

I want to thank the National Turkey Federation for once again donating this year's tom turkey. This is the eighth I've had the privilege to meet and set free in the Rose Garden. [Laughter]

I'm told that Jerry, the turkey, traveled all the way here from Wisconsin, proving that the Cheese State is about more than good cheese. It's also, I might add, about a very well-behaved turkey. [Laughter]

Tomorrow we will celebrate the first Thanksgiving of the new millennium and the last one of our Presidency. As Hillary and Chelsea and I sit down to our dinner, we will give special thanks for the privilege it has been to live here and to serve for the last 8 years.

It's still a bit of a mystery when exactly the first Thanksgiving was actually held. Some say it was in 1513, when Ponce de Leon landed in Florida. But the expert opinions about that are divided, and a recount is still underway down there. [Laughter] Others say it occurred in 1541, when Francisco Vasquez de Coronado arrived on the Texas panhandle. Some conspiracy theorists say neither of those are true.

The most popular story, of course, and the one all of us learned as kids, is that Native Americans and Pilgrims shared a feast of thanks to celebrate their first harvest in 1621, soon after the Pilgrims arrived in Plymouth, Massachusetts. It was a famous meal of maize, squash, and venison and lasted 3 whole days. Now, that would take a lot of turkey.

But no matter what its roots, Thanksgiving is a tradition that has been celebrated in this country since our beginning. George Washington was the first President to declare a national day of thanks, in 1789. And Abraham Lincoln made the tradition a permanent one in 1863, in the darkest days of the Civil War, because he recognized, as he put it, "the blessings of fruitful years and healthful skies."

The times have changed, but the message hasn't: To give thanks for all God's blessings, for our strong families, our spirited communities, and the good fortune of living in our country's most prosperous and peaceful time.

I am profoundly grateful on this Thanksgiving that we have now more than 22 million

new jobs, poverty and unemployment at record lows, and the highest homeownership in history. The American people worked hard for these results, and I hope they're thankful for them as well.

We should also be grateful for the strength of our democracy and the freedom we enjoy, thanks to the courage and patriotism of our men and women in uniform and the strength and abiding power of the Constitution and the rule of law.

As we gather around our dinner tables with family and friends and celebrate our great bounty, we must not forget, also, those who will be hungry this holiday season. That's why it is so important that all Americans, like the young people here today, not only give thanks but give something back to their communities to help those who are less fortunate than themselves.

Almost 50 years ago, President Truman began the tradition of keeping at least one turkey off the Thanksgiving dinner table. And I am very pleased to follow in his footsteps and to hereby officially pardon this turkey in order that he be sent to the petting zoo in Fairfax County, Virginia, to live his remaining days in peace and happiness making children happier, if not more peaceful.

Thank you, and Happy Thanksgiving. Let's bring the turkey up.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:20 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jerry Jerome, chairman, and Stuart Proctor, Jr., president, National Turkey Federation. The President also referred to Kidwell Farm at Frying Pan Park in Fairfax County, VA, future home of the turkey.

Remarks at the Capital Area Food Bank and an Exchange With Reporters

November 22, 2000

The President. First of all, I want to thank Secretary Glickman and all the people that he mentioned for the work that they've done that he discussed today. And I want to say a special word of appreciation to Lynn Brantley. Thank you for your kind comments, but actually, the District of Columbia could

better do without me than you. You have been great, and I thank you so much for everything you have done. This lady has been working on hunger issues since she marched with Dr. King. She's been at it a long time, and she's still a young lady. *[Laughter]* So she's got a long way to go, and we thank her.

I want to thank the wonderful DC Delegate, Eleanor Holmes Norton, and DC City Council chair Linda Cropp and Vincent Orange, Ward 5 councilmember. And I want to say a special word of appreciation—this may be my last public chance to do it—to Representative Tony Hall from Ohio, who, for years and years and years, when it was popular and when no one paid attention, has been the number one opponent of hunger in the United States and around the world in the entire United States Congress. Thank you, Tony Hall, for everything you have done. Thank you.

I also want to point out that we have some participation here from one of my favorite accomplishments as President, the establishment of AmeriCorps, the national service corps. We have AmeriCorps volunteers, and I think we even have some alumni here. And I want to acknowledge Senator Harris Wofford, the director of the Corporation for National Service, and thank him for all that AmeriCorps has done, including this project and their participation here over the last 8 years. Thank you, sir.

I also want to say appreciations, thanks to all the people that are working here who let me work with them. The folks in the back were tolerant when I couldn't remember what box I was supposed to put which item of food in. *[Laughter]* And the young people there were tolerant when I couldn't remember how many cans of what I was supposed to put in the box. And we got through it all right.

The students are from Garfield Terrace. And I think as we prepare our own Thanksgivings, the people in our country should give thanks for people like all these volunteers here, young and old and those in the middle, who keep the spirit of Thanksgiving alive every day by giving to others. And I thank them. This is a great lesson for these young people to learn early in life, and I hope

they'll keep it up. Let's give them a big hand. *[Applause]* Thank you.

I always try to do some community service at Thanksgiving to highlight something good that's going on in our community, in our country. This year I wanted to come here because I think it's too easy for Americans to forget, when we have the strongest economy in our history and we've had the biggest drop in child poverty in 34 years and the lowest overall poverty rate in 20 years—that all sounds really good, and it is really good. It's good that we've got 22 million new jobs. It's good that all sectors of the economy have their incomes going up, from the lowest fifth to the top fifth and everybody in between. It's all really good. But this is a very big country, and it's very important at Thanksgiving that we not forget that in the midst of all of our plenty and all of our prosperity, there are still Americans of all ages who have trouble getting enough decent food to eat every single day. And a lot of Americans do not know that.

I hope by coming here, one of the things that will happen—and Secretary Glickman mentioned it earlier—is that more Americans will be aware of this and will support this institution or their local food bank, wherever they live, or their local religious institutions or whoever else is involved in every community. There's somebody in every community trying to feed people that don't have enough food, and they need help in getting the food.

And so that's the main reason I wanted to come here today. We see these people who don't have enough to eat sometimes living on the street. But we don't see them if they're senior citizens on very small fixed incomes. We don't see them sometimes if they're working families getting by on the minimum wage with more kids than can live on a minimum wage. By the way, it's another argument for raising the minimum wage. We've got one more chance to do that when the Congress comes back in December. And a shockingly high number of people who don't have enough to eat are kids.

As Lynn said a moment ago—I want to reemphasize it because somebody might have missed what she said—one in three Washington, DC, children, the Capital of the country that has the strongest economy in

the world, lives every single day at some risk of going to bed hungry. One in three in the Capital of the country with the best economy in the world, with the best economy we've ever had, is at risk of going to bed hungry at night.

The Capital Area Food Bank helps to right that wrong by distributing 20 million pounds of food a year to community kitchens, children's programs, and other emergency feeding centers. How many people—did you say you had over 750 groups that come here to get food? Around the Nation, a network of private organizations, religious groups, and civic-minded individuals are doing the same thing, just like our friends from Giant Food here are helping.

Now, this commitment, this grassroots citizens commitment to fighting hunger, is a great national treasure for us. The challenge for people like us in Government is to find ways to work with community groups and businesses and farmers to end hunger in America, and not just on Thanksgiving or Christmas but every day. And we need citizen help there, as well.

Secretary Glickman talked about our community food security initiative and the progress we've made, and I really thank him for his personal leadership and commitment. Soon after I named him Agriculture Secretary, Dan told me about a program he'd started in his home State in Kansas to collect food that would otherwise be wasted and pass it on. He told me then, and he just whispered in my ear again today, one of his—he wants to make sure I remember this, so he said it again—that our country loses about 96 billion—that's "b," not million, billion—pounds of food a year that could be consumed, but instead it's thrown out or allowed to spoil. So we established a program that allows Federal agencies to send excess food to food banks like this one. In 10 agencies and the United States House of Representatives—thank you, Tony and Eleanor—and several local military bases are now taking part in this.

But now we've got to meet the longer term challenge, to make sure low-income Americans and seniors get the food at affordable prices they need in the neighborhoods where they live. This is a real problem for people

in inner cities and in rural areas, where more than 20 percent of the stores carry no fresh produce at all, or there simply aren't any stores at all. It's a tragedy for children who especially need vitamins when they're growing up and for older people who need fruits and vegetables to fight diseases like diabetes and hypertension.

So today I'm going to announce three new initiatives that will at least help to change that and will help America's small farmers find new markets for their produce.

First, we're going to make available \$10 million in grants to help seniors take advantage of farmers markets. There are farmers markets all over this country that offer good produce at affordable prices, but you can't take food stamps to them. And so we've asked the States and the Indian tribal governments to apply to the Department of Agriculture by December the 1st to use the funding to create coupons that will allow as many as a half-million seniors on limited incomes to shop directly at farmers markets or buy from local farms directly. And when seniors and low-income people are able to purchase fresh local produce, their health improves and so does the health of the local farm economy.

Capital City Food Bank has demonstrated that here by starting the Anacostia farmers market, which I imagine a lot of you are familiar with, and bringing local growers to Southeast, DC, as well as being one of only four farmers markets in the Nation to accept food stamps. That's why we've got to do this coupon thing, because most of them don't.

Second, the Department of Agriculture will spend \$200 million more next year to buy fruits and vegetables and donate them to community kitchens, schools, and other emergency feeding centers. That means millions more healthy snacks in senior centers, fresh vegetables in school lunches, and full shelves at the Capital City Food Bank and others like it across our country.

Third, we're going to spend about \$2½ million in new community food project grants to 16 nonprofits in 13 States to help build community gardens at public schools and in vacant lots. They'll then fund training in gardening, nutrition, and food preparation

for young people to help create farmers markets in underserved areas, by using land that's out there in communities and towns now to let people grow some food that can either be consumed or sold.

Now, all these initiatives are good for our seniors, our working families, our kids, and our farmers. They will build a direct connection between people who grow food and people who need it. They will take another step toward ensuring that, in this land of plenty, no child—no American—should go to bed hungry.

That ought to be a national goal. It ought to transcend political parties, race, age, and region. But there are people in cities and little country towns, on Indian reservations, who are hungry. And I will say again: If we—I know I have said this so many times about so many of our problems, but if you take this problem—if we cannot deal with this now, when we have the strongest economy in our history, the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, the highest work force participation in our history, and at least a manageable number of people struggling with this, when are we ever going to deal with it?

So, at this Thanksgiving, we should all be thankful for our blessings. We should all look around at people who need help and try to give them a little. But we ought to make a commitment to deal with this systematically. If Lynn can spend a lifetime dealing with this, the rest of us ought to spend a year fixing it so that she'll have the resources she needs to actually meet the problem that's out there. I hope these steps will help. I'm sure they will, but there's more to be done.

Thank you, and Happy Thanksgiving.

**Republican Vice Presidential Candidate
Dick Cheney**

Q. Any thoughts on Secretary Cheney?

The President. Just that I hope he'll be well and fine. I just found out right before I came over here, and I'm going to go back to the White House now to either call him or write him a note. I hope he's fine.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:22 p.m. at the food bank's warehouse. In his remarks, he referred to Lynn Brantley, executive director, Capital Area Food Bank.

**Videotape Remarks on the
Observance of Ramadan**

November 22, 2000

It is a privilege to deliver again this year, on behalf of the American people, a message of friendship and respect to Muslims around the world as they begin the sacred month of Ramadan.

As America's 6-million-member Muslim community grows in numbers and prominence, Americans of every religious tradition are learning more about the origins and meaning of Islam—that on “the Night of Power,” the Angel Gabriel appeared to the Prophet Muhammad and revealed to him the first verses of the Koran; that the Koran declares that Ramadan was the month Allah's words were sent down and so should be spent in fasting.

The rigors undertaken by devout Muslims inspire respect for Islam among people of all faiths. And this can bring hope of greater understanding for good will. It can overflow old boundaries when wholehearted devotion to one's own faith is matched with a devout respect for the faith of others.

That is why we welcome Islam in America. It enriches our country with Islam's teachings of self-discipline, compassion, and commitment to family. It deepens America's respect for Muslims here at home and around the world, from Indonesia to Pakistan, the Middle East, and Africa.

We all had hoped that when this month's crescent Moon first appeared and the month of Ramadan was announced, fasting would begin in a time of peace. Yet, tragically, violence continues, and lives are being lost in the land that is holy to Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. For all Americans, these deaths are a source of great sorrow. The Muslim chaplain at Georgetown University, where I attended college, has told me of a verse in the Koran in which Allah tells us that He created nations and tribes so we may know one another, not so we might despise one another.

As the fasting of Ramadan begins, I pray people of all faiths may come to appreciate this precious wisdom of the Koran. And when next month's Moon appears and the Muslim