

Week Ending Friday, January 13, 1995

The President's Radio Address

January 7, 1995

Good morning. Now that the holidays are over, it's back to business around the country and back to the people's business here in Washington.

I'm looking forward to working with the new Congress. If they'll put politics as usual aside and put the American people and our future first, we've got a great opportunity to make progress on our mission: restoring the American dream of opportunity to all Americans and making sure we enter the next century, now just 5 years away, still the strongest and greatest nation in the world.

Earlier this week, I met at the White House with Republican and Democratic congressional leaders. I challenged them to work with me and with each other, and they assured me that they are willing to cooperate.

Many of the toughest decisions we made in the last 2 years are paying off for us now. We've reduced the deficit by \$700 billion; that's \$11,000 in less debt for every family in America. We've cut the Federal Government, eliminating over 100 programs, and there are already 100,000 fewer people working for the Federal Government than when I took office.

We've taken the savings and invested in the American people, in their education and training by expanding Head Start and apprenticeship programs and making college loans more affordable to 20 million people, providing the opportunity for national service to thousands of others.

Just yesterday, we saw new evidence that this economic strategy that has been pursued with such discipline over the last 2 years is still working. Unemployment is now down to 5.4 percent from over 7 percent when I took office; 5.6 million new jobs have been created in the almost 2 years since I became President. Nineteen ninety-four was the best year for job growth in a decade. And the vast

majority of these new jobs are in the private sector. This was the first year that manufacturing jobs increased in every month since 1978. These new jobs are a testament to what can be accomplished when we combine the phenomenal ability and productivity of American businesses and workers with responsible and visionary political leadership willing to make tough choices. I will work with the new Congress to keep this recovery going. I will not go back to the failed policies of the past, which may have short-term attraction but will undermine our economic future.

We've still got a lot more to do, things that we must do in the months ahead. Because for all the good statistics and all the legislative accomplishments of the last 2 years, the average American simply is not receiving enough benefit from this recovery. And Republicans and Democrats have to work together to change that.

Here's the problem: For about 20 years, the incomes of Americans without college educations have been stagnant. They've been working harder for the same or less income; their benefits are less secure. What caused this? Technology and the global competition that we face mean that even when the economy is growing, inflation is low, and that's good. But wages often don't go up either, and that's not. There's a bigger educational premium than ever before. That is, workers who have more education are more likely to have higher incomes compared with workers without than at ever before in our history.

What's the answer to this dilemma? First, we have to create more high-wage jobs. I'm heartened that in 1994 we had more high-wage jobs coming into our economy than in the previous 5 years combined. But second, and even more important, we have to get more education and training opportunities to all of our people and an increase to take-home income of middle class Americans.

That's why I want Congress to adopt what I call the middle class bill of rights, four new ideas to help middle class Americans build a future that lives up to their dreams. Like the GI bill of rights after World War II, the middle class bill of rights will help people go to college, raise their children, and build a future. Like the best of all Government programs, the middle class bill of rights offers opportunity, not a guarantee; it emphasizes personal responsibility; and it's open to all so that it can help build the strength of our entire American community.

Now, anybody can say, "I want to give you a tax cut," and make people very happy in the short run. What I want to do is cut taxes so that people can invest in the education of their children and in their own education in training and skills. That will raise incomes and lead to a stronger America. I want our people to have more than a quick fix. I want them to have the resources they need to fulfill their hopes and dreams over the long term.

Here's what's in the middle class bill of rights: first, a tax deduction for the tuition costs, up to \$10,000, of all education after high school, for college, community college, graduate school, professional school, vocational education, or worker training for families with incomes of \$120,000 or less; second, for families with incomes of \$75,000 a year or less, a tax cut phased up to \$500 for every child under 13; third, for those with incomes of under \$100,000, the ability to put \$2,000 a year, tax-free, into an individual retirement account, but also the ability to withdraw that money, tax-free, not just for retirement but for education, for health care, for the care of an elderly parent, or to buy a first home. Finally, the middle class bill of rights will take the billions and billions of dollars Government now spends on a variety of job training programs and consolidate that money and instead make it directly available to working Americans, so that when people are eligible for the funds, because they lose a job or because they're training for a better job, they'll be able to get the cash and spend it where they want in the education program of their choosing.

Every single penny of this middle class bill of rights proposal is paid for by dramatic cuts in Government that I've proposed. We have led the way to the largest 2-year deficit reduction in the history of our country, and I will not allow anyone to destroy this progress in reducing the deficit and to threaten our economic recovery. We've already seen that progress is possible in Washington this year. The House of Representatives this week voted to apply the laws that apply to the rest of America to Congress. That's long overdue. They did that last year, but the Senate didn't follow suit. I hope the Senate will follow suit now.

But we have to do more to change politics as usual. We desperately need to pass lobbying reform. The lobbyists didn't go away with the last election, and we still believe that they shouldn't be allowed to give gifts, entertainments, or trips to lawmakers. Unfortunately this week, the new majority in Congress voted not to enact lobby reform—at least for now. It's not too late for them to do it, and I urge them to do it as quickly as possible. If we want middle class Americans to benefit from what we do, then the public interest, not those of special interest, should have the loudest voice in Washington.

That's why I'll apply one simple test to every policy, every piece of legislation that comes before me: Does it advance the interests of average American families? Does it promote their values, build their future, increase their jobs and incomes? If it passes that test, I'll support it, and if it doesn't, I won't.

If we work together to do the job the American people hired us to do, 1995 will be a terrific year for all Americans who work hard and play by the rules. We've seen for too long how people in Washington can obstruct progress for partisan gains. Now, sincerely, we must prove that we can work together to keep our country moving forward for America's gain.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

**Remarks at Carl Sandburg
Community College in Galesburg,
Illinois**

January 10, 1995

Thank you for that wonderful and warm welcome. It is wonderful to be here. Thank you, Dr. Crist, for making me feel so much at home. Thank you, Congressman Evans, for coming down, and Congressman Poshard, delighted to see you. And Mayor Kimble, thank you for making me feel welcome here. The representatives of Knox College and Blackhawk Community College as well as Carl Sandburg Community College, I'm glad to see all of you here.

I'm glad that Secretaries Reich and Riley came with me, and I understand they have already spoken, which makes anything I say perhaps redundant. *[Laughter]*

I met a college president the other day. He looked at me and said, "I've got a lot of sympathy with you. Being President is just like running a cemetery. You've got a lot of people under you, and nobody is listening." *[Laughter]*

I want to begin by saying how very, very happy and proud I am to be here today. I believe as strongly as I can state that community colleges represent the very best of America in 1995 and where we need to go as a country with all of our institutions, community based, flexible, committed to quality, opportunity for everyone, with a real sense of community. I'm honored to be here, and I'm honored to have all of you here.

I'd also like to recognize the people who were with me just a few moments ago who participated in our little roundtable, who have had some experience with this institution. I'd like to ask all of them to stand up that were in my private conversation because I want to thank them. *[Applause]* Thank you. They're employers of people who came out of this community college. They're students. They're former students. They're people who have taught here. They are a picture of America.

I came here to talk about America, about where we are and where we're going. And I don't think we could have picked a better place. This place is so steeped in our national history, just as this community college is so

representative of the best of our present and our future. The Underground Railroad came through Galesburg, and as all of you know and as you saw just a few moments ago, over 135 years ago, Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas met here for one of their famous debates. How'd they do just a few minutes ago? *[Applause]* Thank you. I met them outside, and they were still arguing about who really won. *[Laughter]*

I identified with what President Lincoln said. He performed so brilliantly in those debates, but he lost the Senate race anyway. And he said that it hurt too much to laugh, and he was too old to cry. And then he said something I have always kept with me. In fact, I've got a copy of the exact quote on the wall in my private office in the White House. He said after Douglas defeated him for the Senate, he was walking home, and it had been raining that day and the path was muddy, and one of his feet slipped and hit his other foot and knocked his footing out from under him. But just before he fell, he righted himself and he smiled, and he said, "This is a slip and not a fall." Well, I think we all ought to try to keep that in our own minds as we deal with life's challenges and adversity.

The Lincoln-Douglas debates, as you just heard for a few moments, were about the course of our country and the proper role of government in a time of great change. In 1858, of course, the issue was slavery. Lincoln believed that it was a national issue. Long before he believed the Government could abolish slavery, he at least believed the Government could stop it from expanding. Douglas believed it was not a national issue; that it should just be up to the States or the territories. If they wanted to keep slavery, they could vote for it and then come on in to the Union.

The Republican Party was born out of a conviction that even though we are a country deeply devoted to limited government, there are some things that the times demand national action on and that at that moment, the times demanded first, national action to stop the spread of slavery and then national action to stop slavery.

About a half a century earlier, the Democratic Party was born in the Presidency of