

America is now on track to pay down nearly \$300 billion in debt by the end of this year and to be debt-free by 2013. In this new era of surpluses, these “debt buybacks” will help us continue to pay down the debt, save money for American taxpayers, and lift the burden of interest payments off our children and grandchildren.

### **Statement on Senate Action on Judicial Nominations**

*March 9, 2000*

Today the Senate finally confirmed, after 4 years, Judge Richard Paez and, after 2 years, Marsha Berzon to the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

Both of these candidates bring extraordinary experience and diversity to the bench, both received the American Bar Association’s highest rating, both were approved by solid bipartisan majorities today, but unfortunately both were forced to wait far too long to receive votes.

This week the Senate also confirmed Judge Julio Fuentes of New Jersey, who becomes the first Hispanic to serve on the Third Circuit. Judge Fuentes had to wait a year for his vote, but when it finally came, he was approved unanimously by a vote of 93 to 0.

I want to thank the Senate for moving this process forward. But I want to repeat that dozens of qualified judicial nominees still await confirmation. Meanwhile, caseloads rise and backlogs mount. These fine Americans have offered themselves to serve our country—and they are entitled to an up or down vote. Election year politics should not be used as an excuse to slow down the confirmation process.

This is a good day for our country. But we must keep going. It’s what our nominees deserve and what justice demands.

### **Statement on Minimum Wage Legislation**

*March 9, 2000*

The minimum wage must be raised but not with a bill that stacks the deck against America’s working families. This bill repeals

key overtime protections, could reduce pension coverage for many families, and includes risky tax giveaways that threaten our prosperity and the future of Social Security and Medicare. Once again, Republicans in the House of Representatives have demonstrated that they would rather fight for special interests than give working families the raise they deserve.

I will veto the bill Republicans in the House passed tonight if it comes to my desk. Congress should send me a bill I can sign: a clean straightforward bill that raises the minimum wage by a dollar over 2 years.

### **Message to the Congress Transmitting the Report on Federal Advisory Committees**

*March 9, 2000*

*To the Congress of the United States:*

As provided by the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), as amended (Public Law 92–463; 5 U.S.C., App. 2, 6(c)), I hereby submit the *Twenty-seventh Annual Report on Federal Advisory Committees*, covering fiscal year 1998.

In keeping with my commitment to create a more responsive government, the executive branch continues to implement my policy of maintaining the number of advisory committees within the ceiling of 534 required by Executive Order 12838 of February 10, 1993. Accordingly, the number of discretionary advisory committees (established under general congressional authorizations) was again held to substantially below that number. During fiscal year 1998, 460 discretionary committees advised executive branch officials. The number of discretionary committees supported represents a 43 percent reduction in the 801 in existence at the beginning of my Administration.

Through the planning process required by Executive Order 12838, the total number of advisory committees specifically mandated by statute also continues to decline. The 388 such groups supported at the end of fiscal year 1998 represents a modest decrease from the 391 in existence at the end of fiscal year 1997. However, compared to the 439 advisory committees mandated by statute at the

beginning of my Administration, the net total for fiscal year 1998 reflects nearly a 12 percent decrease since 1993.

The executive branch has worked jointly with the Congress to establish a partnership whereby all advisory committees that are required by statute are regularly reviewed through the legislative reauthorization process and that any such new committees proposed through legislation are closely linked to compelling national interests. Furthermore, my Administration will continue to direct the estimated costs to fund required statutory groups in fiscal year 1999, or \$45.8 million, toward supporting initiatives that reflect the highest priority public involvement efforts.

Combined savings achieved through actions taken during fiscal year 1998 to eliminate all advisory committees that are no longer needed, or that have completed their missions, totaled \$7.6 million. This reflects the termination of 47 committees, originally established under both congressional authorities or implemented by executive agency decisions. Agencies will continue to review and eliminate advisory committees that are obsolete, duplicative, or of a lesser priority than those that would serve a well-defined national interest. New committees will be established only when they are essential to the conduct of necessary business, are clearly in the public's best interests, and when they serve to enhance Federal decisionmaking through an open and collaborative process with the American people.

I urge the Congress to work closely with the General Services Administration and each department and agency to examine additional opportunities for strengthening the contributions made by Federal advisory committees.

**William J. Clinton**

The White House,  
March 9, 2000.

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## **Remarks at a Dinner Honoring Governor Mel Carnahan**

*March 9, 2000*

Well, thank you very much. Let me begin by thanking Smith and Elizabeth for having us into this magnificent, beautiful place, for the Democrats again and specifically for Mel Carnahan; and for being such good friends and for being willing to be called Smith Barney and Bailey Smith and other names. [*Laughter*] I'm sure there's a reward for you in heaven for enduring those slings and arrows.

I want to thank the other Senators who have come here to express their support for you. I see Senator Boxer back there, Senator Murray, and Senator Cleland. I think Senator Harkin is here. There he is. And Senator Wellstone and Senator Daschle were here. I don't know if they're still here or not. But this is quite an outstanding turnout of your prospective colleagues.

I also want all of you to know that I have a different take on this than everybody—this race—than everybody here who is not from Missouri, because Mel and Jean Carnahan have been friends of mine for along time. Robin has worked with me, and their children I've had a chance to know. I want you to know that you did a good thing tonight, contributing to his campaign, because he was a great Governor and because he's a good man and a good friend and because he'll be a good Senator.

I'm for him in part because when only my mother thought I could be elected President in 1991—and my wife, as she never lets me forget—[*laughter*]—Mel Carnahan was a Lieutenant Governor involved in a very difficult primary for Governor. He had all he could say grace over, and he still endorsed me for President in the Missouri primary. It was a brave and good thing to do, and I'll never forget it.

And I was the Governor of Arkansas. Missouri is my neighbor. I was raised idolizing Harry Truman. When I was a young man here in the Senate, I worked for Senator Fulbright and got to watch Stuart Simington up close. And I may be the only person here who's actually known Senator Ashcroft for