

only for ourselves but for others all around the world.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:25 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Robert Wallace, executive director, Veterans of Foreign Wars; Gen. Brent Scowcroft, USAF (Ret.), former National Security Advisor; Adm. Elmo Zumwalt, USN (Ret.), former Chief of Naval Operations; and Gen. Colin L. Powell, USA (Ret.), former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; and former Senator Bob Dole.

Statement on the Supreme Court Decision To Expedite Review of the Line Item Veto

April 23, 1997

I am pleased that the Supreme Court has granted the Solicitor General's request to provide an expedited review of a lower court ruling on the line item veto. The line item veto provides a critical tool for the President to strike wasteful spending and tax items from legislation. Congress took the correct step giving the President this authority, and I was pleased to sign the line item veto into law. It is my hope that this expedited ruling will clear up any confusion on this matter.

Message on the Observance of Take Our Daughters to Work Day

April 23, 1997

Warm greetings to everyone participating in "Take Our Daughters to Work Day." We dedicate this special day each year to empowering girls with the encouragement and practical work experiences that will enable them to become leaders in the workplace of the future.

Young girls must never believe that there are limitations on what they can do or become in this country. That's why all of us have a responsibility to renew our commitment to gender equality not only at work, but also in our homes, schools, and communities. It is time to treat our children the same, to embrace their unique gifts, and to allow them to utilize their God-given talents as they choose.

As parents, family members, mentors, and teachers, we also have an obligation to introduce our children to new experiences and to extend their education beyond the boundaries of the classroom. If we are to fulfill the exciting promise of the twenty-first century, we must instill in our girls and boys a deep appreciation for lifelong learning and the confidence and self-esteem to live out their dreams.

I commend the thousands of families, businesses, schools, and communities participating in "Take Our Daughters to Work Day" for showing America's young women that we believe in them and in their ability to lead us in the years to come. You are making a lasting investment in America's future.

Hillary joins me in extending best wishes for a memorable observance.

Bill Clinton

NOTE: This message was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 24 but was not issued as a White House press release.

Statement on the Proposed "Employment Non-Discrimination Act"

April 24, 1997

Today Vice President Gore and I met with a bipartisan delegation from Congress, representing the lead House and Senate sponsors of the "Employment Non-Discrimination Act" ("ENDA")—an important piece of civil rights legislation which would extend basic employment discrimination protections to gay and lesbian Americans. At our meeting, I underscored my strong support of the bill, which will soon be reintroduced in Congress, and our intention to work hard for its passage.

As I said in my State of the Union Address this January, we must never, ever believe that our diversity is a weakness, for it is our greatest strength. People on every continent can look to us and see the reflection of their own great potential, and they always will, as long as we strive to give all of our citizens an opportunity to achieve their own greatness. We're not there yet, and that is why ENDA is so important. It is about the right of each

individual in America to be judged on their merits and abilities and to be allowed to contribute to society without facing unfair discrimination on account of sexual orientation. It is about our ongoing fight against bigotry and intolerance, in our country and in our hearts.

I applaud the bipartisan efforts of Senators Jeffords, Kennedy, and Lieberman and Congressmen Shays and Frank to make the "Employment Non-Discrimination Act" the law. I also thank the members of the Human Rights Campaign and the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, whose executive directors joined in our meeting, for their early support and hard work on behalf of this bill. It failed to win passage by only one vote in the Senate last year. My administration worked hard for its passage then, and we will continue our efforts until it becomes law.

Discrimination in employment on the basis of sexual orientation is currently legal in 41 States. Most Americans don't know that men and women in those States may be fired from their jobs solely because of their sexual orientation, even when it has no bearing on their job performance. Those who face this kind of job discrimination have no legal recourse in either our State or Federal courts. This is wrong.

Individuals should not be denied a job on the basis of something that has no relationship to their ability to perform their work. Sadly, as the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee has documented during hearings held in the last Congress, this kind of job discrimination is not rare.

The "Employment Non-Discrimination Act" is careful to apply certain exemptions. It provides an exemption for small businesses, the Armed Forces, and religious organizations, including schools and other educational institutions that are substantially controlled or supported by religious organizations. This later provision respects the deeply held religious beliefs of many Americans. The bill specifically prohibits preferential treatment on the basis of sexual orientation, including quotas. It does not require employers to provide special benefits.

As I indicated when I originally announced my support of this legislation in October of 1995, the bill in its current form appears to

answer all the legitimate objections previously raised against it, while ensuring that Americans, regardless of their sexual orientation, can find and keep their jobs based on their ability and the quality of their work. It is designed to protect the rights of all Americans to participate in the job market without fear of unfair discrimination. I support it, and I urge all Americans to do so. And I urge Congress to pass it expeditiously.

Remarks on Senate Ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention and an Exchange With Reporters

April 24, 1997

The President. Ladies and gentlemen, the United States Senate has served America well tonight. Because they have ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention, our troops will be less likely to face poison gas on the battlefield, our hand will be strengthened in the fight against terrorists and rogue states. We will end a century that began with the horror of chemical weapons in World War I much closer to the elimination of those kinds of weapons. And once again, America has displayed the leadership that we must demonstrate as we build a safer world for the 21st century.

Two and a half months ago, Majority Leader Lott and I put together a process to work through the concerns that some Senators had about the treaty. Our negotiating teams held 30 hours of meetings; so did groups led by Senator Biden and Senator Helms. At the end of the day, because we went the extra mile, we resolved the problems that had been raised by the vast majority of the Senators.

I thank the Majority Leader for guiding these efforts so successfully. I applaud the efforts of Senators on both sides of the aisle, including Minority Leader Daschle, Senator Biden, Senator Lugar, and Senator McCain. And I've been so gratified that in these past few weeks, so many have put politics aside to join together behind this treaty, as we saw yesterday when Senator Dole and General Powell, Brent Scowcroft, and other Republicans joined me, as they had previously.

I thank the Vice President, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and so many of