

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Albert Gore, Jr., President of the Senate. The report detailing the cancellation was published in the *Federal Register* on August 12.

**Remarks at Midwest Technology Corporation of St. Louis in St. Louis, Missouri**

*August 12, 1997*

Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, I'm glad to see you all here. I'm sorry it's so hot. I want to say to my longtime friend and former colleague as a Governor, Senator Kit Bond, that I was very glad to cross party lines and follow your lead to take my coat off. [Laughter] And now you owe me one, and I will call you next time there's a vote that's real important to me in Congress. [Laughter] Actually, you don't have to be suffering like this. The truth is this building is very well air-conditioned, but Barry Corona is such an entrepreneur, he thought there might be a market in St. Louis for a large sauna, and that's what we're testing out today. [Laughter]

I'm delighted to be here. I want to, first of all, say my thanks to my good friend Governor Carnahan, to my friend, our minority leader, Dick Gephardt, to Kit Bond, and to Mayor Harmon, who have spoken here today. I thank the other State officials who are here. The Speaker of the House Steve Gaw is here. Senator Ehlmann, the senate minority leader, is here. Congressman Clay could not be here today, but we're glad Senator Clay is here with his most important possession. Thank you for coming. I thank State Treasurer Holden and Secretary of State Cooke for being here.

I want to say a special word of thanks—and I'll say more about them later—to the CEO of Monsanto, Bob Shapiro, and to my good friend Eli Segal, the president of the Welfare to Work Partnership, and to all the others who are here. And thanks again to Mid Tec for hosting us.

It's great to be back in St. Louis, even on a hot August day. This city is very much alive. You can see it in the revived area and your record job growth, your commitment to education reform, and now to welfare reform.

And I want to talk about finishing the job of welfare reform, moving people from welfare to work.

If we expect to be the country we want to be in the next century, we have to provide opportunity for everyone who's willing to work for it, we have to require responsibility from everyone who's capable of providing it, and we have to find a way to come together across all the lines that divide us to make one America.

Fixing our broken welfare system is an important part of that because it means more opportunity, more responsibility, and a stronger, more united community. It's been a priority of my Presidency. You've heard others mention—I think the Governor talked about it—that shortly after I took office we began giving people waivers from Federal rules that undermined their reform experiments so they could try new and innovative ways that would work perhaps in one community but not another, perhaps in one State but not another, to facilitate the movement of people from welfare to work.

Then a year ago next week, I signed the welfare reform legislation, which really did end welfare as we know it. It was designed to make welfare a second chance, not a way of life. It gave the States far more responsibilities and opportunities to create new programs to move people from welfare to work. It guaranteed children their nutritional and health care benefits and provided several billion dollars more money to pay for child care for parents who otherwise could not afford to take jobs at entry levels if those were the only jobs they could get.

Now, a lot of people said that welfare reform would never work because the private economy wouldn't do its part or the Government wouldn't do its part or we couldn't figure out how to get people from welfare to work or—you know, I heard all the reasons that people said it wouldn't work. But a year later, I think it's fair to say the debate is over. We know now that welfare reform works.

Today I am proud to announce that just since I signed the law a year ago, there are now 1.4 million fewer people on welfare in the last year alone. In the 4 years and 7 months or so, almost 8 now, since I took office, the welfare rolls have declined by 3.4

million, 24 percent, the biggest decline in history. We now have the smallest percentage of Americans living on public assistance we have had since 1970. We can make this work if we all work together.

I come here to St. Louis and to this fine place and to these programs—and let me again thank all of you who are part of all these programs—to say that the job is not over. And the law requires us to do more, because the law says that able-bodied people, people who are able physically and mentally to do work, should be on welfare continuously no more than 2 years and no more than 5 years in a lifetime. Now, if you say that to someone and you don't want to be cruel to them or their children, then you must acknowledge that we, the rest of us, have a moral obligation to make sure there is a job there and that if they need training, that they have the training they need for the job.

The National Government is determined to do its part. Last week when I signed the first balanced budget law in a generation into law, we—[*applause*—thank you—we had two provisions that I want to especially emphasize: one, \$3 billion in a welfare-to-work challenge fund to help communities with higher unemployment rates move long-term welfare recipients into the work force; and two, an expanded and carefully targeted work opportunity tax credit which gives a significant incentive to private employers, including small-business people who need to be brought into this equation, to move people from welfare to work.

And in that connection, let me say that we are committed to doing everything we can. As evidence of that, I would like to acknowledge the presence here today of the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Donna Shalala; the Secretary of Labor, Alexis Herman; the Administrator of the Small Business Administration, Aida Alvarez. They're here working with St. Louis, working with Missouri. We're going to do this with every major community in every State in our community. We want to do our part to help you meet the goals of the welfare reform law. And I thank you all for being here.

I have also asked the Vice President to head two other initiatives for me: One, to bring civic and business groups together to

mentor new employees. I had a friend from the Midwest call me the other day, and he said, "You know, I just want you to know I really am trying to do what you asked me to do. I run a small business"—and we've been friends for many years—and he said, "I'm trying to hire people from welfare to work, but because the economy is going so well, most of the people who can easily move into the work force already have. And the people I'm trying to hire, they're really having a hard time because they've actually never had to do this before. They've never even had to show up before at the same time. They don't understand how to find—how to handle conflict in the work force. If they run up against something they can't do, they're uncomfortable asking how to do it."

We forget that if we're going to go all the way, we have a lot of work to do to make some of these folks believe in their own capacities and understand them and understand that, hey, we all mess up at work. You know that. Read my polls, right? [*Laughter*] I mean, sometimes we all mess up at work. And we've got a lot of work to do to get people in the right frame of mind to understand that having a job and keeping a job is a continuous learning and growth experience. So we know we need to do that. We're trying to do our part with that.

And finally, the Vice President is leading our effort to have the Federal Government, even in a time when we've downsized the overall Government, fill as many new openings as possible with welfare recipients until we hire 10,000 welfare recipients on our part over the next couple of years.

Now, we know that the States, the communities, the private sector also have to do an awful lot. Believe it or not, 48 of the 50 States have seen their caseloads decline dramatically. Missouri has done better than the national average, at 27 percent decline in the last 4 years. Thirty-five States have now followed Missouri's lead. Missouri asked for one of these welfare waivers, so that in certain parts of the State you could authorize employers to receive the welfare check as a hiring and training supplement for a period of time—which I thought was a great idea, a legitimate idea, particularly with people who are harder to place—to give employers a pre-

mium to really work with those employees and train them and help them become full-time volunteers.

Since I came here, first in 1994 to Missouri to announce welfare reform efforts, then in 1996 to talk about getting the private sector involved, you might be interested to know that now 35 other States have allowed Missouri to show them that this is a good reform, and they are also doing it. I hope all the rest of them will, too.

The most important thing we can do is get the private sector to hire people. That's why Barry and Chairman Shapiro are so important to us, because we've got to have the private sector hiring people. That's why the AmeriCorps project that I just visited downstairs, training young people for private sector jobs, is so important.

And last year when I came to Missouri, we announced that there would be a national effort involving in the beginning a number of Missouri corporations, and five corporations nationally to organize businesses of all sizes to commit to hire people from welfare to work. Since Monsanto and Sprint and Burger King and UPS and United Airlines agreed to start that effort, the Welfare to Work Partnership, which was founded by my good friend Eli Segal, who also, by the way, was the first head of our national service program, AmeriCorps, which has done a fabulous job, I believe, for young people in our country—but since we started, we now have over 800 companies of all sizes signed up to promise to hire people from welfare to work. What you should be proud of is that 300 of them have locations here in St. Louis. And you should be very proud of that.

Now, I want to challenge every employer in America to join this crusade. And we have a toll-free number, it's 1-888-USA-JOB1—1-888-USA-JOB1. I want the employers in this country who get this number to call it and help a welfare recipient find a job. And again, I'd like to thank Sprint for donating this number. This is quite a considerable financial investment to help people move from welfare to work, and I appreciate they're doing it. Remember that. I feel like I'm hawking something on one of those channels on television—[laughter]—1-888-USA-JOB1—I can do this.

Let me close by putting a personal face on this. There's a woman on stage with us today who is an example of what someone who once was on welfare with serious obstacles to overcome can do to become a valuable and successful employee. Felicia Booker's success took courage, responsibility, and a dream that she could make a better life for her young children, ages 2 and 6. It also took an employer, A.G. Edwards, willing to take a chance on her, and people along the way who wanted to help her realize that dream. Felicia Booker has been working at A.G. Edwards for nearly a year and a half now. She's a computer programmer, and she's already been promoted once. I'd like for her to stand and be recognized. Felicia? [Applause]

Again let me say, if this is really going to be a country where everyone has an opportunity, then we have to prove that the young women I just met in that job-training program downstairs are going to be given the opportunity to make the most of their own lives. Ultimately, that's what welfare reform is about. It's not primarily about saving the Government money. We're going to balance the budget regardless. It's about empowering every single person in this country to be a part of this country in a new century, in a new era.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:25 a.m. on the factory floor. In his remarks, he referred to Barry Corona, chairman of the board, Midwest Technology Corporation of St. Louis (Mid Tec); Gov. Mel Carnahan of Missouri; Mayor Clarence Harmon of St. Louis; State Representative Steve Gaw, speaker of the house, and State Senator Steve Ehlmann, senate minority leader, Missouri General Assembly; State Senator William Clay, father of U.S. Representative William Clay, Jr.; State Treasurer Bob Holden; and Missouri Secretary of State Bekki Cooke.

### **Remarks to the Democratic Business Council in St. Louis** *August 12, 1997*

Thank you. Thank you very much. First let me say a thank you to all of our Missouri hosts, Governor Carnahan and Congressman Gephardt. Mayor Harmon, thank you for making me feel so welcome to be back in