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The President. I think the Supreme Court decision, as I understand it, just said we ought to have an accurate count. And I think that's how the American people feel. And I know that's how the people in Florida must feel. I mean, if you went to vote, you would want your vote counted.

So I think that's all. I don't know how it's going to come out; I don't think anybody does. But I think when it's over, if we believe we've done everything we could do to get an accurate count, that will confer greater legitimacy on the result, whichever one of them wins. And when there is a final winner, then the rest of us ought to say, "Okay, let's give this new President a chance to do the job." That's what I'll do, and I'll do whatever I can to facilitate it.

Thank you.

NOTE: The exchange began at 12:50 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to President Vladimir Putin of Russia and American businessman Edmond Pope, who had been found guilty of espionage in Russia. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Statement on Russian President Vladimir Putin's Decision To Pardon Edmond Pope

December 9, 2000

I welcome President Putin's statement of his intent to pardon and release Edmond Pope. It will be a great relief to all Americans when Mr. Pope is finally freed and reunited with his family. We want to see him home and safe as soon as possible.

Proclamation 7386—Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week, 2000

December 9, 2000

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

On December 15, 1791, the Bill of Rights was ratified. A century and a half later, on December 10, 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Though separated by more than 150 years, these two documents are not dusty relics of a distant past—the ideas they so powerfully express continue to shape the destiny of individuals and nations across the globe.

Because the rights guaranteed by these documents, such as freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom from arbitrary arrest, are such an inherent part of America's history and national character, we at times may take them for granted. We sometimes forget that people elsewhere in the world are suffering, struggling, and even dying because these rights are denied them by oppressive governments. In countries such as Afghanistan, Burma, and the Sudan, men and women are harassed, arrested, and executed for worshipping according to their conscience. In many corners of the world, modern-day slavery still exists, with criminals trafficking in women and children and profiting from their servitude.

But there is hope for the future. Globalization and the revolution in information technology are helping to break down the former barriers of geography and official censorship. People fighting for human rights in disparate places around the world can talk to one another, learn from one another, and shine the light of public scrutiny on the dark corners of the world. Free nations can work in concert to combat human rights abuses, as the United States did last spring when we joined with the Philippines and more than 20 other Asian and Pacific nations to develop a regional action plan to combat trafficking in persons and protect trafficking victims.

The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., once said that the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice. We have seen the truth of that statement in the history of America, where each generation has strived to live up to our founders' vision of human dignity: that we are all created equal and that we all have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. But that statement holds true for the world's history as well; in our own lifetime, we have seen the fall of the Berlin Wall and the triumph of democracy in the Cold War. More people

live in freedom today than at any other time in history.

But that march toward freedom is not inevitable; it is advanced by individual acts of courage and will; by the strong voices of people refusing to be silenced by their oppressors; by the willingness of free people and free nations to defend the rights of men, women, and children. Heroes like Lech Walesa in Poland, Vaclav Havel in the Czech Republic, Nelson Mandela in South Africa, and Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma are powerful reminders of how precious our human rights are and how high the cost is to sustain them. The Bill of Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that we celebrate this week are not merely proud words preserved on paper; they are a pledge written on our consciences and to oppressed people everywhere, so that they too will some day know the meaning of dignity and the blessing of human rights.

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 December 10, 2000, as Human Rights Day; December 15, 2000, as Bill of Rights Day; and the week beginning December 10, 2000, as Human Rights Week. I call upon the people of the United States to celebrate these observances with appropriate activities, ceremonies, and programs that demonstrate our national commitment to the Bill of Rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and promotion and protection of human rights for all people.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this Ninth day of December, 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., December 13, 2000]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on December 14.

Remarks at "Christmas in Washington"

December 10, 2000

Thank you very much. First, I would like to thank my good friend Gerry Levin, George and Michael Stevens. Thank you, Sarah Michelle Gellar. I thank The Corrs for what they said about the work we've tried to do for peace in Ireland.

Thank you, Billy Gilman. I think you've got a future. [*Laughter*] Thank you, Brian McKnight, Jessica Simpson, Marc Anthony, and my old friend Chuck Berry.

Our family looks forward to this "Christmas in Washington" every year. But tonight, as many have noted, it's more special than ever to us, because it's our last one here. It also is the first Christmas of the new millennium.

Tonight I am grateful that we can celebrate in an America blessed with unprecedented peace and prosperity, a nation that, as we see when we look at all of these young people who sang for us tonight, is growing increasingly more diverse, and yet, at least if the young are our guide, increasingly more united as one community.

So this is a time for us to be grateful for our good fortune and to rededicate ourselves to the lessons of love and reconciliation taught by a child born in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago. As people all around the world gather this season to decorate trees and to light menorahs, we should remember the true meaning of the holidays, the spirit of giving. A gift was given to us, and we should in turn give—to bring a little light into every child's life, to give a little love and laughter and hope to those who don't have it.

That's really what Christmas is all about and what this celebration, and the work of the Children's National Medical Center, has been about. They've been at it for 130 years. In healing children, they remind us that every one of our children is a miracle.

As we rejoice in their lives, let's also take time tonight, when we look at the Navy Glee Club, to remember our men and women in uniform and all those around the world working for peace who will not be home this Christmas.