

Safety Action Plan with the goal of eliminating illnesses from *Salmonella Enteritidis* in eggs. Additionally, we launched a high-tech early warning system called PulseNet that uses DNA-fingerprinting techniques to help us better detect and prevent outbreaks of foodborne illness.

These and other efforts have helped to make meaningful improvements in food safety. But we can do even more. Millions of Americans get sick from eating contaminated food each year. With changing patterns of food production and consumption, we must continue to aggressively meet the food safety challenges of the 21st century.

One challenge we must address immediately is that of *Listeria monocytogenes*, which can cause a severe infection called listeriosis. Listeriosis is a significant public health concern, and is especially lethal, resulting in death in about 20 percent of cases. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that 2,518 persons become ill and 504 persons die each year from listeriosis. Pregnant women with listeriosis can pass the infection on to their unborn children, potentially resulting in severe illness or death to the fetus or newborn infant. Others at high risk for severe disease or death are the elderly and those with weakened immune systems. Ready-to-eat food products, such as lunch meats, smoked fish, certain types of soft cheeses, and hot dogs, are among the foods most commonly associated with food-related illness from *Listeria*. To address this serious public health problem, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), in cooperation with the Department of Agriculture (USDA), is conducting a risk assessment on *Listeria monocytogenes* to determine which foods warrant further preventive measures. This risk assessment will be completed shortly, and I believe we must build on what is already being done to target this deadly organism.

My Administration's goal—articulated in our Healthy People 2010 plan—is to cut the number of illnesses caused by *Listeria* in half by 2010, from 0.5 cases to 0.25 cases per 100,000. To meet and exceed this goal, I hereby direct you, in cooperation and consultation with the Council and relevant Federal agencies, to report back to me within

120 days on the aggressive steps you will take to significantly reduce the risk of illness and death by *Listeria monocytogenes* ready-to-eat foods. In particular, within this time period, I direct the Secretary of Agriculture to complete proposed regulations that include any appropriate microbiological testing and other industry measures to: 1) prevent cross-contamination in the processing environment; 2) ensure that the processing of ready-to-eat products meets appropriate standards; and 3) ensure that such products are safe throughout their shelf life. In addition, I direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services, within this time frame, to develop an action plan identifying additional steps necessary to reduce *Listeria monocytogenes* contamination. This plan should include consideration of control measures for at-risk foods and the publication of guidance for processors, retailers, and food service facilities. Finally, you should consider whether enhanced labeling is necessary to provide additional safeguards for consumers. These actions should be based in science and should establish the foundation for a comprehensive approach that significantly reduces the opportunity for *Listeria* product contamination and *Listeria*-related illnesses to occur. All these actions, taken together, should allow us to achieve our Healthy People Goal by 2005 rather than 2010.

These steps will continue to ensure the safety of America's food supply and will help protect some of the Nation's most vulnerable populations from foodborne illness.

**William J. Clinton**

NOTE: This memorandum was embargoed for release by the Office of the Press Secretary until 10:06 a.m. on May 6.

### **Remarks on Departure for Fayetteville, Arkansas, and an Exchange With Reporters**

*May 6, 2000*

### **Northern Ireland Peace Process**

**The President.** I would just like to make a brief statement about the acceptance by the IRA of the proposals by Prime Ministers Blair and Ahern. This is a very good day for

the people of Northern Ireland. It is a truly historic step. For the first time, the IRA is clearly committed to decommissioning and a process to get there. I applaud that. I want to thank the Prime Ministers and Gerry Adams and everyone else who was involved in this. But this is a very good day.

**Q.** Do you think it will stick?

**The President.** Well, I do. Of course, the Unionists still have to formally accept it, but this idea of storing the weapons and having the storage site monitored, I think, is a way for both of them to achieve their previously stated objectives, both sides. So it's a very, very good day.

**Q.** Weren't we at this point once before, sir?

**The President.** No, we never got this far on the details of the implementation. We always knew, I think, that the sequencing of decommissioning and the full implementation of the accords by both sides and by the British Government would be a problem. And that's really what this last year-plus has been about. For all of us who've worked on it, this is a very happy.

But I really appreciate the work done by Prime Minister Blair and Prime Minister Ahern and the fact that the IRA has accepted it, and the Sinn Fein has obviously had a role in that. So this is a big step. And they've reached out to the Unionists now. Of course, I hope it will be fully accepted by all parties, and we can get the Government back up and go on.

#### **Senate Opposition to the Nomination of Enrique Moreno**

**Q.** Why do you think the two Texas Senators—did they reject your nominee because he's Hispanic, Mexican-American?

**The President.** There are only two conceivable alternatives, I think. That or they just don't want to confirm any judges unless they're rightwing ideologists. I mean, this man had unbelievable academic credentials. He was endorsed by every conceivable professional association. He was consistent with the judges I've appointed for over 7 years now, highly qualified and clearly in the mainstream of the American judiciary.

But you know, they like judges that are more results oriented, and it may be that they

just want to use this opportunity to try to seize control of the judiciary again. For them, it's all too often a political arm of the Government. But to do this to a Hispanic judge from Texas, who has made himself into an excellent lawyer and a superbly qualified person is just unconscionable. I mean, it's unbelievable.

If their committee didn't find this man qualified, I'd certainly be interested in knowing what the criteria of their committee is.

**Q.** But you're not charging that two U.S. Senators are prejudiced against Hispanics, are you?

**The President.** No, I'm saying that—you have to ask them, and people can draw their own conclusions. They may or may not be. But since he's clearly well-qualified and everybody virtually in the world with an opinion has endorsed him, if it's not that, it's that they want somebody who's more politically malleable.

As I said, all you have to do is look at the way so many of their judges perform. They're highly results oriented when they appoint judges. I just try to appoint people I thought would be fair and interpret the law and be balanced and represent this country. So it might be politics and ideology. But it's a terrible, terrible day for the Hispanic community and for the idea of fairness in the judiciary.

**Q.** What's this going to do—[inaudible]—election, Mr. President?

**The President.** I don't know. I don't have a comment on that. I'd rather—to me this is—I made this appointment; this man was qualified on the merits, superbly qualified. And he's from a State with a huge Hispanic population and a big caseload, and he deserved a hearing, and he deserved to be confirmed. I think it's just disgraceful.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 12:15 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland; Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams; and Enrique Moreno, nominee, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

**Statement on Opposition in the Senate to the Nomination of Enrique Moreno**

*May 6, 2000*

Senators Gramm and Hutchison announced yesterday that they opposed the confirmation of Enrique Moreno, my nominee for a Texas vacancy on the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. Their claim that he lacks the necessary experience to serve on the fifth circuit is unconscionable. The American Bar Association, which has rated judicial nominees for Republican and Democratic Presidents since the Eisenhower administration, unanimously gave Moreno their highest rating. The son of Mexican-American immigrants and a graduate of Harvard Law School, Moreno was rated one of the top three trial attorneys in El Paso by State judges.

In rejecting Moreno's candidacy, the Texas Senators have ignored the strong endorsement of the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Hispanic National Bar Association, and local law enforcement officials. This is not the first time that the Texas Senators have rejected an exceptional Hispanic candidate for this seat, which has been vacant for more than 3 years. Jorge Rangel was forced to withdraw after the Texas Senators refused to allow action on his nomination. By blocking qualified judicial nominees, Gramm and Hutchison have exacerbated the vacancy crisis on the fifth circuit. Their unjustifiable opposition to Enrique Moreno—an exceptionally well-qualified Hispanic judicial nominee—must not be allowed to stand.

**Statement on the Northern Ireland Peace Process**

*May 6, 2000*

I want to join Prime Ministers Blair and Ahern in welcoming the IRA's commitment to initiate a process that will completely and verifiably put arms beyond use and its decision to resume contact with the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning. This is a significant step toward realizing the full promise of the Good Friday ac-

cord. I urge the loyalist paramilitaries to do the same.

I express appreciation to Martti Ahtisaari and Cyril Ramaphosa for their willingness to take part in confidence-building measures involving third party inspection of IRA weapons dumps. I have great confidence in their ability to contribute to this important task.

These developments offer renewed hope to the people of Northern Ireland that politics will once and for all be pursued through exclusively political means. The United States remains ready to assist this process in any way we can.

NOTE: In his statement, the President referred to Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland; former President Martti Ahtisaari of Finland; and former Secretary-General Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa's African National Congress.

**Remarks at a Reception for Hillary Clinton in Little Rock, Arkansas**

*May 7, 2000*

Thank you very much. Vic, thank you for being here. Marion, thank you for being here. Vic Snyder was one of the bravest people in the Arkansas State Senate when I was Governor. When he ran for Congress, I told Hillary, I said, "I'm afraid he can't get elected. He's got too much guts. He'll say what he thinks about everything." But he got elected, and he got reelected. And I thank—when Marion Berry ran for Congress after doing a stint in our administration in the Agriculture Department, Dale and David and I really felt that he was entitled to be in Congress, almost as a conciliation prize for having hosted us at the coon supper in Gillette all those years. Anybody who could get us to eat coon for 10 or 15 years in a row should be given a seat in Congress, just as a matter, of course. But I thank them so much.

The other night when I was home, a couple of weeks ago—or maybe it was last week—to dedicate the law school here to Bill Bowen and to do the event in honor of our friend, Daisy Bates, Dale and David and I went to dinner alone, just the three of us. And we needed adult supervision. [*Laughter*]