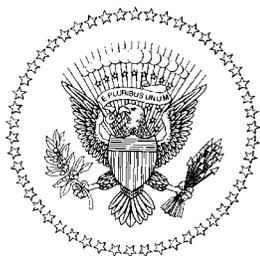


Weekly Compilation of
**Presidential
Documents**



Monday, April 17, 2000
Volume 36—Number 15
Pages 771–837

Contents

Addresses and Remarks

- See also* Meetings With Foreign Leaders
American Society of Newspaper Editors,
question-and-answer session—807
- Colorado
Gun safety rally in Denver—793
MSNBC's townhall meeting on guns in
Denver—796
- Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee
dinners—816, 817
- Georgia
Education Writers Association, question-
and-answer session in Atlanta—819
Reception for Representative Cynthia A.
McKinney in Atlanta—828
- Louisiana
Democratic National Committee luncheon
in New Orleans—775
"Messiah 2000," performance in
Alexandria—784
- Maryland, State bill signing ceremony in
Annapolis—788
- Middle East peace process—792
- PBS' "The American President," documentary
screening—771
- Radio address—774

Bill Signings

- Joseph Ileo Post Office legislation,
statement—833

Communications to Congress

- Iraq, letter reporting on compliance with
United Nations Security Council
resolutions—788

Interviews With the News Media

- Exchange with reporters in the Rose
Garden—792

Letters and Messages

- Jubilee 2000, message—785

Meetings With Foreign Leaders

- Israel, Prime Minister Barak—792

Proclamations

- National Crime Victims' Rights Week—787
National D.A.R.E. Day—806
National Former Prisoner of War Recognition
Day—783
National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness
Week—834
National Park Week—835
Pan American Day and Pan American
Week—782

(Continued on the inside of the back cover.)

Editor's Note: The President was in Atlanta, GA, on April 14, the closing date of this issue. Releases and announcements issued by the Office of the Press Secretary but not received in time for inclusion in this issue will be printed next week.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

Published every Monday by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC 20408, the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* contains statements, messages, and other Presidential materials released by the White House during the preceding week.

The *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* is published pursuant to the authority contained in the Federal Register Act (49 Stat. 500, as amended; 44 U.S.C. Ch. 15), under

regulations prescribed by the Administrative Committee of the Federal Register, approved by the President (37 FR 23607; 1 CFR Part 10).

Distribution is made only by the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. The *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* will be furnished by mail to domestic subscribers for \$80.00 per year (\$137.00 for mailing first class) and to foreign subscribers for \$93.75 per year, payable to the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. The charge for a single copy is \$3.00 (\$3.75 for foreign mailing).

There are no restrictions on the republication of material appearing in the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*.

Contents—Continued

Statements by the President

See also Bill Signings
America's Private Investment Companies
initiative—806
China, permanent normal trade relations
status—791
Elephant ivory and whale products, proposals
to reopen trade—833
Greek legislative elections—786
Organ donation legislation—806
Prescription drug coverage, Department of
Health and Human Services report—785
Republican budget proposal—771

Statements by the President—Continued

South Korea and North Korea, summit
meeting—786
START II Treaty, Russian State Duma
action—833
V-22 aircraft tragedy—785

Supplementary Materials

Acts approved by the President—837
Checklist of White House press releases—836
Digest of other White House
announcements—835
Nominations submitted to the Senate—836

Week Ending Friday, April 14, 2000

**Statement on the Republican
Budget Proposal**

April 7, 2000

This new Republican budget combines bad fiscal policy and a flawed economic strategy. It undermines our efforts to strengthen Social Security and Medicare, makes it harder to pay off the debt, and rests on dramatic cuts in education, law enforcement, the environment, and efforts to promote peace in national security.

I remain committed to working with any Member of Congress from either party on a budget that will strengthen Social Security and Medicare, add a prescription drug benefit, eliminate the debt by 2013, expand access to health coverage through Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program, and strengthen education and other key investments. Let's put this empty political document aside and work together to keep America on a responsible fiscal course that meets our Nation's long-term challenges.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

**Remarks at a Screening of PBS' "The
American President" Documentary
Series**

April 7, 2000

The President. Thank you very much, and welcome. I want to say a special word of welcome to all the voices of the Presidents who are here—and they were supposed to give me a list of them—I don't know what happened, I just saw it. [Laughter] But I know we have Senator Bumpers, Senator Glenn, Senator Simon, Representative Rostenkowski, Governors Weicker and Weld. Bill Ferris, we welcome you here. And a special word of thanks to Sy Sternberg and his fam-

ily. We appreciate the fact that New York Life has underwritten this.

I also want to thank the coproducers, Philip Kunhardt, Jr., and Philip Kunhardt III and Peter Kunhardt. And there are some other voices here from the series: Ben Bradlee, Walter Cronkite, James Roosevelt, Charlie Rose—I don't know if he's here or not—and Tim Russert.

Tonight this is a fitting way for us to open the first in a series of events celebrating the 200th anniversary of the White House. It is clearly the right thing to do to begin by honoring the lives of individuals who have roamed the halls and carried the burden of the Presidency within the walls of the White House.

This room has not only witnessed historical events, it has played a role in shaping them. It has hosted 42 administrations and 41 different personalities, every President except George Washington. The East Room began as a laundry room for Abigail Adams—an auspicious beginning—[laughter]—reminding us that there are certain basic elements to this job.

Thomas Jefferson and Meriwether Lewis laid maps and animal skins on this floor where you're sitting and charted the Lewis and Clark expedition. Later, in 1814, a banquet was being held here in this White House and in this room when James Madison sent Dolley word that the Army had miscalculated where the British were going to assault Washington, and he told her to cut Gilbert Stuart's painting of George Washington down and get out of the house as quickly as possible. She did, and they had to leave the banquet here. The British came in, ate the food, and then burned the White House. [Laughter]

Later, this house and this room was the headquarters for battle-worn Union troops during the Civil War. President Roosevelt's children roller-skated here. Over the years, this room and this house have survived a

major fire, two wars, a plane crash, and five weddings. And of course, it has been a gallery for some priceless art which embodies the history of this country.

Each President in his own time has survived unique challenges, striving to fulfill the purpose of our Founders to form a more perfect Union. Tonight we will have the opportunity to see two of these selections from the "American President" series, the first documentary series ever to profile all of our Chief Executives.

The first viewing is on the life of Thomas Jefferson. Every American President has been inspired by Jefferson, affected by his decisions, fascinated by his life story. He spent a lifetime shaping our new and ever-evolving democracy. It would become, as he said, more developed, more enlightened as new discoveries are made, new truths disclosed, manners and opinions change.

One hundred and fifty years later, our 35th President, John Kennedy—whose sister, Eunice, is with us tonight, and we thank you for coming—brought that same spirit of innovation and progress to the White House. His fleeting time in this house remains a singular story in our history. Our President for only a thousand days, he changed the way we think about our country, our world, and our own obligations to the future. The New Frontier inspired millions of Americans to take a personal responsibility for making our country stronger and more united. As he said, "The New Frontier is not a set of promises. It is a set of challenges. It sums up not what I intend to offer the American people but what I intend to ask of them."

Many great people have called this house home. All of them, so far, have been white males of European descent. I am absolutely convinced that in the not-too-distant future, there will be a woman President, and a person of color will occupy the White House and the Oval Office. But the Presidency was not built by one person. And in a fundamental way, it has been carried forward by the American people since the beginning.

I have spent a lot of time reading the histories of various periods in the White House and the biographies of some of my lesser known predecessors. One of the things that I hope this series will do is to give people

a feel of the mixture of the personality and character and skills of a President and his time, and also a sense of what personal joys and tragedies surrounded Presidents.

Just for example, Franklin Pierce, one of the only other Presidents who came from a small State and was a Governor, is generally accounted not to have been a very good President. But when you consider the times in which he served, I wonder whether Lincoln could have succeeded in 1853, instead of 1861. And almost never do I hear anyone talk about the fact that when Franklin Pierce was on his way to be inaugurated, with his wife and his only child, he took the train from New Hampshire to Washington, and there was a minor accident in which 10 or 11 people received minor bruises. But his son fell on his head, cracked his spine, and died. He never recovered. His wife never recovered.

I've often wondered why it was that Abraham Lincoln, who would have a hard time getting elected today because he had terrible periodic, persistent bouts of depression before he became President, was married to a wife who was bubbly and strong and happy and, as far as I know, has the distinction of being the only woman in American history to have been courted by three of the four candidates for President in 1860. [Laughter] For John Breckenridge and Stephen Douglas also pursued her, and clearly she made the right decision. [Laughter]

But they had lost a child before they came to the White House. They lost another child here. She lost three half-brothers fighting for the Confederacy. And then all the carnage of the Civil War, the burden of the tragedies they faced broke Mary Todd Lincoln, and in history she is seen as a very different person from the person she really was for most of her life. And yet, in some magical way, all the personal and national trauma of that time was absorbed by Abraham Lincoln in a way that enabled him to become stronger, to overcome his own demons, to leave aside his own depression, and to become, in my view, the greatest President we ever had.

So I hope when this whole series is done, there will be a greater appreciation for people like Rutherford B. Hayes, who Senator Glenn is the voice of in this series.

Rutherford B. Hayes was one of four or five Union generals from Ohio who became President. After the Civil War, if you were a Union general from Ohio, you had about a 50 percent chance of becoming President. [Laughter] It's the only category in our history that has ever been like that. And a lot of the rest of us wish that it had been so easy. [Laughter]

I hope we'll understand those people that we don't know very much about. I hope we'll have a better understanding of the personal circumstances that Presidents face. I hope we'll have a better understanding of how they fit with their times and how they overcame their difficulties, as President Lincoln did.

Theodore Roosevelt once complained that he would never be viewed as a great President because he had the misfortune to serve when there was no great war. He couldn't have been more wrong. And I'm convinced his temperament was absolutely perfectly suited to the times in which he served. Ironically, since he complained about having no war, he's the only President ever to win the Nobel Prize for peace. [Laughter] Which all goes to show you, you've just got to show up every day and do your best. [Laughter]

Now, I'd like to ask Sy Sternberg, the chairman of New York Life, to come up. And again, I think we should all thank him for making this evening possible. [Applause]

[At this point, Seymour Sternberg, chairman and chief executive officer, New York Life Insurance Corp., made brief remarks and introduced coproducer Philip Kunhardt III, who made brief remarks and presented two clips from the series.]

The President. Well, I would like to, first of all, congratulate Hugh Sidey and Richard Neustadt on the marvelous job they have done with this program, and all of you who are involved in it.

When I was watching those two very important pieces of our history, I couldn't help feeling grateful for some of the things which have been passed down to the present day, to me. The day before I became President, I received a copy of the only book that Thomas Jefferson ever wrote, "Notes From the State of Virginia," which is remarkable for its incredibly detailed analysis of every-

thing about the State. But it's most important today because it contained the first known recording of Thomas Jefferson's condemnation of slavery. And it always struck me that every person in this job lives with a certain ambiguity, and I wondered how he dealt with it. But I'm grateful for what he left us.

Shortly after I became President, Pamela Harriman gave me a copy of the ink blotter that President Kennedy used in his office in the White House, that Mrs. Kennedy had given to her husband, Averill, about 12 days after President Kennedy was killed—with the letter that Jackie Kennedy had written. And because it was my great good fortune to know Jackie and her children, it is one of my most precious possessions. About once a month I open the ink blotter and read the letter again, just to remember how fleeting life is and what a great gift every day is.

I think one of the most treasured pictures I have from my time in the White House is the picture I have of young John Kennedy looking at his father's portrait on a visit he made here, when we had a wonderful preview here of the great series on space that HBO did.

So the history of the country goes on, and the families come and go. But you have given us a great gift tonight, and this whole series will be a great gift. And one of the things that I had hoped would occur, you have done, even with people who lived long ago: You have reminded us that for all their achievements and all their failures, they were also people.

The great premise of democracy is that ordinary people will make the right decision most of the time; that no one is irreplaceable, but that freedom is.

I hope you'll all join us now in the Dining Room for a reception. And thank you again, to the Kunhardts; thank you again, Sy; thank you again to PBS; and thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:25 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Senators Dale Bumpers, John Glenn, and Paul Simon; former Representative Dan Rostenkowski; former Governors Lowell P. Weicker, Jr., of Connecticut and William F. Weld of Massachusetts; Ben Bradlee, former executive editor, Washington Post; Walter Cronkite,

former CBS News anchorman; James Roosevelt, grandson of Franklin D. Roosevelt; Charlie Rose, host of PBS' "The Charlie Rose Show"; Tim Russert, host of NBC News' "Meet the Press"; and Hugh Sidey, narrator, and Richard Neustadt, on-camera scholar, "The American President." This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

April 8, 2000

Good morning. In less than a week, Members of Congress will adjourn for spring recess, leaving behind a great deal of unfinished business. Today I'd like to speak with you about some of the pressing priorities that are languishing in Congress and the real consequence of this delay on people's lives.

First, we've waited far too long for a strong and enforceable Patients' Bill of Rights. Last October the House passed the bipartisan Norwood-Dingell Patients' Bill of Rights by an overwhelming margin. I would sign that bill tomorrow. Unfortunately, the Senate passed a much weaker bill. Now both bills have been gathering dust on a shelf for more than 5 months.

Delay may be easy for the congressional majority, but it's proving very hard on our families. According to a new analysis of physician reports, every single day the Congress sits on this legislation, thousands of patients experience serious declines in health as a direct result of bottom-line-driven managed care decisions.

At this time of great change in our health care system, patients need a guarantee that they can see a specialist and go to the nearest emergency room, a guarantee that their doctor can discuss the best treatment options, not just the cheapest, a guarantee to an internal and external appeals process, and a guarantee that they can hold a health plan accountable if it causes them great harm. They need a strong Patients' Bill of Rights. And they need it now.

Second, we've waited too long for an increase in the minimum wage. Last year we introduced legislation to give a well-deserved raise to 10 million working families by lifting the minimum wage by a dollar an hour. A dollar an hour—it may not sound like much,

but in the 7 months that have gone by since our legislation would have gone into effect, families have lost more than \$600 in income. That's enough to pay for 2 months of groceries or almost a semester of community college. For these hard-pressed families, the cost of congressional delay can be measured not just by the day but literally by the hour.

Third, we've waited too long for Congress to fund our supplemental budget—budget priorities like helping the victims of Hurricane Floyd, aiding families struggling with high energy prices, supporting our troops and our peacekeeping efforts to build stability in Kosovo, providing debt relief to the poorest nations, and combating drug traffickers in Colombia. Now, delays in this funding could jeopardize military readiness, undermine international support for Colombia's democracy and its antidrug efforts that directly protect our people here, and leave many hurricane victims in temporary shelter for the second straight winter.

Finally, we've waited too long for commonsense gun safety legislation. Last year, with a tie-breaking vote by Vice President Gore, the Senate passed a bill that would require child safety locks for every handgun sold, ban the importation of large ammunition clips, and close the loophole that allows criminals to buy firearms at gun shows. Unfortunately, the House failed to pass similar measures. And even more disturbing, 9 months now have gone by, and the Congress has taken almost no action to complete a bill for me to sign.

Every day we wait, 89 Americans—12 of them young people—are killed by gunfire. Of course, no legislation can prevent every act of gun violence or every gun accident. But when there are simple safety measures we can take, measures that will save lives. There is absolutely no excuse for sitting on our hands. Two days ago Senators from both parties voted to push congressional negotiators to produce a final gun bill by April the 20th, the anniversary of Columbine. That's the very least we can do.

With only a week to go before recess, I ask the congressional leaders to think about these daily tallies: 12 children dying from gunfire; thousands of managed care patients

suffering unnecessary declines in health; millions of working families missing out on a long-overdue raise. These are just some of the everyday costs of failing to do the people's business. So let's get back on track. Let's work together to protect the health, the safety, the welfare of the American people. Let's safeguard their financial security, and in so doing, our national security. And let's do it now.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 3:00 p.m. on April 7 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on April 8. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 8 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Luncheon in New Orleans, Louisiana

April 8, 2000

Thank you. Well, thank you very much, Arnold. And Celia, thank you. We would have all come here today just to see your beautiful home. And unless you're lucky, half of us may take a swim before we leave. [Laughter] But I thank you so much for opening your home and for reminding me of that speech that I gave. It seems like a long time ago in one way, and another just like yesterday.

I want to thank my good friend Sheriff Harry Lee, who proved to me that you could get bad press and the people would stay with you. [Laughter] So I simply decided to test the theory, and it got a little out of hand. [Laughter] Now, that's a crack I probably wouldn't make anyplace in America outside of Louisiana. [Laughter]

I got tickled when Mayor Rendell said he'd never met anybody like Ray Reggie. I thought, that's true, but if you stayed down here long enough, you'll meet 4 or 500 people you never met anybody like before and never will again. [Laughter]

So Ray, thank you. Thank you, David Young. Thank you, Mary Lou Winters. I want to congratulate our young State representative, Karen Carter. Her father has been a friend of mine forever. And once Karen came

up and accosted me and chewed me out over something she thought I was wrong about, and then she later thought maybe she'd gone too far. And I told her daddy that I'd be proud if my daughter could talk to the President that way. [Laughter] Not because—because she wasn't disrespectful; she was just aggressive and articulate. And I'm glad to see her being so successful.

And Mrs. Morial, it's nice to see you. I want to say a special word of thanks to Bill and Andrea Jefferson for being here. Bill Jefferson was for me when only my mother thought I could be elected President. [Laughter] In our immediate household, it was a close call. So I thank him for all of his friendship and support over the years.

And I thank all of you who worked so hard to raise these funds for our party. I want to thank all the young people who worked on this event. And my friend Mayor Rendell—you know, when I first met Ed Rendell, we went to Philadelphia. I was running for President, and he took me to a neighborhood where he had worked to eradicate gangs and drugs, in a very poor neighborhood. And we walked down the street, and I could see his evident pride that he had helped to change the lives of people who were very often overlooked by other public officials. And then we got to the end of the street, and he challenged me to shoot baskets. There was a little park there. And even though he knew I might become President, he beat me anyway—[laughter]—which I sort of respected. And we've been friends ever since. And I have been waiting for 8 years for a chance to get even. And when I talked him into becoming chairman of the Democratic Party I said, "You know, it's just a little part-time job; it won't take much work." [Laughter] He had a full head of hair when he took this job. [Laughter]

But he's really been wonderful. And I think it's a great thing to have our party headed by someone who's actually been elected to something, served people at the grassroots level, understands the problems and the promise of all different kinds of people. And Philadelphia is a magnificent city that's been very good to me and to the Vice President. So I want to thank him.

I've been to Louisiana a lot since I've been President, about half as many times as I would have liked to have been. And I want to thank you all, and through you and the media here, to all the people of this State, for voting for me twice for President and for giving me the chance to serve.

I am a little perplexed some days that this is the first time since 1974 they've held an election and my name hasn't been on a ballot. [Laughter] I like to joke that most days I'm all right about that. So today I'd like to talk to you from the perspective of someone who is not a candidate but is profoundly grateful for what this country has given to me and for what this State has done for me. I'm grateful that I had the chance to serve at a very crucial moment in American history, when we were in need of making some difficult decisions about what kind of country we were going to be and how we were going to prepare for a new century.

And I guess I want to make just two or three brief points, because when you come to a deal like this I'm sure maybe for a few days afterward people say, "Well, what was it like? And what did the President say? And was it really worth all the money it cost you to go? And why did you do such a stupid thing?" [Laughter] I'm sure you get asked all those questions. So I'd just like you to think about a few things.

First of all, this country is in a lot better shape than it was in 1992. We had high unemployment, high interest rates, low growth, almost no new jobs, our social problems like crime and welfare were getting worse, and we didn't seem to have any governing vision for taking us into the new century. And I think ideas matter a lot.

You mentioned—Ed Rendell made the remark about what a diverse group we have here, and he made a remark about the contributions of people who have brought lawsuits on behalf of injured people that I agree with, but I—sometimes I get criticized from the other side because I want to pay America's debt off. One columnist, a couple of weeks ago, who is a friend of mine, a man I admire very much, accused me of embracing Calvin Coolidge economics. I'll explain why; I'm going to do it in a minute. But the point is, when I ran in '92, I had been, as

President Bush said, the Governor of a small southern State, somewhere to the north of here. And I was so dumb, I thought he was complimenting me when he said that. [Laughter] I was kind of proud of it, myself. I still am, to tell the truth. And the way Washington worked didn't make a lick of sense to me. I mean, there was a liberal position and a conservative position; there was a Democratic position and there was a Republican position. And the one thing that you couldn't do without being accused of heresy is try to unlock the differences or come out with a third position that would go beyond both of them. And it looked to me like it was a very serviceable setup for politicians who needed to get on the news for 15 seconds every night, because only conflict will guarantee you a place on the airwaves. But it wasn't doing very much good for the American people.

And so I asked the people to give me a chance to try a different way. I really believed we could have a country that could get rid of the deficit and still increase our investment in education and our children and their future. I believed we could grow the economy and improve the environment. I thought we could be pro-business and pro-labor. I thought we could get rid of unnecessary Government bureaucracy and still be more vigorous in the pursuit of those things we saw to be pursued. I believed all that.

And I remember when I first started giving these talks, the people who had been covering politics for years looked at me as if I were some sort of heretic or it was just political gobbledey-gook.

But first I want to say, ideas matter. Because after 8 years, we have—instead of record deficits and a debt that was quadrupled under the previous administrations and their theories, we've got the first back-to-back surpluses in 42 years and the longest economic expansion in history and the lowest minority unemployment ever recorded and the lowest overall unemployment in 30 years, the lowest female unemployment in 40 years.

So we did it by being pro-business and pro-labor. We did it by getting rid of the deficit, and we've about doubled our investment in education and training for our children and dramatically increased access to college and

raised the standards for education. So, you can do these things.

The air is cleaner; the water is cleaner; the food is safer. We've tripled the number of toxic waste dumps we cleaned up over the previous two administrations. And the economy is stronger. So it makes sense.

We've got a stronger Federal Government, but it's the smallest Government since 1960. We've eliminated hundreds of programs, and I will give anyone here the ticket price here—I'll give you your money back if you can stand up right now and name three of them. Any takers? [*Laughter*]

I say that because I didn't think it was anti-Democratic or anti-progressive to recognize that we had programs on the books that were no longer serviceable, that just kept getting funded because people couldn't think of anything better to do with the money. And we were up to our ears in debt, and we had to get out. And we needed the money for education; we needed the money for health care; we needed the money for the environment; we needed the money for helping poor people move from welfare to work.

So that's the first thing I want to say to you. Ideas really matter. I've learned that in over 20 years of public life and over 7 years of being your President. One of the reasons that I support the Vice President is that he understands the future. He understands the importance of ideas; he knows how to get us there. These things aren't just slogans to him. I've spent too many hours with him doing too much work, making too many difficult decisions.

The second thing I want to tell you is, our adversaries are smart, and they want back in in the world's worst way. And they figured out the way to do it is to try to blur the differences within the party until they get in and they start appointing their judges and passing their bills and doing their thing. But in the meanwhile, they'd like to blur the differences.

So I want to tell you there are differences. Let me just cite a few. We worked hard to turn this deficit around and start running these surpluses. And we're paying off the debt at a rapid rate. Now, I'm not against a tax cut. I'm actually for a tax cut if it's small enough to enable us to save Social Security,

reform Medicare, and add a prescription drug benefit to the 70 percent of our seniors that can't afford it today; continue to invest in education, health care, and the environment and science and technology and research; and pay the debt off. We can get out of debt, for the first time since 1835, in 12 years. And I think we ought to do it, not just because it sounds good, but because if we keep paying the debt down, we'll keep interest rates down, and there will be more money for people to borrow to start businesses, to hire people, to invest in their equipment, to move the economy along. That's what I think.

Now, in spite of all that, I still have offered a tax cut, and the Vice President has offered one, I think, in the campaign, in the same range. We could give people a \$3,000 tax credit for long-term care costs for their parents or disabled relatives; let people deduct the cost of college tuition for their kids, up to \$10,000 a year; increase the child care tax credit; increase the earned-income tax credit for lower income working people. Nobody who works for a living and has kids at home should be in poverty. The tax system ought to take them out. That's what I believe.

We still have a sizeable tax system. We could even give them some relief on the marriage penalty, an issue where our Republican friends say they're interested. But I don't think we ought to do that at the expense of what got us here. We've got the longest economic expansion in history because we said we're going to get rid of the deficit, invest in education and technology, and sell more American products around the world. That's how we got here. And so there's a big difference.

What's the difference? The other party wants a tax cut even bigger than the one I vetoed last year. Even bigger. Now, they'll tell you they're for education; they're for the environment; they're for this, that, and the other thing. The truth is they're not going to have any money. They promised this huge tax cut and even bigger increases in defense than I've advocated, and the money won't be there. Or if they do spend this money, it means that we won't be able to save Social Security for the baby boom generation's retirement. Or it means we go back and start

running a deficit again, and we'll have all the same problems we had the last time we did that.

Now, so I would say to you, I don't think this is rocket science. What they're running on—now, they're using different words and blurring the distinctions, but what they're running on is the exact same economic program they pursued for the last 12 years the last time. And so the American people—when they ask you why you're here, you say, "Well, I think we're better off than we were 8 years ago, and we've got a choice that's the same choice we had before about which economic strategy we're going to follow." Except in 1992, you took a chance on me, but in 2000, you now have evidence about how their system works and how ours works. And you need to tell people about this.

Because every day all these folks are going to be saying different things. All the ones running for Senate and Congress and President, they're all going to be emphasizing this issue and that. But I'm telling you, I've been there. You can make promises until the cows come home, but if you're going to deliver the promises, there is a price tag on it, and it all has to add up in the end. Or if it doesn't add up, you're going to cut something else or start running deficits again.

The central thing you need to know about the economic differences between the parties is, after I vetoed that huge tax cut last year to keep the economy going—and I might add, after I did it, the economic growth in the last quarter of last year was 7.3 percent, the biggest in a coon's age. Nobody can remember when that was—[*laughter*—forever and ever. Nobody can remember that.

Now, they come back and say, "That tax cut he vetoed wasn't big enough; we want a bigger one." And let me tell you what's on the other side. The number of people over 65 in this country is going to double in the next 30 years. I hope to be one of them. There will be two people working for every one person drawing Social Security. The baby boom generation—that's anybody here between the ages of 54 and 36—and I can only tell you about the older baby boomers, because I was born in the first generation of them—we are panicked about the pros-

pect that our retirement might undermine our children's ability to raise our grandchildren.

Now, we've got the money right now, if we don't throw it away, we have the money right now to pledge the interest savings from paying down the debt to the Social Security Trust Fund and take it out to 2054—54 years from today—beyond the life of all but the most fortunate baby boomers. We ought to do it. And it's more important to your long-term financial health than a tax cut we can't afford.

If we were starting Medicare again today—now, we're for that; they're not—if we were starting Medicare again today, we would never design a Medicare program without a prescription drug component. When Medicare was set up 35 years ago, it was basically a critical care program, the fund covered doctor and hospital bills. Now, anybody that lives to be 65 years old has got a life expectancy of 83 years, and it's going to keep going up.

There needs to be more attention to preventive care, to chronic problems, to all kinds of things that medicine can have a big impact on. And literally, almost three-quarters of our seniors either don't have any or don't have an adequate and affordable prescription drug coverage. It's a big deal. You overdo the tax cut, you can't cover enough people. And we have differences on how many people we want to cover with them.

In education, it's fine to say you want to have higher standards for our schools and all these other good programs, but you've still got to pay for them. They've still got to be paid for. Our program is, repair our schools that need repairing, build thousands of new schools, hook them all up to the Internet, put another 100,000 teachers out there—2 million teachers are going to retire in the next few years, and more kids in the schools than ever before. So I think we ought to help put more teachers in the early grades. Have higher standards, but give schools the help they need for after-school, for summer school, for the reading, the mentoring program, so that you don't blame kids for the failure of the system. I've got no problem with ending social promotion and having higher standards, but if you're going to do it, you've got to

give the kids a chance to succeed. And I think most people believe that. So there are differences. And it all starts on the economic front with this.

There are also differences on a lot of other issues. I'm trying to raise the minimum wage a buck a year over 2 years. And they won't just pass a clean minimum wage bill; they're trying to get a humongous tax cut out of it. But you know, the last time we raised the minimum wage, about 6 years ago, they said, "Oh, boy, this will drive up unemployment." Twenty-one million jobs later, we know that if you've got a good economic policy and a strong economy, paying people a decent wage who are working hard does not hurt the economy. And it's time to raise it again.

And do you know, if we raise it again, it would still be, in real dollar terms, we'd still only be back where we were about 30 years ago, in terms of the purchasing power? So we ought to raise it. We're for it; they're not.

On the gun issue—I grew up down here. I grew up in a culture that valued hunting, sport shooting. When I signed the Brady bill there was the awfulest commotion you ever heard in the assault weapons ban. People said, oh, they were going to lose their guns and all that. We heard all that stuff. Well, nobody has missed an hour in the deer woods. But 7 years later, 500,000 people—felons, fugitives, and stalkers—have not gotten handguns, and it could be a reason why we have a 30-year low in gun death rates.

So now the issue is, should there be child trigger locks on the guns; should we ban the import of large capacity ammunition clips, which makes a mockery of the assault weapons ban because you just import the clips, then you adjust the gun to take the new clip; and should we do a background check at the gun shows?

Now, when we passed the Brady bill, the people that were against it said it won't do you any good to do a background check of people who buy guns from gun stores because all the criminals buy their guns at the gun shows. I said, "Oh, surely some buy their guns at the gun stores." And sure enough, a half-million did anyway. [Laughter] So now I go back to the same people and I say, "You remember when you told me 7 years ago all these people were buying their guns at the

gun shows? Well, we have the technology to do these background checks now, they're not particularly burdensome, let's do them." They said, "Oh, my goodness, we couldn't do that. It would be the end of civilization as we know it." [Laughter]

And all I can tell you is, I think it will keep kids alive. And I have never done anything, to the best of my knowledge, not one thing in my public life that interfered with the legitimate rights of hunters and other lawful gun owners. That is not what this is about. It's not about scare tactics and slogans.

Somebody asked me the other day what I thought about all the mean things Charlton Heston has said about me. I said, "I like his movies very much." [Laughter] And I actually—he came to the White House a couple of years ago for the Kennedy Center Honors—I liked him very much. This is just a difference of opinion here.

I think it's really unfair to even say the Republicans are sort of in the pocket of the NRA, as if they're doing something they don't believe. I think they believe that. We think differently about this. This is a difference of opinion.

They believe that basically this is the one area of our national life—guns—where there should be no prevention, all punishment. They do say—and I've increased gun prosecutions and want to increase them some more, and they're going to support me on that, I think—give us more prosecutors and all that. But they believe the only answer is wait until somebody breaks the law and throw the book at them. But this is the one area of our national life where we can't have prevention.

Well, you think about that. We have prevention everywhere else. We've got crosswalks for walking across the street, trying to keep people from getting run over. We put seatbelts on when we get in the car, trying to keep our heads from going through the dashboard. We put our kids in these child safety seats, trying to keep them from flying around if we have to slam on the brakes. We've got speed limits. We have airport metal detectors. Why do we have all this stuff? Most people are law-abiding, sensible, careful, and safe, in every endeavor. But you still do what you can to stop bad things from

happening in the first place, right? I mean, that's what you do. When it's your family and your life and your kids, that's what you do. And that's what smart societies do. All this is about is whether we're going to do sensible things to prevent bad things from happening.

I said it in my press conference the other day—I don't know if any of you saw it—I said, what do you think the country would think of me if I said, "You know, I'm really worried about how many people are crowding in our airports and how hot they are and tired they are and pushed together they are. And 99.9 percent of them are the best people you ever want to meet in your life. They're totally law-abiding; they would never think of doing anything. And it drives them nuts to be late for an airplane and go through one of these metal detectors; and they've got a rodeo belt on or a big, old, heavy money clip, and they go, 'bing, bing, bing, bing, bing, bing.' They have to go out, and you take everything out of your pockets, you go through it, it goes off again, and you have to go out and do it again. It just drives them nuts. And I just think it's so burdensome, and since almost all of them are law-abiding, let's just take them all out. And the next time a plane blows up, we'll throw the book at them." [Laughter]

Now, that is the logic. That is the logic behind not doing these background checks. But man, this has got nothing to do with the deer season. It's got nothing to do with the gun shows. It's got nothing to do with anything. It's a question of whether you believe there should be prevention in this area of our national life.

See, I believe America could be the safest big country in the world. When I got elected President, nobody even thought the crime rate could go down. I did because I'd been out to places like Philadelphia. I'd seen this. I believe America can be the safest big country in the world now. And if I were running the NRA, I would have a whole different take on this. I'd say, "I'd like to prove that you can have the safest big country in the world and still have people who like to go hunting, go to these shooting contests and have a good time, own guns lawfully, be trained carefully, that use them." I'd like to prove that. I wouldn't be against all this prevention stuff.

I think prevention is an important part of life. But there are differences here. And you know what the other differences are.

So the first thing I want to say is, the country is in better shape. Ideas matter. We've tested ours; we've tested theirs. On the economy, they want to do what they did before. And if you do it, you'll get the same consequences you got before. And all the other things they talk about, all of them running for all these offices, you have to view in view of their commitment to a tax cut even bigger than the one I vetoed.

The second thing I want to say is, I think these other issues matter: what you do in education; what you do with the environment; what you do with crime and how you do it.

The last thing I want to say is this. The Democrats have lost some votes since I've been in here, I'm quite sure because we take a very inclusive view of society, and we don't believe that people ought to be discriminated against just because they're female, just because of their race, just because they're handicapped, or even if they're gay—in the workplace—subject to hate crimes or anything else. That's what we believe. And some people are threatened by that, and they don't think we're good Americans, and they won't vote for us. But I think most people are with us on this.

My view of this is real simple. I think if you get up every day and you show up for work and you go about your business, you obey the law, you pay your taxes, you're a good citizen, you ought to have a chance to live in this country and live up to the fullest of your ability, and nobody ought to get in your way doing it. That's what I believe. That's what I believe.

And I believe that—I think that we define our sense of community in terms of how we live. They, I think, believe we define our sense of community more in terms of whether we say we believe the same things. And all I can tell you is, if you think about the time I've spent since I've been President working on peace around the world, what's the problem in the Middle East, in Northern Ireland, in Bosnia, in Kosovo, in the tribal wars in Africa, all these places? People killing each other because they're different—racial,

ethnic, tribal groups, or religious groups. Different, right?

Why did that guy in Los Angeles shoot those kids at the Jewish community center and kill that Filipino postman? Why did that guy in the middle West, who said he belonged to a church that didn't believe in God but did believe in white supremacy, shoot the black former basketball coach at Northwestern and the Korean Christian when he was coming out of church, and three or four other people? Why was young Matthew Shepard stretched out on a rack in Wyoming? And why was James Byrd dragged to death in Texas? And what has all this got to do with us?

I really believe one of the great challenges every person's life faces—every person, even people who themselves have been discriminated against—is figuring out how to get it right when it comes to how to deal with people who are different from you, and how to find a way to appreciate other people's differences, enjoy them, and still somehow feel that what we have in common is more important than what is different about it. And that's hard to do. And the more I try to make peace around the world, the more I understand how much progress we've made in this country, for all of our problems. It's hard to do.

And all over the world, people are raised to believe that they can identify themselves as good by having somebody else to look down on, that their religion only has meaning if somebody else's doesn't. They were raised to have pride insofar as it's set off against, in conflict with, somebody else. It's not just American. This is everywhere. And in this most modern of worlds, we are bedeviled by this old conflict.

So I just want you to think about that. If somebody gave me one wish today, they said, "I'm sorry you can't finish your term; you've got to check out tomorrow"—and God came down to me and said, "I'm no genie. You're not getting three wishes. I'll give you one"—I would not wish for prosperity or even a Democratic victory in November. I would wish that this country could truly be one America, across all the lines that divide it. Because we're smart people; we're good people; we work hard. If we could ever get our hearts and minds right about this stuff, the

rest of it would work out. That's what I believe.

And I'll just leave you with this thought. The most important question of all in this election is, what are we going to do with our prosperity? Are we going to make one America? Are we going to give everybody a chance to be a part of it? And are we going to meet our big, long-term challenges? The biggest danger for the Democrats in this race is that people will do what they often do when things are going along well; they'll get relaxed. They won't concentrate. They won't feel a sense of urgency. And they'll either stay home, or they won't be sharply focused on what this could be about.

How many times—everybody here over 30, how many times have you ever made a mistake in your life, not because you were under the gun but because things were going along so well you didn't think there were any consequences to what you did today? Now, that's the big question here. What will we do with this unique moment of prosperity?

In other words, all these differences only matter, that I just went through to you, if we're going to do something about it. And the only thing I'd like to tell you about that is, the older I get, the more my friends pass away, the faster time goes, and the more I realize nothing lasts forever. And I say that not to be morbid. I'm the most optimistic person you'll ever meet. I believe in the promise of America. I believe no one is irreplaceable. I believe in our country only freedom is irreplaceable. I don't believe there is anybody, including me, who's irreplaceable. But I believe moments come and go.

And the last time we had an expansion like this was in the 1960's. It was the last time we had the longest economic expansion in history. And it's when I graduated from high school, in 1964, where everybody thought the economy would go on forever; we would never get mired down in Vietnam; the cold war would be over before you knew it because we were good and strong; and civil rights would be solved in the courts and in the Congress—1964, middle of the big expansion.

When I graduated from college 4 years after that, it was 2 days after Robert Kennedy

had been killed, 2 months after Martin Luther King had been killed, 9 weeks after Lyndon Johnson said he couldn't run for President because the country was too divided over the Vietnam war. Mr. Nixon got elected President. He was a very able man, but he got elected President on one of these "us" and "them" divisive campaigns. He represented the Silent Majority, and those of us that were on the other side, we were in the loud minority. We were kind of out of the club there. And a few months later, the longest expansion in American history was over, boom! And we blew a chance to solve a lot of our problems in a wholesome, peaceful way.

Now, I'm not running for anything, but as an American citizen, I want to tell you, I've waited 35 years for that opportunity to roll around again for my country, where we could build the future of our dreams for our children. Ideas matter; there are differences. We've got to do this together.

The most important thing right now is that we focus on the importance of this election. Do not take our prosperity for granted. Do not take our social progress for granted. Do not take your ability to even come to something like this for granted. We've got to make the most of this. If we do, we'll be proud for the rest of our lives. If we don't, we'll never forgive ourselves. This is a moment for making tomorrow. That's why you came today. If somebody asks, you tell them that.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:05 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to luncheon hosts Arnold and Celia Lupin; Harry Lee, sheriff, Jefferson Parish, LA; Edward G. Rendell, general chair, Democratic National Committee (DNC); luncheon cochair Ray Reggie; David Nelson Young, Louisiana DNC national committeeman; Mary Lou Winters, vice chair, Louisiana State Democratic Party; Louisiana State Representative Karen Carter; Sybil Morial, wife of Mayor Marc H. Morial of New Orleans; and Representative William J. Jefferson and his wife, Andrea.

Proclamation 7288—Pan American Day and Pan American Week, 2000

April 8, 2000

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

This year on Pan American Day and during Pan American Week, we celebrate the springtime of a new century in which the fundamental ideals of democracy and human rights are blossoming across our hemisphere. We stand at the threshold of a new era of economic development and prosperity with a common determination to meet the challenges and seize the opportunities that face the Americas.

Building on the agreements forged at the last two Summits of the Americas in Miami and Santiago, we are witnessing unprecedented cooperation within our hemisphere. Efforts such as the negotiations on a Free Trade Area of the Americas, now progressing toward a concrete agreement in 2005, exemplify our commitment to building a self-sustaining and widely shared prosperity. We continue to work creatively through the Organization of American States to encourage constitutional solutions to political crises such as those that occurred in Paraguay and Ecuador. And we have witnessed elections in our region that were models of civic participation and a testament to the strength and vibrancy of democratic government in the Western Hemisphere. Such achievements illustrate that the well-being of our neighbors is fundamental to our own security and prosperity. We look forward to the Third Summit of the Americas in Quebec City, where the democratically elected leaders of 34 nations from North, Central, and South America will gather to review our progress, identify new challenges, and further enhance our cooperation.

Even with our significant progress, however, challenges remain. The 34 free and democratically elected nations of this hemisphere must work together to ensure that

Cuba, the only country that has not embraced our common vision, becomes a member of our community of democracies. By doing so, we can ensure that all the people in our hemisphere share in the blessings of freedom and in the promise of the global economy, living and working and raising their families in dignity and with hope for the future.

Now, Therefore I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim Friday, April 14, 2000, as Pan American Day and April 9 through April 15, 2000 as Pan American Week. I urge the Governors of the 50 States, the Governor of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the officials of other areas under the flag of the United States to honor these observances with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this eighth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., April 12, 2000]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on April 13.

Proclamation 7289—National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day, 2000

April 8, 2000

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

As we stand at the dawn of a new century, we reflect with pride on all that our Nation has accomplished in the 224 years since we first declared our independence. Today we enjoy unprecedented peace and prosperity, and, as it has for generations, America shines as a beacon of democracy, freedom, and opportunity for peoples around the world.

Yet the blessings we rejoice in today were won at great cost. Millions of young Americans who stepped forward in times of crisis or conflict to defend our Nation and uphold our values around the world sacrificed their freedom and lost their lives. The century just past will forever be known as the American century, not only because of our economic strength, military might, and technological prowess, but also because of the character, determination, and indomitable spirit our people demonstrated time and again.

That character and spirit have never been more evident than when Americans have been held captive as prisoners of war. Suffering hunger, fear, isolation, and uncertainty, stripped of their freedom and often subjected to physical and psychological torture, American POWs nonetheless continued to serve our Nation with honor, dignity, and remarkable courage. For many, the long, agonizing days stretched into years, and the loss of freedom and the cruel separation from family, home, and friends left scars that the passage of time can never erase.

We owe a profound debt of gratitude to these heroes who stood face to face with the forces of tyranny and oppression, true to our country and to the spirit of freedom even in captivity. We owe a debt as well to their families, whose faith and fortitude have been an unceasing source of strength to our Nation in many of our darkest hours. As we observe this special day for the first time in this new century, let us remember and honor the sacrifices of America's prisoners of war and their families; and let us keep faith with them by remaining resolute in defending liberty and securing a just and peaceful world for the generations to come.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 9, 2000, as National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day. I call upon all Americans to join me in remembering former American prisoners of war who suffered the hardships of enemy captivity. I also call upon Federal, State, and local government officials and private organizations to observe this day with

appropriate ceremonies, programs, and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this eighth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., April 12, 2000]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on April 13.

**Remarks Following a Performance of
“Messiah 2000” in Alexandria,
Louisiana**

April 8, 2000

Well, I am rarely at a loss for words. I use words for a living. I have done reasonably well at it. And I am virtually speechless.

First, I want to say to my friend Anthony—we were talking, oh, maybe 6 months ago, about how much I wanted to come down here one more time before I left office and see this “Messiah” service as President. And it worked out for me to be here. I wish Hillary could be here. I wish Chelsea could be here. We came, the three of us, 11 years ago. Chelsea and Miquell were just little girls; Gentry was so small he was almost invisible. [*Laughter*] And our friendship goes back long before that, to 1977.

So I just want to say how much this has meant to me. I thank you for acknowledging all the people who came down with me, and I’d like to thank the people from your church from Arkansas who came: my good friends Keith and Janice Sjostrand, and brother Bill Harden, Mrs. Harden, and the others who came. Thank you for coming to be with us tonight. I love you, and I’m glad to see you.

We’ve had an unusual relationship, Anthony and Mickey and Hillary and I and our kids. We’re sort of an odd couple. I say that so that you will not hold him responsible for anything I have ever done you disagreed with. But we love each other a lot. I bet I cried through more of this tonight than anybody else here.

I want you to know something about this guy. There for a period of time, a day or two at least, there was some question about whether I would finish my term. He called me on the phone, and he said, “Mickey and I want to come spend 20 minutes with you. And we won’t spend more than 20 minutes, because we know you’ve got a lot to do.” I said, “You’re going to come all the way to Washington, DC, from Alexandria, for 20 minutes?” And he said, “Yep. And we won’t stay long.” So I said, “Okay, come on.”

So he shows up. She shows up. First thing they did was give me a tape of a song she sang, wrote and sang for me, that I was supposed to listen to every day to keep my head in the right place—[*laughter*—]which I dutifully did. Then he gives me about seven pages of points he wants me to study up on every day to make sure I know where I want to be. [*Laughter*]

Then he says, “I don’t know how this is going to come out.” But he said, “I know you. You are my friend. We have raised our children together. I love you. I was here when you were going up. If the ship starts to sink and other people start to bail out, you call me; I want to go down with you.” He said, “I will be there. If not another living soul were standing there, I would be there.”

And I say that not for some personal reason but because that was the embodiment of his Christian faith and the witness of the Pentecostal Church that I have been blessed by for 23 years now. And I just want you to know I’m grateful to you and your wife and kids and both sets of parents that are here and your extended family, for what you meant to me and Hillary and to our daughter.

And I’m grateful that you gave me the chance to help your church advance the cause of liberty in—last time I counted, three or four different countries, now. I would have done it for anybody, but you gave me the chance to do it for you.

And I’m grateful that one more time in my life I got to sit here and be bathed in the glorious love of all these singers and actors and all the people that put together this “Messiah” service. It was a blessing that I will have with me for the rest of my life.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 p.m. in the sanctuary at The Pentecostals of Alexandria. In his remarks, he referred to Rev. Garold Anthony Mangun, pastor, The Pentecostals of Alexandria; his daughter, Miquell Mangun Hennigan, his son, Gentry, and his wife, Mickey; Rev. Keith Sjostrand, pastor, First United Pentecostal Church, Lonoke, AR, and his wife, Janice; and Rev. Bill Harden and his wife, Margaret. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Message on the Celebration of Jubilee 2000

April 7, 2000

Warm greetings to everyone gathered in our nation's capital to celebrate Jubilee 2000. You can take pride in being a part of this extraordinary grassroots effort to reduce the debt of the world's most impoverished countries. Your work is helping to raise awareness and put this issue at the forefront of the national agenda.

In too many countries around the world today, excessive debt and unwise economic policies divert crucial resources from health, education, environment, and other social investments. Every year, two-thirds of the world's heavily-indebted poor countries (HIPC) spend more on debt service than on health or education. At the same time, basic human needs go unmet. In these countries, one in ten children dies before his or her first birthday, one in three children is malnourished, and the average adult has had only three years of schooling. This is wrong.

Last year, we worked with other creditor nations to reach agreement on a plan to triple the debt relief available for the world's poorest nations. The Cologne Debt Initiative promises to reduce more than 70 percent of the total debt of these countries, enabling them to commit additional resources to the health and education of their people. Thanks to your efforts and the efforts of a bipartisan group in Congress, we have made significant progress in lifting the burden of debt from half a billion people around the world. This year we must build on that progress. For debt relief to move forward, Congress must take action on my request to cover the remaining cost of the U.S. share of debt relief.

I applaud each of you for your commitment to Jubilee 2000. Let us say today that no nation on this Earth should be forced to choose between feeding and educating children or paying interest on excessive debt. Let us say that no children—no matter where they are born—should be deprived of the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Best wishes for a memorable event and continued success in your efforts.

Bill Clinton

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 9.

Statement on the V-22 Aircraft Tragedy

April 9, 2000

On Saturday, April 8, the United States lost brave members of the Marine Corps, who died in the line of duty in the service of their country. They sacrificed their lives in a training accident involving a V-22 aircraft in Arizona. This terrible loss of life is a reminder of how so many men and women in the Nation's military put their lives at risk each and every day, so that we might be a free people and the cause of peace can be advanced throughout the world.

Hillary and I offer our prayers for those we have so suddenly lost and for their family and friends, whose burden of grief is so great. We pray that God may bless them all. Though their names and faces were not known to most of America before this tragic moment, I know that the American people will recognize in their names and faces in the days ahead the genuine quality of heroism.

Statement on the Department of Health and Human Services Report on Prescription Drug Coverage

April 10, 2000

Today's release of the Department of Health and Human Services report on prescription drug coverage, spending, and pricing practices provides further evidence of the need for a voluntary, affordable Medicare prescription drug benefit that is available to

all beneficiaries. This report makes clear that uninsured seniors not only lack prescription drug coverage but also are denied the significant discounts and rebates that those with coverage receive. This price gap is wide and growing. It's time to level the playing field for both coverage and prices for all of America's seniors.

Although the HHS report provides the most comprehensive analysis to date on prescription drugs, there is still much that needs to be learned and conveyed to the general public and to policymakers on this important issue. For this reason, I am also announcing that the administration will hold a national conference this summer on drug pricing and discounting practices and their impact on Medicare beneficiaries and pharmaceutical innovation. I believe this conference will help us determine how the best purchasing and quality improvement practices from the private sector can be incorporated into a Medicare prescription benefit.

I am encouraged that there is growing support from both parties to address the prescription drug cost and coverage problems that burden our Nation's seniors and people with disabilities. As today's report makes clear, the challenge of prescription drug coverage for the uninsured and underinsured Medicare populations is one that afflicts millions of beneficiaries of every age and income level. However, we must make certain that any legislative proposal is more than a benefit in name only. As I have said repeatedly, the only way this issue can be adequately remedied is through a Medicare drug benefit that is voluntary, affordable, accessible, and administered competitively, using the most successful private practices to negotiate discounts on behalf of seniors. It should be enacted in the context of broader reform that modernizes and strengthens the program. I believe that the release of today's report shows how vital it is to reach this goal.

Statement on the Announcement of a Summit Meeting Between South Korea and North Korea

April 10, 2000

I welcome the announcement that the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will hold a historic first summit in June. Direct dialog between the two Koreas is something we have long advocated and is fundamental to solving the problems of the Korean Peninsula. This announcement is testimony to the wisdom and long-term vision of President Kim Dae-jung's engagement policy. I congratulate both leaders on their decision to meet.

Statement on the Greek Legislative Elections

April 10, 2000

I congratulate Konstandinos Simitis, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, and his PASOK party for their victory in the Greek legislative elections on April 9. I also applaud Konstandinos Karamanlis and the New Democracy Party for running a fine campaign. The elections demonstrated yet again the vitality of democracy in the land of its birth and should serve as an example to the rest of the world.

The election results and the debates fostered by the campaign show a broad consensus in favor of the course Greece has chosen: economic prosperity at home and fuller integration with the European Union; leadership in building stability in the Balkans and southeastern Europe; improved relations with Turkey; and progress toward a just and lasting settlement on Cyprus. On these and other issues, the United States pledges its continuing support and cooperation.

Proclamation 7290—National Crime Victims' Rights Week, 2000

April 10, 2000

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

This week marks the 20th anniversary of National Crime Victims' Rights Week. Over the past two decades, we have made enormous progress in our efforts to build safer communities and to reshape our criminal justice system so that it better protects victims' rights and responds more compassionately to their needs.

In the 7 years since I first proclaimed National Crime Victims' Rights Week, my Administration has worked hard to achieve some of the most progressive criminal justice reforms in our Nation's history. Recognizing the urgent plea from millions of Americans to restore safety and security to their neighborhoods, in 1994 I signed into law the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, which funds 100,000 additional police officers to fight crime and protect our citizens. In Federal court cases, this law also gives victims of violent crime and sexual abuse the right to speak out in court before sentencing, providing them the opportunity to describe the impact such victimization has had on their lives. To help protect our communities from gun violence, we enacted the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act, requiring background checks for potential handgun purchasers. Since its passage, more than 500,000 attempted gun purchases by felons, fugitives, and other prohibited persons have been prevented, saving an untold number of lives. And we worked to pass the assault weapons ban to keep these deadly firearms off our streets.

We also fought to pass the Violence Against Women Act, which addresses the complex dynamics of gender-motivated violence and seeks to ensure justice for women who live in daily fear for their safety and often for their lives. By providing support services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and empowering prosecutors with new tools to target offenders, we have

sent a clear message that our society will not tolerate violence against women.

Thanks to the concerted efforts of crime victims' advocates, many of whom are survivors themselves, government at all levels is focused on ensuring victims' rights. Today, all States have enacted laws safeguarding crime victims' rights in the criminal justice process, and 32 States have amended their constitutions accordingly.

Despite this progress, millions of Americans still fall prey to criminals each year. In the past year alone, gun violence alone has taken an enormous toll across our Nation. To address this, my Administration has proposed the 21st Century Policing Initiative to provide 50,000 more police officers for our streets, requested more funding for our Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative to reduce school and youth violence, and put forth the largest national gun enforcement initiative in our Nation's history. I continue to call on the Congress to strengthen our Nation's hate crime laws and to pass commonsense gun legislation to keep guns out of the wrong hands; and we should pass the Victims' Rights Amendment to the Constitution.

Criminal victimization is at its lowest level in 25 years, but we can do more. As we observe National Crime Victims' Rights Week, as we near the fifth anniversary of the tragic bombing in Oklahoma City and the first anniversary of the shooting at Columbine High School, let us vow to continue working together to prevent crime and violence. Let us also pledge to honor the needs and rights of victims whose lives have been forever altered by crime. And let us recognize the courage and determination of the thousands of men and women across our country who dedicate themselves daily to the protection of victims' rights.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 9 to April 15, 2000, as National Crime Victims' Rights Week. I urge all Americans to remember crime victims and their families by working to reduce violence, to assist those harmed by crime, and to make our communities and

homes safer places in which to live and raise our families.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this tenth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., April 12, 2000]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on April 13.

**Letter to Congressional Leaders
Reporting on Iraq's Compliance
With United Nations Security
Council Resolutions**

April 10, 2000

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Consistent with the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution (Public Law 102-1), and as part of my effort to keep the Congress fully informed, I am reporting on the status of efforts to obtain Iraq's compliance with the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Security Council. My last report, consistent with Public Law 102-1, was dated January 7, 2000. I shall continue to keep the Congress informed about this important issue.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Strom Thurmond, President pro tempore of the Senate.

**Remarks at a Maryland State Bill
Signing Ceremony in Annapolis,
Maryland**

April 11, 2000

Thank you very much, Governor and Mrs. Glendening, Lieutenant Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, Secretary of State Willis, Attorney General Curran, Mr. Speaker, President Miller. I also want to acknowledge the Members of Congress who are here, who

are on the right side of this fight, Senator Mikulski, Representative Morella, and Representative Wynn. You can be very proud of what all three of them are doing on this issue.

I thank the members of the legislature, the overwhelming numbers of Democrats and the brave Republicans who joined you to pass this legislation. I thank the students from the Young Kids Against Violence and the Students Together Against Guns and from Largo and Potomac schools for their work. And I want to say a little more about each of you in a moment.

Let me say, I think it is fitting that we are here today in this magnificent old place where our forebears walked the halls more than 200 years ago. It's a site of firsts. The Speaker mentioned George Washington resigning his commission just a few steps from here. The State House was also the site of the ratification of the Treaty of Paris, which officially put an end to the Revolutionary War and marked the birth of our new Nation.

Today we are trying to end another kind of war, an ongoing struggle to reduce the staggering toll of violence on our citizens and especially on our children. The Maryland Legislature once again has made history, and I just want to thank you from the bottom of my heart. I came up here today more than anything else to say thank you.

I applaud first your Governor. I remember after I first met him—you know, he's sort of low-key; you have to keep listening to Parris Glendening. [Laughter] But I must say, he wears well. The more I watched him—I remember once, a couple years ago, I was talking to people at the White House about what was going on in the States about a completely different issue. And I said, "You know, it is astonishing; in almost everything I have tried to accomplish as President, Maryland has been out there on the forefront of change, ahead of the other States in virtually every area." And I might say, in the area of gun safety, it's worth pointing out for the record that Maryland has already banned assault weapons, cheap handguns known as Saturday night specials, already limited handgun sales to one per month, and with this new law, you are again leading the way.

Last year California passed legislation to limit handgun sales to one a month, to ban

junk guns, new generations of assault weapons. Last week Massachusetts began enforcing consumer product safety rules for guns, to ban junk guns, and to adopt devices to prevent children from firing guns.

Tomorrow I'm going to Colorado to support a citizen ballot initiative to close the gun show loophole and require background checks on all gun sales.

We ought to talk for a moment about how this came to be. I was looking at Mike Miller up here, and I've had the privilege to know him well for many years now. I know what kind of district you represent; this can't have been an easy fight for him. I heard the Speaker talking. I used to go down to the Eastern Shore when I was a student at Georgetown. I've had the privilege of spending a little time at Camp David since I've been President, traveling in the neighborhood. I know not all of Maryland is Baltimore, and I know what the Speaker was saying. I know how hard this vote was for a lot of you.

And I know something else, too. None of us want to really pay tribute to the people who are truly responsible for us all being here today. We thanked each other. The truth is, we're all here because too many children got killed. And I was so moved by what Kathleen said, and I couldn't help thinking how proud her father would be of her today.

Most of the history of the United States to bring sanity to our gun laws has been a sad history, littered with the lost lives of people we could ill afford to lose. President Johnson, to his everlasting credit, proposed sweeping gun legislation in the aftermath of the deaths of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. He got something passed the Congress in 1968, which was better than nothing but woefully weak. I will remind you that that law only required gun sellers to ask but not to verify whether purchasers had a criminal record or a mental health history.

And then, somehow, we just forgot about it. And a lot of people like me who came from places like Arkansas and Maryland, who always knew we ought to be doing something, just didn't. I remember in 1982, when I ran for Governor, I actually blurted out what I thought. I said I would support a waiting period and background checks for gun sales, handgun sales, 18 years ago. It sparked a

withering firestorm. And when I got elected, I saw there was no support for it. So I just walked away and went on to other things.

My life was changed when a friend of mine who ran a hardware store in a small mountain town of about a thousand people—a man, I knew him and his family very well—was in his store one day, and a guy came in he hadn't seen in a long time, and he said, "Where you been?" And he said, "Well, I went away to the service, and then I lived in other States, and I just got back. I want to buy a gun. I want to do some target practice." And he kind of joked about the gun control form, "Well, have you ever been in prison, ever had a background check, a mental health history?" And the guy said, "No, no." He handed him the gun; 18 hours later 5 people were dead. He had broken out of the State veterans mental hospital that morning.

And it nearly destroyed my friend. He lost years of his life trying to get over what had happened. He was not responsible. The law, in any case, would not have found out what had to be found out. It was totally inadequate. But he lived with the nightmares of those people.

And then the NRA started trying to pass legislation all over the country to actually require States to keep cities from having gun control laws more stringent than the State did, and I vetoed it a couple of times—and had some rather interesting exchanges with them.

Then, when the Brady bill was vetoed in 1991 or '92, whenever it was, I just promised myself if I ever had a chance to start again, I would. And unfortunately, our cause has been aided by the deaths of all these children in all these schools and in other settings. And I think we should pay tribute to them. They are why we're all here today. You know it, and I know it. They are what made our constituents in places like rural Arkansas and rural Maryland—who now know, because of the experience of the Brady bill and the assault weapons ban, we have no intention of interfering with hunting season or sport shooting events or any other lawful activities—they made those folks willing to say, "You know, this is something we probably ought to do."

And now, in truth, the people are ahead of most of the politicians. And what I would hope today is that we could just keep on. We could make it clear that we have no intention of undermining the legitimate interests of people who hunt and sport shoot. We can also make it clear, to go back to what one of the previous speakers said, that we think the NRA ought to join us in this. What possible interest could anyone have in being against child trigger locks or being for safe gun technology that would permit handguns to be fired only by the adults who own them?

There is a need, as they say, for more training of people, for more sensible education to make sure that responsible conduct is the rule for people who do lawfully own these guns. And it's time for us to get together.

There's just one other thing I would like to say. The Governor talked about the terrible toll of deliberate killing, handgun killing, and how the—if my math is right—the death rate is roughly 30 times in America what it was in the other countries that he mentioned. I think it's worth also mentioning that the accidental death rate of children from handguns is over 9 times that of the next 25 biggest industrial countries combined. And this is something else that's worth pointing out. We are here not just to prevent crimes; we are here to prevent accidents that also, tragically, take the lives of these children.

I hope that the United States Congress is paying attention to this event today, because every child in America deserves the protection you have given Maryland's children, and only Congress can provide that. There are very few people in Congress who represent districts any tougher, any more resistant to the argument that will be made against such legislation than some of you do who are sitting here, very few.

There are more than enough people in the Congress who represent districts who would support this kind of action by more than 2 to 1, to pass this legislation in a landslide, legislation to require child safety locks, to ban the importation of large capacity ammunition clips, to close the gun show loophole. But for 9 months now, there has been no action. Oh, a good bill passed the Senate, as the Governor said, because the Vice President broke

the tie. And a weaker bill passed the House, and we have been in conference. And the Democrats, through Congressman Conyers, have even offered a reasonable compromise. But nothing has happened.

And I'll say again, every single day Congress waits, we lose 12 children, nearly 90 people overall, to gun violence. Congress should follow Maryland's lead.

Since the passage of the Brady bill, half a million felons, fugitives, and stalkers have been unable to get handguns at gun stores; gun crime is down by more than 35 percent. The people who opposed closing the gun show loophole 6 years ago said the Brady bill would be ineffective because criminals didn't buy guns at gun stores; they only bought guns at gun shows and urban flea markets. Now they say, well, even if that's true—which it wasn't entirely true—it's just too burdensome.

But it isn't. It isn't. The modest amount of time that would be required at rural gun shows in the most isolated area where people drive the longest distances are more than worth it to save one child's life. Over 70 percent of these background checks can be done in about an hour; over 90 percent, in a day. People say, "Well, why are you holding out for the other 8 or 9 percent?" Because the rejection rate of the 8 or 9 percent that can't be checked in a day is 20 times higher than the rejection rate of the 90 percent that can be checked in a day.

So I say to you, we have got to do this. Do we need more enforcement? Of course, we do. We've increased enforcement, and I've asked for 500 new ATF agents and 1,000 new Federal, State, and local gun prosecutors.

You mentioned the Smith & Wesson announcement where they agreed to change the way guns are manufactured, marketed, and sold. I hope that did help you. It was a courageous thing for Smith & Wesson to do. And let me just explain the practical issue here again. An enormous number of the guns used in crimes that are bought from stores are bought from a very small percentage of

the stores. That's what this is about, primarily. And I only hope that other gun manufacturers will follow their lead instead of excoriating them. They don't deserve to be condemned; they deserve to be applauded. And others ought to step up to the plate and do the same thing.

Now, Governor, you said the NRA ought to stop attacking me. I'll tell you what, if they stop attacking this legislation, I'd be happy for them to attack me for the rest of my life. I've kind of gotten used to it. What we say about each other doesn't amount to a hill of beans. But whether all these kids here live to have their children standing on these steps some day fighting for some other issue, that's what matters. That's what matters.

So again, I say a simple thank you. Thank you, once again, for leading the Nation to a better tomorrow. And again I say, Washington should follow Maryland's lead.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:04 p.m. in the Maryland State House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Parris N. Glendening, Lt. Gov. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, Secretary of State John Willis, and Attorney General Joseph Curran of Maryland; Governor Glendening's wife, Frances; and Maryland State House Speaker Casper R. Taylor, Jr., and Senate President Mike Miller. The Maryland law was entitled, "The Responsible Gun Safety Act of 2000."

Statement on Permanent Normal Trade Relations Status for China

April 11, 2000

Today I met with my national security team about the critical stakes in China's WTO accession and our decision regarding permanent normal trade relations.

The economic reasons for PNTR are clearcut. Our markets already are open to China; the agreement we reached to bring China into the WTO doesn't require that we open them further in any way. What it does is to open China's markets to our workers, our farmers, our businesses. That means more jobs, growth, and exports for Americans. China will join the WTO regardless of what we decide to do. The decision before Congress is whether the United States will

receive the same trade benefits from China as will our trade competitors.

The national security implications are even more far-reaching. Bringing China into the WTO will entwine China in the global economy, increasing its interdependence with the rest of the world. It will bring the information revolution—with the knowledge and freedom of thought that entails—to millions of people in China in ways its Government cannot possibly control. It will accelerate the dismantling of China's state-owned enterprises—a process that is getting government out of people's lives and sparking social and political change all over China. It will strengthen China's reforms and the reformers behind them.

That is reason enough to vote for PNTR. But I am also concerned about what a vote against PNTR would do. It would have extremely harmful consequences for our national security. Because the economic case for PNTR is so strong, the Chinese will see a rejection as a strategic decision by the United States to turn from cooperation to confrontation, to deal with China as an adversary. That would undercut the reform-minded leaders who signed this agreement with us and strengthen the hand of hardliners who believe cooperating with the United States is a mistake. Those are the same forces most threatened by our alliances with Japan and Korea, the same forces that want the Chinese military to sell dangerous technologies, and the same forces that would pursue confrontation with Taiwan rather than dialog.

It's no surprise that Taiwan's President-elect Chen strongly supports China's membership in the WTO and wants us to grant PNTR. He understands the importance of the stability that will come from good U.S.-China relations and China's membership in the WTO. If both Beijing and Taiwan are in the WTO, it will increase their interdependence and, therefore, the cost to Beijing of confrontation. If China is shut out, tensions in the Taiwan Strait will likely rise. Our ability to ease them will diminish.

We will spare no effort in the coming days and weeks to make sure that the Congress and the American people understand what the stakes are. And I am confident that when the debate is over and the votes are cast, the

Congress will do what is right—both for our prosperity and our security.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel

April 11, 2000

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, why did you call Mr. Barak so urgently to come to Washington? What was the urgency in the matter?

President Clinton. Well, we wanted to talk to each other. It was as much his idea as mine. I think that he wants to continue to energize the peace process, move forward with the Palestinians and with his withdrawal from Lebanon, and I strongly support that, and we're going to talk about it.

Q. Mr. President, what is the United States going to do to prevent an outburst of violence in Lebanon when Israel pulls out in only 3 months?

President Clinton. Well, if Israel pulls out in accordance with the United Nations resolution, what justification will anyone have for violence? They've been asking for this for years—years and years and years.

Q. Justification or not, there is a warning that there could be a real violent—

Q. That doesn't stop Hezbollah from doing its—

President Clinton. We'll talk about that.

Q. Is there anything the U.S. can do for Israel to make the withdrawal serene, to make it peaceful?

President Clinton. Well, "serene" is a word not normally used in the context of the Middle East these days, but we'll do what we can to help, and we're going to talk about it.

Q. Mr. President, are things as bleak on the Syrian track as it seems to us?

President Clinton. Excuse me?

Q. Are things as bleak as they seem to us, on the Syrian track?

President Clinton. Well, I got an answer back from President Asad to several of the points that I raised when I met with him in Switzerland. And there are still differences, if that's what—but that's no bleaker than it was before we met. And so I think what we've

got to do is figure out where we go from there. But I think there's a lot of hope for more rapid movement on the Palestinian front, and that's what we're going to talk about.

Q. Is the door still open? Is the door still open on Syrian track? Is the door still open?

President Clinton. You should be asking him, but I think so. But there's got to be a willingness. So we've got to bridge some of these divides, and so we need to make progress where we can.

Q. Are you going to discuss a new proposal on the Syrian front?

President Clinton. Today we're going to discuss, I think, mostly the Palestinian track and Lebanon.

Q. Are you satisfied with the pace of Israel's withdrawal on the Palestinian track?

President Clinton. I think you should wait and see what happens in the next few weeks before we talk about that.

Q. Well, the—

President Clinton. We're going to talk about what's going to happen from here on in.

Israeli Weapons Sales to China

Q. [*Inaudible*—Israel's view of China? Can you talk about that issue, when you come back from the Prime Minister, Israel sell of weaponry to China? Is that going to affect things?

President Clinton. We're going to talk about that. I'm concerned about it; you know I am, and we'll talk about it.

Q. [*Inaudible*—on the Palestinian track today?

Prime Minister Barak. We have a variety of ideas to discuss about how to move to give new momentum and energy to the Palestinian track in order to live up to the timeline that we have set together with Chairman Arafat.

Q. And what are you going to tell the President about China, selling arms to China?

Prime Minister Barak. We'll discuss it.

NOTE: The exchange began at 6:33 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to President Hafiz al-Asad of Syria. Prime Minister Barak referred to Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority.

A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks at a Gun Safety Rally in Denver, Colorado

April 12, 2000

The President. Thank you. Thank you so very much for making me feel welcome. And I thank you for reminding me again what this is all about. I want to thank my long-time friend Wellington Webb for his leadership in this fight and his leadership of Denver. I thank Tom Mauser for having the courage not to be broken by his loss but to give his son the legacy he deserves.

I thank John Head and Arnie Grossman for reminding us that this is not about party politics; it's about saving people's lives. And I also want to thank my longtime friend, your former Governor, Dick Lamm, who's here, and former Governor John Love, who's not here, for also reminding us this is not about party politics. I thank Attorney General Ken Salazar and Governor Bill Owens, who is also not here, but I want to thank them both for what they tried to do in the legislature and for what they're trying to do to help you pass this referendum.

I want to thank the other SAFE board members who are here on stage. And I want to acknowledge—it's already been mentioned by Arnie, but I want to tell you that I had the privilege of meeting with the SAFE students—David Winkler, Ben Gelt, and their other colleagues in Washington. They told me today, David and Ben, that they've now been to 30 States, and they have 10,000 young people across America enlisted in this cause. So I want to thank them. I think we ought to give them a big hand. *[Applause]*

Finally, I will say more about this in a moment, but as you know, I'm trying to pass some legislation on this subject in Washington, and there are three people I want to acknowledge. First of all, a former Congressman from Maryland, Mike Barnes, who's the president of Handgun Control, who came with me, and he's up here today. Mike, thank you for coming. Secondly, Representative Diana DeGette from Colorado, who is supporting our legislation in Washington. Thank you, Diana, for what you're

doing. Thank you. Thank you. And someone who's not on the platform, I don't think, today, but who came all the way from Washington with me because he believes so strongly in this, and he wanted to express his solidarity with you, the Democratic leader in the House of Representatives, Dick Gephardt from Missouri, came all the way from Washington to be here today. And I want to thank him for doing that.

Let me say that not only Denver but the whole State of Colorado is a mile high in the eyes of your fellow Americans today. You come from all backgrounds, different communities, and surely different political parties, to speak with a single voice for common sense and safety and the future of our children. I want to tell you, first, you are not alone; and second, America is listening.

All across America, people like you are speaking up: here, where you're taking the lead, working to close the gun show loophole because the legislature wouldn't do it for you, in spite of the leadership of Governor Owens and Attorney General Salazar; in Maryland, another State with a lot of hunters and sports shooters, which yesterday became the first State to require built-in safety locks for all new handguns; in California, which banned junk guns, a new generation of assault weapons, and limited handgun sales to one a month; in Massachusetts, now enforcing consumer product safety rules for guns, banning junk guns, requiring child trigger locks and other devices to prevent children from firing guns. All these steps have helped to protect more of our children. But every child in America deserves these protections. Reducing gun violence is a national challenge.

I came here, first, to say I support what you're doing. And in spite of all the attempts to put roadblocks in your way, you must not be deterred. Your leaders told me you need 62,000 signatures to put this initiative on the ballot. The purpose of all these delaying tactics is to put off the day when you can start gathering the signatures. I want every one of you who is here today to sign up with these folks when you leave, because you ought to be able to get 62,000 signatures in 2 hours if everybody who is for this will sign up and go get the signatures.

The second thing I wanted to do is to say that you deserve a National Government that follows your lead, and Congress is the only body that can provide the kind of national approach we need to protect all the children in every State. That's why I asked—

[*At this point, there was a disturbance in the audience.*]

The President. That's why I asked—

[*The disturbance continued.*]

The President. Sir, this meeting is not about you and not about me. So would you please let me give the speech? [*Applause*]

I'll be glad to speak to him out there, but you came here to talk about something else.

Now, let me say to all of you, the thing—I'm very proud of the fact that you've made this a bipartisan effort. And as John said when he spoke, it is true that even in Washington not every Democrat is for this legislation, and not every Republican is against it. This is largely a matter of political organization and power among the opponents of this legislation—here, too—and a matter of culture.

One of the reasons I wanted to come here is that I grew up in a State not all that different from Colorado. I was 12 years old when I first shot a can off a fencepost with a .22. Unlike most elected officials in Washington, I've actually been to gun shows. I understand what is going on here. But I will say this: The message you are sending the country is not that this is the only answer but that it's an important answer. The message you are sending the country is not that we shouldn't have stronger enforcement of the laws—we should; not that we shouldn't teach firearms safety—we should; not that we shouldn't have community efforts like our national campaign against youth violence is promoting, to strengthen the role of parents and families and schools and community groups—we should. But that is not an excuse for saying that guns are the only area of our national life where there will be no prevention. That is their position, and that is wrong.

We punish reckless drivers, but we still have seatbelts in our car and child safety seats for our kids. We punish people who hijack airplanes and terrorists who blow them up,

but we still—thank God—have got airport metal detectors. Every one of us, just about, at least my age, were raised by usually our mothers telling us that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Gun safety cannot be the only area of our national life where we say no to prevention. Colorado is here to say we have lost enough of our children; it's time to have prevention, too, in this important area of our national life.

When I signed the Brady bill into law in 1993, a law which had been vetoed by the previous President, the same people who are fighting you said the Brady bill would do no good because all the criminals bought their guns at gun shows and urban flea markets—[*laughter*—and out of the back of trunks from one another. And therefore, this prevention would do no good; it would just be a terrible burden for hunters and sports people.

Well, 6 years later and a few months, over half a million felons, fugitives, and stalkers have been unable to get handguns. Gun crime down more than 35 percent; homicide down to a 31-year low: it worked.

But no one believes this country is safe enough. I don't want any future President to have to go to Columbine, or to Springfield, Oregon, or to Jonesboro, Arkansas, or to all the other places I have been. It's tough enough to comfort the families of our service men and women who die in the line of duty. Children have no duties, except to their studies and their families. Our duty is to protect their lives and give them futures.

I know I'm talking to the converted here, but I want the evidence to get out. This gun show loophole is now a serious problem. Last year a study by the Departments of Justice and Treasury of 314 gun show investigations showed the following: 34 percent of the sales investigated involved guns later used in serious crimes, a total of 54,000 gun crimes. This is a serious problem.

Now, should we have—I will say again—should we have a comprehensive strategy? Of course, we should. Does the media have a responsibility? Do communities have a responsibility—schools, parents? Absolutely. Is teaching people gun safety an important part of this responsibility? Of course, it is. When the NRA was focusing on teaching young

people gun safety in my home State, I supported them in every way I could. But it is no excuse not to have prevention.

Let me tell you something. I come from a State where factories in small towns shut down on the first day of deer season every year. And when we were debating the Brady bill and the assault weapons ban, I heard all this stuff, and I told them, I said, "If you miss a day, even an hour in the deer woods, I'll be against this bill." Of course, they haven't. That's not what this is about. So I say to you, you have to go out and say this. Now, people say—the same people who said 6 years ago that all these criminals were getting their guns at gun shows and urban flea markets and, therefore, the Brady bill wouldn't work, now say you can't have background checks at gun shows because it would be so burdensome.

Well, let me tell you what the burden is. More than 70 percent of these checks can be done within minutes; 95 percent can be done within a day. The 5 percent that can't be done within a day should still be done. Why? Because they are 20 times more likely to be rejected because of a criminal background or another problem. Those are the facts. Now, I don't know about you, but I think it's worth a little bit of inconvenience to save a few thousand lives over the next few years.

Now, should we enforce the law? Yes, we should. Gun crime prosecutions are up by 16 percent since I've been President. The average person convicted is serving 2 years longer. Gun crime down, as I said, by 35 percent.

Here in Colorado, your U.S. Attorney, Tom Strickland, is working with local officials on Colorado's Project Exile. They're enforcing the laws more vigorously, including against those who violate the Brady bill. But I will say again, the real question is, with the children's lives at stake, with the accidental gun rate of kids under 15 in this country—the accidental gun rate—9 times higher than that of the next 25 biggest economies combined, how can we say prevention has no role?

You all believe this, but I want you to have these facts to argue. And I want you to understand that the country is looking very

closely at Colorado. We know it's a State that has Republicans and Democrats. We know it's a State that has a strong culture that favors hunting and sport shooting. We know it's a State with a broken heart over Columbine. We know it's a State where people can put aside their partisan differences, and maybe even their lifetime culture, to look at the facts.

Now, other States will follow your lead. I hope and pray Congress will follow your lead, as well. But you must not get tired or frustrated. You must not even get angry. You've got to go talk to these people. Believe me, not every member of the National Rifle Association is dead set against you. They get this stuff in the mail; they hear this stuff over the airwaves, but they love their children, too. I wouldn't give up on anybody.

But the main thing you have got to do is win here. So I will say again, if you haven't signed up to be with SAFE, sign up on your way out, and find out when those petitions get circulated, and do your part.

Look how many people are here. If everybody in this room—everybody in this room—there's about 3,000 people here, right?—if you got 20 signatures, it would be a done deal.

In the end, change is always difficult. But you must understand how important it is for your children and people all over the country. If you do this, you will give so much energy to people who have been sitting around in other States like yours, thinking it was a hopeless battle, thinking they couldn't win. If you do this, you will give enormous impetus to our efforts in Congress to try to provide national protections.

And most important, if you do this, you will say, we're going to treat this area of our life like every other area of our national life. America is the country that respects the rights of people. But we've still got our rights over 200 years later, since we started, because we also exercise our responsibility, especially for our children and their future.

I admire you. I support you. Don't quit until you win.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:40 a.m. in the Colorado Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Wellington E. Webb of Denver;

Tom Mauser, political director, and John Head and Arnold J. Grossman, co-presidents, Sane Alternatives to the Firearms Epidemic (SAFE) Colorado; former Governors Richard D. Lamm and John A. Love and current Gov. Bill Owens of Colorado; and Colorado State Attorney General Kenneth Salazar.

Remarks at MSNBC's Townhall Meeting on Guns in Denver

April 12, 2000

Tom Brokaw. And to start our discussion here at the University of Denver, the President of the United States, who earlier today spoke at a rally here in Colorado organized by the families of the victims of Columbine. Mr. President, what message do you bring on gun control, not only to the citizens of Colorado but to the rest of the Nation as well, with these appearances?

The President. Well, first of all, I wanted to come to express my support for the people of Colorado who are trying to put this initiative on the ballot to close the gun show loophole. A bipartisan effort led by Governor Owens and Attorney General Salazar failed to get the legislation through the legislature, so the people are trying to put it on the ballot, and I wanted to support it.

And secondly, I wanted to highlight the fact that even though Colorado, Maryland, Massachusetts, California, and other States are moving to increase gun safety, we really can't do what we need to do until there is national legislation passed by the Congress to close the gun show loophole, to require child safety locks, promote safe gun technology, and stop importing the large capacity ammunition clips that make a mockery of our assault weapons ban.

Mr. Brokaw. But do you think that this issue has become so highly politicized, especially in a Presidential election year—Governor Bill Owens, for example, didn't want to appear in this hour with you; he'll be appearing later tonight on MSNBC—that it's become so politicized that it's highly unlikely that we'll achieve any consensus in this year?

The President. Actually, I think the fact that it's an election year increases the chances that we can get something done. If it weren't an election year, there would be

no way, because the—in Washington at least, the influence of the NRA is so great that even though some people are afraid of them at election time, they know the public is for commonsense prevention measures, overwhelmingly. So I think in a funny way, the fact that it's an election year might help us to pass it, especially since—you know, I'm not running for anything, so I'm just out here trying to do what I think is right.

Mr. Brokaw. It seems that one of the real hangups is this whole question of how long the waiting period should be at a gun show for a background check. The NRA and other people who are critical of your position say they would be willing to take the 24-hour waiting period. You've been holding out for 72 hours.

The President. Here's the problem—and there may be a way to split the difference—but 70 percent of these checks can be done in minutes. Over 90 percent can be done in 24 hours. The problem is that the less than 10 percent that can't be done within 24 hours, where you need 3 days, they have a rejection rate of 20 times the rejection rate of the other 90-something percent.

So their position puts them in—I think it's a totally untenable position. They're basically arguing for the group that is most likely to have criminals in it. So there's got to be a way to do the checks, clear them, let the people have their guns who clear, and still hold those that can't be cleared and—in rural areas, for example, I've actually been to very rural gun shows, because that's the kind we mostly had in my State—there's got to be a way to find that common place to deposit the gun and the check if it's over the weekend, and then do the background check, and send for the gun—to the gun owner and the check to the seller.

Mr. Brokaw. So there may be some room for compromise in the 24 versus 72 hours if you can find, if in effect, what we would call an escrow for the gun?

The President. Sure. There are practical problems in these rural gun shows, but they don't approach the cost to society of not doing the background checks. And the problem is—again, once the background check is done, people ought to be able to get their guns. But the problem is, if you don't have

the provision for 3 days for the small percentage of buyers that can't be checked in a day, then you're giving up a huge percentage of the people that have a criminal background.

Mr. Brokaw. Let's talk about the larger picture when it comes to safety checks and gun controls and the question of gun control versus gun safety. If you put all of that on the table, and then you look at what happened in Columbine High School—and we know what was in the minds of Harris and Klebold; we've heard the tapes—there are no laws in the world that would have kept them from carrying out that act.

The President. Well, you may be right. The young woman who provided one of the guns said that if she'd been subject to a background check she wouldn't have purchased the gun at the gun show. But you may be right about that. There's been a recent study showing that a lot of these terrible instances don't necessarily fit a profile, that young people nearly always give some heads up to some peer and never do it to their own families.

But one of the things we do know is, since we passed the Brady bill and increased gun enforcement at the same time, a half-million people who were felons, fugitives, and stalkers haven't gotten their handguns. Gun crime is down 35 percent since I took office, and we've got the lowest homicide rate in 31 years. So we know we can do better.

You can't—there is no society that can prevent every tragedy, every outrage. But you do—if you have sensible prevention measures, you save more lives. That's what this is about. It's not being perfect; it's about not making the perfect the enemy of the good.

Mr. Brokaw. You have a big deal on the table at Congress. You want to get additional money for enforcement of gun laws—1,100 new prosecutors, 500 new ATF agents, \$10 million for smart gun research. This comes at the end of your 8 years in office, and the NRA has been after you for a long time about enforcing the gun laws that are already on the books.

The President. Well, they say that, but they haven't endorsed this measure yet. And look at the facts. Since I've been President, we've increased Federal prosecutions by 16 percent; we've started operations like the one in Richmond and here in Colorado; we have

increased by 2 years the average sentence of a violator of a gun law. We've increased enforcement. That is not an argument not to have prevention.

My argument with the NRA is not on enforcement. My argument is that guns can't be the only area of our national life where we don't have a balanced approach. I agree with them; we should do more to educate young people about gun safety. I agree that the media and parents and communities and schools have a responsibility.

But this shouldn't be the only area of our national life where we don't have sensible prevention measures. We would never think of applying this principle to airport metal detectors, to taking all of the seatbelts out of cars or—that's what my problem is. Prevention ought to be a part of our strategy. And the evidence of the Brady bill is it works, it drives down crime, and it saves lives. And we ought to close the loophole. That's what I believe.

Mr. Brokaw. One of the interested observers we have here is Jerry Whitman, who is the police chief, the acting police chief of the city of Denver. Mr. Whitman, one of the claims that the NRA makes is that around the country, law enforcement officers are unhappy with the Federal Government for not doing enough to enforce the Federal gun laws. Is that your judgment?

[*Jerry Whitman said that Federal partnership in law enforcement should go further and stressed the need for consistency laws, in order to protect the officers on the street.*]

Mr. Brokaw. What happens when you have a gun show here in the Denver area? In a number of other communities, they say the crime rate goes up, crimes committed with guns. Has that happened in Denver?

Mr. Whitman. Well, in 1989, the city council and city government put into law an assault weapons ban in the city, so we don't have gun shows in the city itself. I haven't noticed any increase as a result of the gun shows outside the city limits with the crime rate in the city of Denver.

Mr. Brokaw. And we also have in the audience Doug Dean, who is the majority leader in the Colorado State House of Representatives.

You were among those who defeated your own Governor's gun control bill that he put before the House. Why did you do that?

[Representative Dean stated that he believed the legislation would not have had any effect on the Columbine tragedy since Robin Anderson, who purchased the guns for Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, would have passed the background check supported by the President.]

The President. I agree with that. She would have passed the background check. What she said was, if she'd been subject to one, she probably wouldn't have bought the gun. But let me point out—again, I say, you can't solve—you can't refuse to vote for a law because it's not perfect, it won't solve every problem.

Last year we had a study done by the Department of Justice and the Department of the Treasury, involving over 300 sellers at gun shows—and without background checks. Thirty-four percent of them resulted in sales of guns that were later used in serious crimes, a total of 50,000-plus gun crimes committed. Now, if there had been background checks, those would not have occurred.

So to say, well, it wouldn't have solved every problem, therefore we won't do it—I don't think that's a good answer.

Mr. Brokaw. Mr. Dean—

The President. If the Brady bill works, if you believe in the Brady bill, if you accept the fact that it's kept a half-million felons, fugitives, and stalkers from getting handguns, then it would by definition work to have the same background check at the gun shows.

And let me just say one other thing. Everybody says, enforce the law, enforce the law, enforce the law. The more we prosecute violations of the Brady bill, the more we enforce the law, the more illegal people will turn to the gun shows to buy their guns, unless we close the loophole.

Mr. Brokaw. Mr. Dean, a question that I have for you. Eighty percent of the Coloradans, in a survey about gun laws in this State, said they really did want to crack down on gun shows; they wanted to crack down on sales to 18-year-olds. All of this is possible—and they wanted background checks for gun shows. So, are you representing the

people of Colorado when you defeat those very measures?

[Representative Dean stated that the vast majority of people in his district did not support the measures.]

Mr. Brokaw. But let me just ask you, so I understand perfectly well your position personally. You think that there can be unlicensed dealers at gun shows, and that background checks should not be required at gun shows, and that guns can be sold to 18-year-olds at gun shows. You're in favor of all three of those points?

[Representative Dean responded that 18-year-olds were adults who could serve in the military and be sent to war. He said he was concerned that regulation of every private firearm transaction would create a Government registry of firearm owners. The program then paused for a commercial break.]

Mr. Brokaw. Mr. President, we're back, and these are just some of the Federal firearms regulations that we already have on the books. If you could add just one or two that you think would change the current climate in this country, what are the two priorities that you have for the end of your term?

The President. I would close the gun show loophole, because the Brady bill has worked superbly. It has given us a 35 percent drop in gun crimes and a 31-year low in the homicide rate and kept a half-million people—felons, fugitives, stalkers—from getting handguns. That's the first thing I'd do.

And then the second thing I would do is to require safety provisions for children. I also believe that the loophole in the assault weapons ban should be closed; we banned assault weapons and then we still allow the import of these large capacity ammunition clips. But I think that child safety and doing more to keep guns out of the hands of criminals through preventive measures that haven't delayed by a day or an hour a hunter going to the deer woods, anybody going to a sport shooting contest, any law-abiding person buying a handgun for safety at home—hasn't done any of that—I think it is a tiny burden to pay to give lots of people their lives back. So that's what I'd do.

Mr. Brokaw. But do we have to get beyond the laws and get to a dialog as well about the place of violence in our culture?

The President. No, no, that should all be a part of it. I mean, I think the media has a responsibility here. I'll say again, communities, schools, and families have heavy responsibilities. I think when we've got a lot of guns out there, we should do more to teach young people how to use them safely. But you can't say that guns are the only area in our life, because of the second amendment, where we're not going to do prevention.

You know, the same people that are arguing now, we can't close the gun show loophole, said to me 6 years ago when I signed the Brady bill that it wouldn't do any good, it would just burden people, because all the criminals bought their guns at gun shows, they didn't buy their guns at gun stores. Turned out that wasn't right. Prevention makes sense in every area of our national life. That's my message and my belief.

Mr. Brokaw. One of the places in America where this dialog has been going on with a very, very heavy price, of course, is Columbine, Colorado. And Lance Kirklin is with us today. He was one of the students who was shot in Columbine. And Lance and his family also still like to use guns.

Lance, what did you learn about guns in the last year, being a victim of a gunshot?

Lance Kirklin. Well, I mean, it's not guns that kill people, it's people who kill people. You don't see guns jump off tables and start shooting people. It's people that have it in their possession, and it's their mind that does the crime.

Mr. Brokaw. What would you change, however, in the teenage culture, if you will, or in the culture of young people—not just in Columbine, but across the country, in terms of their attitudes about violence and the use of guns?

Mr. Kirklin. I don't know.

Mr. Brokaw. Do you think that they are open to change? Do you think that they learn—I mean, you go out hunting with your father, for example, right? You shoot guns from him, and you've learned from him. But how many other young people only know about guns from video games or from some

violent movie and don't really know what the impact is?

Mr. Kirklin. I think a lot of people my age know about guns from movies and video games and stuff, but they also know the other side of it. You know, they are dangerous, and they also can be used for hunting and good, I guess.

Mr. Brokaw. Would you be uncomfortable if the gun show loophole were closed?

Mr. Kirklin. Kind of.

Mr. Brokaw. You would be uncomfortable?

Mr. Kirklin. Yes.

Mr. Brokaw. Let's ask Dave Thomas, who came to be known nationally as well, who is the district attorney for the county in which Littleton resides, about how his attitudes have changed toward guns in the last year, or having to deal with the tragedy there?

[*Mr. Thomas stated that he agreed with Lance Kirklin, except that he believed that people's access to guns increased the lethality of the acts that they commit. He agreed with President Clinton that the Brady bill worked better than anticipated. He also advocated closing the loophole, providing resources for investigations, and prosecuting violators aggressively.*]

Mr. Brokaw. We also have—in that very area is Diana Holland, who is the co-chair of the Littleton Community Task Force. The task force is officially neutral on the whole question of gun control. But I wonder, Ms. Holland, has your work, in effect, been impeded some by the emotional divisions of gun control debates bring to the table?

[*Ms. Holland said that task force members left their political and personal agendas out of their work. The program then paused for a commercial break.*]

Mr. Brokaw. Mr. President, I know it's no surprise to you that you have been a very large target for the National Rifle Association and its spokespeople in political arenas and on television. We're going to share a couple of the ads that they've been running so that you can respond to them and so that we can talk to some people here who are supporters of the NRA.

Let's see one of those ads.

[A videotape ad was shown.]

Mr. Brokaw. Pretty harsh language, Mr. President.

The President. Well, actually, Mr. Heston is right, I guess. If you say something is wrong unintentionally, it's a mistake; and when you know it's wrong, it's a lie. That's what he said.

Now, when that child—when the one child killed the other child, I said, A, there ought to be child safety locks, and B, another provision of my bill, which I couldn't get through either House, was to hold people like the people in that crackhouse criminally responsible when they allow children like that little boy to have access to guns. That was a provision of my law. That was my position. And actually, I believe they supported me. So they knew I was for that, because they supported it. But he didn't say that on the airwaves.

Now, I'm not going to call him a name like he did; I still like his movies, actually. [Laughter] But this is not about me and him. You have to understand—the NRA, if they can make a demon out of me, then they can raise more money. If they can terrify people who live in a district like the House Majority Leader there, where there really is a cultural divide here—because they don't have many people in his district who would ever violate the gun laws, and they have a lot of people who own guns, they use them safely, they taught their kids to use them safely, and they can't imagine the kind of culture that a lot of these kids live in, these urban cultures. So they don't understand what the deal is, and they're afraid it's a slippery slope.

So that's what this is about. They just keep everybody all agitated, and they raise a lot of money, and maybe they beat the bill. But again I say, let's calm down here. Since I've been President, gun crime is down 35 percent, nobody's missed a day in the deer woods, nobody's been unable to go to a sport shooting contest, and the prevention has worked. And what we need is more prevention that doesn't unfairly burden the right of hunters and sports people and people who want guns for their own safety. Those are the facts.

The gun death rate in America is still higher than any other country in the world. And I want to say this: The accidental gun death

rate of children under 15 is 9 times higher here than in the next 25 largest countries combined. We could use a little more prevention. That's what this is about. That's all it's about—not about a fight with the NRA—it's about a fight to save lives.

Mr. Brokaw. We had hoped in our next hour, which we'll play tonight, to have Wayne LaPierre, who is a very conspicuous officer of the NRA, appear with us. And he had accepted, but then cited a scheduling conflict, so he won't be with us later tonight. But we do have in the audience, I know, some people who are not only enrolled members of the NRA—but are outspoken proponents of the NRA's position on a lot of things.

Bob Ford is the president of Rocky Mountain Arms, Inc. He is a gun dealer, and he joins us now. Mr. Ford, right here. Mr. Ford, Wayne LaPierre has said two rather provocative things about the President, in addition to the Charlton Heston commercial that we just saw. He said the President “has blood on his hands” as a result of what happened to the coach that was tragically shot in the hate crime shooting in Northwestern. And he said that this President wants a “certain level of violence in America to further his political agenda.” Do you agree with that?

[Bob Ford disagreed, and stated that too much rhetoric was coming from both sides. He said that we need to send a message to felons that if you use a gun, you will be sent to prison.]

Mr. Brokaw. And what about gun shows in places like Colorado and across the American West and across the American South, for that matter, where they're so popular? You're a regular gun dealer and represent gun dealers. Do gun shows unfairly compete with people who go out and set up their shop in a brick-and-mortar operation?

[Mr. Ford stated that individuals selling private or estate gun collections are engaged in business transactions and thus should have to apply for a license to sell firearms or get out of business, and the ATF should enforce that position.]

The President. I agree with that.

Mr. Brokaw. But this administration raised the standards for licensing. And here

in Colorado, just this week, after I arrived, many Colorado Republican legislators were saying they've made it too hard to get a license. They only raised the price from \$10 to about \$30 and put some additional standards in there. Wasn't that the appropriate thing to do, or not?

[*Mr. Ford stated some dealers who used to have Federal firearm licenses were liquidating their personal inventory, but the ATF was requiring them to get a license and perform background checks. He emphasized that no dealer in the country objected to performing background checks.*]

Mr. Brokaw. Were you surprised when the Colorado Legislature defeated the attempts to tighten the laws governing gun shows?

Mr. Ford. No, I was not. Our members of our Colorado Legislature are responsive to their constituents.

Mr. Brokaw. Thank you very much.

Matt Bai is a colleague from Newsweek magazine, and he has been covering extensively this whole question of the gun culture in America, the gun laws, and the political debate that has heated up across America. Matt?

Matt Bai. Well, Mr. President, the NRA, in a letter to gun dealers last week, called you "the most antigun President in history." That may or may not bother you, but along the same lines of what we've been watching, there are a lot of gun owners and gun dealers who believe that you won't stop until you get an outright ban on handguns, and that whatever you get, you're going to want more. I'd like to know what specific provision, of the ones you've outlined today, it would take for you to go away and leave the gun companies and the gun dealers alone.

The President. Well, first of all, I have said specifically I would not support a ban on handguns. You may know that a major newspaper in Washington, DC, the Washington Post, has actually advocated that. And so we were all asked about it, and I said, no, I wouldn't support that.

I would go further than my proposals here. I also think that it's all right to register these sales the same way we register cars, because what I'm trying to do is improve the ability

of law enforcement to trace weapons when they're used in a crime. And none of this in any way interferes with the second amendment. You know, historically there were a lot of people who had to have a license to carry a concealed weapon. No one ever thought that interfered with the second amendment.

So my basic view is, I am for anything that will increase our capacity to prevent guns from going into the wrong hands. But I'm not for preventing law-abiding people from having a gun that they have the right to have, to hunt, to sports shoot, or, if they choose, to protect themselves in their own homes.

I do think, in addition to that, we should invest a lot more in this smart gun technology. We will be able—within 3 years, we will have guns on the market that can only be fired by their lawful owners. I think we ought to have internal as well as external child trigger locks. I believe that. That's what I—and I believe when we do that, you will see a much safer country. I think that if you look at the evidence here, there have been no assaults on hunting; there's been no assaults on sports shooting. But we do have a safer country than we did because I've taken on these fights.

And so I think that the fears are unfounded. We should take—instead of getting into big verbal battles, we ought to look at the specifics of every proposal and debate it, and decide whether it's right or wrong.

Mr. Brokaw. As you know, many people believe that if you register every handgun, that's going to be a national registry, and the Government someday is going to show up at your door and say, give me your guns.

The President. Well, I don't agree with that. But that wasn't my proposal. I think first of all, that's impractical, because there are already over 200 million guns out there. And now, that just scares a lot of people. The truth is that the vast majority of them are in the hands of collectors and law-abiding hunters and sports people. There are too many that are kind of floating around on the streets and in the criminal culture, but the answer to that, I think, is aggressive local buy-back programs, which we've tried to support.

But if you registered new gun sales, then they could be—the guns could more easily

be traced in the event of a crime. That's all I'm interested in. I would oppose any effort to say that people couldn't have firearms in this country. You know, maybe others disagree, I suppose, but it's part of the culture I grew up in, and I'm still a part of it. But I also think that the people—most of the folks I grew up with, if I have a chance to talk to them, and they understand we're trying to save kids' lives and trying to prevent crimes from happening in the first place, and it doesn't burden their ability to do what they want to do lawfully with their guns, will support these specific measures. That's the direction I think this debate ought to take.

Mr. Brokaw. You've tried to make it a local State option as well. Would that be the answer, that gun owners would be more inclined to trust their State governments than the Federal Government? The Federal Government can provide the appropriate incentives for the States to install those kinds of laws?

The President. Well, they probably would. But to me, how it's done is not as important as whether we have done everything we possibly can.

Look, let me just say this. When I started in '93 as President, we had a rising crime rate. Most people didn't think you could drive it down. Now, the Congress not only passed the assault weapons ban and the Brady bill, they put 100,000 police on the streets. They put more resources into law enforcement. They did more to help local agencies, as well as to strengthen our Federal efforts. And crime is at about a 25-year low, the murder rate at a 31-year low. But I won't be satisfied until America's the safest big country in the world.

And if I were running the NRA, I would love—I'd have a whole different take on this. I would be for all this prevention business, because I would want to prove that a country where lots of people hunt, sports shoot, and have guns for their home protection could also be the safest country in the world. So I would have a totally different take on this. I might not raise as much money through the mail, but I think it would be better.

Mr. Brokaw. Let me just be absolutely clear about this. You're going to be out of work in less than a year. Does that mean that

you're thinking about running for the NRA presidency? [Laughter]

The President. I think—you know, somehow I think I'd have a better chance of getting elected to the school board at home than I would to the NRA presidency. [Laughter] But I'm just trying to say—again I will say, let's go back to what the gun dealer there said. We don't need to turn this into personal animosity. We need to debate every single one of these issues, bring out all this stuff, and figure out how we can make America the safest big country in the world. That's really what we all want, isn't it? Wouldn't you like it if your country was the safest big country in the world? I mean, that's what we all want.

Mr. Brokaw. I think we have a question from the audience for you, Mr. President.

Q. I'm a junior here at the University of Denver. I have a question I'd like to direct to the President. Sir, do you believe the second amendment is absolute or something that can be limited by gun control legislation?

The President. Well, there is no such thing as an absolute, if you mean it can never be restricted. The first amendment, which most people believe is the most important one, let's say freedom of speech—the Supreme Court has said there's a limit on the freedom of speech; pornography is not protected; you can't shout "fire" in a crowded theater when there's no fire. Freedom of religion—the courts have upheld that people who want to join the United States military, for example, may not be able to have beards, even if their religion says they're supposed to have one.

So all of these amendments have to be interpreted over time in terms of the real circumstances. If you look at the history of the second amendment and what led to its adoption, there is—it's my view—nothing in there which prevents reasonable measures designed to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and kids. To say that criminals have an absolute right to get guns and we're just going to throw the book at them if we catch them, but we can't prevent them from committing a crime in the first place, I think is wrong.

Mr. Brokaw. Mr. President, we have in the audience a group of women who are interested on both sides of this issue, and one of them is Robin Ball, who is a spokeswoman for the Sisters of the Second Amendment. Is Robin here? I was misinformed. [Laughter]

Tom Mauser is here, though, from Columbine. He lost his son at Columbine, and he appeared, obviously, at the State of the Union speech, and you came out here to speak to this group today. Mr. Mauser, have you been surprised in the almost year now since the tragedy at Columbine and the loss of your son, by the divisions in the Colorado community generally, and specifically in Littleton, about how to resolve these issues of violence in America and especially what we do about guns?

Tom Mauser. No, I haven't been that surprised, because I think Littleton is no different than any other community. There are differences of opinion of how we deal with this terrible epidemic of gun violence.

Mr. Brokaw. And where do you think it will lead to in Colorado, given how the Colorado Legislature voted this time?

Mr. Mauser. Well, clearly, where it's leading to right now is that we're taking—my organization, SAFE Colorado, is taking a ballot initiative to the people to close the gun show loophole. And I think, clearly, the polls show that people see that it's reasonable common sense.

Mr. Brokaw. We also have in the audience Richard Gephardt, who represents your party in the House of Representatives. There is a letter, Mr. Gephardt, that we got a copy of just today. It may come as some surprise to you. It's signed by—Henry Hyde is the Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, and John Conyers, who is the ranking Democrat on that committee, and they're sending it to Orrin Hatch, saying they want to request a juvenile conference meeting as soon as possible, because they think that they have agreed on some terms of where they can get to in closing these loopholes. For example, on gun shows, John Conyers is signing off on a 24-hour check. Does that have any chance of passing?

Representative Richard A. Gephardt. Well, I hope that that can happen. We've

been trying to, on a bipartisan basis, get this conference to meet and get them to bring out something that we can get a vote on in the House and the Senate. I'm very optimistic that we can get this done. And as the President has said, we all have our eye on safety, and this bill would help.

Mr. Brokaw. Twenty-four-hour checks would be okay with you?

Representative Gephardt. If it can be done feasibly, if we think that we can catch the people. As the President said, even under the 72-hour rule, 90 percent of the people passed the check; we're only inconveniencing about 10 percent, and a large portion of them are the people that we're trying to stop from getting guns.

So if we can work it out to get a 24-hour check, clear everybody or not clear everybody in that period of time, that would be great.

Mr. Brokaw. Would you sign that bill?

The President. Well, I want to see the details, but I almost certainly would sign anything that had the support of both Mr. Conyers and Mr. Hyde and, therefore, got a majority of both their caucuses.

You know, we may never get a perfect bill, and I don't know what they mean by 24 hours, because John Conyers had offered Henry Hyde 24 hours before, but he wanted some provision for this group—small, small group for whom there is a very large rejection rate. So I don't know where they settled; I want to see the details. But if we could get a big, bipartisan bill to come out of the House that would save people's lives, even if I thought it weren't perfect, of course, I would sign it.

Mr. Brokaw. Would it be worth trying a conditional bill—we'll try the 24-hour check for 2 years with a time limit on it, and if it's not working, we'll come back to it again, just so that we get some effort to begin to close the door on gun shows?

The President. I think we ought to do the very best we can on that. The one thing I did not want to do that was suggested by some is that we just go for the child trigger locks and leave the gun show loophole alone altogether, just because it's almost impossible to come back. So if we can make some progress, obviously I'm open to it. But I think

that even—without regard to party, what is uncomfortable is, everybody would like—because a lot of these gun shows are held on the weekend, and people are passing on. And as a gun dealer, a gentleman pointed out, a lot of these people are just getting rid of their own personal stock.

And I've been to gun shows way out in the country where you're 10 miles, 15 miles from the nearest town, and they're passing through. So everybody would like to minimize the inconvenience. The real issue is, what do we do about this very small percentage of people that don't clear within a day and do have a 20 times higher rejection rate?

But I can't believe we can't find a fix for that so we can let everybody else go in a day. Look, the ones that clear in 30 seconds, I'm for letting them go in 30 seconds. I don't want—the Government should never be in a position of imposing a burden for which there is no benefit. I can't believe that we can't work this out, and I'm encouraged by this letter.

Mr. Brokaw. Speaking of that, Smith & Wesson recently came to you and volunteered to put in place a number of guidelines that rankled other gun manufacturers in this country—not only gun locks but they're not going to allow their guns to be sold at gun shows, they're not going to allow multiple handgun sales in the course of a fixed period of time. The NRA has already pointed out that that's a foreign company, and it may be up for sale. Are you going to put the pressure on other gun manufacturers to follow the Smith & Wesson model, or are you going to leave it to them to do what they want to?

The President. Well, first of all, I think they did a good thing. Second, let me tell you exactly what they did, because I think it's important. And you might want to go back to some of the people in the audience.

What they said was, they would not allow their guns to be sold at gun shows unless all the people selling at the gun show did a background check. Then, they said they would require trigger locks, both internal and external, and within 3 years would have smart gun technology. And they said that they would not continue to distribute their guns through dealers that had a bad record.

Another thing, a lot of these gun dealers get an unfairly bad name. An extraordinary percentage of the guns sold to criminals by gun dealers are sold by a tiny percentage of the dealers. Most of the dealers are perfectly law-abiding and very vigilant. So Smith & Wesson said, "Hey, I want to get in and support this process." And what I'm going to do is encourage other manufacturers to do the same, and I think you're going to see a lot of city and State governments that buy a lot of guns and encourage other manufacturers to do the same.

Now, there is some evidence that a lot of the other manufacturers are trying to gang up on Smith & Wesson, which I think is a mistake. Again, what did they do that was wrong? All they did was to promote prevention. And they're in the business of selling guns. They're obviously not trying to ban guns; they're making money selling guns.

Mr. Brokaw. There's somebody in the audience who has some pretty strong feelings about that. Paul Paradis is a gun dealer here in the State of Colorado. You've decided, Mr. Paradis, not to sell the Smith & Wesson weapons?

[*Paul Paradis said that his store no longer sold Smith & Wessons, and he also noted that the agreement involved more ATF inspections.*]

Mr. Brokaw. Why do you think that selling Smith & Wesson weapons would bring more ATF inspections?

Mr. Paradis. It's one of the things that dealers have to do. There's a number of other things. I carry over 400, 500 guns in my store.

Mr. Brokaw. Right.

Mr. Paradis. One of the things that they were requiring us to do is remove every gun from the shelf and lock it up in a safe every night. Well, you take two employees, me and my wife, usually, to spend a couple of hours unpacking and putting guns up and next morning taking them out; that's a lot of money lost.

You know, the States, a short time ago, were very upset about Federal unfunded mandates. Now, it's businesses, especially small businesses like mine, that are receiving Federal unfunded mandates.

Mr. Brokaw. Do you have an answer to that, Mr. President?

The President. Well, I think what Smith & Wesson agreed to do, though—and they kind of initiated a lot of this—was to try to make sure that if a gun store was broken into at night, that it would be harder to steal the guns, and if you left them all out in full view, that it would be. But I can see—it’s obviously some burden on them. It’s an extra lot of trouble for 2 people to store 400 guns. But again you have to ask yourself, on balance, is this a good requirement if these stores might be broken into?

Mr. Brokaw. I think a lot of people in America probably don’t realize that most gun manufacturers are now shipping their guns with trigger locks.

The President. They are. They’ve been great.

Mr. Brokaw. Are they getting enough credit?

The President. No. But I’ve tried to give them credit. You know, we’ve had at least two events at the White House to compliment and thank the manufacturers who are putting trigger locks on their guns when they ship them now, the new guns. And there are, I think, even—there are some people I think out here that are even providing trigger locks to people that can be applied to guns that they already have. And all this is good. We should do more of it.

Mr. Brokaw. We have one quick question. I’m sorry, it’s going to have to be very quick.

Q. I am a sophomore here at DU. How many laws were broken last April 20th at Columbine, and why do you think one more will make a difference?

Mr. Brokaw. I think there were 18 broken, if I can help you with that, Mr. President. [*Laughter*] Is that right?

The President. Well, as I said—let me go back to Columbine. If you look at the troubled history of those young men, no one can be sure that anybody could have done anything in law enforcement to stop it. And you all know the facts better than I do. You must have all asked yourself a thousand questions about whether anybody, including any of their classmates, should have known, could have known, could have done something. But the main thing is you shouldn’t evaluate these

proposals solely in terms of Columbine. What you should say is, would it make a difference?

Why do I think one more will make a difference? Because if you close the gun show loophole, then all gun sales will be subject to the same background checks the Brady bill imposes on gun dealers today, which has resulted in a half-million felons, fugitives, and stalkers not getting handguns. And the gun crime rate today is 35 percent lower than it was 7 years ago. That’s my argument.

Mr. Brokaw. Mr. President, thank you very much.

The President. Thank you.

Mr. Brokaw. On behalf of NBC News and MSNBC, I certainly appreciate this attentive and very articulate audience, and especially the President of the United States to take time out of his busy schedule to address this issue that, clearly, so deeply divides so many Americans. But I hope that with this dialog here today and many others like this in the course of the coming months in Colorado and across the country, we can take that one step toward some common ground.

This, after all, is a debate about much more than just gun safety, gun laws; it’s about who we are and what we want our children to think of us in the future. Thank you all very much for joining us here today.

[*Following a commercial break, Mr Brokaw invited the President to make further remarks.*]

The President. I think this country would make better decisions across the whole range of issues if we could all find a way to give each other forums like this, because I have seen repeatedly how, on this gun issue, each side—once one side strikes a personal blow, then the other one wants to strike a personal blow back. And before you know it, we’re all into demonizing each other, which is—it may make for good television—no offense—[*laughter*]—but it makes for bad decisions.

We’re not talking about—there’s no need in us demonizing each other. And I think we have to recognize that most of the advocates of strong gun control and most of the advocates—opponents of it really come out of different cultures and have different experiences which lead them to the positions they

hold. And what we've got to do—I've spent a lot of time, since I came out of—basically out of the hunting and sport shooting culture, I've spent a lot of time explaining to the people on my side of this why the people on the other side think the way they do and argue the way they do and feel the way they do. And I think it's important that we try to minimize calling each other names, and try to hear what each other is saying. And I thought the gentleman who is the gun dealer today made some particularly cogent points. And I appreciate what you said.

And I also want to say, not every problem has an easy answer. I don't have an answer to what the gentleman up there said, that he quit using Smith & Wesson guns because he and his wife didn't want to spend 2 hours every night that they didn't have running their small business to load up 400, 500 guns. There's not an easy answer to every one of these things.

But we'll get through this, and we can make this the safest big country in the world if we keep listening to each other and dealing with each other respectfully, the way all of you have today. And I just want to thank you. And I want to thank all the officials who came here today for the role they played in this.

Thank you.

NOTE: The townhall meeting began at 1 p.m. at the University of Denver. In his remarks, the President referred to Gov. Bill F. Owens and State Attorney General Kenneth Salazar of Colorado; and Charlton Heston, president, National Rifle Association. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Statement on the America's Private Investment Companies Initiative

April 12, 2000

Last fall in Chicago, Speaker Hastert and I agreed to work together on a bipartisan legislative initiative to bring new private investment to America's economically disadvantaged communities. Today I am pleased to report that we have made some progress on that pledge. Passage of the APIC's initiative by the House Banking and Financial Services Committee represents the first crucial step in this bipartisan effort. America's Private In-

vestment Companies (APIC's) will spur as much as \$1.5 billion in new private investment in new markets across America. They represent a smart, innovative way to help ensure that all communities share in America's economic prosperity.

I would like to thank Representatives LaFalce, Leach, Lazio, Kanjorski, and Baker for their leadership in moving this legislation forward. I look forward to continue working with Congress on comprehensive legislation to help renew America's communities and tap into the full potential of our new markets this year.

Statement on Organ Donation Legislation

April 12, 2000

I am pleased by Senator Frist and Senator Kennedy's announcement that they have reached a compromise on legislation that moves our Nation forward to promote greater equity and effectiveness in the allocation of our Nation's organ supply. This compromise takes a first step towards ensuring that those Americans most in need of receiving these life-saving resources will be able to better access them. At the same time, we must redouble our efforts to encourage voluntary donation by all Americans.

Proclamation 7291—National D.A.R.E. Day, 2000

April 12, 2000

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Children face many challenges in today's complex society. Peer pressure to abuse drugs and alcohol; negative influences in films, music, television, and videos; school violence; gang activities; fear and low self-esteem—any or all of these pressures can lead young people to make unwise choices that can jeopardize their future and even their lives. Since 1983, however, there has been a strong positive influence in the lives of America's children that is helping them to navigate safely through these dangers and

uncertainties: Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.).

D.A.R.E. was developed jointly by the Los Angeles Police Department and the Los Angeles Unified School District and continues to draw its strength from partnerships among law enforcement officials, schools, parents, and communities. Under the program, specially trained police officers conduct classroom lessons designed to teach children from kindergarten through the 12th grade how to make healthy choices, overcome negative influences, avoid destructive behavior, and resist the lure of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.

The D.A.R.E. curriculum has several components designed to meet the changing needs of students as they mature. From the visitation program for children in kindergarten and the early elementary school years to the core curriculum for highly vulnerable fifth and sixth graders to reinforcement programs for middle school, junior high, and senior high students, D.A.R.E. helps young people of all ages develop the skills and self-confidence to recognize and resist negative influences. And this year, D.A.R.E. has pledged to use a specialized curriculum to reach out to thousands of parents and help them talk to their children about drugs.

My Administration is also taking forceful measures to help our young people make the decision to reject drugs. We are continuing to expand the unprecedented National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign in order to change the attitudes of an entire generation of young people; a campaign that is working across all race, gender, grade level, and income lines. The campaign is already paying dividends for American families: studies show that growing numbers of parents are talking to their children about the dangers of drug use, and youth drug use is down 13 percent in just one year. We have also expanded the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program and the Drug-Free Communities program.

Through efforts like these and the commitment of programs like D.A.R.E., we can ensure that America's children have the skills, self-esteem, and guidance they need to reject substance abuse and violence and to create for themselves a bright and healthy future.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 13, 2000, as National D.A.R.E. Day. I call upon our youth, parents, educators, and all the people of the United States to observe this day with appropriate programs and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twelfth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., April 19, 2000]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on April 20.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With the American Society of Newspaper Editors

April 13, 2000

The President. Thank you very much, Chris. And thank you for asking me again—I think. [*Laughter*] I want to say I am delighted to be here. And I'm glad you said it was the sixth time. I knew I had been here more than half the time, but we were talking on the way in about how, when you live a busy life, how memory fades. And I've enjoyed these six occasions, or at least the previous five, and I think I'll enjoy this one.

I was asking myself on the way over here, why am I doing this? I'm not running for anything. [*Laughter*] And I read the Vice President's speech to you and the jokes that he made, the joke he made about Chris and the Orange County Register. I was so delighted to carry Orange County, I didn't care whether the newspaper was for us or not. [*Laughter*] And surprised.

But I am delighted to be here. And I want to talk primarily today about the present debate over the budget and tax proposals on Capitol Hill. But I would like to say one thing very briefly at the outset about the census and to ask for your help.

Because the census is, at its core, information about who we are as a democracy, I would imagine everyone in this room is particularly interested in it. The information especially from the long form helps hometowns do everything from design mass transit systems to provide 911 emergency services. The census helps us to calculate cost of living increases for Social Security, military retirement, veterans' pensions. It serves as a foundation for a variety of economic surveys, including the monthly jobs reports, and it's important in the calculation of the Consumer Price Index.

So far, about three of five census forms have been returned. That means about 40 percent have not. We want everyone to count, and we hope that you will help us to reach them. So I would just say, anything you can do to help encourage the people who read your papers to fill out their census forms, every one of them, would be very much appreciated.

More than 35 years ago, President Johnson spoke before the American Society of Newspaper Editors, at a time, superficially, not so unlike this time. Unemployment was low; inflation was low; growth was high. The economy was humming in the middle of what was then the longest—to prove to be the longest economic expansion in our history. It lasted from 1961 to 1969.

President Johnson spoke of our obligation to look beyond the moment, to think of America as what he called “a continuing community,” to see how decisions affect not only today's citizens but their children and their children's children. “To build for tomorrow,” he said, “in the immediacy of today.” I think that's a good way of capturing what it is I believe we should be doing today—building for tomorrow in the immediacy of today.

It was very different 7 years and 3 months ago when I came to office. The economy was in trouble; the society was divided; the politics appeared to be paralyzed here. I had a vision of 21st century America and a roadmap I thought would help get us there. I saw an America where the American dream of opportunity was alive for every person responsible enough to work for it; an America strong, of strong communities with safe

streets, good schools, a clean environment; and a national community, which not only respected but celebrated our diversity and found even greater hope in our common humanity. And I saw an America still leading the world toward peace and freedom and prosperity.

We had a strategy to achieve that vision, one rooted in opportunity, responsibility, and community. The roadmap included economic reforms, education reforms, welfare reforms, health care reforms, reforms in criminal justice, reforms in environmental policy; greater efforts to strengthen the combined roles of work and family in the modern world; efforts to support our American community through community service; and initiatives in foreign policy against wars rooted in racial and ethnic conflicts, against terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, and for peace processes all across the world; efforts to build new partnerships in Asia and Latin America, to advance the cause of world health, and to relieve the debts of the poorest countries in the world.

We also had an idea to reform the role of the Federal Government, to make it smaller but more empowering and more aggressive in creating the conditions and the tools within which people could make the most of their own lives.

Strengthening the economy, of course, was key to realizing our vision. Doing that made all the rest of this possible. Our strategy was quite simple: We wanted to pursue a course of fiscal discipline, the greatest possible investment in education and technology, science, and other things that would advance our objectives, and to expand trade in American products and services around the world.

Now, we are in the midst of the longest, strongest economic expansion in history, with 21 million new jobs, the lowest poverty rate in 20 years, the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 30 years, the lowest female unemployment rate in 40 years, the lowest African-American and Hispanic unemployment rates on record, the highest homeownership in history. We also have the lowest crime rate in 25 years. Gun crime is down 35 percent since I took office. We have cleaner air, cleaner water, fewer toxic waste dumps, greater land preservation

in the lower 48 States than in any other period, except the Presidencies of Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt. Twenty-one million people have received the benefits of the family and medical leave law; 150,000 young Americans have earned money for college by serving in AmeriCorps. Two million children, with 2 million more on the way, have been given health insurance under the Children's Health Insurance Program. Ninety percent of our children are immunized against serious childhood diseases for the first time in our history. In our schools, test scores are up, college-going is up. And America has been a source of support for peace and freedom in the Middle East, Northern Ireland, the Balkans. We have done it with the smallest Federal Government in 40 years.

In the course of all this, the nature of the economic debate has changed radically. If I had come here the first time I spoke with you and said, "Give me a few years and we will eliminate the deficit, run three surpluses in a row for the first time in half a century, double our investment in education, and we'll have tax relief for middle class and lower income working people, including the earned-income tax credit, the HOPE scholarship tax cut, the child tax credit, and we'll actually lower the tax burden on average American families"—and according to the Treasury Department, income taxes for a typical family of four are the lowest percentage of income they have been since 1965. If I had said that, and I had said, "Now, give me a few years and the main question we will be debating is, what are we going to do with our surplus?" you would have been forced to write editorials complaining that the new President was slightly deranged, but he seemed like a pretty nice fellow. [*Laughter*]

Now, nonetheless, that is now the subject of debate in Washington—what do we do with the surplus? The question really, I think, is a larger one: What do we make of this moment? Do we believe, as President Johnson believed when he came here in the early sixties, that we should plan for tomorrow in the immediacy of today?

To me, the answer to that question is clear. We should be looking at our long-term challenges and opportunities, the ones I outlined

in the last State of the Union Address, the challenge of the aging of America. The number of people over 65 will double in the next 30 years. There will be only two people working for every one person drawing Social Security at present rates of Americans maturing and immigration and retirement.

We can extend the life of Social Security beyond the expectancy of the baby boom generation, and we can extend the life of Medicare and add a prescription drug benefit so that baby boomers, when they retire, are not a burden to our children and their ability to raise our grandchildren.

We have the challenge of expanding opportunity for all the children of America, the most racially and ethnically and religiously and linguistically diverse group of children ever in our schools. We can give every child a world-class education and, now, unlike 15 years or so ago, when we started the education reform movement of the late 20th century, we actually know how to do it. And we know that all children can learn; we know what strategies work, and we have evidence, abundant evidence all across the country.

We have the challenge of securing the long-term health of America. I believe to do it, we ought to continue to pay down the national debt and make America debt-free for the first time since 1835. And I believe we have a challenge to extend economic opportunity to people and places that have not been part of this recovery even yet, which is the heart of my new markets initiative.

We have the challenge of continuing to help people balance work and family, and eliminating what is still a scourge of child poverty in the United States. We have a challenge of proving that we can meet our environmental challenges, including global warming, and still grow the economy; a challenge of making our country the safest big country in the world; a challenge of accelerating our leadership in science and technology, and spreading the benefits of it, not only across America but to every corner of the Earth; the challenge of continuing to lead the world toward peace and freedom and continuing to build one America here at home. Now, I think that's what we ought to do with this magic moment of possibility.

In large measure, the decision about what to do and whether we continue on that course is what the budget debate in Congress is all about and what the election of 2000 is all about. There are those who say, "Well, even if the tax burden is a percentage of income, is the lowest it's been in 35 years for most Americans, we still ought to give some of this money back to the American people." We can do that, but I believe the tax cuts should be responsible and targeted, to help working families raise their children, provide for long-term care for their parents, tax deductibility for college tuition and better child care.

I think there should be incentives to wealthier Americans to solve our common problems, for example, to invest in new technologies, to help us combat global warming and promote environmental protection, and to invest in our global vaccine initiative to help eradicate AIDS, TB, and malaria from the world, and especially to invest in the poor areas of America which have not yet fully benefited from our recovery.

We can do all that, and it will actually reinforce our efforts to meet our long-term challenges. But I believe the budget now being debated in Congress and put forward by the majority takes us in the wrong direction and risks safeguarding this unique moment in our history, primarily because the tax cuts that are proposed in the aggregate would take us back to the policy that I have worked for over 7 years to reverse.

I vetoed their tax bill last year because it would have ended the era of fiscal discipline that has served our economy so well. This year Congress is working on last year's tax bill page by page, piece by piece. In separate measures, it is already voted to spend in the aggregate nearly half a trillion dollars, more than half the surplus. And we don't know how much is on the way because their budget, unlike the projections I try to do, only covers the next 5 years rather than 10 years.

Last year their tax cut cost about \$150 billion over 5 years, but it would have exploded to nearly \$1 trillion over 10 years.

This year, from Capitol Hill to the campaign trail, we're hearing positive statements about investing in health care and prescription drug coverage and education. But after

a \$1 trillion tax cut—and I believe the one they're running on this year is even bigger—there will be no room left for these investments or for saving Social Security and Medicare, unless we're prepared to go back to the bad old days of deficits.

Congress has a responsibility now to show us how all these separate proposals add up; how the choices made today will affect our ability to meet the challenges of tomorrow. Before we talk about massive tax cuts that would derail our hard-won economic prosperity, I say again, we should put first things first.

First, we should strengthen the solvency of Social Security and Medicare. These two programs represent the bedrock of our commitment to seniors and to millions of Americans with disabilities. Fiscal responsibility has been the foundation to keep these programs strong.

When I came to office, Medicare was projected to go broke last year, 1999. We have taken action to put Medicare and Social Security on a better path to the future. Just last month the Social Security trustees announced that the economy has now added 3 years to the life of the Social Security Trust Fund; it is now solvent until 2037. The Medicare trustees announced that Medicare is now solvent until 2023, 24 years beyond where it was projected to be in 1993. That's the strongest Medicare has been in 25 years.

Now, to be fair, there is a consensus in Congress that we should use all the Social Security surplus for debt reduction, and that is a good thing. But my budget goes one step further. It's an easy step, I believe, but one the congressional majority has not yet embraced. Debt reduction produces interest savings. Rather than using those savings to pay for an exploding tax cut or a spending increase, my budget locks away the interest savings from the Social Security surplus to lengthen the life of Social Security to at least 2054. This would cover all but the most fortunate baby boomers. I'd have to live to be 108 to run out the Social Security Trust Fund.

My proposal also lengthens the life of the Medicare Trust Fund to at least 2030, by investing a significant portion of the surplus

while also making Medicare more competitive and efficient. For example, we'd allow seniors to shop around for health plans that meet their needs. If they find a plan that saves money, they'd pay a lower Medicare premium. This would increase competition, give us better quality and lower costs. We would also modernize Medicare by creating a voluntary prescription drug benefit, something we plainly would provide if we were creating Medicare in the first place today.

Medicare was created at a time when it was basically designed for acute care, for hospital and doctor costs. Today, the average person who lives to be 65 has a life expectancy of 83. And the crying need is for chronic and preventive care. And today, unlike 35 years ago, pharmaceuticals can very often dramatically increase not only the length but the quality of life.

So one of my problems is that the budget pushed by the congressional majority this year would not extend the life of Social Security or Medicare by a single day. It is very important that everybody understands it. It's one thing to say you're saving the Social Security surplus and you're not spending it. That does not add a day to the life of the Trust Fund. It does help you pay down the debt, and I like that. And I'm glad we've got bipartisan, virtually, unanimous support for it. But if you really want to solve the problem of the aging of America, you have to take the interest savings that come from paying down the debt from Social Security taxes, which all of you are paying in excess of what we're paying out every month, and put it into the Trust Fund so we can take Social Security out beyond the life of the baby boom generation.

The second thing we ought to do, I believe, is to stay on course to eliminate all of our publicly held debt by 2013. By the end of this year alone, we will have repaid \$300 billion in our national debt. This is having a real impact.

For our economy, it's set in motion a virtuous cycle of reduced interest rates, more capital for private investment, more people investing in new businesses and new technologies. For families, debt reduction has meant more money on average, \$2,000 less in home mortgage payments every year for

the typical family, \$200 less in car payments, \$200 less in student loans, than would have been the case had we not reduced the debt. That amounts to a sizable tax cut for American families. We need a fiscally responsible budget, not one that risks economic growth and makes it impossible for us to continue to pay down the debt.

Third, we need to continue to invest in key priorities that are clearly essential to our future—education, health, law enforcement, science and technology. The budget proposed by the Republican majority has nearly a 10 percent average cut in virtually all domestic priorities. This would lead to serious cutbacks in everything from reducing class size to cleaning up toxic waste dumps to putting more police on our streets.

Furthermore, the budget is based on the assumption that the cuts will grow even deeper over time. This is very important for all Americans to understand. It is one thing to go out and propose all these programs that cost money, and quite another to say, "But we have to have a tax cut first. And somehow, I'm sure it will work out."

We tried it that way before, and it didn't work out. So if you have \$1-trillion, or even a larger, even bigger than a \$1-trillion tax cut over a decade—plus, keep in mind, their defense spending increases proposed are even bigger than the ones I have proposed, and I proposed an increase in defense every single year I've been here, and they've never failed to do that, to fund that—then you're either going to have to drastically cut all these programs—education, health, the environment—or go back and start running deficits or have a combination of both.

In other words, as I found out the hard way when I put together the budget in 1993, if you're going to be fiscally responsible, sooner or later arithmetic intrudes on politics. [*Laughter*] And this is very important. Far be it from me to tell you how to do your job, but I hope that arithmetic will be part of this year's campaign debate as well.

The proposal, from my point of view, defies common sense. I think the argument is over. We had a test run. We had 12 years of their proposals—do the big tax cuts first, and it will all work out—and we had 8 years of arithmetic in public policy. And I think

if you compare the results, the argument should be over. Our commitment is to fiscal discipline and to investment to move the country forward.

Still, in spite of all this hard evidence, later today the Republican majority will vote on a budget resolution that is loaded with exploding tax breaks and untenable cuts in critical investment. It will take us back to an approach that failed before and will fail again; back to ideas that didn't work before and won't work now; back to putting Medicare and Social Security on the back burner, instead of up front where they belong.

So I say again, we cannot afford to veer from the proven path onto a trail of unmet obligations, unrealistic cuts, and unnecessary giveaways. We can't squander the moment by squandering the surplus. We can't go back to the rosy scenario of the 1980's. The new scenario bases tax cuts we can't afford under the assumption that unrealistic spending cuts will be made at the very time they're out there in the election season telling us that they want to spend more on education and health care and the environment.

But the bottom line is this: The choices Congress will make this spring are fundamentally the choices that Americans will make this fall. What are our priorities? Will we maintain our commitment to fiscal discipline? In a larger sense, what is our vision? There is room in the vision I have outlined for the best ideas from both parties. When we have determined to do it, we have worked together—in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, which passed both Houses by big majorities from both parties; in the Welfare Reform Act of 1996, which passed both Houses by big majorities in both parties; in the fundamentally education budgets of 1998 and 1999, which passed both Houses by big majorities in both parties. We can do this, but we have to make up our mind to stay within the framework of what has served us so well for the last several years.

When I started, I quoted President Johnson, who said, "We should plan for tomorrow in the immediacy of the moment." And I told you that when he spoke those words in the early sixties, it was in the full flush of what was at that time the longest economic expansion in history.

In February, when we celebrated the longest economic expansion in history, I asked my economic team when the last longest expansion was. And they told me, it was '61 to '69. And I got to thinking about that. We tend to think about yesterday, I suppose, as we get older. But while I think we should keep focused on the future, we shouldn't forget the past.

There is a tendency, when you're in the middle of a boom like this, to think that you have to do nothing to shore it up, that it will last forever, and that there are relatively few consequences to whatever you decide to do or not to do. So indulge me just for a moment before I take your questions. And let me remind you of what happened to the last longest economic expansion in history.

Johnson was here, speaking to this group in the early sixties, about the time I graduated from high school in 1964. Unemployment was low; inflation was low; growth was high. Vietnam was somewhere in the outer range of our consciousness. No one really doubted that we would win the cold war because our ideas were superior and our values were superior, and no one expected the country to be rendered by that conflict. And at the time, we had a serious civil rights challenge, but most people believed then in the optimism of the moment that it would be solved in the Congress and in the courts in a peaceful manner.

A year later, we had Bloody Sunday in Selma. Two years later, we had riots in the street. Four years later, I was here in Washington, graduating from college 2 days after Robert Kennedy was killed, 2 months after Martin Luther King was killed, 9 weeks after Lyndon Johnson said he couldn't run for President anymore because the country was split right down the middle over the Vietnam war. And so we had a Presidential election with three candidates amidst all the turmoil of the moment, and in a few months, the longest economic expansion in American history was over.

If I seem insistent about this, it's because not as President, but as a citizen, I have waited for 35 years for my country to have the chance to build the future of its dreams for our children and to have the kind of positive role in the world I believe we can now have.

I have worked as hard as I can to turn the situation around and get us pointed in the right direction. And I just don't want us to do anything to squander this moment, as it was once squandered before in my youth.

We have a chance that none of us may ever see again in our lifetimes. And we have to make the most of it for our children.

Thank you very much.

N. Christian Anderson III. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President's time is very limited, but he has graciously agreed to take three questions. So, following our usual—well, I don't need to give you the rules, because I see who's at the microphones. So let's begin with Margaret [Margaret M. Sullivan, Buffalo News], please.

Possibility of Pardon

Q. Mr. President, first of all, as a New Yorker, although Chappaqua is a few miles from Buffalo, where I'm the editor of the Buffalo News, I wanted to say welcome to the neighborhood. [Laughter]

Yesterday Vice President Gore, before this group, answered a question about whether he would, if elected, use the power of the Presidency to pardon you in relation to the investigations being pursued by the independent prosecutor. He said you had said that you would not accept such a pardon by your successor. It turns out you didn't exactly say that yourself, not publicly. So we seem to have a rather public forum here. Would you request or accept such a pardon?

The President. Well, the answer is, I have no interest in it. I wouldn't ask for it. I don't think it would be necessary.

I think it's interesting that you would ask that question without going through the facts here. Let me remind you that there was a truly independent review of the whole Whitewater matter, which was concluded 4 years ago, in 1996, by a predominantly Republican law firm for the Resolution Trust Corporation that said neither my wife nor I did anything wrong.

If you want to know what's really been going on, you have a good book here, Mr. Toobin's book; you have the Joe Conason and Gene Lyons book, which explains how this all happened. There are independent coun-

sels and then there are special counsels. The independent review was over in '96. So I won't be surprised by anything that happens. But I'm not interested in being pardoned.

We had—if you remember, during the House Judiciary Committee hearings, there were five prosecutors, former prosecutors, including two Republicans, who said that no prosecutor would even entertain bringing any kind of criminal charges against an ordinary citizen like this.

But there is something fundamentally changed in the last 7 years about how the counsels were appointed and who they were and what their priorities were. And no one has yet written the full story. I can imagine why you wouldn't—particularly given the way a lot of this has been covered.

But the answer is, no. I don't have any interest in that. I don't want one. And I am prepared to stand before any bar of justice I have to stand before. But I would like just once to see someone acknowledge the fact that this Whitewater thing was a lie and a fraud from the beginning and that most people with any responsibility over it have known it for years.

Next question.

Presidential Library

Q. Mr. President, Brian Stallcop from the Sun in Bremerton, Washington—over here in the middle. You spent the last several minutes talking about what I think you hope will be your legacy as President. And I wonder if you could think ahead 5 years from now, when you open your Presidential library and all the living Presidents are there with you. Will there be a wing in your Presidential library to your impeachment trial and to that whole era of your Presidency?

The President. Yes, we'll deal with it, and I will deal with it—we'll have to deal with it. It's an important part of it. But I have a slightly different take on it than many of you do or at least than the Washington media does. I made a terrible personal mistake. I think I have paid for it. I settled a lawsuit that I won. I won that lawsuit, remember. I won that lawsuit. I settled it anyway because of the political nature of the people that were reviewing it, and because—so I gave away half of my life's savings to settle

a lawsuit I had won because I wanted to go back to work being President. And we now know that the questions asked were asked in bad faith, because they knew the answer and they knew it had nothing to do with the lawsuit—something hardly anybody ever points out.

So I think I've paid quite a lot. I struggled very hard to save my relationship with my wife and my daughter. I have paid quite a lot.

But on the impeachment, let me tell you, I am proud of what we did there, because I think we saved the Constitution of the United States. I think—first of all, I had to defeat the Republican revolution in 1994, when they shut down the Government, and we beat back the contract on America. Then we had to beat it in the impeachment issue. Then we had to beat it when I vetoed the tax cut last year. Then the voters had their verdict in the 1998 election and in the 1996 election.

But as a political matter, you have no idea—I'm not ashamed of the fact that they impeached me. That was their decision, not mine. And it was wrong. As a matter of law, the Constitution, and history, it was wrong. And I am glad I didn't quit, and I'm glad we fought it. And the American people stuck with me, and I am profoundly grateful.

That has nothing to do with the fact that I made a terrible mistake, of which I am deeply regretful. But I think that an average, ordinary person reviewing the wreckage left in that would say that I paid for that. And I should have paid for it. We all pay for our mistakes.

But I'll deal with the impeachment. But you have to understand, I consider it one of the major chapters in my defeat of the revolution Mr. Gingrich led, that would have taken this country in a very different direction than it's going today and also would have changed the Constitution forever, in a way that would have been very destructive to the American people.

Elian Gonzalez

Q. Mr. President, Edward Seaton, the Manhattan, Kansas, Mercury. I want to turn to the news events of today. The Attorney General has set a 2 p.m. deadline for the

Miami relatives to turn Elian Gonzalez over to his father. Is your administration prepared to send Federal marshals in if that happens?

The President. Well, first of all, let me say this. Attorney General Reno has done her best to try to resolve this in a peaceable way. This has been a very painful situation for her, personally, because she was the prosecuting attorney in Dade County for 12 years. She knows a lot of the people involved in this. And she went there to try to handle this personally. And she hopes, and I still hope, it won't come to that.

Since she's on-site and events are unfolding almost by the minute, I think I should let her address what we're going to do and when we're going to do it from the site. I think that's the best thing to do, because I haven't talked to her today about it.

Let me just say, I think the issue here for me is the rule of law. We have a system. The system has—if you don't think it's right, then you can say, well, we ought to change the laws. But we have a legal system, and it has been followed. And the decision that was made that Elian Gonzalez's father was a devoted and fit father and could proffer to speak for his son and, therefore, to make decisions for his minor son, was ratified in a district court and is now on appeal to a court of appeals. But none of the courts have granted any kind of interim relief which would justify opposition to the plain rule of law. So, to me, this case is about the rule of law.

I've done everything I could to stay out of it to avoid politicizing it. But I do believe that it is our responsibility to uphold the law, and we're doing our best to do that.

Constructive Criticism of the Press

Q. Mr. President, I'm Tom Koeninger, editor of the Columbian at Vancouver, Washington. This organization, ASNE, takes pride in receiving constructive criticism from its readers. As a reader of America's newspapers, I would like to offer you the opportunity now to provide your constructive criticism. And I'm speaking of newspaper and wire service coverage, not broadcast media.

The President. Well, the only difference in me and somebody writing a letter to the editor to give you constructive criticism is

that what I'll get from my constructive criticism is a bomb on the head. [Laughter] I know I'm not running for—I realize I'm not running for anything, but I'm not totally dumb here. [Laughter]

Q. Well, this is your last opportunity, though, to address us.

The President. No, it's not my last opportunity, it's just the last opportunity I'll have when anybody will pay any attention to me. [Laughter] It's ironic, you know, when I can say what I think and nobody will care anymore. [Laughter]

I think the most I should say—first of all, I think it's interesting—I think it's hard to run a newspaper today in an environment in which you're competing with television news, Internet news sources, radio news, and entertainment which abuts on the news, and all the lines are being blurred, both the technological lines and the categorical lines.

And I think the—but I think there is a special role for the old-fashioned newspaper in daily life, although I think it's interesting—the papers that are being made smaller or more readable or also put on the net and all that—I think that's very good. I think you ought to maximize that.

But it seems to me that one of the things that you have to fight against—I've often felt happened here over the last 7 years—is sort of getting stuck in a place that amplifies the sensational and the emotional, which carves out a certain market share in the short run, but may undermine the fundamental and the purpose of a newspaper over the long run.

And I think that—but I think that it's very hard—I mean, I think it's really quite challenging to run a good, old-fashioned newspaper, where you've got the news stories on the front page, and the editorial opinion on the editorial page, and you don't really mix the two, and you don't try to get caught up in sort of a given point of view on a big story, and then have to keep grinding it and pushing it, no matter what, because that's what's driving the place you've marked out for yourself in an increasingly competitive market.

I don't know what the answer to that is. But I believe—and I'm an old-fashioned person—I don't even—I hate to say this, it will get me in trouble with the networks because—and I need the exposure still. [Laugh-

ter] But because of my schedule, usually my only source of news is the newspaper. I'm sort of a troglodyte media person, I actually sit down and read the papers. Normally I'm not home at the time of the evening news, but I watch CNN a lot because I can get it anytime of the day or night.

But I have thought about their dilemma. The networks also have real challenges. And I think this whole communications revolution, which I think on balance is an exceedingly positive thing, runs the risk of giving people more information than they have ever had before without adequate perspective or framework or balance or background or back-and-forth.

I still think the editorial page and the op-ed pages of newspapers, where the editorial pages may be consistent and forthright, but you've got people on the other pages with different opinions or even writing about subjects different from the ones that the editors have time to write editorials about—I think that is a great thing. I think it's very helpful.

The thing I worry most about is that people will have all the information in the world; they won't have any way of evaluating whether it's true or false, A; and B, even if it's true, how to put it in proper perspective. That's what I consider to be the single most significant challenge presented to all of you by the explosion of media outlets and competitive alternatives in the information age.

On balance, I think it's a plus. And people are smart, and they nearly always get it right, which is why our democracy's around here after over 200 years. They nearly always kind of get it right if they have enough time. But still, you've got—how much will it cost your paper?

I'll just give you an example. When the full sequencing of the human genome is announced in a few months, how much will it cost you to run a long series on exactly what that is, what its implications might be, how it came to be, and where we're going from here? And how many people have to read it for it to have been worth the investment? What opportunity costs did you forgo? And then when things start to happen, spinning out of the human genome, how are you going to deal with that? That's just one example.

I think newspapers actually are going to become more and more important again, because so much of what people will have to absorb about the new century will be advances in science and technology, that it's very hard to put into the time constraints of an evening news program. And I think they will have all kinds of political and social ramifications as they unfold. So I think in a funny way, even if you feel beleaguered now, the nature of what is unfolding may make newspapers and old-fashioned newspaper work more important in the next few years.

But I think the information revolution and the sort of changes in the media structure have presented you with a lot of very difficult challenges. And if I were you, rather than asking me what my criticism is, I'd sit around and I'd really try to have an organized, honest discussion about how the fundamental purpose of the newspaper can be maintained, and you can still make enough money to stay afloat. Because somebody needs to organize and give perspective to all this information and opinions and all the stuff we're flooded with. I think it's very, very important.

I wish I were in your position. I wish I could do it, because I've thought about many times how hard it is for you. But I wish you well, because it's really important. People need more than facts. They need to know the facts are accurate, and they need to understand in some perspective about what it means and where it's all going.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Anderson. Mr. President, on behalf of all of these troglodytes, thank you so very much. One more little bit of trivia, and that is that every year you have been in this country, you have come to this convention during your 8 years in office. We're very grateful for that and grateful for the time you've spent with us today.

Please stay in your places while the President leaves. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:45 a.m. in the Grand Ballroom at the J.W. Marriott Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to N. Christian Anderson III, president, American Society of Newspaper Editors; independent counsel Robert W. Ray; authors Jeffrey Toobin, Joe Conason, and Gene

Lyons; Juan Miguel Gonzalez, father of Elian Gonzalez; and former Speaker of the House of Representatives Newt Gingrich.

Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Dinner

April 13, 2000

Thank you. Thank you very much, Senator Torricelli, Senator Inouye, Senator Akaka, Senator Johnson, ladies and gentlemen. I think I would like to begin by thanking Jane for that beautiful prayer and for agreeing to serve on the Indian Arts Board recently; thank you very much. And I would like to thank all of you for your presence here and your support for our Senators and our Senate candidates.

I don't know whether Bob Torricelli is right about what other people will remember as defining moments of my administration, but I certainly will remember my trip to Pine Ridge, and I'm very much looking forward to being at Ship Rock on Monday afternoon with Kelsey Begaye. Thank you for being there with us in continuing our efforts to bring empowerment and opportunity to Native Americans. We will be there Monday to talk about closing the digital divide, how to bring the power of the computer to lift people up rather than keep them down, in education and economic development and health care and so many other ways.

I have to tell you that my association with the Native American tribes of our country has been one of the most important aspects of my Presidency, to me. I always thought that the United States had something—to put it politely—less than a nation-to-nation relationship, and that sometimes, that the existence of that relationship had been used by the United States to run from our own responsibilities for the health, the welfare, the future of the Native American children and the people of our country.

And for 7 years and 3 months now, I've done everything I knew how to do to increase economic opportunity, to increase the quality of health care, to increase the support for the educational institutions, and, particularly in the last couple of years, to try to increase not only the voice and the respect for the tribal people and your leaders in our National

Government's decisions and the right to make your own decisions but especially to try to bring more economic opportunity. And I will continue to do that for as long as I am in this office, and then when I'm not President anymore, I will have more time to work on fewer things.

And one of the things I intend to work on when I'm not President anymore is the economic empowerment of people who had been left behind in this country and around the world. I believe in the potential of all people. I believe that intelligence is equally apportioned among all races and ethnic groups. But opportunity isn't. And I believe that we have done a lot of things over the last 120 years that, at least I for one, wish we could go back and undo in our relations with the Native Americans. But I'm proud of what—not only of what our administration has done but what our party has tried to do. I'm proud of the leadership of Senator Inouye and Senator Johnson, Senator Akaka. I'm proud that Senator Torricelli is leading this group and that you have joined us.

But the last thing I would like to say is that in the end, the most important thing of all is empowerment and respect, and I have tried to have a Bureau of Indian Affairs that would move beyond where it had traditionally been on that score. I have tried to see that a lot of other decisions were made differently. But your participation in this endeavor and in others like it as citizens is also a form of empowerment, and for that I am profoundly grateful. I'm glad for the progress we've made. I'm glad for the things we've been able to do. I think this year we'll have a good year on education, on health care. I think we'll pass this new markets effort that will help get more investment in to all the people and places that have been left behind in this remarkable recovery.

But the most important thing for me is that I hope when I leave office there will have been a fundamental seismic shift in the relationship between the United States Government and our tribes and our tribal governments throughout the country and a dramatic increase in the level of respect and independence and cooperation and partnership that you feel from your Government. I hope it will never, ever be the same. And if that is

true, then in large measure, my service will have been justified. And again, if it hadn't been for you, it would not have been possible.

So I ask you to keep it up, keep going, and give me every chance I can to be helpful, not only for the next 9½ months but for the rest of my life.

Thank you very much. Thank you all. Senators, thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:10 p.m. in the Georgian Room at the Phoenix Park Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Robert G. Torricelli, chair, Democratic Senator Campaign Committee; Jane Fawcett, who gave the invocation; and Kelsey Begaye, President of the Navajo Nation.

Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Dinner

April 13, 2000

Thank you very much. First of all, I want to thank Bob Torricelli for his leadership of this committee, and I see Senator Wyden, Senator Murray, Senator Bingaman, Senator Leahy, Senator Rockefeller, Senator Robb—is that everybody who is here? We almost have a quorum. [*Laughter*]

I would like to say, first of all, I want to welcome all of you here, and I want to thank you for meeting with our Senators, and I want to thank them for meeting with you. Just a few days ago, our leader in the House, Dick Gephardt, announced a five- or six-part program of support for the high-tech sector of our economy, which I thought was very good. I'm very pleased to see that the Senate committee trying to establish a systematic ongoing relationship with members of the community that I think has powered a great deal of our growth.

In the last 7 years since I've been President, the high-tech sector has accounted for about 8 percent of our employment but about 30 percent of our growth. And in a larger sense, the rifling of technology through traditional work environments has had a far bigger impact, because we know that the reason that we have the longest and strongest economic expansion in history is because of an unusual rise in productivity

growth after decades of stagnant productivity.

And what we've tried to do in Washington, essentially, is to create the conditions and give people the tools to make the most of their own lives, including you. So what we've tried to do that directly affects you is get rid of the deficit, keep interest rates down, make capital more available, invest in the education and training of our people, and continue to do basic research in science and technology, expand trade in American goods and services, and to try to open new markets continually. We've negotiated well over 270 different trade agreements in the last 7 years and deal specifically with the institutional barriers to growth. And I might just mention one.

I think that the way the Telecommunications Act finally came down was a significant contributor to the growth, to the creation of new companies, and to the flourishing high technology in our country. I say that because I believe that our party, beginning with the Vice President and me and the support played a very important role in the competitive elements in the Telecommunications Act of 1996. So I hope we have been supportive, and I hope we can do more together.

I would just like to repeat something I said today to the American Society of Newspaper Editors. The great question before the American people now is not how did we get here; the question is, where are we going, and how do we propose to get there? And in a larger sense, what is it that we intend to do with this magic moment of possibility?

I think, notwithstanding the churning of the Nasdaq in the last few days, there are many people, I think, who believe that, somehow, the prosperity of the last few years will inevitably be projected into the next few, and perhaps for an indefinite period of time. I think it could happen for an indefinite period of time but not inevitably.

I think that the real question I have is, I see the debate we're having with the Republicans over the budget now, are we going to continue to pay down the debt; are we going to continue to invest in education and technology; are we going to prepare now for the aging of the baby boom generation, and then take what's left and give it in a tax cut

instead of have a big tax cut first, and then figure out what we're going to do, which means we're either going to cut back on our investments in the future, not deal with the aging of America, or go back to running deficits?

In a larger sense, these questions are: What kind of country do we want to be? I feel very strongly that we should continue to change rapidly, but in the direction of the last 7 years. I feel very strongly it would be a serious error for us to go back to the way we changed in the 12 years before and go back to running big deficits. I think that would be a mistake.

I think that if we make our minds up, we can get this country out of debt for the first time since 1835 and guarantee a generation of new investment at lower interest rates. I think if we're determined to do it, we can close the digital divide and not only have this technology be the source of vast new centers of wealth and employment but actually help us to reduce poverty for more people more quickly in the United States and throughout the world than ever before in all of human history.

I think if we believe in the promise of science and technology, we can grow the economy and solve our environmental problems, including climate change. I think we can use the power of technology to make our country the safest big country in the world for things like safe gun technology, where handguns can only be fired by their lawful owner. If we think about how to make the most of this moment. And so, that's what I'd like to talk to you about.

You know, I'm not running for anything. [Laughter] And most days, I'm okay about it. [Laughter] But I am old enough, unlike some of you in this room, I am old enough to remember the last, the previous longest economic expansion in history. It encompassed virtually the entire decade of the 1960's.

When I graduated from high school, we had low unemployment, low inflation, high growth, high productivity. We had a civil rights challenge that people thought then would be handled in the courts and in the Congress. We were sort of involved in Vietnam. Nobody thought it was very serious, and

everybody thought we would win the cold war as a matter of course—1964.

Four years later, when I finished college in '68, we had riots in our cities. It was 2 days after Senator Kennedy was killed, 2 months after Martin Luther King was killed, 9 weeks after Lyndon Johnson said he couldn't run for reelection because the country was divided on Vietnam. And before you knew it, the longest expansion in American history was over, and we had failed to meet the large, long-term challenges of America.

Actually, I think we have fewer internal and external crises now than we did then. But the challenge is the same, and because we have fewer crises, the responsibility is greater. I believe our party's had a solid economic policy, a solid technology policy, a solid education policy, a good crime policy, a good welfare reform policy. But we need you. We need more and more partnerships. We need to keep working to create the conditions and give people the tools to do more and better. But we've got to be guided by the right vision. And the right vision is not a tax cut so big that it either puts us back in a deficit or keeps us from meeting our long-term objectives.

The right vision is to have a tax cut we can afford, targeted to purposes that are needed in the context of meeting the big, long-term challenges of America. That's what I stand for. I believe that's what our party stands for. And I hope that it's one of the reasons that you're here tonight.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:21 p.m. in the Ballroom at the Phoenix Park Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Robert G. Torricelli, chair, and Senator Patty Murray, vice chair, Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With the Education Writers Association in Atlanta, Georgia
April 14, 2000

The President. Thank you very much, Kit. Ladies and gentlemen, I'm delighted to be here with all of you, along with Secretary Riley and Bruce Reed, my Domestic Policy Adviser.

It has been over 20 years now since Dick Riley and I, as young Governors, first began to grapple with the need to reform education. It's been 17 years since the "Nation At Risk" report sounded the alarm about the state of education nationwide; over 10 years since the Education Summit in Charlottesville, which put us on a path to national action; and as Kit said, it was 10 years ago this month that I got up at 4:30 in the morning to fly to Chicago to speak to this group. I hope you'll forgive me if I don't remember exactly what I said in the fog of that early morning. [Laughter]

Doubtless, some of the veteran reporters here have been around long enough to have seen this whole fascinating drama unfold. Today I'd like to talk about the progress our public schools have made and the hard work still ahead. First I want to note something astonishing that I think everyone in this room should be proud of: 17 years after the "Nation At Risk" report, over 10 years after Charlottesville, there is still a passionate sense of national urgency about school reform, about lifting standards, improving accountability, increasing learning.

I can think of no other issue that has sustained to such an intense level of commitment from the public, elected officials, business leaders, and the press. If anything, the determination of the American people to improve our schools is greater than ever. That's a tribute to the love of our people for their children, to their understanding of the importance of education in the global information economy, to the realization that we have the largest and most diverse student body in our history, and to the enduring American belief that all our children can and must learn.

It is also a tribute to the commitment and the enterprise of education writers in cities and towns all across this country who have kept the story of education reform in the news year after year.

This intense national commitment has produced real progress. Today I am pleased to announce a new report by the Department of Education which documents the progress of the last 7 years, some of which Kit mentioned. The report makes clear that math and reading scores are rising across the country,

with some of the greatest gains in some of the most disadvantaged communities. For instance, reading scores of 9-year-olds in the highest poverty schools rose almost an entire grade level on the National Assessment of Education Progress between 1992 and 1996, reversing a downward trend.

The report also shows that 67 percent of high school graduates now go on to college, up 10 percent since 1993. This is a copy of it, and it will be available soon, and I hope all of you will read it and then distill it for the people who read you.

Clearly, we're making progress. Our young people are getting the message they need a college education to have the future of their dreams. We've tried to make those dreams more affordable, with the largest expansion of college opportunity since the G.I. bill, including the creation of the HOPE scholarship tax credit, which over 5 million families have already claimed since 1998; education IRA's; more affordable student loans, which have saved students \$8 billion—about a third of our student loan recipients are in the direct loan program now—they've saved students \$8 billion, and the taxpayers \$5 billion more. They have helped us to take the default level from over 22 percent to under 9 percent, and to triple annual loan repayment rates.

We also have more Pell grants; we're up to a million work-study slots; we've had over 150,000 young Americans earn scholarships by serving in AmeriCorps, many of them in our public schools. And the GEAR UP program is now pairing college mentors with a quarter of a million middle school students who are at risk, to prepare them for college and convince them the money will be there when they're ready to go.

College entrance exam scores are rising, even though more students from disadvantaged backgrounds are taking the test. And before the Congress this year is my proposal to provide a tax deduction for college tuition of up to \$10,000. If we can do that, along with another increase in the Pell grants and the other proposals I've mentioned, I think when we leave, Dick and I, we'll be able to say that we have truly opened the doors of 4 years of college education to all Americans.

We also see progress in the fact that about two-thirds of all of our classrooms are connected to the Internet, with the help of the E-rate program which the Vice President pioneered. That's up from only 3 percent in 1993. Ninety-five percent of our schools have at least one Internet connection, including 90 percent of our poorest schools. And I think we'll be right at 100 percent by the end of the year for not only the schools but for almost all the classrooms, "except"—and this is a big "except"—in those schools that are literally too dilapidated to be wired for the Internet.

We see progress in falling class sizes in the early grades, and we're trying to help that with our program to hire 100,000 new highly-trained teachers, 30,000 of whom have been funded, and we're trying to go to 50,000 in this year's budget. We see progress in the very large increase we've had for preschool—and I've proposed the largest in history for this year—and in the fact that 1,400 of our colleges and universities are providing volunteers for the America Reads program to help make sure all our third graders can read independently by the time they finish that year.

And we see progress in the growing public consensus about what must be done to reach our ultimate goal, providing a world-class education for every child in America. I think this consensus can be summed up in a simple phrase that has been our mission for the last 7 years: Invest more in our schools; demand more from our schools.

When I became President in 1992 the education debate in Washington, I felt, was fairly stale and predictable and unfortunately divided into what I thought were partisan camps with false choices. On the one side were those, most of them in my party, who believed that money could solve all the problems in our schools, and who feared that setting high standards and holding schools and teachers and students accountable to them would only hold back poor children, especially poor minority children.

On the other side, there were those, mostly in the other party, who fundamentally did not think the public schools were fixable and therefore didn't want to spend much money trying. Also they felt education was a State responsibility and therefore should not have

a comprehensive national response. Some of them, you'll remember, even tried to get rid of the Department of Education.

Vice President Gore and I believed both those positions were wrong. There was plenty of evidence, even then, that high levels of learning were possible in even the most difficult social and economic circumstances. The challenge was to make the school transformation going on in some schools available and active and real in all schools. And we sought to do it by investing more in our schools and demanding more from our schools.

This did not require, as some have charged even recently, micromanagement of our schools by the Department of Education. Indeed, under Secretary Riley's remarkable, steady leadership, Federal regulations on schools K through 12 have been reduced by two-thirds. In addition, we made ed-flex available to all 50 States, which makes it possible for them to reduce even further Federal regulations on the details of how Federal dollars are spent.

In 1993 we passed a new economic plan that cut hundreds of programs in order to reduce the deficit and improve the economy. But even in that harsh budget year, we boosted education spending. Over the last 7 years, we've nearly doubled investment in education and training, even as we've turned record deficits into record surpluses.

In 1994 we overhauled the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, requiring States to set academic standards for what their students should know. We passed the Goals 2000 legislation, which provided States with more resources to create and implement strategies to achieve standards. Since then, we've gone from only a handful of States having standards to nearly every State with them.

Forty-eight States also have assessments in place to measure student progress in meeting those standards—although, as Kit noted, I have been unsuccessful so far in convincing the Congress that we ought to have national standards and a voluntary national test to measure them. But because we insisted in 1994 that Title I funds be better targeted, 95 percent of high-poverty schools get them today, up from 79 percent 7 years ago. And I think it's very important that this progress

not be undone as Congress looks at Title I again this year.

In 1994 we began encouraging more competition and more choice for parents within the public school system, including magnet schools, schools within schools, worksite schools, and the creation of public charter schools. We also invested the resources necessary to get the charter school movement off the ground. When I became President, there was just one charter school in all of America, in Minnesota. Today, thanks in part to our investments, there are over 1,700. Vice President Gore has called for tripling that number.

I think the spread of the charter school movement is one of the great underreported stories in education, one that makes the whole debate over vouchers into something of a sideshow. Charter schools provide choice and competition that proponents of vouchers say they want. And unlike private schools, charter schools are accountable to the public for results. They all haven't succeeded, although most of them have done quite well; but then they can be shut down, if they don't. I think we should be working to make all public schools more accountable, not diverting much-needed energy and money away from them.

The strategy of greater accountability and greater investment continues to guide everything we're fighting for in education. I have sent Congress an "Education Accountability Act" to fundamentally change the way the Federal Government invests in our schools, to support more of what we know works and to stop supporting what we know does not work.

We want quality teachers in all classrooms; report cards to parents on school performance, for all parents and all schools; no social promotion, but help for students, not blaming them when the system fails them; a plan to identify failing schools and improve them, or shut them down; a systematic effort to make our schools safe, disciplined, and drug-free.

I've also asked Congress to make a range of other investments to make accountability work. Yes, we must end social promotion. But I say again, we need more investments in after-school and summer school programs.

It is wrong to blame the students for the failure of the system.

We had the first Federal support for after-school programs in 1997, at a million dollars a year; \$40 million in '98; \$200 million in '99; \$453 million in 2000; and we're asking for a billion dollars in 2001. If we get it, we will soon be able to provide after-school programs to every student in a poor-performing school in the United States.

We must also invest in modernizing our schools, to get our kids out of overcrowded classrooms or classrooms where the walls are too old to be wired for the Internet or where it's so stifling hot in the summer that students in summer school can't learn. There are many cities in this country where the average school building is 65 years of age or more. There are schools in New York City that are still being heated by coal-fired furnaces. There are literally school buildings all across the country that cannot be hooked up to the Internet—they simply can't be wired. And we all know the stories of how many of our kids are in trailers. The largest number of trailers I have seen behind the smallest school was 12, outside an elementary school in Jupiter, Florida, a couple of years ago. So I think that is very important.

We have also worked on this for a long time. For 4 years I have tried to get the Congress to approve my tax credit to help to build or modernize 6,000 schools. I have made the proposal again this year, along with an appropriation that would allow us to do renovations on another 5,000 schools a year for the next 5 years, in districts that are so poor it is simply unrealistic to expect that they could float a bond issue and raise the money, even with a tax credit.

Six years ago we passed legislation calling on States and school districts to identify and improve low performing schools. States have now identified some 7,000 low performing schools, and they're working to improve them. The education budget that I have presented last year—that we passed, excuse me, we passed last year required States that failed to turn around their low performing schools to let their students transfer out of those schools to other public schools.

I've asked Congress now to double our investment in the educational accountability

fund, so that we'll have adequate funding to help more schools turn around or be shut down. School districts can use this money to make the sweeping systematic changes that have proven so effective in turning around low performing schools, from Dade County to Kentucky to Chicago.

Last year, for example, I gave a Blue Ribbon Schools award to Beaufort County Elementary in Beaufort, South Carolina. Classified as one of the State's worst performing schools 5 years ago, Beaufort embraced accountability and higher academic standards and started after-school and summer school programs for students who were lagging behind. Today, their math and test scores exceed the State average, and local parents are pulling their children out of private school and putting them in the city's public schools.

If, for whatever reason, a school doesn't turn around, our educational accountability fund can be used to allow parents to transfer their students out of these schools into better performing ones, including charter schools.

The standards movement is making a difference. I believe when we passed Goals 2000 and provided funds to help States develop standards and strategies for meeting them, we made a contribution. Now, the real key is—and I think it's embodied in the topic of your conference—is if we have standards in all the States, how do we get them in the classroom? And how do we make sure they're making a difference in the lives of the students? That, to me, is the real key.

And you have to begin, I think, with improving the capacity of principals and teachers to do their jobs. We have \$40 million in our budget to help States improve school management and school leadership, instructional leadership, by principals. I have proposed a new teacher quality initiative to recruit more talented people into the classrooms, to reward good teachers for staying there, to give all teachers the training they need. This will build on the strong support we have given for incentives for people to go into inner-city and other underserved areas, that we've given to the National Board for Professional Teacher Certification.

There were no board-certified master teachers when I took office; there are now 5,000. We've done everything we could to

support that program. There are 10,000 teachers who are in the application process at this time. Our goal is to provide funding enough to get up to 100,000 teachers that are board-certified master teachers, with the idea that there ought to be one in every school building in America. When that happens, I think it will significantly change the culture of education in our country, because of the rigorous certification process and the work that is done to make sure that the teachers are actually effective at teaching our children.

We're also trying to help deal with some of our teacher shortages. Secretary Riley has established a commission on math and science teaching, and Senator John Glenn has taken that on as his next mission. In October they will give us a report which I hope will spur further action in that area. The Secretary has also called for the creation of more dual schools, that provide English plus education in at least one other foreign language, which could, I think, help to moot the whole English-only debate, show that we're interested in teaching all of our kids English and teaching them in English, but recognize the vast diversity we have in the country and the need we have to have more teachers who are bilingual and who can teach in an effective manner the students who come to our schools whose first language is not English.

I would also like to mention that in our proposal to create 100,000 new teachers for smaller class sizes, the teachers are required—every new teacher under that proposal is required to be fully qualified. And I think that this whole movement to improve teacher quality is really catching on. I know that you know that today the American Federation of Teachers is proposing a national standard and a national test for all new teachers. And I applaud them for it. I've been fighting for testing for higher standards, for better pay for teachers for almost 20 years now. In 1993 Hillary and I passed a law that made Arkansas the first State in the country to test teachers. That was a really popular law at the time. [Laughter] It was an interesting experience. But because our teachers performed, I might add, better than anyone anticipated, it happened that the children began to perform better, as well. Today, I

think Al Shanker would be very proud of the AFT, his successor, Sandy Feldman, and all of them. And I think all of you should be proud of them.

We need to demand more of our teachers, but we need to reward them better. We're going to have a couple of million teachers retiring in the next few years. We already have the largest student population and the most diverse one in our history. We're going to have to work very, very hard to get more qualified teachers in the classroom. There are already too many teachers teaching classes for which they're not fully qualified, and this problem is going to be dramatically exacerbated by the size of the student population, combined with the retirement plans and just the ticking of the time clock for many of our teachers. So we have to focus more and more and more attention on this.

And in that connection, let me say I have repeatedly challenged States—I'd like to do it again today—to spend more of their budget surpluses on raising teacher pay. Most of our States are in terrific shape today, but they, too—every one of these States is facing the prospect of too many teacher retirements. With very low unemployment, they're having the same problem recruiting teachers that we're now having in some of our military positions, recruiting and retaining. But they don't have any of the sort of supplemental benefits that you get if you're in the military.

Everybody says this is the most important thing in the world. Most of the money still comes at the State level. When the budget surpluses are there, when the money is there, now is the best time most States have had in a generation to make a dramatic increase in teacher pay, and I hope they will do so.

Now, let me just make a couple of points about where we are and where we're going. The fundamental lesson of the last 7 years, it seems to me, is that an education investment without accountability can be a real waste of money. But accountability without investment can be a real waste of effort. Neither will work without the other. If we want our students to learn more, we should do both.

The strategy is working. But again I say, with the largest, most diverse student body

in history and the educational premium rising every year in the global information society, we must do more. I've been very pleased at the proposals that Vice President Gore has made and the education plans he's put forth. I'm also pleased that, after some struggle, we have had bipartisan majorities for the education budgets of the past few years. Unfortunately, it's still a fight every year. Yesterday the House Education Committee passed a so-called reform bill that eliminates after-school programs, abandons our class size effort, which is totally bipartisan, and fails to modernize a single school in yet another year. This comes on top of the Senate's education bill, which rolls back reform even more.

I believe that the majority of people in the other party in Congress are still resisting the investments our schools need. In the name of accountability, they are still pushing vouchers and block grants that I believe would undermine accountability. And both bills greatly underfund education.

There's an even bigger problem with many of the plans being discussed in this election season, and many of them apparently appealing. But the problem is, even the apparently appealing plans advanced by Republicans are in trouble because of the combined impact of their proposed tax cut and defense spending increases. You know, one of the things—somebody asked me the other day, "Well, Mr. President, what was your major contribution in your economic reform package to this longest expansion in American history?" And you know what my answer was? "The return of arithmetic. We brought arithmetic back to the budget. We replaced supply-side economics with arithmetic." [Laughter] And lo and behold, it worked.

And so when anybody says anything—they're for this, that, or the other thing—you have to say, "Well, how does all this add up? Here's the surplus; it's going to be reduced by X amount, depending on what your tax cut is. Then it's going to be reduced by Y amount, depending on what you require for defense. Now, what are your plans for the retirement of the baby boomers? How will you deal with the fact that Social Security today is slated to run out in 2037, before the end of the baby boomers' life expectancy? What about Medicare? What are you going

to do with education?" Arithmetic is a very important element in politics and public life. And it is often ignored—you're laughing, but I'm telling the truth, and you know it. [Laughter]

And so here's the problem with some of these education proposals. If you take over \$1 trillion out over 10 years for a tax cut, and you increase defense even more than I have—and I've been a pro-defense Democrat; we've increased defense spending every year I've been President—there simply will not be the money left to fund a lot of these education and other proposals. I think it's wrong to spend about \$100 of the surplus on tax cuts for every dollar you spend on education. I just don't think that is consistent with our national priorities.

A study came out last week showing that the percentage of income the average American family is paying on income taxes is the lowest it's been since 1966. And it is true that income tax for lower income working Americans is now largely negative, because of the impact of the earned-income tax credit. It is true that people in the highest 20 percent are paying higher rates, but because of the way the economy has grown, their after-tax income in real, constant dollars, even with higher rates, is 24 percent higher than it was 12 years ago.

So I support, as I think all of you know, I support a tax cut. But mine is considerably more modest. I want the \$10,000 deduction for college tuition. I want a refundable child care tax credit. I want an increase in the earned-income tax credit. I want families to have a \$3,000 tax credit for long-term care, to care for an elderly or disabled family member—it's becoming a huge problem, and as the aging of America progresses, it will be a bigger and bigger problem.

I want to give people with money, upper income people, financial incentives to increase philanthropy and to invest in the poor areas of America—the new markets of America that have been left behind—and to invest in new technologies that will help us clean the environment and combat global warming.

But I have applied arithmetic to my proposal. And I think it is very important that we think about this, because it would be tragic if, after we're finally beginning to really

make some nationally measurable progress in education here, not just in the inputs but in the outputs; and we know so much more about how to do it than we did when “Nation At Risk” was issued; so much more than we did in 1989 when the national education goals were written, in that wonderful all-night session in Charlottesville I’ll never forget—we know so much more today. And we’re able to invest in what works.

But the American people, their wealth, and their welfare will be far more greatly enhanced by making uniform excellence in education, proving that people, without regard to their race, their income or their cultural or linguistic backgrounds, can learn what they need to know and keep learning for a lifetime. That will do so much more for the American economy, for the strength and coherence and fabric of our national community, than a tax cut which cannot be justified and which will either throw us back to the bad old days of deficits or require big cuts in domestic programs, including education, or both.

So one of the things that I hope education writers will talk about is old-fashioned arithmetic.

Now, finally, let me just say, I think when all is said and done, there are only about three things worth focusing on. Do you believe that all children can learn or not? Do you believe that it’s more important than ever before, for the quality of an individual’s life, for the shape of a family’s future, for the strength of the Nation? And do you believe we know how to do that now, with more investment and more accountability for higher standards?

If the answer to all three of those questions is yes, then I will consider that the work that the Secretary and I have done, even though we haven’t won every battle, will have been more than worth the effort.

Thank you very much.

[At this point, the question-and-answer session began, and Kit Lively, president, Education Writers Association, read questions from the audience. The first question was from a journalist with the Los Angeles Times, who asked what the President could do to head off a growing backlash against testing and standards.]

The President. Well, one of the things—Dick and I were talking about this on the way in today—one of the things that we thought would happen, if we could actually get some accepted national standards and then a voluntary national test that would measure against that, is that would provide an organizing principle, if you will, which we thought might allow some of these other tests to be dropped. I think it is absolutely true that in some districts there may be too many tests. And what are they measuring, and what do they mean?

I also think that on all this testing business, every few years you have to have kind of a mid-course review. You have to see where you are and where you’re going. And I think I’ve earned the right to say that, since you know I believe in them. I mean, I’ve got a pretty long record here on this subject.

I think we shouldn’t obscure the major point, which is, it is very difficult to make progress that you can’t measure. There must be some way of measuring our movement. On the other hand, you don’t want our children and our teachers to spend 100 percent of the time teaching to a test that does not encompass all the things our students need to know and our schools need to provide. You don’t want the test to be so easy that the whole thing is a mockery and looks like a bureaucratic fraud. You don’t want it to be so hard that it crowds out all the other endeavors that a school ought to be doing.

But all of that, it seems to me, argues for looking at the number and the types of tests, what you want to measure, and whether you goals are sharply focused. It’s not an argument against testing and accountability. I see no possible way to continue to reform all our schools without some sort of testing and accountability.

Look, if none of us had ever come along, ever—including me—you know, it’s hard to admit this, especially when you can’t run again, but if none of us had ever come along, a lot of the good things that have happened in education would have happened. I’ve been saying for 15 years, every problem in American education has been solved by somebody somewhere.

How many times have you gone to a school and then you’ve written this gripping story

about, oh, my goodness, look at this school in this high-crime neighborhood with all these poor kids and all this terrible disadvantage, and the kids have—they live in these little apartments, and they have to go into the bathroom to study at night in the bathtub and read all their books—I mean, how many of those stories have you written? Every one of you have written those stories, right? And look what the kids are doing.

What is the problem in American education? It is not that nobody does this; it is that we still have not figured out how to make achievement universal.

Every one of you has written this story about somebody succeeding against all the odds, about a great teacher, a great principal, a great school. What is the problem? We have not devised a method to make learning occur at a universally high level.

And that's what the voucher people argue. They argue that that's because public schools have a monopoly on revenues and customers. So we sought to break the monopoly without losing the accountability by promoting school choice, charter schools, and other alternatives. But you still have to have standards and measurement.

And let me just say this—I realize I'm talking this question to death, but this is pretty important because it really gets to everything else. If I were to suggest to you that standards and measurement are quite distressing and troubling, and so—and I'm worried about the anxiety they cause, so I think we'll ease up on them in the military—there would be a riot in the country, right? Thank you very much; send them back to the training.

And so I do think it's time to review all this; I think there are too many of these tests and some are too easy; some are too hard; some are too off-beat; some may crowd out other educational missions. But that's why we tried—Dick and I did—to have a set of generally accepted national standards with a voluntary national test to measure them and to have it done by a nonpolitical group and sort of modeling on what the NAEP people do, which I think is quite good, by the way.

And so, anyway, that's my answer. Just because there may be too much or wrong, doesn't mean you don't have to measure. You do have to measure. Might as well not have

standards if you're not going to measure whether you're meeting them.

[Ms. Lively read a question submitted by a journalist from *Catalyst Magazine*, which asked if the Chicago school system's approach to retention and promotion should be a model for the Nation.]

The President. Read the first part of the question again. I didn't understand.

[Ms. Lively repeated that research showed students retained had not benefited and were more likely to drop out.]

The President. Well, in order to answer that question, I would have to know the answer to something I think is equally important, which is, what happened to the kids that weren't retained because of their performance in summer school? Are they doing better than they were? Are they learning more? Are they more likely to succeed and stay in school?

Keep in mind, in the Chicago system, if you fail, you get retained only if you either don't go to summer school, or you go to summer school and you don't make the grade there. So most of the people—Chicago's summer school is now the sixth biggest school district in America. It's one reason that the juvenile crime rate is way down there. And it's the sixth biggest school district in America.

So I can't answer that question without knowing whether those kids did better and are more likely to stay in school and learn more, because it wouldn't be surprising that kids that are retained get discouraged and drop out. But there was a study a few years ago, and I haven't kept up with the literature as much as I should have since I've been President, which showed that one big reason for dropout after the middle school years was that kids weren't learning. If they weren't learning anything and they were being passed along, they got bored and dropped out, too.

So I don't want to disparage the study, but I don't know if it's right or not. And neither does the person who asked the question, until you follow what happened to the kids that weren't retained because they went to summer school and made the grade, and what are the percentage of those who made

the grade as opposed to those who were retained.

[A participant cited studies showing that kids in the Chicago system who went to summer school and passed did indeed stay, but she clarified the question by pointing out that 10,000 students were retained in the last several years and, despite efforts to help them, became increased risks.]

The President. But let me ask you this. Does it follow that they would have been helped by being promoted, or that it's worth promoting them even if they couldn't be helped, because the social stigma of being retained and dropping out makes them more likely to turn to crime? I mean, I think that's the answer.

I don't believe—I guess, fundamentally, what I'd like to see done is—and you may be right—let me go back to that. My answer to your question is, I don't know, so I'll start with that.

But you may be right. But what's hard for me to believe is that we can't help these young people. I mean, one of the things that I thought would happen with the Chicago system, sooner or later—and may be happening sooner, rather than later, from what you say about the study—is that we would identify young people who might not measure out to be special ed kids, for example, but who, for some reason, even though they showed up in class and seemed to be trying, just weren't learning, even though the teachers were trying, everybody was trying.

And I think there may be some of those kind of kids in virtually every district, but in a district, a town as big as Chicago, you'd have a larger number. And one of the things that I would like to see is, before the principle is abandoned, I would like to see some new and different efforts made to see if different kind of strategies would help those kids to learn.

One of the reasons I like the potential of this whole computer revolution in the schools—even though I think it can be oversold and there are a lot of computers being unused because either the software is not good or the teachers haven't been trained or whatever—but one of the things that I do believe is that there is quite a bit of evidence

that people of more or less equal intelligence may learn in dramatically different ways and that some of the people who seem to be impervious to the best efforts of education, but they would like to learn, may be able to learn in radically different ways. And Chicago may have enough people to identify a class of folks that we ought to make a special national effort to see if there are some other strategies that would help them.

I don't know the answer to that, but I'd be willing to try if they are, if they want to do it, if they want some help from us.

[Ms. Lively read a question asking the President's position on gay youth groups in high schools.]

The President. I think it ought to be decided by the school districts. I don't think the States ought to prohibit them. I think the school districts ought to make a decision based on what the facts are in every district.

Look, I think the real issue here is a lot of parents, even parents that are fairly open-minded on such matters, are worried that if you have these groups when children are still impressionable, that somehow they'll be sanctioning or encouraging people to adopt a lifestyle that they may have a choice not to adopt.

On the other hand, there's a lot of evidence that a sexual stigma for gay kids is one of the reasons that they have high suicide rates and other associated social problems. And I think that the facts will tend to be different from place to place, and that's why I think it would be better if the people who are on the ground who care about the kids and who aren't homophobic—that is, they're not interested in bashing them, but they understand there's got to be at some point below which you would not go, probably an age—were able to make these judgments based on the facts. That's my thinking about it.

Ms. Lively. Those are the three questions.

The President. Go ahead.

Ms. Lively. That's all we have.

The President. Oh, that's all? [Laughter] This is the first press group I have ever been with that said, "I'm sorry, we're out of questions." Where were you when I needed you the last several years? [Laughter]

Okay, go ahead.

[*Ms. Lively read a question, by a journalist from the Savannah Morning News, who asked if the President remained in favor of charter schools despite studies showing they were not meeting their original goals and were draining funds from local systems.*]

The President. Yes, but what I think the studies show is, some work and some don't. And the idea is that, unlike—when we started them, there were two ideas behind charter schools, let me remind you. There was an upside idea and a downside idea. The upside idea was that if teachers and parents and others organized these charter schools, either to deal with a certain kind of kids or to meet a certain mission or whatever, they would be more likely to succeed.

The downside hope was, if they failed, unlike other schools, the parents and kids could leave immediately and the thing could be shut down—that is, the school district, in return for letting the charter schools be free of a lot of the rules and redtape that other schools would be under, should have the discipline to shut the thing down if it had had enough years to operate to see that it wasn't succeeding. And I think the evidence is, a lot of them are doing quite well. And the ones who aren't, the thing I'm worried about is that the ones that aren't will become just like other schools that aren't doing so well, and nobody will want to shut them down either.

I mean, the whole purpose of the charter school was to bring the sort of hope—the concept of empowerment of the parents and the students into the public education system, and it would work on the upside. And if it didn't work on the upside, it would at least work on the downside. And that's where I think we need to focus.

But I think that some of them have done very well, and some of them have not done so well. And what we need is to make sure the downside potential is present as well. But yes, I do still favor them, based on the ones I've been in and the kinds of things they've been able to do.

And I don't think it's fair to say they drain resources. If you don't spend any more per kid in a charter school than you do per child

in another school, and you've got to have those kids somewhere, I don't think it's fair to say that, especially if you're not—unless you're paying for physical facilities you wouldn't otherwise pay for.

Ms. Lively. I've been told that was our last question. So, thank you. We know you have a busy day, and we appreciate you coming.

The President. Thank you again for your interest. I've enjoyed this very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:35 a.m. in the Grand Ballroom North at the Sheraton Colony Square Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Sandra Feldman, president, American Federation of Teachers.

Remarks at a Reception for Representative Cynthia A. McKinney in Atlanta

April 14, 2000

The President. Thank you. Well, first of all, I'm glad to see you. [*Laughter*] And I'm glad to see you in such good spirits. And I want to thank you for being here for Cynthia and thank her for giving me a chance to come here and be with you.

I think we ought to give another hand to our hosts, the Sadris, for letting us come into their beautiful home today. [*Applause*] Beautiful place. I appreciated Governor and Mrs. Barnes and Mayor Campbell for being here. They had to leave. And as Roy and Bill said on the way out, "We've got to go, and besides, we've heard this speech before." [*Laughter*]

That reminds me of something Tina Turner said once. Tina Turner is my favorite political philosopher. [*Laughter*] I went to a concert of hers, and she sang all of these new songs. And at the very end, she started singing "Proud Mary." It was her first hit. And the whole crowd just went nuts, you know, clapping for her. So she didn't start singing; she just waited until they quit clapping. She said, "You know, I've been singing this song for 25 years, and it gets better every time I do it." [*Laughter*] So I thank the rest of you for hanging around.

I want to acknowledge—in the audience we have Mayor Jack Ellis of Macon and Mayor Patsy Jo Hilliard of East Point and Representative Tyrone Brooks, thanks for being here. And my old friend and '92 co-chairman, Calvin Smyre; Representative Robert Brown. And Billy McKinney is here, Cynthia's daddy. And Senator Butler, thank you for coming. And there may be other members of the legislature here we've missed. State Representative Vernon Jones—Jones—I can read Cynthia's handwriting; she can't read mine. [Laughter]

And Dikembe, I want to thank you for coming. He came to the White House once with his whole family. And I went out to meet him. And you know, I'm not a small man. I felt like a total shrimp standing there. [Laughter] You know, all these members of the other party, they've been trying for 8 years to humiliate me. If they'd just gotten the Mutombo family standing around—[laughter]—they could have done it in a day. It would have been no problem.

Let me say to all of you, I am here basically for three reasons. One is, I wanted to thank Cynthia McKinney, in front of her constituents, for the support that she has given to our efforts to make America a better place, with a stronger economy, a stronger social fabric, greater equality and opportunity for people; an America that is truly one America across all racial, religious, and other lines that divide us. And you can see by the crowd today that that's the kind of person she's been, and that's the kind of America I've tried to build. And I thank her for that.

The second reason that I'm here is to thank all of you for the work you do here and the example you set. I was listening as the—I saw Iranian-Americans, Chinese-Americans, Pakistani-Americans, Sikhs introduced. I was glad to see so many members of the Muslim community here. I think that I am the first President ever to consistently give messages on the *Eid* to the Muslim community around the world, to have Muslim Americans come into the White House and meet with us.

I look around the world—and I'll just start—the third reason I came here is to tell you what I think this election this year is about. And I feel free to say it since it's the

first time in 25 years I'm not running for anything. [Laughter] And I'm okay about it most days. [Laughter] I'm okay.

But let me begin by saying this. Everybody knows what's going well today, and I won't go back over it except to just briefly say that we not only have the longest economic expansion in our history and the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 30 years, the lowest crime rate in 25 years, the lowest poverty rate in 20 years, the lowest female unemployment rate in 40 years, highest homeownership in history, the lowest African-American and Hispanic unemployment rates ever recorded—we also have a sense, I think, of optimism and that we can do certain things. And as Cynthia said, we've tried to be a force for peace and freedom around the world.

But since we've got all these folks here, let me say, I think it's very interesting that in this most modern of ages, where we're thrilled that our kids are on the Internet, and they can go to school with people of different cultures and backgrounds, and we're about to decode the mysteries of the human gene—just in the next few weeks, we'll be able to announce the whole gene sequence that's been completed. And after that happens, it won't be long before we'll be able to block the genetic flaws that cause Alzheimer's or Parkinson's. We'll be able to identify certain kinds of cancers when they're—just a few cells congeal. We may even find out early in the next century what's in those black holes in the universe. It will be the most modern of ages.

No country can be isolated from it. Two years ago there were 2 million Internet users in China. Last year there were 9 million. This year there will be over 20 million. Within 2 years, there will be over 100 million, and the country will never be the same again.

I just came back from the Indian subcontinent. I went to Bangladesh and Pakistan and India. And I was in this—and in India, the per capita income is \$450 a year. And I was in this little village—I mean, a little village—you may have seen the pictures on the television of me dancing with the village women, and they were pelting me with flowers. It's better than other things I could be pelted

with. [*Laughter*] I was delighted. But anyway, let me say, so here I am in this little remote village. And in the sole public building in the village, I met with the city council, 11 men and 4 women, representing 10 different tribes and castes. And I saw the village's computer. And this new mother comes in to the village computer. And it was in Hindi, although they have these in all the various languages spoken in India. So she calls up the health department's webpage. And she's just had a baby, and she runs it out to the instructions for what the best care for a newborn is for the first 3 months of his life. And then she hits the print button, and they have this fabulous software, and this beautiful program printed right out on a world-class printer. And she took home information as good as you could take home from any obstetrician in Atlanta. So it's wonderful. This is a very modern world.

I went to another city where they give 18 government services on the Internet—nobody buys a driver's license in a revenue office anymore. I told Governor Barnes if he did that here, there would be no term limits and he could stay until he was 95. [*Laughter*]

So that's the sort of picture we imagine for these children. And it's all modern, it's about science and technology, and we're relating to each other and how interesting it is. Don't you think it's also interesting that the biggest problems the world faces are rooted in the oldest difficulties of humankind? That we're still basically scared of people that aren't like us?

I mean, I see these Sikhs here, I thank them for coming here. The most heart-breaking thing that happened on my trip to the Indian subcontinent is that about 40 Sikhs were murdered in Kashmir. And I'm sure they were murdered because I was there. Those people lost their lives because I went to India and to Pakistan. And people who don't want their turmoil to be eased used my trip there as a pretext to highlight the difficulties. And somebody, we don't know who, killed 40 perfectly innocent people who, I might add, had never before been targeted in all the conflicts in Kashmir.

In Rwanda—Cynthia talked about Rwanda—Rwanda's not like a lot of other African countries that were formed in 1885 by Euro-

pean powers. It's basically been a coherent country for 500 years, with two dominant tribes, the Hutus and the Tutsis—for 500 years. And they fought from now and then, but they basically worked it out to get along. And in 100 days, 800,000 people were killed, almost with no guns.

In the Middle East, we still are seeing these tensions between the Israelis and their neighbors. In the Balkans, a million Islamic Albanians were driven from their homes like cattle, driven from their countries, in a matter of weeks, until we stopped it and turned it around in Kosovo. Even in Northern Ireland, where the people voted overwhelmingly for peace, the leaders are still so in the grip of their problems they can't get along.

Well, we know about India. We know that—I said before, I think the situation—here's an interesting story. The situation in Kashmir is interesting from an American's point of view for the following reason: Indian-Americans and Pakistani-Americans, of the 200 ethnic groups that exist in America today, both rank in the top 10 in per capita income and education. Obviously, if the difficulties over Kashmir could be resolved, people from South Asia would explode. There is literally no limit to the potential of the life that could be had there.

But they are sort of kept back from the modern world by this ancient tension or at least the tension that grew out of the founding of the nations of India and Pakistan. I say that to make this point only—I'm basically, you know, a very optimistic person. And I always have been, and I remain so today.

But let's take it closer to home. Isn't it interesting that here in Atlanta, is the home of more international companies than any other American city, and we're still fighting in the South about whether there ought to be a Confederate flag on our flag. [*Laughter*] So there's something wrong with this picture here, you know? [*Laughter*] At least we can put it on a website. [*Laughter*]

What's the point of all? Here's the point of all this—not to get you down, but to get you back up—but to remind you that our progress and our good fortune is the product of constant effort, good values, good people, good ideas, hard work. It is not an accident,

nor is it inevitable, nor can you depend on it to last forever.

A time like this for any country comes along once in a blue moon. And so the election is not about whether Cynthia McKinney had a good voting record, or Bill Clinton was a good President. The real issue is, what are we going to do with this moment?

And you know, I feel very strongly that the American people should be humbled by this good fortune. And I think we should say, we're going to take on the big challenges facing our country. One, we've got to keep the economy going, because if we don't, the wheels will start to run off, and then we'll not be able to think about big things. That's why I want to keep paying the debt down. We can be debt-free for the first time since 1835. I want to do that.

Number two, we ought to bring economic opportunity to people and places that have been left behind in this country. That's why I want to give people the same incentives to invest in poor areas in America they have to invest around the world. That's why I want to close the digital divide and bring computer opportunities to schools and work places and entrepreneurs in distant rural places, Indian reservations, inner-city neighborhoods.

Number three, we ought to give a world-class education to every one of our children. We know how to do it now, so we don't have an excuse.

Number four, we ought to help people whose parents work to better balance the demands of work and family—equal pay for women and men; improved tax treatment for lower income working people; more health care coverage for children and for their parents if they can't afford it now. We have a program I want to expand; a long-term care tax credit for people that are caring for their elderly relatives or disabled relatives—a lot of people are doing that now, and it's a terrible burden on them. And we want to keep families together, but we ought to help them do that. We ought to help them balance work and family.

Number five, we ought to make America the safest big country in the world. You know, Georgia and my home State of Arkansas are States with a strong hunting culture. But there's no excuse for not doing a background

check every time somebody buys a handgun. There's no excuse.

The law we've had has kept half a million felons, fugitives, and stalkers from getting handguns, and we got gun crime down 35 percent to a 30-year low in the last 7 years. But we can make America the safest big country in the world if we work at it.

Number six, we ought to prove we can improve our environment and the world's and grow the economy. If we don't do that, we will never get out—50 years from now, the children of the children in this audience will be living on a planet that will be much more difficult to navigate if we do not meet the environmental challenges of our time. And we don't have to mess up the economy to do it.

Number seven, we ought to keep in the lead in science and technology.

Number eight, we ought to do more to be good citizens in the world. I've been trying to pass a bill to buy more products from Africa and our neighbors in the Caribbean Basin. We can afford it in America, and a little bit of effort here does a phenomenal amount of good there.

And I want to relieve the debts of the world's poorest nations. I want to head a global effort to develop vaccines for AIDS and malaria and TB. It could save millions of lives.

You know what the number one killer in poor countries still is?

Audience member. I believe it's malaria, no?

The President. No.

Audience member. What is it?

The President. Well, malaria is the second. It's basically problems related to the absence of clean water. Still, problems related, including total dehydration, which kills a lot of kids.

I think we ought to do these things. I think we ought to keep trying to help people solve their racial and ethnic and religious problems. I think it is worth it. I also believe we ought to bring China into the world's trading system, because if we don't, they'll think we're isolating them, and there's a greater likelihood of a war there.

I just finished reading President Woodrow Wilson's private secretary's memoirs of the

end of World War I, and how the Congress ran off and left him and they stiffed all of our opponents, and how it made World War II inevitable. Somebody asked me the other day, "What have you learned about foreign policy since you've been President?" And I said, "I've learned it's a whole lot more like life than I thought it was." What do I mean by that? That people everywhere, across all different cultures are far more likely to respond to the outstretched hand than they are to respond to the clenched fist.

Now, there are some people who do things that I think require us to clench our fist. When Mr. Milosevic did what he did in Bosnia and Kosovo, we clenched our fist. But on the whole, we ought to encourage the positive developments around the world and try to help people get together. I think this is important.

And the last point I want to say is what I started with, if we want to do good around the world, we've got to be good at home. We've got to keep working. You know, we haven't solved all of our problems here. We still have racial prejudice; we still have religious prejudice; we still have people who are shot because of their race or because they're gay or for some other reason. And we have to keep working on this.

If I received a message from God tonight and He said, "You can't finish your term. I'm checking you out tomorrow, and you get one wish. I'm not a genie; you don't get three wishes. You get one"—I would not even wish for continued prosperity. I would wish for us to be truly one community, one Nation, because—because just look around this room here. Look at all the intelligence, the experience, the understanding, the energy in this room, from the youngest to the eldest and all in between. If we can just keep our bearings, if we can keep our spirits, if we can keep centered, there is no limit to what we can do.

And what I want you to understand is, that means that we have to pay very close attention in this election. The last thing I will say to you—you have to pay very close attention. People get in a lot of trouble when times are good because they think there are no consequences to what they do. Sometimes you can get in more trouble in good times than

you can in bad times because you break your attention. You've worked so hard, you've labored, you've worked, and you think, "Gosh, I just want to forget about this now."

And I was just talking to Tyrone Brooks. He was at Selma when I was there, celebrating the 35th anniversary of the march over the Pettus Bridge, and it put me to thinking—I will close with this point—when we celebrate the longest economic expansion in American history in February, I got all my advisers together and I said, "Now, when was the longest economic expansion in history?" When many of you weren't here—it was between 1961 and 1969. You either weren't born or you were in another country. I was here. *[Laughter]*

Now, let me tell you what happened. Let me tell you what happened. In the full bloom of expansion in 1964, I graduated from high school. And yes, we were sort of peripherally involved in Vietnam, and yes, we did have a big civil rights challenge. But unemployment was low, inflation was low, growth was high, productivity was high. Most everybody thought that our new President, Lyndon Johnson, with the great sympathy the country had after President Kennedy had been killed, would solve the civil rights problems of America in the Congress, and those that wouldn't be solved in the Congress would be solved in the courts. And no one believed Vietnam would tear the country up. And we all thought in the course of time we would win the cold war, and we would always just be prosperous.

Now, 4 years later, I graduated from college in Washington, DC—4 years; 2 days after Senator Kennedy was killed, 2 months after Martin Luther King was killed, 9 weeks after Lyndon Johnson couldn't run for reelection because the country was split down the middle. And within just a few weeks, the longest economic expansion in American history was itself history.

What's the point? Not to be down but to be determined, to realize it makes a difference who is in the Congress, to realize it makes a difference who is the President, to realize it makes a difference what people think the subject of this election is. The subject of this election is, what are we going to do with this magic moment in our history?

I've done the best I could to turn this country around and to get us moving in the right direction. But the best is still out there. That's what I want you to believe. And forget about me being President; as a citizen, I have waited 35 years for my country again to be in the position to build the future of our dreams for our children.

And it is a so much more interesting country now because so many of you are here. And the world is more interesting, and the potential is so great. But whether we seize it depends upon whether we understand what the issue is about, whether we work and vote, and whether people like Cynthia are in the United States Congress.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to reception hosts Saeid and Sudabeh Sadri; Gov. Roy Barnes of Georgia and his wife, Marie; Mayor Bill Campbell of Atlanta; State Representatives Tyrone Brooks, Calvin Smyre, and J. E. (Billy) McKinney; State Senators Gloria S. Butler and Robert Brown; President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro); and NBA Atlanta Hawk Dikembe Mutombo.

Statement on Proposals To Reopen Trade in Elephant Ivory and Whale Products

April 14, 2000

I am deeply concerned that successful efforts by the international community to protect endangered species would be undermined by proposals to reopen trade in elephant ivory and whale products. We will oppose these proposals and urge other nations currently meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, to maintain current trade restrictions. I am proud of the fact that the United States has been a worldwide leader in the protection of elephants and whales. We will continue our work with international partners to protect these magnificent animals.

Statement on Signing Legislation Designating the Joseph Iletto Post Office

April 14, 2000

Today I signed legislation designating the United States Post Office located at 14701 Peyton Drive in Chino Hills, California, as the "Joseph Iletto Post Office." Joseph Iletto was a Filipino-American postal worker who was tragically murdered last year in a crime of hate. He was a dedicated public servant, killed simply because he was an Asian-American who worked for his country's Government. It is a fitting tribute to the life and memory of Mr. Iletto that we name this Post Office in his honor.

During the last year, we have all been shaken by violent acts like the murder of Joseph Iletto, acts that strike at the very values that define us as a nation. Now is the time for us to take strong and decisive action to fight hate crimes, and I call on Congress, at long last, to pass strong hate crimes legislation. It is time for us all to raise our voices against intolerance and to build the one America that our hearts tell us we can be.

NOTE: H.R. 3189, approved April 14, was assigned Public Law No. 106-184.

Statement on Russian State Duma Action on the START II Treaty

April 14, 2000

I am very pleased that the Russian State Duma today approved the START II Treaty—a critical step toward the treaty's entering into force. This action builds on decades of cooperation between the United States and Russia to reduce nuclear arms and clearly advances the interests of both countries. Together with the START I Treaty, it will result in a two-thirds reduction in the strategic nuclear weapons that the Soviet Union and the United States maintained at the height of the cold war. START II will make our people safer and our partnership with a democratic Russia stronger. It will open the

door to further significant steps to reduce nuclear arms and the nuclear danger, a course that is strongly supported by the international community and has strong bipartisan support in the United States.

I congratulate President-elect Putin and his government, members of the State Duma, and Russian citizens who supported this giant step toward a safer future. I look forward to prompt action on the treaty by the Federation Council. Now, we and Russia can and must seize this opportunity to intensify our discussions on both START III and the ABM Treaty, so we can take further concrete steps this year to strengthen the security of the United States, Russia, and indeed the whole world.

Proclamation 7292—National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week, 2000

April 14, 2000

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Organ and tissue transplantation offers us the extraordinary opportunity to share with others one of our most precious gifts—the gift of life. By donating tissues and organs, living donors and the families who have lost loved ones are rewarded with the knowledge that they have saved and enhanced many lives. Thanks to donors' generosity and compassion, transplant recipients across our country are able to work, care for their families, and look forward to a brighter future. Thanks to donors' selflessness, many children who were not expected to see their first birthday are playing, learning to walk, and entering school.

The future of the thousands of Americans awaiting transplants, however, depends on the willingness of their fellow citizens to become organ and tissue donors. More than 68,000 patients are on the national organ transplant waiting list; each day, 13 of them will die because the organs they need have not been donated; and every 16 minutes, a new name will be added to that waiting list.

To address this critical and growing need, Vice President Gore and Secretary of Health

and Human Services Shalala launched the National Organ and Tissue Donation Initiative in December of 1997. This public-private partnership was designed to raise awareness of the success of organ and tissue transplantation and to educate our citizens about the urgent need for increased donation. Working with partners such as health care organizations, estate planning attorneys, faith communities, educational organizations, the media, minority organizations, and business leaders, the Initiative is reaching out to Americans of all ages, backgrounds, and races, asking them to consider donation. In its first year alone, the Initiative made a measurable impact, as organ donation increased by 5.6 percent.

But donations are still falling short nationwide. As we observe National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week, I urge all Americans to consider becoming donors. Becoming a prospective organ and tissue donor is an easy, two-step process. Potential donors need only indicate their intention on their driver's license or donor card, which is available from a number of organizations by mail or on-line, and notify their families and friends of their wish to donate. I also encourage organ and tissue recipients to tell others how their lives and health have changed because of the generosity of a donor and his or her family; and I join the friends and families of donors in remembering with pride and gratitude all those who gave of themselves so that others might live.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 16 through April 22, 2000, as National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week. I urge all health care professionals, educators, the media, public and private organizations concerned with organ donation and transplantation, and all Americans to join me in promoting greater awareness and acceptance of this humanitarian action.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fourteenth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand, and of the

Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., April 19, 2000]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on April 20.

Proclamation 7293—National Park Week, 2000

April 14, 2000

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

We are fortunate to live in an era when the explosive growth of technology has put at our fingertips an extraordinary array of information. But even during this technological revolution, one of America's richest and most fascinating educational resources is also among its oldest: our national park system. Our national parks are living libraries and laboratories, where all Americans can experience the beauty and variety of nature and learn about our Nation's history and culture.

Preserving the rare and unusual as well as the spectacular and beautiful, our national parks provide botanists, wildlife biologists, chemists, and other scientists the opportunity to conduct research into the fragile ecosystems that affect the health of people, plants, and animals around the world. Geologists and paleontologists find in our national parks the story of our continent, from the Grand Canyon's geologic formations to the ancient bones resting at Dinosaur National Monument.

The national park system also captures America's more recent history. In the National Historic Sites and along the National Historic Trails maintained by the men and women of the National Park Service, we learn about the lives and achievements of American heroes like Lewis and Clark, Sojourner Truth, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the Wright Brothers, and Thomas Edison. From Fort Necessity in Pennsylvania, where a young George Washington saw action in the

French and Indian War, to the quiet acres of Gettysburg, where one of the Civil War's bloodiest battles was fought, to the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, where the modern civil rights movement reached its emotional peak 35 years ago, Americans can see and touch their history.

Today, we have 379 national parks, and each site offers a unique opportunity to experience the wonder of nature, to stand in the footprints of history, to learn about our culture and our society, to study the natural world, and to look toward the future. As we observe National Park Week, I join all Americans in thanking the men and women of the National Park Service for their dedication in caring for these special places. We are indebted to them for preserving and protecting our natural and cultural heritage, not only for our enjoyment and education today, but also for the benefit of generations to come.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 17 through April 23, 2000, as National Park Week.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fourteenth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., April 19, 2000]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on April 20.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

April 8

In the morning, the President traveled to New Orleans, LA, and in the afternoon, he traveled to Alexandria, LA.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

April 9

In the morning, the President and Hillary Clinton traveled to Fayetteville, AR, where they visited the University of Arkansas. In the evening, they returned to Washington, DC.

April 10

The President declared a major disaster in Maryland and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm on January 25–30.

The President declared a major disaster in the District of Columbia and ordered Federal aid to supplement District recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm on January 25–31.

April 11

In the morning, the President traveled to Annapolis, MD, and in the afternoon, he returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate Phil Boyer to be a member of the Federal Aviation Management Advisory Council.

April 12

In the morning, the President traveled to Denver, CO, and in the evening, he traveled to Chappaqua, NY.

April 13

In the morning, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate James Donald Walsh to be Ambassador to Argentina.

April 14

In the morning, the President traveled to Atlanta, GA.

In the evening, the President attended a dinner for Representative John Lewis at the Atlanta Airport Hilton and Towers. Later, he traveled to Palo Alto, CA.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mildred S. Dresselhaus to be Di-

rector of Energy Research for the Department of Energy.

The White House announced that the President will address commencements at Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti, MI, on April 30; the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, CT, on May 17; and Carleton College in Northfield, MN, on June 10.

**Nominations
Submitted to the Senate**

NOTE: No nominations were submitted to the Senate during the period covered by this issue.

**Checklist
of White House Press Releases**

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released April 8

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Will Meet Prime Minister Barak and Chairman Arafat

Released April 10

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joe Lockhart

Released April 11

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joe Lockhart

Announcement of nomination for U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania

Released April 12

Transcript of a press briefing by Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy Bruce Reed on the President's participation in MSNBC's townhall meeting on guns

Released April 13

Statement by the Press Secretary on the appointment of Brooke D. Anderson as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Communications at the National Security Council

Released April 14

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's upcoming commencement addresses

Statement by the Press Secretary on the release of the President and Hillary Clinton's Federal income tax return

Fact sheet: START II Treaty Summary

Announcement of nomination for U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Oklahoma

Announcement of nomination for U.S. Marshal for the Northern District of Illinois

**Acts Approved
by the President**

Approved April 13

H.R. 1374 / Public Law 106-183

To designate the United States Post Office building located at 680 U.S. Highway 130 in Hamilton, New Jersey, as the "John K. Rafferty Hamilton Post Office Building"

Approved April 14

H.R. 3189 / Public Law 106-184

To designate the United States post office located at 14071 Peyton Drive in Chino Hills, California, as the "Joseph Iletto Post Office"