

groundwork. In this respect, in March I had a useful session on Cyprus with Turkish President Demirel who expressed his government's desire to be helpful. I plan on engaging other visitors similarly in the lead-up to our Cyprus effort.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Jesse Helms, chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

Statement on the Family and Medical Leave Act

May 1, 1996

Three years ago, I worked with the Congress to pass the Family and Medical Leave Act so that we could help Americans balance their work and family responsibilities. Americans should not have to choose between their job and caring for a sick child or parent. We said we could do that without hurting businesses, and we were right. Today, a bipartisan commission that studied the act announced its conclusion that this new law has significantly helped working Americans while placing only minimal requirements on their employers.

The commission found that because we have a Family and Medical Leave Act, fewer workers will have to choose between their jobs and their loved ones if a child or elderly parent should need care. That's tremendously important in an era when most households are headed by two working parents or by single mothers.

And as we predicted at the time we fought for this legislation, businesses are finding that the new law is easy to administer and costs are non-existent or small. The majority of leaves are short in duration, and most workers return to their jobs. In fact, some businesses testified to the commission that the new law has helped them reduce employee turnover, enhance productivity, and improve the morale of their workforce.

The Family and Medical Leave Act has brought many Americans a benefit that was once afforded only to a fortunate few—the knowledge that they can return to their jobs

and keep their health benefits if they need unpaid time off to meet medical or family needs. Thanks to the work of this bipartisan commission, we now have further proof of what I have always known: the Family and Medical Leave Act was, and is, the right thing to do for America's working families.

Remarks at the Olympic Dinner

May 1, 1996

Thank you very much. Thank you so much. President Walker, thank you for your remarks and for your work and to Dick Schultz and Jim Hardyman, Steve Green, Anita DeFrantz, and others who are responsible for this dinner tonight. To the Members of Congress who are here, and Mr. Michel, it's good to see you again. I miss you. I'm glad you're here—I'm glad you're here.

I want to thank the Vice President and Mack McLarty for the work they have done on the Olympics and all those others in our administration who have undertaken this endeavor, I must say, with great joy and energy. As the Vice President mentioned, Hillary had the honor of representing our country at the Olympics in Lillehammer and of being in Greece and Olympia with our daughter when the Olympic flame was lit to be brought to the United States. Our experience with the Olympics has been one of the great highlights of our service here in Washington and in this great office.

I'd also like to say a special word of appreciation to the men and women up here on the stage with me, particularly those who were with me today earlier when the Vice President, over at Eastern High School, in the Champions in Life program, for truly so many of them have been an inspiration to young people all across the country who may never be Olympic athletes but can be Olympian in their citizenship and character and the contribution they give to this country, and who drew inspiration and strength from what was said for them today.

I want to thank Billy Payne and Andy Fleming and all those who have worked so hard to make the Atlanta Olympics and the Paralympics a great success, but also those who won the competition for the 100th mod-

ern Olympics to be in Atlanta. It's a great honor for the United States. And when opening day comes, I believe that the United States will measure up to that honor, that the world will see America achieving a new national best.

The spirit of the United States Olympic Committee was basically born with Dr. William Milligan Sloane, who helped to rekindle the modern Olympic Games and who was so dedicated to getting his team to Athens for the 1896 Olympics that he gave up his own ticket, and his wife's, so that the last 2 of the 13 American team members could go. He didn't even get to see the spectacle he had made possible. Now, I know a lot of you have given very generously to these Olympic Games, but at least you're going to get to see them unfold.

The legacy that Dr. Sloane left us has been richly fulfilled by this U.S. Olympic Committee. When our athletes line up at the starting blocks or face off in the wrestlers' circle or the boxing ring or the basketball or the tennis court, we will see the best in the world. But we have to thank not only them for their dedication, their coaches, their trainers, their families, their friends, but also the United States Olympic Committee. Here in America we do it our way, the Government does not finance the Olympic teams. Everyone pitches in and does his or her part, businesses, communities, universities, neighbors, friends, and families.

So not only our athletes but also all of you would have anything to do with the Olympics are part of Team USA, and on behalf of the American people let me thank you for making Team USA possible. We are very proud of you.

Not very long ago I had the privilege to spend a few hours with Billy Payne, walking around the Olympic stadium and some of the facilities and being briefed. Andy Fleming was there, others were there. And I'm telling you they have done a magnificent job down there, and I am in awe of the level of organization, preparation, and execution we are seeing. I am very proud of every aspect of

this Olympics, and I will be bursting with pride when the games begin. I hope in some way I can communicate to the American people and to people all over the world what the spirit and character of the Olympics mean, what the standard of excellence within honorable rules set by these Olympians and the Paralympians mean to the United States.

I also want to thank those who were there with me at Eastern High School today, who reminded those young people that no one really makes it alone and that every achievement is worthy of respect. That's what I want the world to see at the Olympics this summer. And if I could leave you with that thought—you know, when this country gets together, when we reach across all the lines that divide us, when we say, in spite of our differences of color or creed or region or station in life, we really are one nation, helping each other to achieve our individual dreams—when America does that, we are never defeated. And I believe this summer the world will see one America, a place where individual dreams are realized through common efforts, where all Americans who want to work hard are being given a chance to succeed, where different points of view and different heritages are undergirded by shared values that keep this great country strong and secure and give it its character and its future.

I thank you, all of you, for contributing to that and for making America's Team still the envy of the entire world. Good luck and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8 p.m. at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Leroy Walker, president, and Dick Schultz, executive director, United States Olympic Committee; Anita DeFrantz, member, International Olympic Committee; James F. Hardyman, chairman and CEO of Textron, Inc.; Steve Green, chairman and CEO of Samsonite; Bob Michel, former House minority leader; Billy Payne, chief executive officer, Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games; and G. Andrew Fleming, chief executive officer, Atlanta Paralympic Organizing Committee.

Remarks on Returning Without Approval to the House the Common Sense Product Liability Legal Reform Act of 1996 and an Exchange With Reporters

May 2, 1996

The President. Good afternoon. Before I make the announcement I invited you here for today, I want to congratulate the Department of Justice on the success of the Zorro 2 antinarcotics operation that Attorney General Reno announced a couple of hours ago today.

Zorro 2 targeted a Mexican-run cocaine smuggling and distribution network in the United States and the Colombian cartel with which it worked. It dismantled both the organization that owned the cocaine and the organization that ran the transportation system, locking up more than 100 individuals across the country, seizing almost 6,000 kilograms of cocaine and a thousand pounds of marijuana.

Critical to the success of this multi-State operation which is a part of our southwest border initiative was the cooperation of over 40 State and local police agencies, the DEA, the FBI, and several other Federal agencies all across the country. They combined their resources and their expertise to take down this extensive drug organization.

Today's arrests are another big victory in the fight against illegal drugs, the fight to keep them off our streets and out of the hands of our children. On behalf of the American people I want to thank our law enforcement officers for a job well done.

Today I am returning to Congress without my signature the product liability legislation sent to me this week. I take this step because I believe this bill tilts against American families and would deprive them of the ability to recover fully when they are injured by a defective product.

I am eager to sign legislation to make our legal system work better at less cost in a fairer way. But this bill would hurt families without truly improving our legal system. It would mean more unsafe products in our homes. It would let wrongdoers off the hook. I cannot allow it to become law.

One of my duties as President is to protect the health and safety of our people. Parents should know the toys their children play with are safe. Families should know the cars they drive will not explode upon impact. Our grandparents have a right to know the drugs and the medical devices they use will not injure them. It is a hallmark of our system of justice that when a product produces injury or death a family has the right to try and recover its losses. And if someone endangers the health of the public, he or she should be held responsible. I believe we can protect these rights even as we curb frivolous lawsuits.

Let me be clear: We do need legal reform. America's legal system is too expensive, too time-consuming, and does—does—contain too many frivolous lawsuits.

As Governor of Arkansas, I signed several tort reform bills into law. In 1994, I signed legislation in this room to limit the liability of aircraft manufacturers in what I thought was a reasonable and prudent way. We've worked hard to lift the burden of regulation and redtape from business. We cut 16,000 pages of Federal rules, giving a break to small businesses and working for results. I believe we can help the business community in this country without hurting ordinary Americans. But any legal reform must be carefully crafted so that the interest of consumers and businesses are fairly balanced.

For a year I tried to work with Congress to write such a balanced bill. I made it very clear what I would accept in such legislation and what I could not support. When the United States Senate passed product liability legislation, it was clearly an improvement over a much more extreme House bill. I still had a couple of objections to it, which I made very clear. And I expressed the hope that in the conference we could resolve those objections so that a bill would be sent to me that I could sign.

Instead, in the conference, the bill moved back toward the House bill in a couple of respects, and perhaps even worse, included some things which were not included in either the Senate or the House bill, but, as too often happens in Washington, were put into the final conference version.