

This occasion calls us to affirm our country's spiritual roots and to humbly express our gratitude to the source of our abundant good fortune. As we seek to renew the values that have long strengthened America's families and communities, let us reach out to God and to one another for wisdom and courage. We should celebrate this day in the tradition of our founders who believed that God governs in the affairs of men and women, and who based their greatest hopes, dreams, and aspirations on the surety of divine protection.

The Congress, by Public Law 100-307, has called on our citizens to reaffirm annually our dependence on Almighty God by recognizing a "National Day of Prayer."

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 2, 1996, as a National Day of Prayer. I encourage every citizen of this great Nation to pray, each in his or her own manner, seeking strength from God to face the challenges of today, requesting guidance for the uncertainties of tomorrow, and giving thanks for the rich blessings that our Nation has enjoyed throughout our history. "Do not pray for easy lives," said John F. Kennedy in 1963, "Pray to be stronger" May it be so with each of us.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this second day of April, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twentieth.

William J. Clinton

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NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 3, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on April 4.

Remarks to Commerce Department Employees on the Aircraft Tragedy in Croatia

April 3, 1996

Thank you, Dr. Good. Ladies and gentlemen, the Vice President and the First Lady and the members of the Cabinet and I want-

ed to come here to be with the employees of the Commerce Department at this very difficult hour. Hillary and I have just come from Ron Brown's home, visiting with Alma and Michael and their family and friends who are there. And we wanted to come and spend a few moments with you.

As all of you know, the plane carrying Secretary Brown and his delegation, including a number of your colleagues, business leaders, and members of the United States military, went down today near Dubrovnik, Croatia. We do not know for sure what happened there. But I wanted to come here today, as it is almost Passover for American Jews and I know a lot of you will want to be leaving soon, just to have the chance to say a few words to you.

The first thing I want to say is before I left I asked Alma, I said, "Alma, what do you want me to say when I go to the Commerce Department?" She said, "Tell them Ron was proud of them, that he liked them, that he believed in them, and that he fought for the Commerce Department, and tell them that you're going to do that now," which I thought was an incredible thing.

I've known Ron Brown a long time. I was always amazed at the way he was continually reaching out trying to bridge the differences between people, always trying to get the best out of people, always believing that we could do more than we have done. In a way, this job was sort of ready-made for him at this moment in history, and he loved it very much.

Most of the time, Ron Brown spent using the power of the Commerce Department to find ways to give opportunity to ordinary Americans, to generate jobs for the American economy and build better futures for American citizens. But when we met earlier this week, right before he left for the Balkans, he was so excited because he thought that, along with these business leaders and the other very able people from the Commerce Department on this mission, that they would be able to use the power of the American economy to help the peace take hold in the Balkans, to help people in that troubled place have the kind of decent, honorable, and wonderfully ordinary lives that we Americans too often take for granted. And he was so excited

by it. If you saw any of the clips on the television that have been showing today about his meetings yesterday, you could see that.

I just want to say on a very personal note that I hope all Americans today will be grateful for what all the people who were on that plane did, for the military personnel, for the business leaders, who didn't have to go on that mission, who did it not out of a sense of their own profit but out of a sense of what they could do to help America bring peace.

To all of the wonderful people in the Commerce Department that were on that plane, some of them very young, one of them who came to our campaign in 1992 thinking the most important thing he could do was to ride a bicycle across the country, asking people to vote for the Vice President and me, wound up a trusted employee at the Commerce Department; to all of their loved ones and their families, their friends, I want to say I am very grateful for their lives and their service.

I also want to say just one last thing about Ron Brown. He was one of the best advisers and ablest people I ever knew. And he was very, very good at everything he ever did. Whether he was the Commerce Secretary or a civil rights leader or something else, he was always out there just giving it his all. And he always believed that his mission in life was to put people's dreams within their reach if they were willing to work for it and believe in themselves.

When we were over at his home a few moments ago, Alexis Herman, who as many of you know used to work with Ron at the Democratic Committee, and they've been friends a long time, told me that his favorite Scripture verse was that wonderful verse from Isaiah:

They who wait upon the Lord shall have their strength renewed. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and faint not.

Well, Ron Brown walked and ran and flew through life. And he was a magnificent life force. And those of us who loved him will always be grateful for his friendship and his warmth.

But every American should be grateful that at a very difficult moment in our Nation's history, he made this Commerce De-

partment what it was meant to be, an instrument for realizing the potential of every American. For all of you who played a role in that, I ask for your prayers for Secretary Brown and his family, for your colleagues and their families, for the business leaders and their families, and for our beloved military officers and their families. And I ask you always, always to be fiercely proud for what you have done and very grateful for the opportunity to have done it.

I'd like to ask now that we bow for a moment of silence.

[At this point, a moment of silence was observed.]

Amen.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:09 p.m. at the Department of Commerce. In his remarks, he referred to Ron Brown's wife, Alma Brown, and his son, Michael Brown.

Message on the Observance of Passover, 1996

April 3, 1996

Warm greetings to all who are celebrating Passover.

This festival chronicles God's deliverance of the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt. With faith and determination, these courageous people sought liberation from slavery and a path to freedom. Although their journey was long and fraught with peril, the children of Israel reached the Promised Land to rebuild their communities in the sweet air of freedom.

More than three millenia later, Jews across America and around the world gather during Passover to commemorate this epic journey. The holiday seder itself is rich with symbols—of the suffering endured by the Israelites in Egypt, the difficulties encountered during their exodus, and their unquenchable hope for the future. And throughout this ritual meal, unifying and sanctifying it, prayers are recited in praise of God and in gratitude for His intervention in the struggle of the Israelites.

This year Passover has fresh meaning for us. The seder's bitter herbs and salt water