

also true that on a day-to-day basis he could have no policy, he was controlled by events. We are not controlled by events. We get to shape events. It is rare when this happens to a country.

And we cannot blow this opportunity, either by being complacent or by falling out over small things. This is a time to be big and visionary and active and aggressive and a time to do it together. That is what I want you to be invested in. That is what I want you to feel that you are participating in.

And whenever we announce a new initiative you agree with, or results of something you support, I want you to understand that it is all part of a bigger effort to create a country in which, really for the first time in our history, every person actually does have a chance to live out his or her dreams, a country which really can help to shape a world where there is more peace, more freedom, more prosperity, and in which we are organized in a different way to meet the different challenges to our security and to our values around the world.

This is a very good time, but it imposes a special responsibility on us because nobody is beating us on the back with a lash, making us do the right thing. Our existence is not hanging by a thread so that we pray for the largeness of spirit that people seek when they know that. We just have to do it because we understand that this is a unique opportunity, and we are not going to pass it by.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:10 p.m. at the Sheraton Carlton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to C. Thomas Hendrickson, chair, Democratic Business Council; Carol Pensky, treasurer, Steve Grossman, national chair, Alan D. Solomont, national finance chair, and Paul DeNino, finance director, Democratic National Committee; and attorney Stanley Chesley.

## **Proclamation 6973—American Red Cross Month, 1997**

*February 24, 1997*

*By the President of the United States  
of America*

### **A Proclamation**

Founded over a century ago by Clara Barton, the American Red Cross has evolved from a branch of the International Red Cross into a uniquely American institution, serving our Nation in peace and in war, and through countless natural disasters. Since the Spanish-American War, when the first volunteers brought emergency first-aid and news from home to wounded soldiers, generations of Americans have followed in this grand tradition of service.

Today, in communities across our Nation, a million and a half volunteers stand ready to help their neighbors at a moment's notice. Last year, Red Cross paid and volunteer staff assisted disaster victims across the country by opening more than 3,200 shelters and giving comfort to 172,000 people. The Red Cross also reached 16 million Americans through health and safety courses, including HIV and AIDS education and community outreach programs; collected more than 6 million units of lifesaving blood to keep our national blood supply ready, strong, and safe; and provided immediate counseling and support to the bereaved families of the victims of TWA Flight 800 and ValuJet Flight 592.

Overseas, American Red Cross workers provided emergency communications for our troops in Bosnia; worked with foreign Red Cross societies to rebuild the lives of civilian refugees in places such as the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda; and provided personnel, financial aid, and gifts of goods and services to the victims of international disasters and armed conflicts in every corner of the globe.

Since 1881, the size, scope, and complexity of major disasters have placed an ever-greater demand on the resources of the Red Cross. Yet, the generosity of our citizens has enabled the American Red Cross to continue

to fulfill its humanitarian mission, providing assistance to those in need and easing suffering around the world. We must continue this tradition, and, in the spirit of service, support this voluntary agency because it truly belongs to all Americans. Each of us can help keep the American Red Cross strong through our donations of time, money, and blood.

**Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton,** President of the United States of America and Honorary Chairman of the American Red Cross, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim March 1997 as American Red Cross Month. I urge all the people of the United States to support the humanitarian work of their local Red Cross chapters by volunteering and participating in Red Cross blood drives.

**In Witness Whereof,** I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fourth day of February, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

**William J. Clinton**

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., February 26, 1997]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 25, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on February 27.

### **Remarks Announcing the 1997 National Drug Control Strategy and an Exchange With Reporters**

*February 25, 1997*

**The President.** Thank you very much. First of all, thank you, Nathan, for your introduction and your commitment, and I thank all the young people who are here from the Boys and Girls Club, from the D.A.R.E. programs. I want to thank the members of the President's Drug Policy Council who are standing here behind me and those out in the audience who have been introduced by the Vice President and by General McCaffrey. And I thank the Members of Congress for being here and their support, and all the rest of you who are involved in this battle.

Let me say a special word of appreciation to General McCaffrey. He has literally been tireless in developing a national strategy to reduce illegal drug use and, more importantly, to implement it in a way that makes a difference in the lives of all Americans. I knew that he was well-suited for the job. I had had a lot of exposure to General McCaffrey before I asked him to do this job. But even so, I have been surprised by the increased intensity of his tenacity and focus, and for that I am grateful. I think it gives us a chance to turn this situation among our young people around, with all of your help.

Let me say at the outset, one of the things that I have tried to do, and one of the reasons I like this drug policy so much, is that it is focused on children and therefore it is a part of what I think ought to be our overall mission, which is to give our children a safe, wholesome, constructive upbringing that begins with a drug-free life, appropriate health care, safe streets, and a decent education.

I want to thank the Attorney General—today, the Justice Department has announced something else that I think is important. I'd just like to begin, because I think we need to look at this in terms of the safety of our children. Today the Justice Department announced that in the first 28 months since the Brady bill went into effect—another law directed to the safety of our children—more than 186,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers were blocked from buying guns over the counter, more than 186,000, from March of 1994 to the end of June of 1996. And more than 70 percent were rejected because the applicant was an indicted or convicted felon. Now, it seems to me that, for all those who are still out there campaigning against the Brady bill, those of us who support it can now rest our case. It's the right thing to do for America. It's making us safer. It's giving these children a chance to grow up drug-free. And I ask all of you in law enforcement to redouble your efforts to support it and to do what we can to defend it.

Our five-part drug strategy is another part of making America safer for our children. In 10 years, a young person, a young man or woman Nathan's age, will be in his or her early twenties, a time when a person should be well on the road to becoming a contribut-