

Week Ending Friday, July 1, 1994

Statement on the Death of Airmen at Fairchild Air Force Base

June 24, 1994

I was profoundly saddened to learn tonight of the tragic aircraft accident at Fairchild Air Force Base, Washington, that took the lives of four Air Force officers of the 12th Air Combat Command. The deaths of these superb airmen remind us as a nation of the hazardous risks involved in maintaining the readiness and proficiency of our Armed Forces and the debt we owe our military personnel. Hillary joins me in asking all Americans to keep the families of these distinguished Air Force officers and all the personnel of the 12th Air Combat Command in their prayers.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Remarks at a Fundraiser for Representative Richard Gephardt in St. Louis, Missouri

June 24, 1994

Thank you so much. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for that wonderful welcome. It's great to be back in St. Louis. Thank you, August Busch, for those kind words and for what you have done to support the work of our administration and the people of Missouri. I am delighted to be here with all of you.

I want to say a special word of thanks to Mr. Busch for two things: first of all, for stepping forward last year when it would have been easy to hang back and helping us to build a coalition of business leaders from both parties all across the country for the economic plan that Congress passed to bring the deficit down and get this economy going again; and for the work he did that Congressman Gephardt mentioned, during the great flood last year to help the Red Cross and

the Salvation Army to send drinking water to families all across the region. That's the kind of thing that we depend on our great companies to do, but it's something we should never take for granted but, instead, should appreciate.

I see Congressman Costello and Congressman Volkmer here. We were with Congressman Clay earlier today. He may be here, and Congressman Poshard. I know that Mayor Bosley is here and your county executive, Buzz Westfall. And I was with your Lieutenant Governor, Roger Wilson, and your treasurer, Bob Holden, earlier today. I don't know, I'm sure there are many other dignitaries here. But let me say that I always love coming to Missouri. You were good to me in the campaign of 1992. I've been back here often, and I always feel at home.

This afternoon, Dick Gephardt and I were in the Fox Park neighborhood with people in that community who, along with the mayor, the chief of police, and others, are trying to take control of their destiny and fight against crime. We heard things that were heartbreaking, but we saw things that were uplifting. We talked about a drug-related killing of a 12-year-old boy, the 23d child in the city killed this year. We heard about a 19-year-old young man who was gunned down with an AK-47 assault weapon, one of the kinds that Congressman Gephardt and I are trying to ban in this crime bill.

But we were on the platform with a young fellow that really is an American hero to me, a young man named Tim Hager who was severely beaten in that neighborhood by thieves when he was a teenager. He had to have pins inserted in his hips. But he never gave up his dream to join the Marines. And he joined and survived basic training, which is something in itself. And when he completed basic training, he was told after an examination that his hips had deteriorated to the point that he had an arthritic condition and he would have to be mustered out.

So he had to give up this lifetime dream because as a child he was victimized by criminals and by violence. Within one week after leaving the Marines, however, he had joined the community service effort in this community and in his neighborhood. And now he's part of an effort involving almost 8,000 other young people in what we call our Summer of Safety, a national service project growing out of a program that all the Congressmen here present helped me pass last year to give our young people a sense of mission to help rebuild our country at the grassroots level. He's organizing block patrols, turning parks into oases for families and kids instead of places of dangers, escorting senior citizens, working with the police to diminish crime. And I told that young man today, he's doing a lot for our national security right here at home by helping to make us all safer, and I think you should be proud that your city has people like that.

This fall, those 8,000 young people will be replaced by 20,000 more when we launch our national service program, AmeriCorps, fully. The head of our national service program, Eli Segal, is here with me tonight. He's done a brilliant job of creating this program from an idea I had and talked about in the campaign, that we ought to have a domestic Peace Corps. If the Congress will give us the funding, within 2 years we'll have 100,000 young Americans working every year, earning money for a college education or for job training programs, solving the problems of America at the grassroots level, giving power and purpose back to the lives of people to make them safer and to make them fuller. It represents in some ways the very best of all the reasons I ran for President. I wanted to restore this economy, to make Government work for ordinary people again, to empower individuals and strengthen communities. National service represents all that.

You know, a lot of us in my generation were inspired by the Peace Corps. At its height, the Peace Corps had 16,000 people a year. We're going to start with 20,000. If we can get it funded, we'll be at 100,000 the year after next. And I am absolutely confident if the money is there we could have a quarter of a million young Americans every year within 5 years, from now on, forever,

working to deal with our problems and build our country. That is what I think we ought to be about in this country.

Now, I wanted to start with this story to make this point. This is a very great country. And most people get up every day and go to work and try to make something of themselves, help their families, do something to help move forward. And the job of Government is not to give the American people a handout but to give the American people a hand up, to face the challenges of this time, and to forge partnerships that unleash the enormous character and energy and drive of the America people. And that is, more than anything else, what I believe Dick Gephardt has devoted his life to.

I have been in this business now for a good while. I was a Governor for a dozen years, and before that I was an attorney general. And the longer I stay in it, the more I tend to view people not just in terms of their partisan affiliation or even the way they are characterized as liberal or conservative, because that's about words and labels, but about what is really in their hearts and what they do every day.

And an awful lot of people today who are being basically barraged, I think, in this country by words and words and words and words and the rhetoric of combat and positioning. And too often, it seems to me, we wind up evaluating people based on not what they do and what they're really going to stand for but what labels are thrown around.

And it kind of reminds me of a sign that became the source of a great story we used to tell on the stump in Arkansas. On a country road there was a guy that had his business sign up. It said, "George Jones, Veterinarian/Taxidermist." And then under it, it said, "Either way, you get your dog back." [*Laughter*]

Well, if we ever get to the point, my fellow Americans, when politics in this country is just about words and name-calling, that's what it will amount to. And don't you forget it. It does matter what condition you get your dog back in. And as I told a smaller group of his supporters before I came out here, I appreciate Dick Gephardt for a lot of things, one is because he's a great leader in the House. And if it weren't for him, we'd have never passed that economic program last

year. And there are a lot of other things that would not have happened. I respect him because he's a great leader for St. Louis and for his congressional district as I saw as we worked through the problems of the flood last year. He's proved as well as anybody I know that you can be a national leader without giving up your local commitments and your grassroots contacts and your commitment to the specific interests of your district.

But the most important thing about him is that he believes that he's supposed to get up every day and do something. And you may think that's funny, but that's real important in this day and age, in this day and age when we're deluged with information and words fly back and forth and cynicism is so much the order of the day, the idea that a person in a position of national leadership really gets up with a vision of what America ought to be like and a clear path there. And it's made for a wonderful relationship.

Even on the couple of occasions where he and I have had a disagreement, I didn't give it a second thought because I knew it came out of his conviction that he had thought through the issue, and that he really believed he was right, and that he was determined to do something to move our country forward. And if everybody in public life could do that and we could somehow communicate that through the haze of cynicism and hard rhetoric that seems so much in evidence today, this country would be much further ahead. He is a national treasure, and I'm glad you're here to keep him in office tonight.

You know, I'll just give one example. You may never even read about this, but it's the kind of thing that I think is important. Dick is leading cosponsor of our reemployment act. Now, since nobody's dropping bombs on me for proposing it, and there's no controversy, conflict, or scandal, you will probably never hear about it. *[Laughter]*

But let me tell you, it is a big deal. Why is it a big deal? Number one, the average 18-year-old is going to change jobs eight times in a lifetime, even if that person, he or she, stays with the same employer. Number two, when a person loses a job today, unlike in previous decades, they typically are not called back to that job. A lot of big companies are downsizing permanently, which

means that the unemployment system is out of position with the modern economy. Why? Because those of you who are employers have been paying that unemployment tax for years on the theory that when someone got unemployed, it was because the economy had temporarily turned down, and then a person could draw the unemployment check and make obviously less than they made when they were working but still enough to live on until the economy came back up and the person was called back to work.

And of course, there were always some people that lost their jobs permanently, and they could go around and find the training programs and then eventually they'd get another job. But, if most people are not being called back to their old job, it obviously is a terrific waste of money and human potential for those of you who pay into the unemployment fund to keep paying people to draw a lower check to do nothing, to wait until the unemployment runs out to find out that they still have to find another job.

So what we want to do is to change the unemployment system into a reemployment system so the minute anybody is laid off, they have the option right then to start a training program, to look about whether they want to start their own business, to go to one place and find out where all the possible opportunities for them are, not to have to go through some bureaucratic maze.

Again, you might not ever hear about it if you hadn't come up here tonight, but this could make a huge difference in the long-term productivity and security of the American middle class. And it could also make a big difference for those of you who pay the unemployment taxes, because it could cut the amount of time people are unemployed and it would increase America's economic growth if we shortened periods of idleness by empowering workers more quickly to learn new skills and take new jobs.

Now, that's the kind of thing a real public servant does, thinking not of today's headlines but of tomorrow's future for our children. And that is why I wanted to be here tonight. I have seen so many times Dick Gephardt—not in public when people were looking and listening, but in private conversation—bring the talk back to the urgent obli-

gation public servants have to deal with, the real problems of real people. And if all of you could see him as I have seen him in private doing his business, you would be even prouder of him than what you have seen in public. Would that we could say that of all of us. That is a very important thing.

When I took office, Government had become more and more about talk and less and less about action. Everybody talked about the deficit while it got bigger. We never could talk it down, you know. And finally, it had gotten so big, the things we had to do about it were not popular. And ironically, the deficit had gotten bigger while middle class taxes had gone up and investments in our future in education and training and new technologies had gone down. Nobody could quite figure out how it had happened.

Well, with Dick Gephardt's help, we made some tough decisions. We cut a lot of spending programs. We raised taxes on the wealthiest Americans, including a lot of you here tonight that are still supporting it which I appreciate. But all your money went to finance a reduction in the deficit, every red cent of it.

We gave a break to one in six Americans who have children, who work 40 hours a week and are hovering above the poverty line, because we didn't want those people to be taxed into poverty and to quit working and to go on welfare. We wanted them to stay in the work force and be able to raise their children in dignity. And we didn't think people who were working 40 hours a week should be taxed into poverty.

And we brought the deficit down. This year, without a tax increase, we eliminated over 100 other programs in this deficit reduction package, cut 200 others. I presented a budget to the Congress that reduces domestic discretionary spending for the first time in 25 years. And when the budget goes through this year, it will guarantee 3 years of reduction in the Federal deficit for the first time since Harry Truman of Missouri was President of the United States of America.

And a lot of our opponents are out there running television ads saying, "Oh, they passed the biggest tax increase in history." By any rational calculation, that was not true.

It was the biggest deficit reduction package in history. Only 1.2 percent of Americans had their tax rates increased; 16 percent got a tax cut because they were in the income category I meant. And now in November we will see a contest between all the rhetoric about what was happening and the fact that, after the other crowd had it for 12 years, you simply couldn't talk the deficit down any more. You actually had to do something to get it down. And the fact that you're here tells me that you know that and you respect Dick Gephardt for having the courage and the vision to take care of our children and our children's children, and let somebody else throw the words around. And that's what we need more of.

But the good news is it actually worked the way it was supposed to. There was a big drop in interest rates; millions of people refinanced their homes; the car industry started exploding. It helped St. Louis a lot. After 4 years in which you lost 2,000 jobs in one year you gained 28,000 jobs in the St. Louis area alone; 3.5 million new jobs in this country in a year and a half, far more than in the previous 4 years, because action was substituted for talk. It almost always works. It works in your personal life too, doesn't it? It's just hard to talk things away. You always have to change what you're doing.

We did a lot of other things, too. We really tried to break gridlock. People talked about doing something about the fact that anybody with a criminal record could buy a gun easily in this country. And the Brady bill hovered around in Washington for 7 years, with all the former Presidents of both parties for it and we couldn't seem to pass it. But after 7 years of gridlock, it finally passed.

After 7 years of gridlock, we finally passed the family and medical leave law. It's really important because it says most parents have to work, but the most important work of any society is parenting. So it ought to be possible to take a little time off when you've got a sick child or an ailing parent or when a baby is being born without losing your job, because we live in a country now where we all have to be good workers and good parents. And if we sacrifice one role for the other, we will never become what we ought to be. It took 7 years to get that passed, but we

broke gridlock with Dick Gephardt's leadership and passed the family leave law and made our country a stronger country.

Now we're working on a lot of exciting other things. We're working on passing a crime bill we talked about today, a crime bill that will put 100,000 more police officers on the street; a crime bill that will stiffen punishment but will also increase programs for prevention to help young people stay out of trouble, everything from summer jobs to midnight basketball to after-school programs for latchkey children; that will ban the kind of assault weapons that make gangs better armed than police. It is a very important piece of legislation. It's been held up in Congress for over 5 years, nearly 6 years, by political gridlock. We're going to break that gridlock next month and give the American people a bill that will make St. Louis a safer place to live, thanks to Dick Gephardt's leadership.

We're working on political reform, on lobby reform, campaign finance reform. We have a lot of major environmental legislation moving through the Congress with unprecedented support from environmental groups and business groups working together. We're working on opening trade all around the world with a worldwide trade agreement that Congressman Gephardt endorsed just the other day that will add hundreds of thousands of American jobs between now and the end of this decade to our economy. And we are working to try to redeem a pledge and a commitment that Harry Truman made 50 years ago, finally to provide assurance of health care to all working families in this country, something we should have done when he was President of the United States of America.

I want to talk just a moment about this health care issue because it is just like the deficit; you just can't talk it down. And it is a difficult issue; it is not free of difficulty. But here are the facts: Of all the advanced countries in the world, only the United States does not provide health coverage to everybody—"everybody" defined as 98 percent of us or more. Everybody else has done that. In our country, we cover about 83 percent of our people with health insurance or

through a Government program like Medicare for the senior citizens.

No other country in the world spends more than 10 percent of their income on health care. In our country, we spend 14 percent—40 percent more of our income than anybody else—but we can't figure out how to cover everybody. Not only that, the burden of paying for health care is wildly uneven and unfair. The Government does not fully reimburse doctors and clinics and hospitals for health care for the poor and often for health care for senior citizens. Many others aren't insured at all and can't pay, but they get care. And all that cost is then shoved on to companies that do provide for their employees. So big companies like McDonnell-Douglas pay health care not only for their own employees but pay for the extra cost of those that take no care for themselves and make no investment.

Small businesses in this country who are struggling to provide some health insurance for their employees pay rates that are, on average, 35 to 40 percent higher than bigger business or Government does. So they're in the worst of all worlds.

I was in Columbus, Ohio, the other day, and I met a woman who—she and her husband ran a delicatessen where I had lunch. They had 20 full-time employees and 20 part-time employees. And she had had cancer 5 years before. And she said, "I am a living example of what is unfair about this system." She said, "We provide health insurance for our 20 full-time employees. And because I had cancer 5 years ago, we pay higher rates for our whole group. But I pay for them. And I resent the fact that my competitors don't do it. On the other hand, I've got 20 part-time employees that I can't afford to cover, and I feel guilty that I don't do that. I've got it coming and going. But I simply can't afford it. If everybody had to do it, I wouldn't be at a competitive disadvantage. The cost would actually be less than I'm paying now for me to cover my part-time employees if I could be in a big pool so that I could buy insurance on the same competitive basis larger companies do. Won't you please do something so I can do that?"

On the other hand, in America—let's take it the other way—we have a lot of people

who are small business people who operate on very narrow profit margins. They're creating most of the jobs in this country, and they don't think they can afford anything else for health care. So what are we going to do? What we've done for 40 years is nothing, except just to sort of add on one little program after another.

In 3 years, in 3 years because of the rising cost of health care, we've lost 3 million people out of the health insurance system. Three million more people uncovered. In 1980, 87.5 percent of the American people were covered with health insurance. By 1993, only 83 percent of the American people were. We are going in reverse, and we're spending more while fewer are covered.

Now, when I put out my program I went around and I listened to people talk about it. And they said, "Ah, you've got too many rules in there; it's too bureaucratic; you need to make it more flexible; change it some." And I said, fine. The only thing I want to do is find a way to cover everybody and give small business, farmers, and self-employed people a break so they can buy rates—insurance on a competitive basis and we can have some way of holding costs down without sacrificing quality. That's all I want to do. But if we don't do it, it will be just like this deficit or just like a hangnail. It won't get any easier. Sooner or later we're going to have to do this. We ought to do it now. We ought to do it now.

Let me say, I want this to be as grassroots a program as I can. The best, most popular thing we've done when people know about it is national service, because the Government provides the money and sets the goals and people at the local level decide how to organize all these young people to solve problems. That's a lot of what we're trying to do with health care. I don't want the Government to take it over. I want to leave the private insurance system in place. I want people at the State and local level to decide how to do it. But you have to have some rules that say how everybody is going to be covered and some way of organizing folks so small business can get a break. You have to do that.

And I say to you, I don't think we have a chance to do that if Dick Gephardt weren't so dedicated to it. And if we had about 10

more folks in both parties in both Houses that dedicated, there wouldn't be a chance that we wouldn't do it. And I wouldn't even have to give a speech about it tonight.

But what we have to decide on health care and crime and welfare reform and all these other issues that face us is whether it's going to be a talking deal—either way you get your dog back—or whether it's going to be about doing something, not trying to box our opponents into extreme positions and covering ourselves with labels but looking at the reality.

Back in the Middle Ages, the great Italian political philosopher Machiavelli said that "there is nothing so difficult in all of human affairs than to change the established order of things." Because, he said, people who will be adversely affected by the change know it and they'll fight you like crazy. He didn't use those words, but I'm freely translating. [Laughter] My Italian is not that bad. But he said, on the other hand, the people who will benefit are always somewhat uncertain about what the change will be, and therefore, they won't bring themselves into the fight with the same gusto as those who are afraid of the change. So it always is difficult to change.

But we know that America is around here after 214 years and more because we always changed when we had to, because we have this capacity to be faithful to our values and our Constitution and our institutions, but to change. And that's what he hired on for, and that's why I ran for President.

I had a good life, and I was as happy as I'd ever been in my life the day I entered the race for President. And everybody told me that my happiest days might be behind me. [Laughter] But I did not want to see my child grow up in a country where things were coming apart when they ought to be coming together. I did not want her to be part of the first generation of Americans to do worse than their parents. And I did not believe that we were incapable of solving these problems.

So I say to you tonight, my fellow Americans, we glorify Harry Truman today because he made us face our problems, and he said what he thought. Everybody talks about how much they miss him. I came from a family

that was for him when he was alive. [*Laughter*] And you know what I'm talking about—we all—you know, he's practically a saint now in America. But when he was alive he was usually low in the polls for telling inconvenient truth and trying to get people to face up to their responsibilities at a time when we were tired of it. I mean, it was at the end of the war, and we'd been through all that, and nobody wanted to face all that.

We cannot be tired today. We have a lot to do. At the end of the cold war we're faced with a whole set of challenges and opportunities that are different. And our children's lives will be measured by the extent to which we choose to do and to pull together, instead of to talk and to divide. We got to where we are today by being a nation of believers and doers.

Dick Gephardt, your Congressman, is one of our finest believers and doers. Let the rest of us do as well on health care and all our challenges, and our country will go into the next century in great shape.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:44 p.m. in the St. Louis Ballroom at the Adams Mark Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to August Busch III, chairman and president, Anheuser-Busch, Inc. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

June 25, 1994

Good morning. This morning I want to talk about the progress we're making in our drive to provide real health care security to America's working families. But before I do, I'd like to say a brief word about families who provide real national security for the American people.

Earlier this week at Fairchild Air Force Base in Washington State, six people died and more than 20 others were injured when an unhappy former airman brought an assault weapon onto the base and opened fire. And now the men and women at Fairchild grieve again. Yesterday afternoon a B-52 bomber from the 12th Air Combat Command crashed at the base during a training mission. All four airmen aboard were lost. Their

deaths remind us again of the hazards and risks involved in maintaining our security and the debt of gratitude we owe each of our military personnel. I want to send my condolences and prayers to the families of the airmen and the good people who will continue doing the hard work of freedom at Fairchild.

After months of debate, health care reform is very much alive. And we have an extraordinary opportunity in the next few weeks to make sure that America joins every other advanced nation by guaranteeing health coverage to each and every citizen, not through a Government program but through private insurance and real opportunities for small business people and self-employed people to buy good insurance on the same terms that those of us in Government or people who work for big business can. I'm committed to making sure we don't miss this urgent opportunity.

This week we had a historic development. For the first time in American history and after 60 years of reform efforts, committees in both Houses of Congress have approved bills that guarantee universal health coverage, coverage to all American families.

Anyone who doubts the significance of this need only look at the last half century. President Roosevelt first tried to reform health care but couldn't get this far. President Truman tried several times and couldn't do it. President Nixon proposed universal health coverage with an employer-employee joint responsibility to pay for insurance, and he couldn't do it. President Carter also tried without success.

These reform efforts never got to this point. Now that we've come this far, we mustn't turn back. Momentum is building toward a solution for the health care crisis. And as we settle on one, we must make sure we go to the root of the problems in the current system.

Half measures, quick fixes, things that sound better than they actually will work, will only make matters worse. We have to help middle class Americans, whose economic success is the key to America's prosperity, know that they will always have health security, even if they have to change jobs or if they lose their jobs.