

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:15 p.m. in the State Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Mike Foster and his wife, Alice; H.B. Downer, Jr., speaker of the Louisiana House; and Randy Ewing, president of the Louisiana Senate. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to the Citizens of Baton Rouge
May 30, 1996

Thank you very much. I want to thank Senator Breaux, and I want to thank Keith, Frank, and the Soileau Zydeco Band. Let's give them a hand, they were great. *[Applause]*

I've had a wonderful day in Louisiana. I started off in New Orleans and met with 20,000 people there at the Church of God in Christ Women's Conference. And then I had a big lunch, and I came up here. I enjoyed speaking to the legislature. I emerged unscathed; as you can see, I'm still standing here. And I think you heard the speech, didn't you? So you shouldn't have to go through another one.

Let me just briefly make a couple of points. First of all, I want to thank all the young people in this audience today for coming out here. And I want you to know that, more than anything else, day-in and day-out, I try to imagine what this country will look like when you're my age. I try to think about what we can do to make this country what it ought to be when you raise your children and when you raise your grandchildren.

I want this country to be a place where everybody can live out their dreams if they're willing to work for it. I want it to be a place where we come together and we cherish and we respect the differences among us, instead of looking for ways to keep being divided in the same old way. That's a paralyzing, frustrating, ultimately self-defeating way to live.

I want your country to be the strongest force in the world for peace and freedom and prosperity. I want to be able to say when I leave this office that—not that we solved all the problems in the world but that America has a way to solve its problems at home by coming together and a way to lead the world to make the place safer for everybody.

I want you to be able to look at your country and say, "You know, I believe that we're going to do fine. I believe we're going to grow together. I believe we're going to go forward together. And I don't have any doubt that the 21st century will be the greatest years this country ever had." That's what I want you to believe. That is the test of what we will do.

Now, I know we're going into an election season and, frankly, we're going into it a little sooner than I think we ought to. *[Laughter]* I'd like to see everybody in Washington just settle down and keep on passing bills that the people need. We need to raise the minimum wage and pass the health care reform. We need to pass the Kassebaum-Kennedy health care reform bill so you don't lose your health insurance if you change jobs and somebody in your family is sick. We need to pass the right kind of balanced budget amendment that protects Medicare and Medicaid and environmental programs and educational programs, including the AmericCorps program that is represented here. That's what we need to do.

So I wish we could put it off awhile. But the main thing I want you to know is that I'm going to try to give this year back to you. And when this year is over, I want you to feel that American democracy has flourished. But that means you have to do your part. Don't let your friends and neighbors say it doesn't make any difference. Don't let your friends and neighbors be cynical. It makes a huge difference.

You have here a great debate going on in our country about how we're going to march into the 21st century, two very, very different visions of change, two honestly different visions of what we should be doing in Washington and what we should be doing at the grass-roots. And they are honest and forthright. For all of the things that may not seem right, there are real differences between the way I believe we should reach the next century and the way the leaders of the other party believe we should reach the next century.

Now, we can make a lot of agreements, and if we just do things that we agree on, we can get a lot done for America, but the election will be a discussion about where the disagreements are. And what I want to do

is to give it back to you. I want you to feel that you are participating in it, that you're shaping the election, that your questions are being answered, that your hopes are being nourished, not that it's just some sort of couch potato mud fight. [Laughter]

But to do it, you've got to do your part. I'm encouraged by seeing you out here today in large numbers. I'm encouraged by your good spirits. I'm encouraged by your enthusiasm. I'm encouraged by your energy. But you just remember: This country has been around for more than 200 years because more than half the time, more than half the people have understood enough to know what the right thing to do was to move our country into the future, to keep it growing and going and coming together instead of being divided and diverted and distracted.

So I say to you: If we can create opportunity, if we can act responsibly in a way that comes together instead of letting our country be driven apart, the best days of this country lie ahead of us. That is my dedication. That is your dedication. That's what we ought to together give to the United States in 1996.

Thank you, and God bless you all. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:26 p.m. at the Pentagon Barracks. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Proclamation 6902—Small Business Week, 1996

May 31, 1996

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The American Dream has long held out the promise of a better life to our citizens—one of prosperity, security, and personal fulfillment for all those who are willing to work hard to reach their goals. Our Nation's 22 million small business owners possess the determination and initiative to make that promise a reality, and their entrepreneurial spirit helps to drive the engine of our economy. In addition, products developed by small firms such as the artificial heart valve, the pacemaker, and the personal computer, have

revolutionized our daily lives and made this an age of extraordinary possibility.

The number of new small businesses has increased steadily over the last three decades, with 800,000 new businesses incorporated in 1995 alone. Small businesses employ some 53 percent of the private work force, account for 47 percent of all sales in the country, and generate more than half of our private gross domestic product. In addition, industries dominated by small business were responsible for 75 percent of the 1.66 million new jobs created during 1995.

Last year, delegates to the White House Conference on Small Business forged an agenda that will continue such progress and prepare our economy for the challenges of the next century. By implementing their recommendations, "reinventing" the U.S. Small Business Administration, and pursuing other incentives and initiatives, we can establish an even better environment for small business creation and growth. These efforts are vital to keeping our economy strong and strengthening the proud legacy of innovation that has always inspired our people and made America great.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim June 2 through June 8, 1996, as Small Business Week. I call upon Government officials and all the people of the United States to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs that celebrate the achievements of small business owners and encourage the formation of new firms.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this thirty-first day of May, 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 will be published in the *Federal Register* on June 4.