

signed today provide neither a satisfactory nor a complete resolution to the current budget dispute, we have succeeded in returning all of you to work with full retroactive pay.

And if there is any positive outcome to the pain and hardship you have undergone for the past three weeks, it is that your fellow Americans have been made painfully aware of the importance of your work.

The inconvenience and pain of this shutdown spread from coast to coast. Veterans benefits were curtailed. Services to small businesses have been interrupted. Important environmental protections have been shut down, including Superfund cleanup and programs to combat air and water pollution. FBI training of state and local law enforcement officers was stopped.

The list of curtailed or limited services goes on and on. FHA mortgages and housing vouchers were halted. State rehabilitation services for those with physical and mental disabilities have started to shut down. Travelers found National Park Service facilities closed, National Forests restricted, great museums padlocked, and passports unavailable.

A ripple effect extended the economic hardship beyond the federal work force to millions of other Americans who provide services to or receive them from you—hardships that, sadly, will not disappear with the stroke of a pen.

Let us be clear: there was absolutely no excuse for this shutdown. We and Republicans in Congress have differing views on how to balance the budget, and that's why we are engaged in negotiations. But there was no justification for this government to be closed while negotiations progress. And there is no justification for Congress' failure to fully fund all government services.

Once again, many of the men and women who make up our federal government were held hostage, with your paychecks delayed and your security threatened during the holiday season. You were put unfairly in the middle of a battle you did not seek. But—whether you were furloughed or working—by your commitment and your sacrifice, you continued to serve our nation as loyally as ever during this crisis.

We salute you for your dedication, and we thank you.

Bill Clinton
Al Gore

Remarks on the Federal Budget and an Exchange With Reporters

January 6, 1996

The President. Let me say that I am pleased that Congress has completed the task of reopening the Federal Government which was begun a few days ago. And I hope that no Congress will ever again shut the Federal Government down in this way. As has been said, it is morally indefensible to hold needed Government services and hard-working Government employees hostage in a political battle.

I'm also pleased to submit the budget plan prepared by Senator Daschle which the Congressional Budget Office says will reach balance in 7 years. This plan illustrates what we have been saying all along, that you can balance the budget in 7 years and protect Medicare, Medicaid, education, and the environment and provide tax relief to working families.

Now it's time to get back to work. This is a moment of great national promise, and we need to find unity and common ground; we need to rise above partisanship to fashion a sensible solution that is true to our values, honors our obligations to our parents and to our children, and builds a stronger future for our country. And in just a few moments we will go back to work.

Q. Sir, what was your priority, to technically meet their demands and open it up, or to get it—

The President. Well, we have reached a point in our negotiations—we have been working in good faith now for days and days, identifying areas of agreement as well as areas of disagreement. And last evening when we ended our session and we agreed to meet again today, we both said that we would try to speed up the negotiations, move as quickly as possible to see if we couldn't at least reach a framework agreement. And this was an appropriate time to do that. And so I'm hopeful that we can reach agreement.

As I said, these numbers show that the Congressional Budget Office agrees that you can balance the budget and still provide adequate protection for Medicare, Medicaid, education, and the environment.

Q. How soon do you think you can get this closed?

The President. How soon—I don't know—we've been in about a 2-hour recess now, and I'm looking forward to getting back to work. And I'm prepared to work all day tomorrow. We have tentatively agreed to start again tomorrow morning, and if the weather doesn't prevent us, I'm prepared to just stay all day. Depending on how big a snow, the weather might not only not prevent us but actually help us to stay here and get downright cozy.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:06 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Statement on the Death of Former President François Mitterrand of France

January 8, 1996

I learned with deep regret this morning of the death of former President of France François Mitterrand. During his 14 years as President of the French Republic and in frequent service as a minister in the post-war years, President Mitterrand put his remarkable intellect and deep-rooted dedication to democracy at the service of the French nation.

Not only France but the United States and the entire world benefited from his strong and principled leadership. He stood shoulder-to-shoulder with his NATO allies during the Soviet challenges of the early 1980's, the Gulf war, and the peaceful revolutions that ended a half-century of East-West confrontation. President Mitterrand's stalwart leadership during some of the Alliance's greatest challenges leaves the people of Europe with a hard-won legacy of peace.

I consulted frequently with President Mitterrand, as did my predecessors, and greatly valued his insights, advice, and wisdom. He was a man of vision whose strength helped bring Europe and the West through a period

of tough confrontation to the peaceful, undivided Europe we are building today.

Hillary and I join the American people in expressing heartfelt sympathy to the people and the Government of France and to Danielle Mitterrand and the Mitterrand family. We hope the sorrow of this difficult time will be eased by an appreciation of the profound contribution that President Mitterrand made to his nation and the world. He was a great statesman.

The President's News Conference

January 9, 1996

Budget Negotiations

The President. Good afternoon. As you know, we have just completed another long meeting with the Republican and Democratic leaders in the Congress. We have arrived at a point where, clearly, all sides have agreed on more than enough cuts to both balance the budget in 7 years, according to the Congressional Budget Office, and allow a modest tax cut. A final agreement on the balanced budget, I believe, is clearly within reach.

Unfortunately, the talks have not yet succeeded because we do still disagree on the level of cuts in the programs of Medicare, Medicaid, aid to poor children, the earned-income credit, which protects the hardest pressed working families, and education and the environment.

The Republicans still want cuts in Medicare and Medicaid that we believe are well beyond what is necessary to balance the budget, and cuts in the discretionary account which funds education and the environment that we believe are excessive and beyond what is needed to balance the budget or to provide a reasonable tax cut.

Still I want to emphasize that we made progress today. The atmosphere was good. It was a genuine bipartisan effort. We are moving closer together on the spending numbers. At the opening of the meeting, we moved and made an initial offer to them. We are clarifying areas of policy agreement as well as the areas of disagreement. And today we agreed to a recess to last no longer than until next Wednesday, during which time our