

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:50 p.m. at the U.S. Ambassador's residence. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to the American Embassy Community in Oslo

November 2, 1999

Thank you very much. Well, Mr. Ambassador, Doreen, Mr. DCM, Congressman Sabo, thank you for coming with us. And thank you so much, Secretary Albright, for all you've done to make this a safer, better world.

Now, Hermelin did not tell you the truth. [Laughter] He says, "Come to Norway. I guarantee you a standing ovation." That's why you don't have any chairs today. [Laughter] He did not even tell you the truth about how he got this job—this deal about, "Oh, I got to go to Norway, and I thought I hit the lottery." That's not what happened. [Laughter]

He called me and he said—you said, "Name one person in America who has done more for you than I have"—[laughter]—"just one." I said, "Hillary." [Laughter] He said, "You can't make her an Ambassador." So I said, "Well, what do you want?" He said, "I want to go to Norway." I said, "David, you can't even find Norway on a map." [Laughter] He said, "No, you have to appoint me to Norway." He said, "You know, the Oslo accords and the role they have in the Middle East peace process." I said, "Yeah, sure, of course, I do." He said, "I, David Hermelin, am the last remaining Norwegian Jew on the face of the Earth." [Laughter]

So even though it isn't true—[laughter]—hasn't he been good for the American Embassy? You know, one of the great joys of my life, because I've spent so much of it in public life, I'll be—when I leave on January 21st, 2001, I'll be moving out of public housing for the first time in 20 years. [Laughter] One of the great joys of my life is, I've gotten to meet so many thousands of people from all over the world, all over our country, from all different walks of life with all different slants on things and all kinds of different talents. And this man and his wife, his children, and his family are truly among the most won-

derful human beings I've ever met anywhere in the world. And I am so blessed that they have been with me.

I also want to say again to those of you who are Norwegian nationals, how profoundly grateful I am to His Majesty, the King, and to the Prime Minister and the Government and people of Norway for inviting me to come and for opening once again their hearts to the peace process in the Middle East and having this truly remarkable event today in honor of our friend Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

And for those of you who were there or who saw it on television, I'm sure you'll agree it was a very moving event. And I can tell you, I met just before I came here with Prime Minister Barak and Chairman Arafat, and I think that the event and the feeling of the people and the luncheon that followed really did help to put them in a good frame of mind as we kind of head for the last sprint toward getting a framework agreement on all these final status issues by next February. It will be very difficult to do.

The chances that we can do it now are dramatically increased in no small measure because we have had one more great gift from this small but remarkable and wonderful country. So I thank them very much for that.

I would like to thank all the people who are here, our career Foreign Service officers, beginning with you, Mr. Gundersen, and all the others who are here, people who have worked for the other departments of the Federal Government, the military people who are here. I'd like to thank the young musicians for providing our music today. Thank you very much. It was very good.

But I want to especially thank those of you who have given your life in service to our country. And I want reiterate and reaffirm what Secretary Albright said. You know, in my lifetime, literally in my lifetime, which, unfortunately, is getting older by the minute, our country has never before been in quite this position where we had the strongest economy in our history, where our social fabric was coming together, not being driven apart, where we have a very high level of confidence that we can do things.

For those of you who are Americans, I can tell you, back home in America if our economic expansion continues—it's already the longest peacetime expansion in history—if it continues until next February, it will be the longest one we ever had, including those that embraced the wars. We have the lowest unemployment rate in 29 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 30 years, the lowest crime rates in 30 years, the lowest poverty rates in 20 years. Our country is moving in the right direction.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the cold war, this is literally the first time in my lifetime that we have had both a very strong economy and a society coming together and the absence of an overarching threat from outside or from inside our country.

I would argue to all of you that that imposes upon us enormous responsibilities, greater than we have had in the past, even in the cold war, to try to build the Nation of our dreams for our children in the new millennium but also to try to bring the world to the point where the forces of peace and freedom are triumphing everywhere and the sense that humanity will continue to increase its sway against all the forces of darkness will be far more deeply embedded. And if we walk away from that, we will never be able to explain it to our children.

So, yes, I want to pass a good diplomatic budget; yes, I think the United States should lead the world toward forgiving the debt, much of the debt of the poorest countries in this world for the millennium, just as the Pope and others have asked us to do. I think the United States should help to bring empowerment opportunities of education and health care and the economy to poor village people, particularly poor village women and guarantee that their little girls, as well as their little boys, can go to school, on every continent. And I think that we ought to continue to lead the world's fight against the proliferation of dangerous weapons and against terrorists.

I know we didn't ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, but I think we will do that

before it's all done. And I do not believe the United States will withdraw from the world. But to all of you who have stayed on the forefront of this important public service all these years, I just want to thank you from the bottom of my heart. And I want to urge you to do whatever you can to urge your friends, your relatives, and others back home to think about this moment in terms of what it means for our country.

Every advanced country has to deal with the aging of its population; most of them, like us, have to deal with the increasing diversity of its children. But no other country can do what we should be doing now to advance peace and freedom and to stand against terrorism and the proliferation of dangerous weapons. We cannot walk away from this. And you're a good example—you and what happened here these last 2 days—of why we don't need to and why we can be successful.

Let me say, in closing, it has been a very great honor for me to serve. I gave you all those numbers not because I think that I brought them about singlehandedly but because this is what I want America to be like at the close of the 20th century. But it only matters—it only matters if now we do the right thing with our good fortune and our prosperity. And anything you can do to make sure that we do and to tell people back home about a country like Norway, the burdens they bear, the responsibilities they shoulder, the dreams that we share, will help.

So again, let me thank you all and urge you all on. And thanks for David Hermelin's guaranteed standing ovation.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:30 p.m. in the foyer at the U.S. Embassy. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Ambassador David B. Hermelin and his wife, Doreen; Jon Gundersen, U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission; King Harald V and Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik of Norway; Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; and Pope John Paul II. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks on Returning Without Approval to the House of Representatives the District of Columbia, Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill and an Exchange With Reporters

November 3, 1999

Shootings in Honolulu and Seattle

The President. Good afternoon. Let me begin by saying that I join with all Americans in expressing shock and profound sorrow at the shootings which have occurred over the last 2 days in Honolulu and Seattle. I have been briefed on both situations. The Federal Government has offered all appropriate assistance to local officials. Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims and with their families.

Veto of H.R. 3064

Yesterday I returned from Oslo, Norway, where, with American support, Israeli and Palestinian leaders entered a new critical phase in their efforts to resolve their ancient conflict. Tomorrow I will begin a journey to places here in America that are only just beginning to feel the benefits of our remarkable economic recovery, an expansion which, in February, will become the longest in the history of our country. I will highlight new ideas and efforts that can make these communities and those like them all across America new markets for American investment, entrepreneurship, and opportunity.

In the last 7 years, our country has gone from conditions of economic distress, social division, and political drift to a nation headed in the right direction for the 21st century. But to truly fulfill our promise, we must all continue to do our jobs. And Congress, in that vein, must produce the right kind of budget, a budget that reflects the values of our people, respects the need for Government to live within its means, and looks to our future.

Moments ago I vetoed a bill because it does not meet those criteria, a Labor, Health, and Education bill that Congress sent me yesterday. The bill is a catalog of missed op-

portunities, misguided priorities, and mindless cuts in everything from education to national defense to the environment. It forces school children to pay for the failure of Congress to make responsible choices. And it fails to reflect our deepest values.

We value education. Yet this bill fails to invest the right way in education. It reneges on last year's bipartisan agreement to fund 100,000 new, highly trained teachers to reduce class size in the early grades. And at the same time, it opens the door for Federal funds to be used for private school vouchers. We need more teachers in smaller classes in our public schools, instead.

The bill fails to include my initiative to demand accountability by helping school districts to turn around failing schools or close them down. And it shortchanges other priorities, from enhancing worker safety to expanding child care to immunizing our children, at the moment when we have finally reached our goal of immunizing 90 percent of them, to protecting Americans from the threat of bioterrorism.

We value fiscal responsibility. But this bill abdicates that responsibility by imposing across-the-board cuts that clearly will damage vital priorities, even as the Republican majority has larded the budget with wasteful projects.

For example, Congress would spend hundreds of millions of dollars for projects the Pentagon did not ask for. Yet this bill would force the military to cut jobs for tens of thousands of soldiers and other military personnel. It would mean fewer FBI agents to fight crime, no food assistance to tens of thousands of low-income women, infants and children, and less help to master the basics to over 100,000 children in our poorest school districts.

We value a clean environment. But the budget Congress has passed would roll back important environmental protections. We value the safety of our families and the fact that we now have the lowest crime rate in 30 years and the lowest murder rate in 32 years. But their budget fails to put 50,000 new community police officers in our neighborhoods where the crime rates are highest, to keep those rates coming down until we're the safest big country in the world. We value