

left, the House has still not acted. Our farmers and ranchers have a bigger stake in the short run in the passage of this than any other group in America. So I ask you to support that as well and tell the Congress we have to do it and do it now.

Now, these are the steps that I think we have to take. I'd just like to take one step back before I close and say that there has been a debate in America for decades that underlies the skepticism of those who don't support what I propose, who say, "Well, farmers ought to be subject to the market like everybody else—a guy running a dry cleaner, nobody brings the clothes in to be cleaned, he goes out of business." The people who basically believe that, in the face of all the evidence that we have the most productive agriculture in the world, don't understand the intersection between global impacts on farm prices, the financing challenges that family farmers, as opposed to big corporate farmers, face, and what can happen to you just by getting up in the morning if it happens to be a bad day.

I know a lot of you feel like Job, you know? "Test my faith, Lord. I didn't mean it that seriously." [Laughter] But we have an opportunity here; we have an opportunity to break through a kind of a euphoria that's out there about the condition of our economy and let people know what's going on on the farm. We have an opportunity to tie the global financial crisis to what's going on on the farm. We have an opportunity to convince Congressmen who come from suburban and urban areas that the welfare, the health, the strength of their citizens—their citizens'—economy rests in lifting the whole American economy and doing the right thing beyond our borders. And they can see it in your stories, in your lives, in your experience, nothing more fully embodying the best of America than you do.

So let me say—I don't know how else to say this—there is suffering on the farm. There is agony on the farm. This is a horrible affront to everything we have worked so hard to achieve to lift the economy for all Americans. And we cannot afford to walk away from this session of Congress—I don't care if there is an election; I don't care what else is happening—we can't afford to walk away

until we do something to stave off the failure of thousands of productive family farms in America. We cannot do it.

Now, let me leave you with one beautiful quote. Franklin Roosevelt once said that American farmers, and I quote, "are the source from which the reservoirs of our Nation's strength are constantly renewed." For 6 years I have worked to renew America. We're a lot better off in virtually every way than we were 6 years ago. But we cannot walk across that bridge into the 21st century, we cannot truly renew our country, if we leave our family farmers behind. So let's go up to the Hill and tell everybody that we all want to saddle up and go together.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1 p.m. in Room 450 of the Old Executive Office. In his remarks, he referred to Lee Swenson, national president, National Farmers Union.

Remarks to the Military Readiness Conference

September 15, 1998

I'm pleased to have the second opportunity of this year to meet with Secretary Cohen, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the senior operational commanders of our Armed Forces. Today we're going to focus on the steps necessary to preserve and provide for the readiness of our Armed Forces to defend our interests and security.

Readiness must be our number one priority. It is being monitored and addressed every day at every level of command. Our forward deployed and first-to-fight units are highly ready, and our overall force is fully capable of carrying out our national military strategy. But I'm determined that we don't relax our vigilance to keep our forces ready to protect our security today and well into the 21st century.

In recent months, we've taken some important steps to strengthen our military readiness. This fiscal year we were able to protect important readiness accounts, such as spare parts and flying hours for our pilots, with the help of Congress' support for emergency funding for our peacekeeping mission in Bosnia and its approval of the request I made

to reprogram \$1 billion of our defense budget for readiness.

We struck a prudent balance between short-term readiness and longer-term modernization, so that our fighting forces will have the cutting edge technology they need to avoid long-term readiness problems, and to dominate the battlefields of the future.

The service chiefs and the commanders in chief have worked tirelessly also to improve the quality of life for our men and women in uniform and to recruit and retain a new generation of Americans for our all-volunteer forces. I want to thank them for that and say that I am well aware that we're going to have to do more in this area as well.

For example, the services have established standards to reduce the burden on our troops of the high tempo of operations and deployments. We've reduced the number and the duration of some deployments overseas, putting units on standby status in the United States instead.

Again, I want to call on Congress to support our ongoing engagement for peace in Bosnia in a way that does not force us to take money away from readiness and training. We will continue to monitor readiness, to deal quickly and effectively with any problems that do arise.

And now I want to hear directly from Secretary Cohen and from our senior military leaders on this critical issue to our security. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:17 p.m. at the National Defense University at Fort McNair.

Statement on the Appointment of the Assistant to the President and Special Counsel and Two Senior Advisors to the President

September 15, 1998

Today I have asked Gregory Craig to join the White House staff as Assistant to the President and Special Counsel, reporting to me in connection with matters arising from the Referral submitted by the Office of Independent Counsel to Congress. Joining Deputy Chief of Staff John Podesta, the Counsel to the President, Charles Ruff, and my personal attorney, David Kendall, in their rep-

resentation before House Judiciary Committee, Mr. Craig will quarterback the response to the Referral. Mr. Craig currently serves as Director of Policy and Planning at the Department of State. I have known him for many years and have great confidence in his judgment and ability.

The White House has also added former Chief Senate Liaison and executive director of the Senate Campaign Committee Steve Ricchetti and former White House Deputy Director of Legislative Affairs Susan Brophy to work as Senior Advisors to the President.

Proclamation 7121—National Hispanic Heritage Month, 1998

September 15, 1998

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The presence of Hispanics on this continent predates the founding of our Nation, and, as among the first to settle in the New World, Hispanics and their descendants have had a profound and lasting influence on American history, values, and culture. Since the arrival of the earliest Spanish settlers more than 400 years ago, millions of Hispanic men and women have come to the United States from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba and other Caribbean regions, Central America, South America, and Spain, in search of peace, freedom, and a more prosperous future. They brought with them a deep commitment to family and community, a strong work ethic, and an unwavering belief in the American Dream.

In a Nation that derives so much of its strength from many cultures and races, Hispanic Americans are a thriving force in our society and a vital part of our economy. For example, businesses started and operated by Hispanic women constitute one of the fastest-growing categories of small business in the United States today. This entrepreneurial spirit has contributed to the strongest U.S. economy in a generation.