

Again, I thank the Congress. And I'm pleased to sign the legislation, and I'd like to ask the Members who are here and the law enforcement officers to come up and be with me.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:23 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Robert T. Scully, executive director, National Association of Police Organizations. S. 1965, approved October 3, was assigned Public Law No. 104-237.

Remarks in Buffalo, New York

October 3, 1996

The President. Thank you. Wow! Thank you. Thank you. Hello, Buffalo. Hello, Erie County. You know, Congressman LaFalce, I am on my way to Chautauqua to prepare for the debate. And I was listening to you go through these steps, and it occurred to me that I ought to take you with me. I need to remember—I hope I can remember all those things you just said Sunday night in the debate.

I am glad to be back here in Buffalo. I thank you all for being here. I want to say thank you, Mayor Masiello. Thank you, Erie County Executive Dennis Gorski. I want to thank the leaders of the State Democratic Party, the Deputy Speaker Arthur Eve and Mrs. Eve. Now they have two sons working for me. Thank you very much. We have Mayor Galie from Niagara Falls here. And we have two other candidates for Congress here. I'd like to ask them to come forward and wave: Tom Fricano, the congressional candidate from the 2d District, and Fran Pordum from the 30th District. There you are. Thank you, gentlemen.

And I want to thank the high school band for playing for us. Let's give them a big hand. [Applause] The colder it gets the harder it is to play one of those instruments, I know. But in Buffalo, this is a heat wave, right? [Laughter]

Let me tell you, I am delighted to be back here in your county, in your city. I'm glad to be back in western New York. You know, 4 years ago when I came here and asked you to help me rebuild the American dream, our country was drifting toward the 21st century.

We had high unemployment, stagnant wages, the slowest job growth since the Great Depression, rising crime, increasing inequality among working families, and increasing tensions in our society. We were drifting toward the 21st century. And 4 years later, we're on the right track, roaring toward the 21st century. And I thank you for your support of our efforts.

We have worked hard to create a country in which the American dream is alive and well for all of our people, a country that is coming together instead of being driven apart by our diversity, a country that is leading the world to peace and freedom and prosperity. And compared to 4 years ago, there's a lot of good news: 10½ million more jobs; average family income is up \$1,600 after inflation since we passed the economic plan that our opponents said would drive the country into the ditch. They were wrong, and we were right.

We have record numbers of new businesses. Ten million people got an increase in their minimum wage the day before yesterday, on October 1st, when the minimum wage increase went into effect. And we learned last week that economic benefits are finally going to all of our working people. We had the biggest decline in inequality among wage earners in growing incomes in 27 years; the biggest drop in the number of people in poverty in 27 years; the lowest poverty rate among senior citizens ever recorded; the biggest drop in childhood poverty in 20 years. This country is on the right track for the 21st century.

When I became President our deficit was \$290 billion and headed higher. We'd quadrupled the debt in 4 years. It is now going down 4 years in a row, the first time that's happened in any Presidential administration since the 1840's, before the Civil War. We are moving in the right direction.

Our deficit would not exist today, we would have a surplus today—a surplus today—we would have even lower interest rates, we could cut taxes more, we could grow the economy faster if we had a surplus today, which we would have if it weren't for the debt run up in the 12 years before I became President, with the same economic program that our opponents are advocating

today: Nevermind, just cut taxes across the board; blow it off; who cares about the deficit? You should care. Why? Because if the Government has to borrow money, we're competing with you for borrowing money. That means your interest rates go up. And that's one thing I want to say: When you think about the 21st century, you have to decide.

We need a targeted tax cut that is targeted to education, to childrearing, to buying that first home, to medical emergencies. And it needs to be paid for, dollar for dollar, dime for dime. We do not need a huge, explosive, across-the-board tax break that goes to people that don't need it, like me, and increase your deficit, your interest rates, which means higher car payments, higher college loan payments, higher home loan payments, higher credit card payments, and higher interest rates for the businesses in Erie County who are trying to borrow money to grow their businesses and hire people and get this country moving even stronger. I say let's have the right kind of tax cut, but let's do it in a way that grows the economy and builds all American families and makes us a stronger country. I hope you will support that approach.

Let me say there are also 12 million families that have been able to take a little time off from work without losing their jobs when a baby's born, when a parent's sick, when a child's sick because of the Family and Medical Leave Act. And I want to see it expanded to let families go to those parent-teacher conferences and take their children and their parents to the doctor without losing their job. It's the right thing to do.

We have made every small business in America eligible for a tax cut if they invest more in their own businesses to grow the economy and make their businesses and our country stronger. We've made it easier for small businesses to take out pensions and for their employees to take those pensions from job to job. And that's very important. Only about half the American people now have a retirement plan at work. More and more of our businesses are smaller business. More and more of our people are working there. This is a very important thing, making it easier for small-business people to have retire-

ment plans for themselves and their employees.

And we have made it easier for people who are self-employed to take out health insurance because they can now deduct more of that health insurance premium from their tax bill. We are moving in the right direction.

We have made 25 million Americans more eligible for health care by passing the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill because it says you can't lose your health insurance anymore just because you change jobs or someone in your family has been sick. We are moving in the right direction to the 21st century.

And in the closing days of this session of Congress, as the American people—I don't want to take credit for this; I want to give you credit for this—in the closing days of this session of Congress—what a difference a year makes. As you heard John LaFalce say, a year ago they shut the Government down. But in the closing days of this session, they passed legislation that I asked for ending drive-by deliveries, saying you couldn't kick mothers and newborn babies out of the hospital within 24 hours anymore. The doctors and the mothers should make that decision based on what's best for the health of the mother and the baby.

They gave some coverage in the health insurance policies for mental health, which is a very important thing to families all across America. They covered for the first time—and thank goodness we have finally done it—with extra health and disability benefits, children of Vietnam era veterans who have spina bifida because their parents were exposed to Agent Orange in Vietnam. This is a better country now. We are moving forward. We are doing things that are consistent with our values.

And I'll tell you something else. The crime rate has gone down for 4 years in a row; there are one million fewer crime victims now than there were. The crime rate's not low enough, but you think about it: If we could bring the crime down 8 years in a row with a strategy that's working, this country may have safe streets, safe schools, safe neighborhoods, and the American people may feel genuinely secure again in their homes and at work and when their children go off in the daytime.

That is the America that I'm working for in the 21st century.

Here in this county, you have benefited from our commitment to put 100,000 more police officers on our streets. In 1994, Congress passed that commitment. And in only 2 years, we have already funded 44,000 of those police officers. Now in this budget we're going to keep going until we finish the job, more police working to prevent crime as well as catch criminals, working with neighbors, working with children, working with school groups, working with church groups. This will work. This will work.

Just before I came here today, I met with the police officers who have been named the top cops of the year by the National Association of Police Officers, and we celebrated the work done just in the closing days of Congress for safer streets. The Brady bill—not very long ago this Congress, the majority, was telling people that the Brady bill was going to take guns away from folks. Well, it didn't take any guns away from hunters, but 60,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers did not get handguns because of the Brady bill. And the Congress in this budget actually answered my call to expand the Brady bill in a very limited way to say if you've got a felony record, you shouldn't get a handgun. That's what the bill says now. Now it says if you have beaten up your spouse or your child, you shouldn't be eligible to get a gun either. And that is the law of the land, and that's a good thing for America. That's a good thing for America.

And finally, the Congress did something that I really strongly agree with and have asked for. They said that if States want to get money from the Federal Government to build penal facilities, they have to drug test people in prison and on parole. Sixty percent of the heroin and cocaine bought in this country is purchased by people who are involved in the criminal justice system: they're on bail; they're on probation; they're on parole. We ought to test those people. They ought to be treated. And we ought to say, "Look, parole is a privilege, not a right. And if you do drugs, you're going back to jail. If you want to stay out of jail, stay off drugs." It will make us a safer country, and we're moving in the right direction with that.

And just before I left I signed a bill which stiffens the penalty for trafficking in methamphetamine. That's hard to say; "meth" is the shorthand. You may not even know what it is, but in some parts of our country it is in danger of becoming what crack was in the 1980's. And we are determined to stop it before it becomes an epidemic.

That's what I'm trying to do, folks, in all of our problems. I'm trying to identify them, get ahead of the curve, and keep America growing and going together.

Let me just say one last thing. I know all of you looked in the last 2 days as I worked as hard as I could to get the peace process in the Middle East back on track and to stop the resumption of violence between the Israelis and the Palestinians. I want to ask you to think just for a moment, as I close, about how many places in the world people are fighting each other because they're of a different religion, a different race, a different ethnic group, a different tribe: in Africa, Rwanda and Burundi; and Northern Ireland, where I've worked as hard as I could to restore the peace process; in Bosnia where the United States and allies from all over the world are working to get people to live in peace, where there is literally no ethnic difference, even though they say they're different ethnic groups, they're in different religious groups, by—almost by accident of history.

You see, the whole world today, now that the cold war is over, we have reduced the threat of nuclear war; there are no nuclear weapons pointed at the children of the United States for the first time since the dawn of the nuclear age. But all over the world, we see terrorism; we see weapons of mass destruction; we see all of this violence rooted in people's desire to hurt other people because they're different from them.

And that's the last thing I want to leave you with. We can go into the 21st century as the strongest country in the world, with our best days ahead, because America is not about looking down on somebody because they're different from you. All you've got to do to be an American is to believe in the principles of the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights and show up tomorrow and be a law-abiding citi-

zen. You can walk across our bridge to the 21st century. And I want you to commit to keep building that kind of American community where we grow and go together because our best days are still ahead.

Stay with us, and help us build that bridge to the 21st century. Will you do it? [Applause]

Thank you, and God bless you.

[At this point, Representative John LaFalce made brief remarks.]

The President. I neglected to say this when I was speaking, but I do believe the biggest Buffalo Bills fan in the entire United States, outside of Erie County, was my late mother and her husband, my stepfather. They're pulling for you every week. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:10 p.m. at the Greater Buffalo International Airport. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Anthony M. Masiello of Buffalo and Mayor James Galie of Niagara Falls. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Statement on Passage of the Federal Aviation Reauthorization Act of 1996

October 3, 1996

In passing the Federal Aviation Authorization Act today, Congress has responded to my request to act quickly on the recommendations of the Gore commission and approved an important piece of legislation that will improve the security of our airports and airlines.

Because of this legislation, criminal background checks can now be conducted on airport personnel, new explosives detection technology can be deployed, baggage will be checked more thoroughly, passenger profiling will be instituted, and families who lose a loved one in an accident will be able to get the help that they need.

I congratulate the Congress and I thank the Vice President, as well as Secretary Peña and his team, for making this important legislation a reality which I look forward to signing into law.

Statement on the Bipartisan Agreement on Omnibus Parks Legislation

October 3, 1996

I am gratified tonight that we could reach a bipartisan agreement on an omnibus parks bill that protects some of this Nation's most precious treasures. This legislation will improve the management of our Nation's parks and public lands, and protect some of our most valued resources.

This bill encompasses my top priorities for parks legislation, including measures to improve management of the Presidio, acquire the Sterling Forest, and establish the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve. It also deletes almost all of the provisions that I had found objectionable, including those that would have adversely affected the Shenandoah National Park and Richmond Battlefield National Park in Virginia, the Sequoia National Park in California, the Tongass National Forest, and other national parks and Federal lands.

Though not perfect, this bill represents a great victory for the American people and proves what we can accomplish if we work together.

Proclamation 6925—Suspension of Entry as Immigrants and Nonimmigrants of Persons Who Formulate or Implement Policies That Are Impeding the Transition to Democracy in Burma or Who Benefit From Such Policies

October 3, 1996

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The current regime in Burma continues to detain significant numbers of duly elected members of parliament, National League for Democracy activists, and other persons attempting to promote democratic change in Burma. The regime has failed to enter into serious dialogue with the democratic opposition and representatives of the country's ethnic minorities, has failed to move toward achieving national reconciliation, and has