about is that people will have all the information in the world; they won't have any way of evaluating whether it's true or false, A; and B, even if it's true, how to put it in proper perspective. That's what I consider to be the single most significant challenge presented to all of you by the explosion of media outlets and competitive alternatives in the information age.

On balance, I think it's a plus. And people are smart, and they nearly always get it right, which is why our democracy's around here after over 200 years. They nearly always kind of get it right if they have enough time. But still, you've got—how much will it cost your paper?

I'll just give you an example. When the full sequencing of the human genome is announced in a few months, how much will it cost you to run a long series on exactly what that is, what its implications might be, how it came to be, and where we're going from here? And how many people have to read it for it to have been worth the investment? What opportunity costs did you forgo? And then when things start to happen, spinning out of the human genome, how are you going to deal with that? That's just one example.

I think newspapers actually are going to become more and more important again, because so much of what people will have to absorb about the new century will be advances in science and technology, that it's very hard to put into the time constraints of an evening news program. And I think they will have all kinds of political and social ramifications as they unfold. So I think in a funny way, even if you feel beleaguered now, the nature of what is unfolding may make newspapers and old-fashioned newspaper work more important in the next few years.

But I think the information revolution and the sort of changes in the media structure have presented you with a lot of very difficult challenges. And if I were you, rather than asking me what my criticism is, I'd sit around and I'd really try to have an organized, honest discussion about how the fundamental purpose of the newspaper can be maintained, and you can still make enough money to stay afloat. Because somebody needs to organize and give perspective to all this information and opinions and all the stuff we're flooded with. I think it's very, very important.

I wish I were in your position. I wish I could do it, because I've thought about many times how hard it is for you. But I wish you well, because it's really important. People need more than facts. They need to know the facts are accurate, and they need to understand in some perspective about what it means and where it's all going.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Anderson. Mr. President, on behalf of all of these troglodytes, thank you so very much. One more little bit of trivia, and that is that every year you have been in this country, you have come to this convention during your 8 years in office. We're very grateful for that and grateful for the time you've spent with us today.

Please stay in your places while the President leaves. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:45 a.m. in the Grand Ballroom at the J.W. Marriott Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to N. Christian Anderson III, president, American Society of Newspaper Editors; independent counsel Robert W. Ray; authors Jeffrey Toobin, Joe Conason, and Gene Lyons; Juan Miguel Gonzalez, father of Elian Gonzalez; and former Speaker of the House of Representatives Newt Gingrich.

Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Dinner

April 13, 2000

Thank you. Thank you very much, Senator Torricelli, Senator Inouye, Senator Akaka, Senator Johnson, ladies and gentlemen. I think I would like to begin by thanking Jane for that beautiful prayer and for agreeing to serve on the Indian Arts Board recently; thank you very much. And I would like to thank all of you for your presence here and your support for our Senators and our Senate candidates.

I don't know whether Bob Torricelli is right about what other people will remember as defining moments of my administration, but I certainly will remember my trip to Pine Ridge, and I'm very much looking forward to being at Ship Rock on Monday afternoon with Kelsey Begaye. Thank you for being there with us in continuing our efforts to bring empowerment and opportunity to Native Americans. We will be there Monday to talk about closing the digital divide, how to bring the power of the computer to lift people up rather than keep them down, in education and economic development and health care and so many other ways.

I have to tell you that my association with the Native American tribes of our country has been one of the most important aspects of my Presidency, to me. I always thought that the United States had something—to put it politely—less than a nation-to-nation relationship, and that sometimes, that the existence of that relationship had been used by the United States to run from our own responsibilities for the health, the welfare, the future of the Native American children and the people of our country.

And for 7 years and 3 months now, I've done everything I knew how to do to increase economic opportunity, to increase the quality of health care, to increase the support for the educational institutions, and, particularly in the last couple of years, to try to increase not only the voice and the respect for the tribal people and your leaders in our National