

far. But we'll keep plugging away at it, because I think unless people have been in this situation where they're afraid they're going to lose their job or wreck their retirement because they're just doing what's necessary to hold their families together, they can't imagine it. And the law is actually a great—it's actually good for businesses, too, because it doesn't put any employers at a competitive disadvantage if it applies to all employers equally. It tends to minimize the cost, the burden of risk, for that. And I thank you very much for what you said.

But I think if we can take this whole family leave issue out of the whole—just eliminate it in terms of whether your retirement vests or not, I think it would be a good thing to do, modest cost to the retirement systems, enormous benefit to the stability of families. So I thank you very, very much for that.

Well, I think our panelists have done a great job, and I want to thank them for that. Again, what we attempted to do today was to show that on the present facts, that women have a disproportionate interest in the stability of the Social Security system and in the adequacy of the benefit because they are disproportionately likely to need it and more likely to have other assets—or less likely to have other assets.

We also wanted to emphasize the disability and child survivor benefits, which our panelists have so eloquently done. None of this, however, is an excuse to avoid making the hard decisions we have to make because of the demographic changes that are occurring. It is just that we have to be mindful of it.

And what I'm hoping we did today was not to confuse anyone, that we've still got hard decisions to make, but to say we ought to be especially sensitive to how these decisions affect women, number one. And number two, we ought to be steely in our determination not to let the surplus go until we figure how much cost is involved and how we're going to balance all the difficult choices that have to be made and the risks that will have to be taken, because we've got to maintain the social cohesion that Social Security has given us.

Think about what we got out of Molly being able to live her life under the circumstances and raise her children. Think

about what society got out of that. Think about what society is going to get out of Tyra Brown because she was not abandoned, when her mother suddenly passed away, at the age of 15. And we were all sitting there watching her talk, just feeling better being Americans, weren't we, every one of us. Don't you think it was worth it to take care of her, help her grandmother take care of her for 3 years? We all got something out of that, and she's got 60 years or more of giving back to society, that we're all going to benefit from that.

So I think as we—we identified, all of us, with each one of these panelists as they talked to us about their lives. And so I'll say again, none of this lets us off the hook for making the hard decisions, but it ought to make us determined to be more sensitive to how they affect women, number one, and determined not to let the surplus go, in case we need it to fill in the patches of the decisions to make sure that we can have more stories like this 10, 20, 30, 40 years from now.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The roundtable began at 2:30 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. The transcript made available by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the opening remarks of Vice President Al Gore. In his remarks, the President referred to feminist Betty Freidan.

## Remarks to Regional Federal Officials

October 27, 1998

Thank you very much and welcome. I know you have had a lot of briefings. I've been briefed on some of the briefings. [Laughter] I got a colorful briefing on Mr. Begala's exuberance when he was here. [Laughter]

### Kosovo

I would like to, before I begin my remarks to you—it's my last opportunity to see the press today, and I'd like to say a few words about Kosovo and the recent developments there.

I'm very encouraged that NATO's persistence and resolve have compelled President Milosevic to pull back his forces and comply

very substantially with the demands of the international community. Hopefully now the climate of fear and intimidation can be lifted and Kosovar Albanians can return to their villages and, more importantly over the long run, that negotiations toward a durable and peaceful resolution can move forward.

From the outset, we have had three overriding objectives in Kosovo: first, to end the violence that threatens the fragile stability of the Balkans; second, to prevent a humanitarian crisis from becoming a catastrophe by stopping the repression of Kosovar Albanians; and third, to put Kosovo back into the hands of its people by giving them self-government again.

We've achieved real progress toward each of these objectives: The fighting has stopped; displaced people are beginning to return to their homes; humanitarian aid is flowing; and Mr. Milosevic has agreed to negotiate self-government for Kosovo with a timetable to achieve it.

It is not enough, however, for Mr. Milosevic to come into compliance. He must also stay in compliance. To verify that, the international community will continue to deploy an unprecedented international presence in Kosovo, on the ground and in the air, something Mr. Milosevic had resisted before for a decade.

As a result of the improving security climate, up to 40,000 displaced people already have been returned to their homes from the mountains, escaping the mortal jeopardy of a winter without shelter. As the cease-fire holds, more humanitarian relief workers and international verifiers move into Kosovo, Serb forces stay out, and roadblocks and checkpoints stay down. The confidence level of the remaining displaced people should now increase. And they, too, will be able to come in from the cold.

Over the long run, stability in Kosovo depends upon a durable political settlement, ultimately, on the establishment of democracy and civil society, including a free press throughout the former Yugoslavia. Now Mr. Milosevic has agreed to internationally supervised democratic elections in Kosovo, substantial self-government, and a local police, in short, rights the Kosovars have been de-

manding since Mr. Milosevic stripped their autonomy a decade ago.

NATO's willingness to act, combined with determined diplomacy created this chance to end the suffering and repression in Kosovo and to put its people on the path to peace. But this is a chance, not a guarantee. That is why NATO today agreed to retain the authority, the forces, and the readiness to act if Mr. Milosevic backslides on his commitments.

We are at a hopeful moment, but we should be under no illusion. There is still a lot of hard road to walk before hope can triumph over hatred in the Balkans. I feel much better today about this, but we've still got to stay on the case if we want to see hope, freedom, and peace prevail.

Again, I'd like to thank Mr. Solana, Secretary-General of NATO; General Clark, our Commanding General; and Mr. Holbrooke and Mr. Hill and others who have worked so hard on this.

I'd also like to thank the people who helped to put together this day for you: Goody Marshall, Kris Balderston, Elizabeth Steele, Eric Dodds. I'm grateful that at least once a year you get to come here, and we get to tell you what we're doing, and you get to tell us what you're doing—more important, that we get to thank you for the essential role you play in making this administration work for the American people.

### **Regional Issues**

Here in Washington, we often come up with great sounding policies. You have to make them work in the real world. It's the GSA's Jay Pearson making our computers-in-school initiative work by donating hundreds of good computers to schools throughout the Pacific Northwest; or Elaine Guiney, creating the Nation's first one-stop capital shop in Boston to speed up small business loans; or John Poulard bringing together diverse groups to work to make the Rio Grande an economically vibrant and environmentally healthy American heritage river. All of you, in different ways, are the eyes and ears of this administration. You are the helping hands of our administration. And we are very, very appreciative of what you do.

And look at what, together, we have done with the American people: nearly 17 million new jobs, the lowest unemployment in 28 years, the smallest percentage of people on welfare in 29 years, more small businesses created in the past 5 years than in the previous 12 years combined, the highest homeownership in history. And last month, just a couple of days ago, we announced we reached a goal of two-thirds of the American people in their own homes, a goal we had set for the year 2000, almost 2 years ahead of time.

Now, these goals, plus the lowest crime rate in 25 years, the cleanest environment in a generation, and of course, the first balanced budget in 29 years, have been very, very encouraging to me. Just a couple of weeks ago we reached agreement with the Republican majority on a fiscally responsible balanced budget that seizes this moment of prosperity to invest more in our future. We fought for and won vital new investments for children: 100,000 new teachers; child literacy; continued funding for our goal to connect every classroom and library to the Internet by the year 2000; college mentoring programs so that we can go into middle schools and tell children that, number one, they can get the help they need now and, number two, we can tell them now exactly what kind of financial help they can get to go to college if they stay in school, learn their lessons, and look to the future.

We fought for and won full funding for the International Monetary Fund to help protect our own economy and to help to stabilize the financial turmoil around the world. We fought for and won emergency relief for hard-pressed farmers and ranchers. We fought for and won substantial increases for our clean water initiative, to head off the threat of global climate change, to protect more precious lands, to invest in science and medical research.

We can be particularly proud of the fact that we fought for and won the right to reserve every penny of the surplus until we save Social Security first. Despite efforts of some in the congressional majority to squander the surplus on election-year tax plans, we now are well positioned to save Social Security for the 21st century.

Although we should take pride in all this, and especially in the 8 days of progress that we had at the end of a long, long congressional session, 8 days of progress cannot make up for 8 months of partisanship. That killed our plan to build and modernize 5,000 more schools. The hundred thousand teachers will enable us to take class size down to an average of 18 in the early grades, but we can't do it if the teachers don't have classrooms in which to meet the children. It killed an increase in the minimum wage. It killed campaign finance reform. It killed the reform legislation to protect our children from the dangers of tobacco. It killed our chance to pass a real Patients' Bill of Rights.

So I am proud of the 100,000 teachers, saving the surplus for Social Security, protecting the environment, keeping our economy going strong. But we have so much more to do. I hope that every American will go out and vote in the election a week from today. I hope they will vote for Social Security first, for a Patients' Bill of Rights, for building and modernizing those 5,000 schools. I hope they will vote for progress over partisanship, for people over politics. You do that every day. And I thank you for it very much.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:34 p.m. in Room 450 of the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro); NATO Secretary General Javier Solana; Gen. Wesley K. Clark, USA, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe; Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke, the President's nominee to be United Nations Ambassador; Christopher R. Hill, U.S. Ambassador to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; event organizers Thurgood (Goody) Marshall, Jr., Assistant to the President and Cabinet Secretary, Kris M. Balderston, Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy Cabinet Secretary, Elisabeth Steele, Special Assistant to the Cabinet Secretary, and Eric M. Dodds, Deputy Chief of Staff of the General Services Administration; and Elaine Guiney, Region I Advocate, Small Business Administration.

**Statement on Signing the  
Community Opportunities,  
Accountability, and Training and  
Educational Services Act of 1998**

*October 27, 1998*

Today I am pleased to sign into law S. 2206, the "Community Opportunities, Accountability, and Training and Educational Services Act of 1998." This legislation reauthorizes and amends Head Start, Community Services Block Grants (CSBGs), and the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). In addition, this bill effectively completes the community empowerment agenda I proposed in 1992 by establishing a new Individual Development Account (IDA) demonstration program to empower low-income individuals and families by helping them accumulate assets for their futures.

I particularly want to thank the chief sponsors of this legislation, Senators Coats, Jeffords, Kennedy, and Dodd and Representatives Goodling, Martinez, and Clay. Let me also thank Senator Harkin and Representative Tony Hall for their efforts to champion the IDA demonstration project.

More than 33 years have passed since President Johnson signed the legislation that began the historic experiment in child development called Head Start. I am proud that since I became President, we have raised Head Start funding by more than 50 percent; increased dramatically the number of children served; and improved the quality of the program significantly. I am particularly proud that we launched Early Head Start to bring Head Start services to children through age three.

As we approach the 21st century, S. 2206 strengthens and expands Head Start—renewing our commitment to prepare our neediest children for school and helping parents to teach and support them. The legislation continues to build on the themes first expressed in the 1994 Report of the Advisory Committee on Head Start Quality and Expansion: improving program quality and accountability, responding to family needs, and strengthening partnerships with other community services. It raises qualifications for Head Start teachers; invests additional dollars in program quality improvement by in-

creasing teacher salaries, benefits and training; and requires the Department of Health and Human Services to study the effects of these investments on children.

The bill also incorporates my recommendation to double the funding set-aside for the Early Head Start program. In light of new research on the significance of the earliest years, this expansion is an essential step to reach more of our most vulnerable infants and toddlers with critical services.

S. 2206 also includes a number of other important provisions to address the needs of low-income families. The IDA demonstration program provides incentives through Federal matching funds for low-income individuals and families to invest in their futures by saving for higher education, a first home, or to start a new small business. In addition, the bill's CSBG and LIHEAP provisions will help to address the need for critical urban and rural community development projects and heating and cooling assistance for vulnerable senior citizens, children, and persons with disabilities.

The Department of Justice advises, however, that the provision that allows religiously affiliated organizations to be providers under CSBG would be unconstitutional if and to the extent it were construed to permit governmental funding of "pervasively sectarian" organizations, as that term has been defined by the courts. Accordingly, I construe the Act as forbidding the funding of pervasively sectarian organizations and as permitting Federal, State, and local governments involved in disbursing CSBG funds to take into account the structure and operations of a religious organization in determining whether such an organization is pervasively sectarian.

Overall, the bill is a fine example of the good that can be achieved when the Congress and the Administration join together to support programs that can break the cycle of poverty and despair and create economic opportunities for our Nation's neediest families. It is with great pleasure that I sign this legislation.

**William J. Clinton**

The White House,  
October 27, 1998.