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we're following through on that commitment in this bill that I will soon sign, the Oceans Act of 2000, legislation to help chart a 21st century strategy for the protection and sustainable use of our oceans and coasts.

The legislation establishes a national Commission to improve our stewardship of the sea. Above all, this bill is about setting a vision to ensure that our beaches are clean, our oceans are protected, our coastal economies remain strong.

We know that when we protect our oceans, we're protecting our future. It is now time to do that. It's been more than 30 years since the last oceans commission, the Stratton Commission, laid the foundation for Federal oceans policy, which led to the creation of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. But the pressures on our oceans and coasts continue to mount. Americans continue to be drawn to the oceans. More than half our citizens live in a coastal area. Nearly half of all new development occurs along the coast. But we know better than ever that oceans have limits. They can be overfished, overpolluted. Poisonous runoff from the Mississippi River alone has created a dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico that is almost as large now as the entire State of Massachusetts.

These are some of the challenges to be addressed by the new Commission. But they will also look for new opportunities in our oceans, exploring ways we can all benefit from new technologies and discoveries. For example, in recent years, we've learned that blood from the horseshoe crab provides a vital antibacterial agent. And a potential anticancer drug may come from a deep-sea sponge. This is just the beginning.

There's no better place to sign this legislation than here, because of the longstanding link to the sea the people of Massachusetts have. The maritime tradition stretches back over 300 years. Marine research was pioneered in nearby Woods Hole starting in the 1870's. Now we build on that proud tradition as we launch a 21st century course for our oceans policy.

President Kennedy once said, "We are tied to the ocean. And when we go back to the sea, whether it is to sail or to watch it, we're going back from whence we came." By going back from whence we came, we prepare a better future for our children. This is a good day for that, and I'm glad it's happening here.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:41 a.m. at the U.S. Coast Guard Station at West Chop Lighthouse. In his remarks, he referred to actor Ted Danson, president and cofounder, American Oceans Campaign, and his wife, actress Mary Steenburgen; and move producer/director Steven Spielberg. S. 2327, approved August 7, was assigned Public Law No. 106–256.

Exchange With Reporters in Martha's Vineyard

August 7, 2000

Senator Joseph I. Lieberman

Q. What do you make of Gore's selection of Senator Lieberman?

The President. Well, first of all, this is a very important choice, and the Vice President is going to make his announcement tomorrow, so I don't want to comment on that. But I'll be glad to tell you what I think of Senator Lieberman. He's been a friend of mine for 30 years. I supported him when I was a law student at Yale, and he was running for the State Senate—he wasn't even 30 years old then—and I think he's one of the most outstanding people in public life.

I've worked with him for 15 years or more through the Democratic Leadership Council. He's a bold thinker. He's always full of new ideas, and he's supported the changes that we've made over the last 8 years that have turned America around and moved America forward. I think he's just an extraordinary guy. I like him. I know his family. I like his family members, whom I know. I just think he's an amazing person.

And we've talked a lot over the years about the Middle East peace process and every conceivable domestic issue. He's an extraordinary, extraordinary human being, as well as a longtime friend of mine. So I think he's terrific.

I think that the important thing now is—I know you'll will have a lot of questions you want to ask me and everybody else, but I'd rather not say anything else today. Let's let the Vice President make his announcement

tomorrow, and then I'll be glad to answer any other questions you have.

But I think right now, you just need to know that I think he's wonderful, and he's been a wonderful friend to me, and he's been great for America these last 8 years with what he's done in the Senate. And he's been great for our party with what he's done through the Democratic Leadership Council. So I'm very happy about Joe Lieberman. But I think we ought to let the announcement be made by the Vice President. You guys ask the questions later. I'll be ready to answer all the questions.

NOTE: The exchange began at noon at the U.S. Coast Guard Station at West Chop Lighthouse. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Statement on Signing the Oceans Act of 2000

August 7, 2000

Today, I am pleased to approve S. 2327, the "Oceans Act of 2000." This legislation would establish a "Commission on Ocean Policy," to make recommendations to the President and the Congress for a coordinated and comprehensive national ocean policy.

The United States is an ocean nation. Our ocean territory of over 4 million square miles is the largest and richest in the world. Over thirty years have passed since the Stratton Commission conducted a comprehensive examination of our Nation's ocean and coastal resources. The work of that Commission led to many significant achievements in the early 1970s, including enactment of major legislation to protect the oceans and coastal areas and creation of the Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. It is appropriate, especially in the wake of the many recent scientific and technological advancements and pressures facing the oceans and our coasts, to re-examine our Nation's relationship to the sea.

My Administration has undertaken several initiatives that will support the work of the Commission. In 1998, I, along with Vice President Gore and the First Lady, participated in the first-ever National Ocean Conference, which was attended by over 500 individuals representing all sectors of the ocean community, from government to industry, science to conservation. At that conference, I called on the Congress to create an oceans commission to help forge a new strategy to preserve the incomparable natural resources of our oceans and seas. The Vice President and I launched a series of new steps to restore coral reefs, rebuild marine fisheries, preserve freedom of the seas, and further explore the ocean. My Administration's Oceans Report Task Force is currently implementing several initiatives related to ocean exploration, coral reef protection, safe navigation, environmentally sound and economically viable aquaculture, improved fisheries enforcement, and the establishment of an international observation network to better understand the role of oceans in climate. The Task Force will be beneficial to the Commission as it begins its important work next year.

My Administration's Coral Reef Task Force has produced a National Action Plan to protect our Nation's precious corals and, earlier this year, I directed Federal agencies to establish an integrated national system of Marine Protected Areas. Most recently, I announced an Ocean Exploration initiative to develop a national ocean exploration strategy and work toward solving some of the mysteries of the ocean through the development of new technologies and newly discovered organisms with medical and commercial potential.

In approving this measure, I note that section 4(a) states that the President "shall submit to Congress a statement of proposals to implement or respond to the Commission's recommendations" concerning a national ocean policy, which may include recommendations for changes to Federal law. The Recommendations Clause of the Constitution provides that the President "shall from time to time . . . recommend to [the Congress'] Consideration such Measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient," U.S. Const. Art. II, § 3. That Clause protects the President's authority to formulate and