

days to meet with him, do whatever I can, and meet with other Republicans to try to get the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill passed before he leaves the Senate. I think that is something we ought to do for the American people. I know it would mean a lot to him. It would certainly mean a lot to me. And I'm very hopeful that we can prevail in getting that done.

Q. Mr. President, the Medicare trustees are reporting today that there was one less year of solvency than originally expected. You have said in the past this should be put off until after the election. Do you still feel it should be put off?

The President. No, no, no. No, I haven't said—I'm sorry. Our plan—and by the way, the savings that have been agreed on already by the Republicans and the Democrats in the balanced budget negotiations would put another decade on the Medicare Trust Fund. And I think we ought to do that right away. I have always felt that way.

The plan that I detailed last year included Medicare reductions of \$270 billion, \$170 billion more than the Trust Fund—the trustees said was necessary to go into the Trust Fund to stabilize it.

But the differences in our numbers now are not that dramatic, and the amount that we have agreed on in common would add—would take it out to 10 years, and I think we ought to do that now. I think we ought to—I've always said we should go on and pass the right kind of balanced budget and do that. We can do that now with no trouble. We have agreed on those things. Providers know they're coming. Everybody understands how they would be managed. And I think we ought to do that. We should not wait.

Q. [*Inaudible*—you all can get together on those. Is that the problem?

The President. What?

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Well, yes. The problems are, I think far more than the money involved, is the structure of Medicare. I don't favor breaking the structure of Medicare. I think putting the medical savings account for Medicare payments in would be a particularly bad idea. You know, Medicare has the lowest administrative cost of any health in-

surance plan in America, private or public. It has done a basically good job. There are more seniors now on the plan than ever before. We have to deal with the population problems that exist now and the ones that are going to exist in the future.

But we have the ability right now to put 10 years into the life of the Medicare Trust Fund, and we ought to just do it. We ought to just go on and do that. We can do that with no problem, and we can do it in the context of a balanced budget plan.

Q. Thank you.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:50 p.m. at the Longworth House Office Building on Capitol Hill. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the Nomination for Chief of Naval Operations

June 5, 1996

I am pleased to nominate Admiral Jay L. Johnson, U.S. Navy, to be Chief of Naval Operations.

Admiral Johnson currently serves as the Vice Chief of Naval Operations. He brings to the job of Chief of Naval Operations a dynamic vision of the Navy's future, a wealth of operational experience, a decisive leadership style and a deep regard for America's sailors.

During his distinguished career, Admiral Johnson completed two combat cruises in Vietnam and served as the Deputy Commander of Operation Restore Democracy and Uphold Democracy in Haiti. As Commander Second Fleet, he significantly improved the effectiveness of our forces in both multiservice and multinational operations. As Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel, he oversaw the career development of the officer and enlisted community during the challenging post-cold war drawdown.

Admiral Johnson assumes the post of Chief of Naval Operations with the full trust and confidence of the Navy community at a crucial time in its history. I will depend upon him to continue Admiral Mike Boorda's high standards and demanding goals for the Navy. With Admiral Johnson at the helm, I am con-

fidant that our Navy will continue to protect and advance our Nation's freedom and security.

Statement on the Report on Substance Abuse and Women

June 5, 1996

The report by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA) on "Substance Abuse and the American Woman" reveals the distinctive characteristics of alcohol, tobacco, and drug abuse by women. The report, based on a 2-year study, provides valuable new insights into this pressing problem and documents long-term trends that show young women closing the gender gap with young men in substance abuse.

The report also points out a unique consequence of substance abuse among women, the effect of alcohol, tobacco, and drug use on newborn children. My administration is determined to do all we can to curb alcohol, tobacco, and drug abuse by young Americans, and this report will contribute to that effort. I congratulate Joe Califano, the president of CASA, and the center for their fine work in combating substance abuse. I especially salute Betty Ford for her courage and commitment in devoting her life to helping America deal with drug and alcohol abuse and addiction.

Message to the Congress Reporting on the State of Small Business

June 5, 1996

To the Congress of the United States:

I am pleased to transmit to you my annual report on the state of small business, and to report that small businesses are doing exceptionally well. In the year covered by this report, a record 807,000 new firms reported initial employment. Firms in industries dominated by small businesses created almost 60 percent of the nearly 3.3 million new jobs. Business failures and bankruptcies declined at some of the sharpest rates in a decade.

Small businesses have both contributed to and benefited from the recent strength of the economy. The deficit reduction plan I

initiated in 1993 has cut the budget deficit in half. The economy has created 8.5 million new jobs since January 1993—almost all of them in the private sector. The combined rate of unemployment and inflation is at its lowest level in more than 25 years.

A major success story has been in the women-owned business sector. Women are creating new businesses and new jobs at double the national rate. Today, women own one-third of all businesses in the United States. Clearly, there is no stopping this fast-growing segment of the economy.

Last June I met in Washington with nearly 2,000 small business owners—participants in the national White House Conference on Small Business. They took precious time away from their businesses to tell us about their problems and their ideas for resolving them, turning over a list of 60 recommendations for Government action. Their ideas are reflected in many of the recent initiatives of my Administration.

Improving Access to Capital

One of the keys to a healthy small business sector is access to adequate start-up and working capital. The Small Business Lending Enhancement Act of 1995, which I signed last October, helped to increase access to capital through the Small Business Administration's (SBA) section 7(a) loan guarantee program. Last year, the SBA provided nearly \$11 billion in long-term credit and other financial assistance to more than 67,000 small businesses, bringing SBA's total loan portfolio to \$26 billion. The number of 7(a) guaranteed loans has increased dramatically, up 52 percent from fiscal year 1994 to fiscal year 1995—and that's with a smaller budget and fewer employees at the SBA. Moreover, during that same period, the number of 7(a) guaranteed loans to women-owned businesses grew by 86 percent; loans to minority-owned businesses increased by 53 percent; and loans to businesses owned by U.S. veterans grew by 43 percent.

Other initiatives are under way. My Administration has been working with banks and banking regulators to remove impediments to small business lending by financial institutions. The Riegle Community Development and Regulatory Improvement Act of