

Then the next year we did the Balanced Budget Act, and it has worked superbly. The only problem with it is that the Medicare cuts were too burdensome on certain groups, and we're trying to fix that. But I can tell you that if this tax cut passes, there will be breathtaking cuts in every area of our national life that you would believe is important, over and above what it would do to totally rob us of any chance to stabilize and improve Medicare and save it for the baby boom generation.

We have big tests as a country. How are we going to deal with the aging of America? How are we going to give all of our kids a world-class education, especially since more and more of them come from families whose first language is not English? Those of us who expect to be alive in 20 years, or hope to be, better hope we do a good job of educating those kids. How are we going to deal with all these other challenges? How are we going to bring economic opportunity to people who still haven't felt it? How are we going to stabilize the economy so that we'll still be growing even better 10, 15, 20 years from now? These are big challenges. But they are high-class problems in the sense that nations rarely get these opportunities.

Once-in-a-lifetime you get a chance to stand up with your country in good shape, bring people together, look down the road, and say, yes, these are big challenges, and we're going to check them off—one, two, three, four—because we have the money and the vision to deal with them.

So my appeal today is that we not get into a big fight; we just go back to basic arithmetic. These tax bills the majority is pushing could not get the support of their own Members if we had a chart up on the wall that says, here is what we have to spend just to stay where we are today in education, defense, the environment, medical research; here's what every expert says it takes to stabilize Medicare; here is the interest savings you ought to be putting into the Social Security Trust Fund; here is what we have to do to fix health care. They agree we have to do some more for veterans care. They agree with these things.

The numbers don't add up. We cannot take the vacation without paying the home

mortgage, the car payment, and the college loan bill. We can't do it. We can't eat the cake until the vegetables and the soup are out of the way. And we cannot defy the basic laws of arithmetic. And contrary to some of the debate, we cannot forget the stories.

This is about how millions upon millions upon millions of Americans will live. Will they live in dignity and health, or will they live in want and insecurity, imposing unconscionable burdens on their children, and limiting their children's ability to raise their grandchildren? Or will we use this moment to build a more prosperous, more just, more decent society? This is about way more than drugs and trips to the doctor. This is about what kind of people we are and whether we can look beyond today to the tomorrow we all want for all of us.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:24 a.m. in Presidential Hall (formerly Room 450) in the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Judith G. Cato, member, Maryland Commission on Aging, who introduced the President. The transcript made available by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks on the 25th Anniversary of the Legal Services Corporation

July 27, 1999

Thank you very much. Let me say, first of all, I apologize for being late. I've been over meeting with the Russian Prime Minister, and you would have given me a pass, I think. I was doing good work, I hope.

Lucy, thank you for your statement, and on behalf of all of us, for the award. Let me say, I could just sit here and sort of look at all the people that are here. I hesitate to even call people by name, but I want to thank all the Members of Congress who are here, including Congressman Berman and Congressman Ramstad. I'd also—I see Mr. Conyers and Congressman Cardin, Congressman Allen, Congresswoman Waters, former Congressman Fox, and Father Drinan, we're glad to see you here, sir. Thank you. Sarge and Eunice Shriver; the ABA presidents, Jerry