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And so they built the West Wing in 1902, believe it or not, as a temporary structure. But no one ever had the courage to go back to Congress again and ask for money to do it right. So it's held up pretty well for the last 99 years. And that's why this was President Theodore Roosevelt's office.

Here's what he said, way back then, "We know there are dangers ahead, as we know there are evils to fight and overcome. But stout of heart, we see across the dangers the great future that lies beyond, and we rejoice." Let these words continue to guide us, as we go forth into a new century. May we continue to live up to the ideals for which both Andrew Jackson Smith and Theodore Roosevelt risked their lives.

Major, please read the citation.

[*Major Mullen read the citation, and the President presented the medal.*]

The President. Well, thank you all very much for being here today. This has been a very moving ceremony. Again, I want to thank the large delegation from the Congress and former Members who have come, and families and folks in the Pentagon who worked hard to get this done. This is a good day for America.

I'll just leave you with this one thought. I said this yesterday, but I may say it every day in the last week of my Presidency. In the case of a black soldier in the long-ago Civil War, it sometimes takes a long time to get things right. But Theodore Roosevelt reminded us that the only way we do that is by constantly focusing on the future. And that's really what we're celebrating here today, two people who changed America in more ways than one by their personal courage, from very different vantage points.

PBS has been showing Geoffrey Ward's magnificent series on jazz—I don't know if any of you have seen it. But there's a great section on Duke Ellington, who was a native of Washington, DC. And he was asked what his favorite jazz tune was, and he said, "The one coming up." [*Laughter*] There's always a new one coming up. That's why we're all still here after more than 200 years.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:45 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Brig. Gen. David Hicks, USA, Deputy Chief of Chaplains; and Geoffrey C. Ward, writer, PBS' documentary "Jazz".

Remarks to the United States Conference of Mayors

January 16, 2001

Mayor Coles, thank you very much. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. I want to thank Secretary Cuomo and Mickey Ibarra for the wonderful job they have done. And I thank Secretary Herman and Director Aida Alvarez. Secretary Riley, thank you for being here. We have the Acting Director of our Office of National Drug Control Policy, Ed Jurith; Zina Pierre and others here who have worked with you. I thank Lynn Cutler, I see out there. And I thank Ellen Lovell, the head of the First Lady's millennial effort, who brought a lot of projects to a lot of communities across this country. And all the others who have worked with you.

I also want to say a special word of thanks to Mayor Coles. We always hear a lot of talk in Washington about bipartisanship, but if we look to America's mayors, we actually see it. Maybe because Fiorella LaGuardia was right when he said, "There was no Republican or Democratic way to pick up the garbage. You either pick it up or you don't." [*Laughter*] I thank you Mayor Coles.

I also want to thank some of the other officials of the various organizations who are here. Mayor Morial, thank you; Mayor Menino, thank you. Executive Director Tom Cochran, thank you. Thank you Wellington Webb for the award, for all the good times we had in Denver over the last several years.

It's been a real joy for me to welcome the U.S. Conference of Mayors here, and I am very proud of the partnership that we have formed. The record has already been established, in terms of the rebound of America's cities. I would like to make today, a different point, one that I rarely read in the retrospectives now being written about the last 8 years. Whether they're favorable or critical, even the favorable ones sometimes, I rarely read it. They say, oh this was—let's take the best case ones— "You know, Clinton

got rid of the deficit, and he's paying the debt down, and we've got a healthy economy again." There was one big idea, America would be connected to the world through networks of trade in an interdependent world, and we would stay ahead of the curve. Or the critical ones, they just read the polls that came out for little things like school uniforms. I might say, parenthetically, that school districts that have them don't think they're little things.

But they missed the whole point, which is that for 8 years, we have had a partnership that focused on working together and that took policy seriously. That is, the thing that made all this work was beyond party and beyond the vast gulf between the White House and your house, is we actually believed there is a real connection in people's lives between the ideas you adopt, how you put them into practice, and then how people wind up living.

And one of the things that really has always bothered me about Washington, and I must say, I live without—I mean, I leave without having changed that very much, is that I think the public enterprise matters. I'm proud to have been in public life for over 25 years. And I believe that people of good will, who are more interested in the impact of their actions on other people's lives than whether they are increasing their own power and position. Whether they're Republicans or Democrats, liberals or conservatives, those people can work together. If what drives you is, what is the impact of what you do on other people for the better, everybody that's motivated by that, without regard to party or philosophy, can work together.

But to get that done, we have to first of all, expect the fact that ideas matter and that how you turn ideas into policies matter, and then you've got to keep score. People are either better off or they're not. And the reason I loved working with the mayors—apart from the fact that I thought it was fun to visit your communities, and I always liked getting out there where I got to see so-called real people—is that I knew you felt that. I knew you were out there thinking ideas matter. I knew you were out there keeping score on yourselves.

And there's hardly a mayor here who's community I haven't visited at one time or another. And I just want to tell you how profoundly grateful I am for what you do. Because I think if we hadn't had the partnership we had, it is quite doubtful that we would have the 22½ million more jobs, 35 million people now taking advantage of the family leave law, interestingly enough. It didn't hurt the economy like the people who were against it said it would.

The other thing I'm quite proud of is that the poverty rate has gone down to a 20-year low. In the last 3 years, the lowest 20 percent of working people have had the highest percentage increase in their income. I figured if we could get the economy going again that we'd create more millionaires. It turned out the economy created a lot more billionaires too. But the real test, it seems to me, is whether all the people that are working get a fair reward for their efforts. And while I think a lot more needs to be done in that regard, it is good to see, for the first time in 30 years, the rising tide lifting all boats again.

I think it's worth pointing out here that the cities did lead the way. Incomes have risen faster in the cities than in the suburbs. Nationally, poverty is down 20 percent since 1993; it's down 23 percent in America's cities. So all of you can be very proud of what you have done. And I want to thank you for what you have done.

I want to thank you for the work you did in crime and urge you to try to maintain that partnership. You know, we wrote a crime bill in 1994 based on what mayors, police chiefs, police on the street, and prosecutors at the local level told us would work. They said, "Do this; this will work." And we put 100,000 police on the street, did those other things, passed the Brady law and 611,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers have not been able to get handguns, and the crime rate is at a 25-year low. In many urban areas, it's even lower than that.

And now we're in the process of putting the second group of 50,000 more police on the street, concentrated in the areas of highest crime and greatest difficulty. So it worked. You proved it worked.

You worked with the Vice President to make sure the empowerment zone program worked, the program to clean up brownfields

in urban areas, and I thank you for that. And I thank you for the input you had on the new markets initiative, and how we expanded the empowerment zones more, and then had some general tax incentives to invest in urban areas so that you didn't have to compete to get an empowerment zone or an enterprise community to get some of the benefits that I think ought to flow to anybody in the country not fully participating in our Nation's economic recovery now. So I thank you for all that.

I thank you for the work you did with us on welfare and housing. I thank you for the work you have done with us on health care. We had the number of people without health insurance going down in our country for the first time in a dozen years, thanks to the Children's Health Insurance Program, which is flowing money into a lot of urban areas in a way that is absolutely critical to your hospitals and your public health clinics.

I thank you for the work you have done with us on education, for the support you've given us to try to hire 100,000 more teachers to lower the classes in early grades, and for the support you've given—many of you very vocally—for funds to repair or modernize schools.

For the first time since World War II, this Congress gave us over a billion dollars to provide emergency repairs in schools all across the country. And in many, many of our cities, the average school building is over 50 years old. So this is something that you're going to be able to take advantage of. And I urge you to keep going with that and keep pushing it until we have more money, because, believe me, a billion dollars—I remember when I was a boy, Everett Dirksen said, "You can take a billion dollars here and a billion dollars there, and pretty soon you're talking about real money." And it is real money, but it's nowhere nearly enough for what we should do for our schools.

I thank you—and Mayor Webb mentioned this earlier today—for the support you gave us to continue Federal funding for the arts. One of the things that I was totally mystified by when we had, 5 years ago, this sort of war on Federal funding for the arts that came out, is that it seemed to me that the people that were conducting the war may have had some poster project or another that they thought they could inflame public opinion about, but they had no idea how many community art centers out there were running educational programs for kids in their own schools, that the cities could not possibly afford to run on their own without this supporting help.

You helped us put the real face of NEA and our funding in the minds of the people doing it. And this year, of course, we actually got an increase. So I feel that two of our major initiatives here were validated. I felt that what the Vice President did—and thank you, Alvin Brown—on the empowerment zones and the enterprise communities was also ratified when we adopted this big new markets initiative. So I thank you for that. And thank you for what you've done.

Now, let's just look ahead for a minute here. One of the things that I think is most important about our cities, and I see it everywhere, is the way people who come into vibrant cities basically naturally incline toward an attitude of interdependence, and they have a high comfort level, much higher comfort level, living with people who are different from them. And since I believe that's the biggest challenge facing people all over the world today, I think that the cities that succeed actually have something profoundly important to show the rest of our Nation and the world.

And I think when you just live close to one another and you have to share a lot of things, like whether it's a subway ride or waiting at a bus stop or some other more basic facility, you just naturally develop a different attitude toward your fellow human beings, and politics becomes a matter of practical cooperation. And I think that's what we need to continue to work on. So I think the cities are very, very important in that regard.

And on the Martin Luther King holiday, yesterday, I released a report to the Congress, the last report I will issue on race, under our One America initiative. And I had some very specific recommendations in there that I hope the next administration and the next Congress will embrace—this Congress now; they're already meeting. And I would urge you to look at that, and if you agree, I hope you will help to get it done.

Because I really believe we've got a lot more work to do in education, particularly in modernizing these facilities and making sure all these urban schools are hooked up to the Internet. I think we've got a lot more work to do in terms of economic empowerment of people and places that are left behind. And it offers an enormous opportunity for the cities of our Nation to have an alliance with rural areas and Native American communities, so that you can't be pitted one against another.

I think there are still a lot of things that have to be done in the way of dealing fairly with immigrant populations coming to our country—so that we have the capacity to have laws and enforce them so that we don't wind up rewarding one group of immigrants over another, and the people that get the shaft are those that loyally waited in line for their time to be able to come to the United States and do what should be done. But on the other hand, I don't think we can afford to be treating some groups of immigrants different than others under the law either.

That's why I've supported the "Latino Fairness Act" in the Congress last time. I'm real sorry we didn't pass it. It's about the only thing we wanted to pass we didn't. So I hope you will help with that.

I think we've got a real—we need to really give a lot more thought than we have to our imprisonment policies—how long people are in jail, what are they going to jail for, and what do they do when they get out. Nearly everybody that goes to jail gets out. I think it is time that we change, as a matter of national policy, the idea that you have to have a Presidential pardon or a Governor's pardon before you can get your vote back. I think if you pay a price, you go to jail, you get out, then you're on probation a while, then your sentence is discharged—why shouldn't you get your vote back? You think about it.

One of the big controversies in the recent election in Florida was the review of people to see if they had criminal records, which disabled them from voting. And then you had a lot of other people agitated because they were apparently—maybe not intentionally, just accidentally—purged from the rolls, because they had the same names or similar names as those people who did.

But if—look, I've been doing this for 25 years now, since I was attorney general in my home State. Nearly everybody that goes to prison gets out. And when they get out, all the rest of us want them to do well, go to work, pay taxes, and not commit another crime, right?

Why should we make them go through the incredible gyration of trying to figure out how to get a pardon? And all the systems are different. And I can tell you, I'm sitting here—I've got just a few days left, and I'm trying to go over all these request for clemency, and it's almost impossible to deal with them all in a fair way, to give due concern to the attention of law enforcement as well as the people who are pleading their case. And I just don't see what that's got to do with this.

It seems to me—we changed the law in Arkansas 24 years ago—if you finish your sentence, you go sign up to vote, nobody has to get a pardon anymore. But I dare say, most people in Arkansas don't know that, because in most States they haven't done it, and we haven't done it at the national level.

These are just things I want you to think about, because I think the cities have got to continue to be the focus of building one America. And we've got to try to figure out how we're going to deal with the outstanding issues we've got.

Let me just mention, finally, that I am very grateful for the environmental support I've had from the mayors and the funding that we got last time, for the first time in history, under this lands legacy initiative, to have a permanent source of funding to set aside precious lands. And I just want to reemphasize to all of you, it is not just to protect the watershed around the Grand Canyon; it may be to protect the little square block park in some neighborhood, where that's the only green space your kids will ever see.

So I urge you, as I leave office, to make full use of this legislation that was passed last year to provide a permanent funding screen, to help you set aside green spaces in your communities. And understand, it is not just about the big open spaces or the big places or some big project, like the Everglades; it's about what's in your neighborhoods. We want this bill, this whole bill. The whole idea

of this was to balance our concern for the big chunks of land and resources that had to be preserved, and the need to provide some environmental balance and access to nature to all of our kids and families in urban America, as well. So I urge you, when you work in this coming year, to make sure that your cities are a part of that initiative.

Well, I've already said more than I meant to. I thank you for the award. I thank you for the work we've done to put this country in good shape. The 8 years passed in a flash, but I enjoyed it very much. And I particularly enjoyed working with the mayors. All of you who have welcomed me to your communities, I thank you for that. And I hope that you will do what you can to keep America on a positive track. Together we proved that good economics was good social policy, that you could be fiscally responsible and reduce poverty, that you could have an urban policy that actually helped the rest of the country, too. You did that. You should be very proud.

But I think that the biggest rewards of our efforts of the last 8 years are still out there. And if ever I can help any of you to do what's right by your people in the future, I will certainly do it. I thank you, and I feel better about my country knowing that you're staying behind to keep up the fight.

God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:24 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Brent Coles of Boise, ID, president, Mayor Wellington Webb of Denver, CO, past president, and J. Thomas Cochran, executive director, U.S. Conference of Mayors; Mayors Marc Morial of New Orleans, LA, and Thomas Menino of Boston, MA; and Alvin Brown, Senior Adviser to the Vice President for Urban Affairs. Prior to his remarks, the President was presented with the U.S. Conference of Mayors "Distinguished Public Service Award."

Statement on Action To Eliminate Sweatshops and Abusive Child Labor Practices

January 16, 2001

Today I am pleased to announce new initiatives that build on our efforts to put a more human face on the global economy by protecting workers, children, and families from abusive and unfair labor practices. Around the world, tens of millions of children are deprived of their childhood and subjected to the worst forms of child labor, slavery, forced or compulsory labor, prostitution, pornography, and other kinds of harmful and unsafe work. At the same time, many millions of workers toil under conditions that are deplorable and unacceptable. These antisweatshop grants and the customs advisory on forced and indentured child labor represent additional tools to help eliminate sweatshops and abusive child labor across the globe.

Over the last 8 years, we have made the U.S. a leader in the global fight to stamp out abusive labor practices and open the door to education and opportunity. I am proud that the U.S. was among the first nations to ratify the International Labor Organization's (ILO) Convention 182 for Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor. With the support of Senator Tom Harkin, we have increased our contributions to the ILO's International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor fifteenfold from $3 million in 1993 to $45 million today. We have doubled to $10 million Customs Service resources to enforce the ban on the importation of goods made with forced or indentured child labor. And last year, we passed a new $37 million Department of Labor School Works program to strengthen educational systems in developing countries, targeted to areas where abusive child labor is prevalent.

I would like to make a special note that one of the antisweatshop grants being announced today is being awarded to the Fair Labor Association (FLA), a diverse coalition of manufacturers, consumer groups, labor and human rights organizations, and universities dedicated to ensuring that products purchased by American consumers were not made in sweatshops overseas. The FLA grew out of the Apparel Industry Partnership, a coalition we first brought together at the White House in 1996 to combat sweatshop labor. This pathbreaking partnership was given new energy and vitality when Chuck Ruff agreed to be its first Chairman. Chuck used his unique leadership and coalition-building skills to give the FLA a successful start. While Chuck recently passed away, the