

Week Ending Friday, March 9, 2001

**The President's Radio Address**

*March 3, 2001*

Good morning. As I begin, I want to say a few words about the people of Washington State. Earlier this week, that State was rocked by a powerful earthquake, which affected countless lives and caused billion dollars of damage. The Director of the Federal Emergency Management Association, Joe Allbaugh, went immediately to Seattle, and my administration is providing help. Our prayers are with the people of Washington State.

A few days ago, I had the honor of addressing a joint session of Congress. I hope you had a chance to tune in and hear my plans for the Federal budget and my priorities for the country. After making my case to Congress, I headed out early the next morning on a swing through five States to bring my case directly to you, the American people.

I approach our budget as American families do. First, we set priorities and funded them. My top priority is education reform. And I have asked that the Department of Education receive the largest percentage increase of any Federal agency. We increase funding for our reading programs and character education and recruiting good teachers. This time around, however, we won't be just spending more money; we will be setting higher standards and expecting real results for all our children.

We're going to keep the promise of Social Security and keep the Government from raiding the Social Security surplus. And to safeguard the system against long-term threats, I will form a Presidential commission to reform Social Security and place it on firm financial ground. We will spend more on Medicare, as well, nearly doubling its budget in 10 years. But just as important, we will modernize Medicare to provide a prescription drug benefit for senior citizens. We will also support and strengthen America's mili-

tary, starting with a pay increase and better housing for our troops.

After meeting these national priorities, my budget pays down a record amount of national debt. We will pay off \$2 trillion of debt over the next decade. That will be the largest debt reduction of any country, ever. Future generations shouldn't be forced to pay back money that we have borrowed. We owe this kind of responsibility to our children and grandchildren.

And in addition to funding our priorities and reducing debt by a record amount, we set up a contingency fund of nearly \$1 trillion, and we still have money left over. The surplus money that remains will be used for a broad, fair tax relief. A surplus, after all, is an overcharge of American taxpayers. And on your behalf, I am asking for a refund.

My tax plan reduces income tax rates across the board, giving the largest percentage reductions to working families who need the most help. My plan reduces the marriage penalty and gets rid of the death tax. It will boost the economy and help create new businesses, new jobs, and new growth at a time when we need all three.

When the tax cut takes effect, the typical family of four will save \$1,600 every year. Some say that's not much. But they ought to talk to people like Steven and Josefina Aramos, young parents trying to build a better life for their family. Right now they pay about \$8,000 a year in Federal income taxes. My plan will save this hardworking family more than \$2,000. Steven says, and I quote, "Two thousand dollars is a lot to my family. If we had this money, it would help us reach our goal of paying off our personal debt in 2 years time."

Well, I want the Aramos family and millions of others like them to meet their goals, and to live out their best hopes for themselves and their children. Our Federal budget must be good for the family budget.

That was my message to Congress on Tuesday. And now, I hope you'll send a message in favor of tax relief to your Congressman or your Senator. After all, the surplus is your money.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 1:05 p.m. on March 2 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 3. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 2 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

### **Statement on the National Guard Aircraft Tragedy in Georgia**

*March 3, 2001*

I was deeply saddened to learn of the loss of 21 members of the Florida and Virginia National Guard aboard a C-23 transport plane that crashed this morning outside Macon, Georgia. This tragic loss on a routine training mission reminds us of the sacrifices made each and every day by all of our men and women in uniform. The price of freedom is never free. Today's events remind us that it is sometimes unspeakably high. On behalf of the entire Bush family, I extend our deepest condolences to the families of the victims and to all members of the 171st Aviation Battalion of the Florida Army National Guard and the 203d Red Horse Flight of the Virginia Air National Guard. Our thoughts and prayers are with you all during this very difficult time.

### **Remarks on Arrival in Hampton, Virginia**

*March 4, 2001*

Well, thank you all very much. And thank you for your service to this great land of ours. Laura and I are thrilled to be here. I'm traveling today with members of my Cabinet: the Secretary of State, Colin Powell, and Alma—she is the true general in that family—[*laughter*]*—*the Secretary of Defense, Secretary Rumsfeld, and his bride; the Secretary of Energy, Secretary Abraham, and his bride.

We've assembled the finest national security team of any administration. We under-

stand our job is to keep the peace. But we also understand in order to do so, our military must be well prepared, well trained, well housed, and well paid.

One of the first policy speeches I gave was to send the message, loud and clear, to the U.S. Congress that we expect there to be a pay raise for those who wear the uniform. But what you can expect from us is a clear mission, a clear, focused mission that says our military will be trained and ready to fight and win war and, therefore, prevent war from happening in the first place.

We're honored to be here. Thank you for your service to America. Our country and the world is better off for it.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 1 p.m. at Langley Air Force Base. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary Powell's wife, Alma; Secretary Rumsfeld's wife, Joyce; and Secretary Abraham's wife, Jane. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

### **Remarks at the Christening Ceremony for the U.S.S. Ronald Reagan in Newport News, Virginia**

*March 4, 2001*

Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary. Mr. Secretary, thank you for those kind words. I picked the right man to be the Secretary of Defense at this time in history.

Mrs. Reagan, it is an honor to be with you. Reagan family members, friends of the great President, Laura and I are honored to be here.

We join with the Governor and Senator of this State in asking for God's blessings on those who lost their lives yesterday and for their families.

Bill, thank you very much for your hospitality. Secretary Powell and Secretary Abraham, Leader Lott, Chairman Warner—I can't tell if you're trying to retire me early—[*laughter*]*—*or influence my behavior.

Senator Allen, Governor Gilmore, Representative Scott, and Members of Congress, Justice Kennedy, Admiral Clark, welcome. But most of all, I want to welcome the men