

to thank you for all the support you gave to Mexico in difficult times.

When we were in crisis, we also got and saw the hand of a friend. And so that's something that we recognize in Mexico and I personally recognize and thank you for in the name of all Mexicans.

Mexican Democracy

Q. Is Mexico considered a democracy example to *America Latina*?

President Clinton. Considered an example?

Q. Yes, to *America Latina*?

President Clinton. I think that what happened in Mexico is very impressive. I mean, we had a genuine, competitive, democratic election. And I think it's an example to people who are friends of freedom everywhere in the world.

Immigration Policy

Q. President Clinton, excuse me—President-elect Fox has brought up a whole bunch of new ideas on the relationship between Mexico and the United States, including plans concerning the border immigration. Are you going to discuss these in full length?

President Clinton. Well, I certainly hope so. I want to hear them. Obviously, we have borders, and we have laws that apply to them, and we have to apply them, and so do the Mexicans. But I think over the long run, our countries will become more interdependent.

If you just look at what's happened in the relationship between the United States and Mexico since NAFTA, President-elect Fox had mentioned—made a reference to the assistance the United States gave to Mexico when they had a serious financial crisis. But I always like to remind the American people that our Mexican neighbors paid their loan back ahead of time and in the best possible way. They were good neighbors. We did the right thing. And everything that has happened there has validated the commitment of every genuine friend of an equal partnership in our country.

I think over time, you will see growing interdependence in our hemisphere. And I think the Canadians will be a part of that, and I very much hope our friends in Central America and South America and the Carib-

bean will be part of that. It will be the way of the world. And we will all have to deal with the enemies of organized society and the nation-state together, as well as taking advantage of all these opportunities. I regret that I won't be around for a lot of it. But I think it's a good thing.

Q. [*Inaudible*]*—*an idea to increase the number of legal visas for Mexico, up to a quarter of a million visas, in exchange for more cooperation and enforcement on the Mexican side to stop illegal immigration from coming to the U.S. How do you see that? Is that doable?

President Clinton. Well, I want to talk to him about it. I think if you look at the United States, I believe we have the most generous immigration policy in the world. And as you know, I've been a very strong supporter of that. We were just talking on the way out about the various kinds of people that are in our administration and where they're from, and America has been made a better country because of that. But I want to talk about the details. Look, we just met. We have to go talk.

Do you want to say anything to him?

Q. Did you talk about border issues with Vice President Gore, and what did he say, Vice President Gore?

President-elect Fox. I will have a press conference later for that meeting.

[*At this point, a question was asked and answered in Spanish, and no translation was provided.*]

President Clinton. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:34 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Proclamation 7333—Minority Enterprise Development Week, 2000

August 24, 2000

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Today, America is enjoying the longest economic expansion in our history, with 22

million new jobs created since my Administration took office in 1993 and the lowest unemployment and inflation rates in more than 30 years. The American people are looking to the future with renewed hope and optimism, eager to embrace the exciting opportunities and meet the new challenges of a dynamic and evolving global marketplace.

If we are to extend this remarkable period of growth and sustain our leadership of the world economy, we must use this time of extraordinary prosperity to ensure that every citizen of our Nation plays a role in our economic growth and benefits from its rewards. One of the surest means of achieving that goal is to promote the full inclusion of minority enterprises in the mainstream of our economy.

My Administration has encouraged the growth and success of minority businesses by ensuring their participation in Government procurement; introducing the New Markets Initiative to bring jobs and capital to America's underserved communities; and strengthening the Community Reinvestment Act. Over the last 8 years, the Small Business Administration has guaranteed \$18 billion in loans to more than 80,000 minority-owned firms. And the Department of Commerce's Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) has assisted more than 430,000 minority-owned businesses with start-up and expansion financing. At Minority Business Development Centers across the country, the MBDA also assists minority clients by providing a variety of business services, including the preparation of business plans, market research and development, financial counseling, and bid preparation.

All Americans stand to benefit from the success of our minority entrepreneurs. With energy and determination, these hard-working men and women create jobs, attract investment, bolster pride, and generate revenue in communities across our Nation. People of different races, people of diverse ethnic backgrounds, people with disabilities—all have skills, new ideas, and fresh perspectives to bring to the marketplace. Minority entrepreneurs have unique contributions to make to our economy and the talent and imagination to produce goods and services

that meet the needs of their fellow Americans and of consumers around the world.

The unprecedented strength of America's free enterprise system demonstrates that when people have access to the tools and opportunities they need, there is no limit to what they can achieve. During Minority Enterprise Development Week, let us reaffirm our national commitment to equality in the economic as well as the civic life of our Nation by providing minority entrepreneurs around the country with an equal opportunity to use their abilities, creativity, and motivation to move our Nation forward. By doing so, we will help preserve America's leadership in the global economy.

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 September 24 through September 30, 2000, as Minority Enterprise Development Week. I call on all Americans to join together with minority entrepreneurs across the country in appropriate observances.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fourth day of August, in the year of our Lord two thousand, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fifth.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., August 28, 2000]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on August 29.

Statement on Action To Support Firefighters Combating Wildfires

August 25, 2000

The wildfire season this year is one of the worst our Nation has ever witnessed. We have marshaled our Federal resources so that the men and women fighting these blazes will have the tools they need to safely and effectively combat the spread of wildfires throughout the United States. Our Federal firefighters and management personnel are