

will have to pay higher taxes to offset the higher Federal interest costs on this debt.

Budget projections are inherently uncertain. For example, the Congressional Budget Office found that, over the last 11 years, estimates of annual deficits or surpluses 5 years into the future erred by an average of 13 percent of annual outlays—a rate that in 2004 would translate into an error of about \$250 billion. Projections of budget surpluses 10 years into the future are surely even more uncertain. The prudent course in the face of these uncertainties is to avoid making financial commitments—such as massive tax cuts—that will be very difficult to reverse.

The bill relies on an implausible legislative assumption that many of its major provisions expire after 9 years and all of the provisions are repealed after 10 years. This scenario would create uncertainty and confusion for taxpayers, and it is highly unlikely that it would ever be implemented. Moreover, this artifice causes estimated 10-year costs to be understated by about \$100 billion, at the same time that it sweeps under the rug the exploding costs beyond the budget window. If the tax cut were continued, its budgetary impact would grow even more severe, reaching about \$2.7 trillion between 2010 and 2019, just at the time when the baby boomers begin to retire, Medicare becomes insolvent, and Social Security comes under strain. If the bill were to become law, it would leave America permanently in debt. The bill as a whole would disproportionately benefit the wealthiest Americans by, for example, lowering capital gains rates, repealing the estate and gift tax, increasing maximum IRA and retirement plan contribution limits, and weakening pension anti-discrimination protections for moderate- and low-income workers.

The bill would not meet the Budget Act's existing pay-as-you-go requirements, which have helped provide the discipline necessary to bring us from an era of large and growing budget deficits to the potential for substantial surpluses. It would also automatically trigger across-the-board cuts (or sequesters) in a number of Federal programs. These cuts would result in a reduction of more than \$40 billion in the Medicare program over the next 5 years. Starting in 2002, they would

also lead to the elimination of numerous programs with broad support, including: crop insurance, without which most farmers and ranchers could not secure the financing from banks needed to operate their farms and ranches; veterans readjustment benefits, denying education and training to more than 450,000 veterans, reservists, and dependents; Federal support for programs such as child care for low-income families and Meals on Wheels for senior citizens; on many others.

As I have repeatedly stressed, I want to find common ground with the Congress on a fiscal plan that will best serve the American people. I have profound differences, however, with the extreme approach that the Republican majority has adopted. It would provide a tax cut for the wealthiest Americans and would hurt average Americans by denying them the benefits of debt reduction and depriving them of the certainty that my proposals for Medicare and Social Security solvency would provide as they plan for their retirement.

I hope to work with Members of Congress to find a common path to honor our commitment to senior citizens, help working families with targeted tax relief for moderate- and lower-income workers, provide a better life for our children, and improve the standard of living of all Americans.

**William J. Clinton**

The White House,  
September 23, 1999.

### **Remarks at a Memorial Service for Lane Kirkland**

*September 23, 1999*

Irena, members of the Kirkland family, Father O'Donovan, Monsignor Higgins, distinguished Members of Congress, visitors from other lands, and my fellow Americans:

I am profoundly honored to be here to pay tribute to a person I admired for many years before I ever thought I would have the chance to work with him as President, a man whom I was honored to present the Presidential Medal of Freedom, because he was in our time the very embodiment of the cause of freedom, a man who was both brilliant

and articulate, and still almost irrationally passionate about the things he knew to be right.

Back in 1985 Lane Kirkland went home to South Carolina, to the State university, and gave one of the most eloquent speeches on the role of Government ever delivered. Perhaps the most memorable line was his reflection on the terms “liberal” and “conservative.” If you look at who is here today to pay tribute to Lane, it’s a pretty good place for me to start my remarks.

He said, “As one who has been afflicted by both labels, depending on the stance of the afflictor and the foreign or domestic nature of the issue, I doubt their utility in this day and age for anyone except slapdash journalists.”

Not only did Lane reject such labels, we all know that he defied the labels, “liberal” and “conservative.” In fact, in many ways, he defied all labels.

He was a man of remarkable contrasts. You’ve already heard others speak about his humility. He was a true five-star general in the global fight for human liberty, but so down to earth, he was offended if anyone called him anything but Lane.

He was such a powerful force for justice, he could lead hundreds of thousands of working people to march on Washington. But for years, the most powerful force in his own home was a little dachshund named Stanley. He was a man of idealism and strong opinions, but he was genuinely open to people who had the courage to differ with him. He was a gifted intellectual, but on Sunday afternoons, he put his books aside to watch the Redskins on TV. He was a man of the arts, whose perhaps favorite artistry was his harmonica rendition of “Solidarity Forever.” For all of his contrasts, there was a remarkable consistency underlying everything he thought and said and did.

Both George Meany and Lane used to say, “The role of the trade unions is to try to keep the big guys from kicking the little guys around.” That was his philosophy of life. And believe me, I got my fair share of lectures about it. [*Laughter*]

He lived it when he walked the picket lines with hotel workers in Las Vegas, when he got arrested with miners in Appalachia, when

he quoted the fiery words of Zapata to mistreated Latino janitors in L.A. He lived it when he stood in solidarity with the oppressed workers of the Soviet bloc or helped to tear down the Iron Curtain in Poland and elsewhere in the communist world. He lived it when he struggled for racial and gender equality, when he fought to strengthen the Civil Rights Act, when he championed the cause of women and minorities within the America labor movement, when he helped to rescue the NAACP from bankruptcy.

You could see it in his own office, where he always treated even the most junior members of his staff with the same dignity and respect he demanded for working men and women throughout the world. He stood up for the little guy. It was his ideology. It was also his way of life.

I want to conclude today with a story that was passed along to us at the White House by one of Lane’s closest advisers. After he passed away, one of the medics who came to the house took Irena aside and said, “When I first took this call, the name Kirkland didn’t ring any bells. But when I arrived, I realized who your husband was. As the shop steward for my EMS unit, I want you to know how grateful I am for everything your husband did for us. He was a wonderful man, and I know that everyone in my unit feels the same way.”

Well, Irena, for all the distinguished speakers who will pay tribute to your husband today, I don’t think any of us could do better than that. So let me just say that I am grateful for this giant of a man, a true American hero, a man who stood up for the little guy. I hope all of us can be faithful to his admonition to do the same. It is the only way we can give him the legacy he has richly earned.

God bless you and your family.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:30 p.m. in Gaston Hall at Georgetown University. In his remarks, he referred to Mr. Kirkland’s widow, Irena; Father Leo J. O’Donovan, president, Georgetown University; and Monsignor George G. Higgins, former director, Social Action Department, National Catholic Welfare Conference (later known as the United States Catholic Conference).

**Remarks Prior to Discussions With Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority and an Exchange With Reporters**

September 23, 1999

**Middle East Peace Process**

**The President.** Let me say, I am delighted to see Chairman Arafat again. We have a lot to discuss, obviously, about our bilateral relations, and especially about the permanent status talks. He and Prime Minister Barak have agreed on a very ambitious timetable, to have a framework agreement by February, final agreement by next September. The United States is prepared to do all we can to assist them in coming to an agreement.

And I would like to take this opportunity to say that we should first meet our own obligations under the Wye agreement. And I hope the Congress will give me the funding both for Israel and for the Palestinian Authority, so that we can meet our obligations there. And we're working hard. We're into the final budget legs now, and I'm quite hopeful.

**Permanent Status Talks**

**Q.** Mr. President, what did Chairman Arafat ask you vis-a-vis the permanent status talks? Did he ask you for a more active role, more involvement, sir?

**The President.** We're just starting—we're getting off to a late start, so we're just starting our conversation. But you know, I've been active in this all along, for 6½ years, now. I intend to continue to be active, to do whatever I can to help the parties come to an agreement. If they're willing—and they must be willing, or they would not have agreed to such an ambitious timetable—then I'll do what I can.

**Israel-Syria Negotiations**

**Q.** [Inaudible]—about the Palestinian-Israeli track? Prime Minister Barak said just yesterday, any time, any place, for the Syrians to resume negotiations. There has yet to be any positive response there. What's your sense of what the hangup is there, and what can you do to try to move that along?

**The President.** Well, we're working on it, and I actually am quite hopeful.

**President's Involvement in the Peace Process**

**Q.** Mr. President, is there a chance that you'll visit the area, to give it a push on both tracks?

**The President.** I would do anything that would be helpful to facilitate the agreement. Right now, I'm not sure that would be the most helpful thing. I would do anything I could to facilitate the agreement.

**Palestinian State**

**Q.** The question of the state of Palestine, Mr. President, are you willing to spend more capital and secure your legacy as the President of the United States who achieved the Palestinian state and the peaceful settlement of the Middle East?

**The President.** Well, I'm certainly willing to do anything I can to achieve a peaceful settlement in the Middle East. The question of the state, as you know—that was a very well-worded question. Congratulations. [Laughter] But the question of the state is one to be resolved in the permanent status talks that have just begun, so I think they will resolve it. I think, obviously, that the two sides will make an agreement on that, or there won't be an agreement.

**Press Secretary Joe Lockhart.** Thank you, pool.

**Q.** Mr. President, what can you tell us—

**Q.** Mr. President, in your U.N. speech—

**Israel's Role in the Peace Process**

**Q.** [Inaudible]—what can you tell us about the performance of the Israeli side so far in the last one month?

**The President.** I'm encouraged. I think you should all be encouraged by the work that they've done together.

**Press Secretary Lockhart.** Thank you, everyone.

**The President.** Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:10 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.