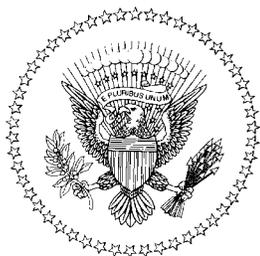


Weekly Compilation of
**Presidential
Documents**



Monday, November 27, 2000
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Editor's Note: The Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents is also available on the Internet on the *GPO Access* service at <http://www.gpo.gov/nara/nara003.html>.

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.

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Week Ending Friday, November 24, 2000

Proclamation 7379—National Farm-City Week, 2000

November 16, 2000

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Since our earliest days as a Nation, farmers have tilled the rich soil of this great land, feeding their families, our country, and people around the world. While America has changed from an agricultural to an industrial society, the American farm has remained a vital thread in the fabric of our national life. Farmers and ranchers exemplify the values on which our country was founded—hard work, faith, family, and devotion to community and to the land—and they have made American agriculture a leading global industry and a source of pride for our Nation.

By providing their fellow Americans with an abundant supply of safe, high-quality food and fiber, our country's farmers and ranchers help sustain a quality of life that is unmatched around the world. In this new century, their role is becoming even more important as they strive to meet the challenge of feeding the world's people while preserving our fertile land, clean water, and other precious natural resources.

Farmers and ranchers, however, do not accomplish these crucial tasks alone. Farm workers, shippers, inspectors, processors, agribusiness companies, marketers, grocers, and many others play vital roles in the extraordinary productivity of America's agricultural industry. These farm-city partnerships strengthen our free enterprise system and remind us that the talents, energy, and hard work of millions of Americans have contributed to the unprecedented prosperity we enjoy today.

This week, as we gather with our families in thanks for the bounty bestowed upon us, let us remember with gratitude the hard-

working men and women in rural and urban communities who devote their lives to producing, processing, and delivering the world's safest, most abundant supply of food and fiber.

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 November 17 through November 23, 2000, as National Farm-City Week. I call upon all Americans, in rural and urban communities alike, to join in recognizing the achievements of all those who work together to promote America's agricultural abundance.

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

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., November 21, 2000]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 18, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on November 22.

Proclamation 7380—National Family Week, 2000

November 17, 2000

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Our families are perhaps the strongest influence in our lives. Anyone who grows up in a strong, nurturing family, grounded in the values of love and responsibility, will have a distinct advantage in achieving the most important tasks of adulthood—living fully,

working productively, contributing to society, and forming one's own strong, stable family.

Our Nation, too, draws its strength and character from America's families, so as citizens we must do everything we can to support their well-being and self-sufficiency. Over the past 8 years, my Administration has strived to create an economic and social climate where families can flourish. We have strengthened the economy; enacted a higher minimum wage; expanded tax credits for working families; created greater access to higher education, quality health care, and affordable child care; and, with passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act, made it easier for working adults to take leave to care for an ailing family member without putting their jobs at risk. We have also been successful in moving thousands of children from temporary homes in foster care to permanent families where they can grow and flourish.

We are fortunate to be members of a larger family as well, composed not only of our immediate relatives, but also of our neighbors, colleagues, communities, and fellow citizens. As members of this extended family, we must learn to appreciate the value and diversity of other families' traditions; we must reach out to help those families who are still in need; and we must share responsibility for the care and development of all our Nation's children. In this season of Thanksgiving, let us be grateful for the knowledge that America is a Nation of families, standing together to make our country a better place in which to live and to make the future a brighter one for our children.

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 the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim November 19 through November 25, 2000, as National Family Week. I call upon Federal, State, and local officials to honor American families with appropriate programs and activities. I encourage educators, community organizations, and religious leaders to celebrate the strength and values we draw from family relationships, and I urge all the people of the United States to reaffirm their own family ties and to reach out to other families in friendship and goodwill.

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

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., November 21, 2000]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 18, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on November 22.

Proclamation 7381—Thanksgiving Day, 2000

November 17, 2000

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

We have much to be grateful for this Thanksgiving Day. Our Nation is free, prosperous, and at peace. The remarkable growth in human knowledge and technological innovation offers real hope for defeating the age-old enemies of humanity: poverty, famine, and disease. Our dynamic economy continues to generate millions of new jobs, and, as wages rise and unemployment falls to its lowest level in more than a generation, millions of American families are sharing in the bounty of this great land for the first time.

Sharing in God's blessings is at the heart of Thanksgiving and at the core of the American spirit. At Plymouth in 1621, the Pilgrims celebrated their first harvest in the New World thanks to the generosity of their Native American neighbors. In return, the Pilgrims invited these tribal members to share in their harvest festival. At Thanksgiving this year and every year, in worship services and family celebrations across our country, Americans carry on that tradition of giving, sharing not only with family and friends, but also with those in need throughout their communities.

Every generation of Americans has benefited from the generosity, talents, efforts, and contributions of their fellow citizens. All of us have been enriched by the diverse cultures, traditions, and beliefs of the millions

of people who, by birth or choice, have come to call America their home. All of us are beneficiaries of our founders' wisdom and of the service and sacrifice of our men and women in uniform. While Americans are an independent people, we are interdependent as well, and our greatest achievements are those we have accomplished together.

As we celebrate Thanksgiving, let us remember with gratitude that despite our differences in background, age, politics, or race, each of us is a member of our larger American family and that, working together, there is nothing we cannot accomplish in this promising new century.

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 Thursday, November 23, 2000, as a National Day of Thanksgiving. I encourage all the people of the United States to assemble in their homes, places of worship, and community centers to share the spirit of fellowship and prayer and to reinforce the ties of family and community; to express heartfelt thanks to God for our many blessings; and to reach out in gratitude and friendship to our brothers and sisters across this land who, together, comprise our great American family.

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

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., November 21, 2000]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 18, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on November 22.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Lapse of the Export Administration Act of 1979

November 17, 2000

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

As required by section 204(c) of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1703(c)) and section 401(c) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1641(c)), I transmit herewith a 6-month periodic report on the national emergency declared by Executive Order 12924 of August 19, 1994, to deal with the threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States caused by the lapse of the Export Administration Act of 1979.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Albert Gore, Jr., President of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 18.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on the National Emergency With Respect to Sudan

November 17, 2000

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

As required by section 401(c) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1641(c) and section 204(c) of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), 50 U.S.C. 1703(c), I transmit herewith a 6-month periodic report on the national emergency with respect to Sudan that was declared in Executive Order 13067 of November 3, 1997.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Albert Gore, Jr., President of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 18.

Remarks to the Joint Task Force-Full Accounting Excavation Participants in Tien Chau Village, Vietnam

November 18, 2000

General Axson, General Frost, Lieutenant Colonel Cory, Director Hung, and all the other Vietnamese and Americans who were engaged in this amazing project. It's an honor for me to be here with my family and Senator John Kerry and Members of our Congress and distinguished veterans from the United States who fought in the conflict here.

At this spot 33 years ago this month, Captain Lawrence Evert's F-105 was shot down. No parachute was seen; the area was heavily defended; and there was no chance for a search.

Today I am honored to be here with Captain Evert's sons, Dan and David, and I thank them for coming. We believe we owe them, and all Americans like them, what they came here for, a chance, finally, to take their father home.

America is very proud of our Joint Task Force-Full Accounting. These young men and women have traveled half-way around the world to bring home comrades fallen in the war that ended before many of them were born. They spend up to 200 days a year here working to recover remains for American families.

We are also grateful for the service of the members of the Central Identification Labs, who help to end the anguish of not knowing.

Our Nation has made a commitment that we will not rest until we've achieved the fullest possible accounting for our lost veterans. But it is only possible for us to fulfill our promise with the cooperation and support of the Vietnamese Government and the Vietnamese people.

I want to personally thank the people of this village, this district, and province for your kindness, for coming forward with artifacts and information to help the search, and for working so hard alongside our service

members and citizens. I also want to express the profound thanks of the American people to the Vietnamese Government for its support. Among other things, it sent engineers and technicians here to help us figure out how we can dig without destabilizing the railroad nearby.

The United States is doing what we can to repay the cooperation of the Vietnamese and their Government by doing all we can to help the people of Vietnam find answers about their missing, as well. I brought with me over 350,000 pages of documents that I hope will provide some of those answers to the people of Vietnam. Whether we are American or Vietnamese, I think we all want to know where our loved ones are buried; I think we all want to be able to honor them and visit their grave sites. This common endeavor we make as friends is unprecedented in all of human history.

Once we met here as adversaries; today we work as partners. We are committed to keep at it until we bring every possible fallen hero home. In the process, we are committed to building a new future for the children of Vietnam and the children of the United States, a future of friendship and cooperation.

While working together to recover those who were lost in a long-ago war, we reduce the chances that any of our children will know war.

Again, on behalf of the American people, I would like to thank all the Americans who are involved in this astonishing endeavor, and all of our Vietnamese partners, who stand in the mud, who work at the screens to try to find answers that are common to our humanity and go far beyond our differences.

I thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:30 a.m. at the Joint Task Force-Full Accounting Excavation site. In his remarks, he referred to Brig. Gen. Harry B. Axson, USA, Commander, Lt. Col. Rennie M. Cory, USA, Commander, Detachment II, and Brig. Gen. Kathryn G. Frost, USA, Joint Task Force-Full Accounting; and Nguyen Ba Hung, director, Vietnam Office for Seeking Missing Persons.

Statement on Establishing Formal Diplomatic Relations With the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

November 18, 2000

On November 17 the United States joined France, Germany, and the United Kingdom in establishing formal diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY).

We take this action in response to the remarkable changes in Yugoslavia following the democratic election of President Vojislav Kostunica and the ouster of Slobodan Milosevic. We and our allies are committed to supporting this historic democratic transition. As a first step, the United States will provide about \$45 million in emergency food aid to help the people of Serbia through the winter. We are also consulting with Congress on how to utilize the \$100 million in assistance appropriated for Serbia, as well as \$89 million appropriated for assistance to the people of Montenegro.

President Kostunica and his government have already made dramatic progress in reversing the brutal policies of the old regime. And by taking membership in the United Nations and other international organizations on an equal status with other successor states of the former Yugoslavia, President Kostunica has signaled that his country is ready to play a constructive and stabilizing role in the region.

The democratic transition in the FRY, however, is far from over. The new government is faced with an economy destroyed by years of mismanagement. Members of Milosevic's regime are still in positions of power. Indicted war criminals continue to escape justice for their heinous crimes. But President Kostunica and leaders of the democratic forces have clearly put their country on a new path, one that includes a commitment to the rule of law and peaceful relations with its neighbors. By establishing diplomatic relations and ending the FRY's isolation, the United States and other Western countries are demonstrating our commitment to supporting the new leaders of the FRY on this journey.

Remarks on Demining in Hanoi, Vietnam

November 18, 2000

Ambassador Peterson, Ambassador Le Bang, Mr. Khoan; my good friend Representative Snyder and the other Members of Congress and our American delegation. I want to say most of all how much I appreciate the work that all of you who are engaged in demining are doing.

I thank the Vietnamese people who are doing this, the members of the NGO's. And I'd also like to especially thank the American veterans who have been involved in this endeavor.

The problem of landmines is a global tragedy, and 90 percent of the victims of war are civilians, mostly because of landmines. In all probability, landmines kill more children than soldiers, and they keep killing long after wars are over. This is the tragedy of war for which peace provides no answer.

Vietnam has about 3.5 million mines in its soil and about 300,000 tons of unexploded ordnance. Each year some 2,000 Vietnamese are killed or injured as they go about their daily lives. This year, at Vietnam's request, we began providing assistance to the humanitarian demining efforts. Since June, we provided over \$3 million to purchase equipment and help survey the countryside.

I am happy to announce that we will also be working with Vietnam to develop a computer system and a database to help pinpoint the location of mines and ordnance used here during the war. We have also worked for some years with NGO's such as the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation to fund rehabilitation services for victims of landmines, an effort that owes so much to the leadership of Senator Pat Leahy. Today our Defense Department is donating more than \$700,000 in hospital supplies to Quang Tri Province for the same purpose.

Finally, we support efforts by organizations such as PeaceTrees and Catholic Relief Services to educate local communities on how to avoid landmines. The children's paintings we saw over here are part of that effort, and again I'd like to thank those four beautiful young boys for being here and for

having the courage to help all the rest of us deal with this problem.

Since I became President, the United States has spent about \$350 million around the world to pull the hidden killers out of the earth, the landmines, to deal with the unexploded ordnance. We usually spend slightly more than half of all the money spent in the world on this every year. But I think we should do more.

I am thankful for all the work the organizations are doing here. I am grateful for the request that the Government of Vietnam gave, that gave us the opportunity to be involved here. But I hope we will all remember these children who had the courage to come here and share their artwork and who want to give the rest of the children of Vietnam and the world a better future.

There are millions of these bombs in the ground in Africa, millions more in the Balkans. They are the curse of innocent children all over the world. I hope that tomorrow all over the world, people will see these children and their drawings, and it will enable us to get even more support for the work you were doing in Vietnam and the work that must be done like this in other countries. You will have America's support until you have found every landmine and every piece of unexploded ordnance.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:50 p.m. at the International Trade Center. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam Pete Peterson; Vietnamese Ambassador to the U.S. Le Van Bang; and Minister of Trade Vu Khoan of Vietnam. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's Radio Address

November 18, 2000

Good morning. I'm speaking to you from Hanoi, Vietnam, where I'm working to fulfill America's commitment to the families of those still missing from the war and opening a hopeful new chapter in our relationship with Vietnam and its people. Today I want to talk to you, however, about the new steps we're taking at home to strengthen our working families.

It may be hard to remember, but just 8 years ago many Americans were out of work, and Washington was out of ideas. Our economy was stagnant, burdened by a crushing debt and rising unemployment. I said I would work hard to turn the country around, to create a situation where everybody who was willing to work and take responsibility has the opportunity to live the American dream.

Since then we've worked hard to restore the value of work, increasing the minimum wage, expanding the earned-income tax credit, helping more than 15 million Americans work their way out of poverty toward the middle class. Congress passed the family and medical leave law, which has given over 20 million Americans the chance to take time off from work to care for a newborn child or a sick loved one. And we passed welfare reform, ending welfare as we knew it, cutting the welfare rolls in half, to their lowest levels in 32 years, and helping millions of parents move into the work force.

We were able to do this while protecting health care and nutrition for children, investing more in child care, transportation, and housing, to help parents go to work and to succeed at home and at work.

By rewarding work and promoting responsibility, we've helped put the American family back on top again, with 22 million new jobs, the lowest poverty in 20 years, the lowest Hispanic- and African-American unemployment ever recorded, and the highest homeownership in history. While we have made great progress, no one who works hard every day should have trouble putting food on the table at night. And the fact is there are still too many hard-pressed families struggling to get ahead and to make the often difficult transition from welfare to work.

Every day 17 million of our fellow Americans rely on food stamps for proper nourishment. These food stamps allow parents to give their children the necessities while getting their own feet on the ground. But as they return to work and struggle to make ends meet, many don't realize they're still eligible for food stamps. And in some States, parents who do sign up for food stamps have to fill out paperwork as often as once a

month, and leave the workplace in order to do so.

Now, this simply should not be the case. So today I'm announcing new steps to remove some of the barriers facing working Americans and to help the families get the food they need.

First, it would allow States to provide recipients with an automatic 3-month food stamp benefit as they make the transition from welfare to work. This gives new workers stability in what can be a trying time. Second, we're eliminating unnecessary bureaucracies by allowing recipients up to 6 months to report income changes, reducing the amount of time they spend in food stamp offices. Third, if we want people to work, they need to be able to get to work. Today's action will make it easier for food stamp recipients to own a dependable car without having to sacrifice proper nutrition for their children. This builds on the steps we took in the Agriculture appropriation bill I signed last month. Finally, to ensure that the families who need assistance get it, we are requiring States to let recipients know that they're still eligible for food stamps when they start to work again.

Supporting hard-pressed working families is the right policy for America. It's also the smart thing to do. It encourages millions of people to take responsibility to strengthen their families, as well as our economy. I urge our Nation's Governors to implement these steps so that all working families get the nutritional benefits they need and deserve. And again I call on Congress to restore food stamp benefits to hard-working legal immigrants and to raise the minimum wage for all working families this year. No family working full-time and playing by the rules should have to raise children in poverty. In the coming weeks, Congress still has the chance to honor and award work by raising the minimum wage for our hardest pressed working families.

Thirty years ago Robert Kennedy reminded us that work is the meaning of what the country is all about. With the actions outlined today, we can create new opportunities for hard-working families and move our Nation closer to the time when everyone willing

to work for it can achieve the American dream.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 5 p.m., local time, on November 17 in the Briefing Suite at the Daewoo Hotel in Hanoi, Vietnam, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m., e.s.t., on November 18. Due to the 12-hour time difference, the radio address was broadcast after the President's schedule of activities in Vietnam for November 18 had been completed. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 17 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Remarks to the Vietnamese Business Community in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

November 19, 2000

Thank you very much. Ms. Liu, thank you for your remarks and for your introduction—and for your excellent English, much better than my Vietnamese. [*Laughter*] I thank Secretary Mineta and the other members of the American delegation. And thank you, Flemming Jacobs, for making us feel welcome in this magnificent port. I would also like to thank the members of the Vietnamese Government and the government of Ho Chi Minh City who are here. I thank you all for the time that we have had together these last few days.

I wanted to come here today to this remarkable place, which symbolizes Vietnam's gateway to the future, to say that one of the things I have learned in the last 3 days is that Vietnam has an ancient history, but it is still a very young nation. Over half your people were born in the last 30 years. And your best days clearly lie ahead, as you continue to find the means to release the skills and the ingenuity of your people.

Over the last decade, Vietnam has taken positive strides toward economic and social reform. In less than a decade, you have seen income per person rise almost 70 percent. You have lifted more than 15 million people out of poverty. You have eradicated polio. And this container port is an astonishing example of how Vietnam is seizing the new opportunities of the 21st century.

You should be very proud of what you have built here. I can tell you that any nation in the world would be happy to have a facility like this. And it should cause you to imagine just how much more you can achieve.

Already in the last decade, Vietnam's exports to the world have increased by 6 times over. You will grow even more as your economy becomes more open and the rule of law develops. More investment will come when people see Vietnamese entrepreneurs creating companies like APL. And many more companies like APL will be created if foreign and domestic investors see barriers to investment fall in a more business-friendly Vietnam.

Already the people of Vietnam have the highest rate of literacy in Southeast Asia. Imagine how much more you will achieve as even more young people gain more freedom to shape the decisions that affect their lives if vigorous competition and innovation bring down the cost of using the Internet for all your school children and all your entrepreneurs, so that all Vietnamese people can benefit from the free and open exchange of ideas.

Another of your great strengths is the burst of ambitious young people who enter the job market every year, about 1.4 million of them. Your country's leaders have acknowledged that state-owned enterprises alone cannot create enough good jobs for all of them. But Vietnam's young people have the talent and ideas to create the jobs of the future for themselves in a new era of entrepreneurship, innovation, and competition. That must be the future for Vietnam and its young people.

Among those who are ready to work with you to build that future are Vietnamese living abroad, including about one million in the United States. With us here today are two Vietnamese-American sisters, their names are Nguyen Cao Thang and Truong Bich Diep. They run a pharmaceutical company named OPV. It was one of Vietnam's most successful companies in the early 1970's, and now our Government has given them a loan to build a new manufacturing plant just outside this city.

Overseas, Vietnamese want to invest in your country, not only with their money but with their hearts. We are glad to be helping

them to return, and we thank you, the people and the Government of Vietnam, for welcoming them home.

The trade agreement the United States has signed with Vietnam will help even more investors come to your country. It will also help to develop a more open, sophisticated free market, based on international rules of law. And that will bring more rewards for the creativity and initiative of the remarkable Vietnamese people. Both our nations should ratify this agreement and implement it. The changes it will bring should be embraced, not feared.

I told your leaders in Hanoi a couple of days ago that the United States is committed to providing assistance to Vietnam to help to implement this trade agreement. Among other things, we will establish a \$200 million line of credit to support U.S. investment in Vietnam, and we and your Government have agreed to begin an economic dialog to discuss how we can work together to grow our economies in ways that truly improve people's lives.

I believe you can avoid some of the mistakes that the United States and other industrialized countries made on their way to prosperity, thanks to the revolution in information technology and in the economics of energy. For example, we know today that protecting the environment is actually good for the economy. It preserves natural resources and helps to prevent natural disasters like the terrible flooding Vietnam has experienced these last 2 years. We now know that the more you invest in workers, raising their skills and protecting their rights, the more productive they will be and the more profitable companies will be, and the stronger national economies will grow.

I am very pleased that on Friday we signed an agreement with the Vietnamese Government to begin a dialog on labor issues, on safety and standards in the workplace and on the skills workers need for this new information economy, as well as the protections they will need from its disruptions. No one can deny the importance of these issues as we work together for a better future. But no one should deny Vietnam the opportunity to grow. That is the meaning of our trade agreement; that is the meaning of this port. The

workers here at this port know better than anyone that trade lifts wages, raises standards, opens opportunities.

It has been a great privilege for me to see today and over the last few days what the Vietnamese people have accomplished. I have been deeply moved by my visit here. I came here, in part, because I believe that America and Vietnam are linked not just by a shared and often tragic past that must be honored and remembered, but that we have a bright future that we can build together to liberate our people and their potential.

The years of animosity are past. Today we have a shared interest in your well-being and your prosperity. We have a stake in your future, and we wish to be your partners. We wish you success.

Chúc các bạn suc khoe va thanh cong.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:35 p.m. on the dock at the Vietnam International Container Terminals. In his remarks, he referred to Le Thi Hai Lieu, director, Duc Thanh Company; and Flemming Jacobs, chief executive officer, Neptune Orient Lines, Ltd. (NOL Group) and its subsidiary, APL. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a United States-Vietnamese Business Forum Reception in Ho Chi Minh City

November 19, 2000

Thank you very much. First, thank you for your warm welcome, Mr. Chairman. And let me thank all the members of the Vietnamese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the U.S.-Vietnam Trade Council, U.S.-ASEAN Business Council and the American Chamber of Commerce for bringing us all together today.

I am honored to be here with distinguished Members of the United States Congress and my Cabinet and administration and American business leaders who are interested in Vietnam.

I hope this trip has helped the American people to see Vietnam in a new way and has encouraged the people of Vietnam to see America in a new way, so that we will have a partnership for the future.

One important element of that partnership is our bilateral trade agreement, and I want to thank all of you here for your efforts to bring it about. There are so many Americans who want to play a positive role in Vietnam's future, including one million Americans of Vietnamese heritage.

There are also a lot of American business people who came here many years ago, during the conflict—people like Jim Kimsey, who is on my trip here—who have done very well in the high-tech economy and other areas, who would like to give back to Vietnam and do something positive to build a better future.

I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the work that you have done here in Ho Chi Minh City to promote private economic growth and to encourage others to be partners with you in the future. And I hope that all of us will be able to celebrate that kind of future because of your leadership and the policies of the Government of Vietnam and the willingness of the people of Vietnam to support this new direction.

Again, let me thank all of you for making my family and my delegation feel so welcome in Vietnam. I thank you for your vision for this young and dynamic country, and I am going home determined to continue the partnership we have for a better future for the people of Vietnam, the people of the United States, and all those whom we can reach together.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:53 p.m. at city hall. In his remarks, he referred to Vo Viet Thanh, chairman, Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee; and James V. Kimsey, founder, America OnLine. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the Appointment of Donna Shalala as President of the University of Miami

November 19, 2000

I congratulate Secretary Shalala on her appointment as president of the University of Miami, a post she will assume on June 1. She is a talented manager and an energetic leader who will bring great experience to the

task of leading the university, its students, its faculty, and its alumni. I have no doubt she will be a real asset to the university and its community.

For almost 8 years, Secretary Shalala has led the Department of Health and Human Services with vigor and skill, always focused on meeting the needs of the American people. During her tenure as the longest serving Secretary in the history of the Department, she has directed the welfare reform process; made health insurance available to 2.5 million children through the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP); raised immunization rates to the highest levels in history; and led major reforms of FDA's drug approval process and food safety system.

As a Medicare trustee, she helped extend the solvency of the Medicare Trust Fund, directing management reforms and launching a campaign against waste, fraud, and abuse in the Medicare and Medicaid programs that has already paid enormous dividends. She has strengthened the scientific leadership and budget of the National Institutes of Health, and she has reinvigorated the Federal role in public health.

I am also pleased that Secretary Shalala intends to complete her term, staying through January 20 to finish the work we have to do for the American people. I look forward to working with her to protect the privacy of medical records and to win congressional approval of a budget that increases our investment in biomedical research and other critical public health priorities as well as health insurance coverage to the uninsured.

Interview With John King of CNN in Ho Chi Minh City

November 19, 2000

New Vietnam-U.S. Relationship

Mr. King. Thank you for joining us. We're here in Ho Chi Minh City with the President of the United States, Bill Clinton, this, the last day of his landmark trip here to Vietnam.

First, sir, thank you for joining us.

The facts speak for themselves. The first U.S. President to visit Vietnam since the end

of the war, the first ever to set foot in Hanoi, the Capital.

Interested in your thoughts. You've called this a new chapter, turning the page in the relationship. What is it do you think it will mean, first for the people of Vietnam, and also for the people of the United States?

The President. Well, of course, I hope it means for the people of Vietnam continued openness and continued prosperity. This country has made a lot of progress in the last few years. The economy is diversifying. It's becoming more open to the rest of the world. Sixty percent of the people are under 30 years old. Most of them have no memory at all of the war, and they are very much oriented toward the future. They are asking themselves all kinds of fundamental questions about what the world is like now, how they're going to relate to it, what their country should be. So I hope that we have opened a new chapter, and I hope it will be good for them and good for us.

Mr. King. Now obviously, part of the new chapter is a widely expanded economic relationship. Do you have much confidence it will go beyond that, at least in the short term? After your meeting yesterday with the leader of the Communist Party here, he referred to the United States in a daily newspaper as imperialists, said that he hoped there would be respect for the different way of doing things here. You mentioned in your speech, nationally televised here to university students, the examples of the United States in the areas of individual freedom, religious freedom, political freedom.

Do you have much confidence that the Government here, as it accepts and embraces a wider economic relationship with the West will do anything to bring progress on those other fronts?

The President. Well, I think there will be more personal freedoms. You know, I had a roundtable this morning with a lot of young people, and they were asking themselves these same questions. And I believe that as we implement this trade agreement, and then Vietnam moves toward membership in the World Trade Organization, the rule of law will become more important; openness will become more important; there will be

a lot more access to the Internet and information of all kinds; and so there will be more freedom.

And the question then becomes, when does it become political freedom, or will the political system try to restrict them more, as has been the case in one or two other countries? The truthful answer is, we don't know where it's going. But I think that the trend toward freedom is virtually irreversible, and these folks are too young; they're too vigorous. And as you can see in the streets, there is a lot of good will toward America here. There's a lot of interest in our country and how we're dealing with a lot of the challenges of the new century. So I believe that the trend is positive.

Now, of course, the political leaders will have their debates, and I had a nice little debate with the General Secretary of the Communist Party here about our country, and I stoutly disputed that we were an imperialist country. We had never had any imperialist designs here. The conflict here was over what self-determination for the Vietnamese people really meant and what freedom and independence really meant.

But we have a chance to continue that debate now in a more peaceful and more constructive way. And I think the fact that they feel free to engage us in it and then have publicity about it—they did, after all, allow my speech to the country to be televised, which I think is a good sign. And the people came out in Hanoi and here in Ho Chi Minh City to see me. So—and it wasn't me; it was the United States. There's a lot of interest and support for the United States here. So I think we're on the right direction.

MIA's/POW's

Mr. King. I want to ask you about some of the remarkable moments on this trip. If you're sitting back in the United States watching this, we see this only by the numbers: nearly 300 sets of remains returned to the United States during your Presidency; the money put into the excavation efforts. But it is numbers until you have the opportunity to see what you did yesterday, to actually go out into the field.

The President. It was overwhelming. It's very important for the American people to

understand that what has made the progress in our relationship with Vietnam possible over these last 8 years has been their cooperation in our efforts to identify and recover and return home our MIA's and to resolve the POW and MIA cases. And we have resolved hundreds of them. And in the cases where we think someone's remains are located, like the site we visited—we believe a plane crashed there 33 years ago; we believe a pilot's remains are there. His two sons came with me over here. And we watched all those Vietnamese people working with the American people, up to their hips in mud, digging in the ground and taking these big chunks of mud over to sifters, and watching other Vietnamese sift through the mud for any kind of metal object or any cloth object, anything that would give us a clue to whether this was, in fact, a crash site, and whether there's something more down there.

It was profoundly moving to me. And it is that good-faith effort that they have made with us—and by the way, we've made with them. They have 300,000 cases still unresolved. And I brought over about 350,000 pages of documents. We have another million pages of documents we can give them so they can do their own resolution of these cases. That's what's made possible this whole focus on the future and the commercial relations and the educational and health care efforts, all the other things we're doing.

Visit to the Joint Task Force-Full Accounting Excavation Site

Mr. King. What were your personal thoughts? You're standing there holding pieces of the aircraft, a label from a part of the aircraft, your daughter standing next to you, crying. It didn't look like you were terribly far from that yourself. And you're with these two big, grown men who last saw their father when I believe they were 6 and 8. What goes through your mind at a moment like that?

The President. Well, first, I was glad we were doing it. I think it made me very proud to be an American and proud that we had made these efforts and made this progress. I was very grateful for the cooperation we've received from the Vietnamese Government and the individual villages. You know, there

were just people out there, stomping around in the mud, trying to find some trace of those boys' father. And I think, for me, it symbolized what was best about our country and what was possible in terms of the reconciliation of people who have been so bitterly divided such a long time ago.

It's not done yet, you know. We still have a lot of work to do to work through all these cases. I still hope and believe that there should be more freedom within Vietnam and recognition of the courage of the people who fought in the South Vietnamese Army, as well as for the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese. And I hope and believe that the American Vietnamese community, over a million strong, can make an even greater contribution.

Now, today we were at that port, and we talked about a big pharmaceutical facility owned by two Vietnamese-American women, sisters, and their presence here in the country. But there are a lot more things that the Vietnamese have to give.

But again, to go back to your question, everything begins with what we saw yesterday, the attempt to identify and bring home the remains of everybody who's still here. It was an overwhelming moment. But it should make every American proud.

Mr. King. Thank you. We need to take a quick break. But we'll be back in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, in just a moment to continue our interview with the President of the United States.

[At this point, CNN took a commercial break.]

Veterans, the President, and Vietnam

Mr. King. I want to ask you a little bit about your personal thoughts and how—your personal journey here—and your thoughts on it. As a young man, you opposed the war, once wrote that you despised it. Yet as President, with the support of Vietnam veterans, you have led the effort, first to lift the trade embargo, then to normalize relations.

As you come here, how do you think this visit will be viewed back in the United States, not just among the veterans' community but especially among the Vietnam veterans' community, and your own personal thoughts on

sort of bridging your youth with your role now in trying to create this new relationship?

The President. Well, let me answer the two questions separately. First of all, I hope the veterans' community will view it with pride, because nothing that we have done in the last 8 years would have been possible without the support of the Vietnam veterans in the Congress and in the various veterans' organizations: Senator John Kerry; Senator Bob Kerrey; Senator John McCain; Senator Chuck Robb; Pete Peterson, our Ambassador, who was a POW for 6½ years. The first 3 years, his wife didn't even know he was alive. He never saw his third child until the boy was 6 years old. Pete was in Congress for a lot of this period before I named him to be the Ambassador. So I would think that the veterans' community would be very proud of this.

And also, I will reiterate, none of this would have happened if it hadn't been for the cooperation of the Vietnamese with our attempts to resolve our outstanding POW and MIA cases. There's never been anything like it in the entire history of warfare, where two countries worked this hard, this long, invested this kind of money and effort to resolve the POW/MIA issues. So I would think, for most of our people who understand that, the central role of the American veterans in the Congress and the country had, this would be a source of great pride.

For me, personally, it was interesting—my overwhelming feeling when I first got here was thinking about the boys I grew up with who died in Vietnam, four of my high school classmates. And I asked Pete Peterson, when he came back, how long it took him to get beyond thinking about how it was before. And he said, "Well, about an hour," he said. Then he had to deal with the challenges of being Ambassador, and he went on with life.

And that's kind of what happened to me. I was the—I had a few moments there where I felt—I was thinking about the personal tragedies that I had been in contact with when I was a boy. And then the moment intervened, and we went on with the future.

Closure on the Vietnam War

Mr. King. Do you think the country is at peace with this now? Even some Democrats

late in the Presidential campaign this past year tried to raise questions about Governor Bush's service. Do you think the country is ready, and should this trip maybe be the final impetus for the country to move on?

The President. I hope it will be. I hope it will be. Because the war divided the Vietnamese from the Americans, but it also divided the Vietnamese one from another—and still does—which is why, as I said, I went out of my way to praise the heroism of the South Vietnamese soldiers, too, and the importance of the Vietnamese-Americans who supported the position we had in Vietnam so long ago and have done so well because of freedom.

So we need to heal the rift within the Vietnamese community, and it divided Americans one from another. And I hope that the last 8 years and the journey we've made together in moving forward with Vietnam has helped to put an end to that. My sense is that it did, that we're—that at least the rifts are nowhere near what they were 8 years ago, not to mention 10 or 20 years ago.

North Korea

Mr. King. Let's move around the world quickly. In a matter of weeks, you will hand off to the man who will succeed you, a man as yet unknown—and we'll get to that—the portfolio on some of the most important strategic relationships in the world. I want to start first with North Korea. You had, at one point, hoped perhaps to follow Secretary Albright and visit North Korea as part of this trip, then decided in the end not enough progress was being made to justify that.

Can you be as specific as possible in saying what it is you're looking for from the North Koreans in terms of the missile program and any other steps, and whether you believe it is conceivable that you still might get there before you leave office?

The President. Well, I haven't made a decision about whether to go, so I'll answer that first. Specifically what we seek with the missile program is an end to the long-range missile program and an end to the exports of missiles. North Korea needs the foreign exchange money. I understand that they need the funds, and they're very good at making missiles. But the people who are most likely

to buy them are those that are most likely to misuse them down the road. So that's what we're trying to do.

We also want to ensure the continued vitality of this North-South dialog for which President Kim of South Korea won the Nobel Prize, the Nobel Peace Prize, and he certainly deserved it. We want that to go on. And we want to have a sense about what the way forward is with regard to North Korea's relations with us, as well as the South Koreans and the Japanese.

So it's conceivable that there could still be a trip, but I just haven't made a decision. The main thing is, I will hand off to my successor a much better situation than I found, because we, first of all, had to end North Korea's nuclear program, and that's what we did and worked on in '93 and '94. And we've been implementing the agreement we made with them then for the last 6 years. Now we're working on the missile program. And it appears that North Korea has made a decision that—Kim Chong-il has made a decision to have a more positive and open relationship with the rest of the world. And I think that's a very good thing. I think the reconciliation and the family reunifications between North and South Korea are profoundly important.

Russia

Mr. King. Russia. You met with President Putin during the APEC meeting in Brunei. Your successor, I assume, relatively shortly after he takes office, will receive a proposal from the Russians to go even beyond anything you and the Russians have discussed. Mr. Putin, because of the obvious budget constraints in his country, wants to go to roughly 1,000 strategic warheads. Is that in the interests of the United States national security? And do you see any potential to get to that level, and also, perhaps as part of that deal, get a compromise on the ABM Treaty that would allow the missile defense program to go forward?

The President. Well, first of all, I don't want to say anything that will compromise my successor's options. I think that's important. Now, I think it is quite possible that we could agree to go down to fewer missiles in our nuclear arsenal and theirs. I think that

it's important that there also be fewer warheads. That is, there's a difference between missiles and warheads. I don't think we ought to go back to highly dangerous, richly armed MIRV missiles, multiple warhead missiles.

But what we have to do is to have a target design that we believe is adequate to protect the United States and that our missile component will serve. And if we do that, then we could agree with them to reduce the number of missiles. And I'd hoped that we could get that done even beforehand. So I'm encouraged by that.

Now, on the missile defense, I think the trick there will be somehow having the Russians and others with equity interests here believe that we all have a vested interest in trying to develop enough missile defense to stop the rogue states and terrorists from piercing the barriers not only of the United States but of Russia, China, of any other country that might want to participate. And there is a way, I think, to get this done, but it will require a lot of joint research and a lot of trust and a lot of understanding about what the problem is and how we're going to develop it.

If the technology existed which would give us high levels of confidence that one or 2 or 5 or 10 missiles could be stopped from coming into the country, it would be hard to justify not putting it up. On the other hand, the reason I didn't go forward is, I think it's very hard to justify wrecking the existing treaty system which has served us so well for so long, in effect, gambling that somehow, some day, some way, the technology will be there. We don't want to do that.

The best way to proceed is to do the research and try to find a way to bring these other countries into this. Because, really, if you think about it, everyone should have an interest in the capacity of a country to resist the errant missile or the missile that would be fired by a rogue state or a terrorist. And they can do this together.

What I tried to do was to buy some time so my successor could sit down with the Russians, with the Chinese, with any others who are parties and interests—and our European allies, of course—and try to plot out a future that would leave us safer than we are today.

The whole point is to keep getting safer, not to do different things but to have a system which leads to a safer world.

And we have to consider what the impact of all these things are on the Indian subcontinent, where there are nuclear missiles; on the Chinese who might decide to build—acquire a lot more missiles or develop them or not. And so my successor will have time to do all that. And I hope we've given the next President and our partners the maximum number of options.

Mr. King. We need to take another short break, but when we come back, we'll ask the President about his thoughts on the crisis in the Middle East, as well as the contested Presidential election back home in the United States.

[At this point, CNN took a commercial break.]

Situation in the Middle East

Mr. King. I want to ask you, lastly, before asking you about the domestic political situation, I want to ask you lastly about the Middle East. You met separately with Mr. Arafat and Prime Minister Barak before you came on this trip. It has to be a source of enormous personal frustration to you, because of all the time you have put into this. Do you have any reasonable hopes that you can bring the two of them together anytime soon and that we will get anywhere beyond perhaps even just calming the violence before you leave office, and anywhere back toward formal peace negotiations? Is that completely unrealistic at this time?

The President. The honest answer is, I don't know, for this reason: I don't think they can start negotiating again until we can dramatically reduce the level of violence. It's not clear to me that that's going to happen right now, although I'm working very hard on it, and we've been working hard on it since I've been here. And I wouldn't rule it out.

But the tragic thing is that they're not all that far apart on a lot of these big issues and that what we have seen is a sober reminder that the old status quo was not an option. You either have to keep making things better in the Middle East, or eventually they'll get worse.

Mr. King. Is the burden on one side or the other? You came away from Sharm al-Sheikh cautiously optimistic you would stop the violence, have a cooling-off period, and then bring them back together. Obviously, they have not even been able to stop the violence.

The President. Well, believe it or not, I still think Sharm al-Sheikh was very much worth doing, because, first of all, the agreement that we reached there is pretty much what they'd have to do to get the violence back and set in motion conditions which would lead to a resumption of the peace talks. And I felt before Sharm al-Sheikh that we were slipping into a very dangerous situation regionally. And now I think that a lot of the really responsible actors in the region are also trying to get this thing shut down.

But I can't really say more than that it's a troubling, difficult, and painful situation, and we've got to find a way to end the violence. You don't have to end every single instance of it, but there has to be a dramatic reduction in the violence before the parties can talk again and make commitments again that could constitute a peace agreement.

Is it possible? Yes, it's possible. It's possible because they're not that far apart. But they might as well be on the other side of the globe, as long as all the shooting is going on. So that's what we're working on, and I hope that a way can be found to bring it to an end.

2000 Presidential Election

Mr. King. Let me bring your thoughts back home, to the United States. When you left on this trip, there was a dispute about who the next President would be. When you made your courtesy call on the Vietnamese President last night, you had to joke that you were hurrying home to see if the country had a President-elect. The recount continues, and along with it, the partisan rhetoric escalates. You have people on the Republican side speaking for Governor Bush saying the Democrats are trying to steal the election; Democrats on the other hand, saying that the Republicans are trying to deny the people a fair count of the vote and shut down democracy. Is this helpful, in your view? The

process is obviously not pretty. Is it helpful what we're hearing from both sides?

The President. Well, first of all, I don't know that that's a particularly useful question, with all respect. You can't, as close as this is—now it appears that, when all the votes are counted, that Vice President Gore will have won a plurality of the popular vote. It appears that unless he wins Florida, he'll be three votes short in the electoral college. Therefore, everything is on Florida. And Mr. Bush has the narrowest of leads out of 6 million votes, far less than a tenth of a percent, one-sixth of one-tenth of one percent, or something like that.

Now, in an environment like that, you have to assume that either side will try to make the best argument they can, because you only have a whisker of difference. I think the important thing is that there is a process underway, and it is being shepherded by the parties—they're both very well represented by articulate, able people—and they have recourse to the courts in Florida and the Supreme Court seems to have been willing to be prompt in its decisionmaking.

So I think the American people should just let it play out, and they should understand that, with so much at stake, both sides are going to make the strongest case they can. And the only thing that I hope that all of us will keep in mind here is that we don't know who won, but we do know that when people vote, they deserve to have their votes counted, if they can be. So we ought to just respect the process and respect the fact that the advocacy will take place, and it should take place. You can't blame either one of them for making the strongest case they can.

This is not a crisis in the American system of government, because it will come to an end. It will come to an end in plenty of time for the new President to take the oath of office. There is a way of resolving these things. All these cases are in the courts, and as I said, it appears to me that they're being handled in a fairly prompt way. Some of the decisions have gone one way, some have gone another way. And we'll just have to see what happens.

But I think the American people ought to let this—it seems to me the American people

are letting this play out in an appropriate way, and that's what I think should be done.

Election's Impact on Next President's Effectiveness

Mr. King. Look around the corner, though. You have considerable experience in your own right trying to govern in a very difficult environment, relations with the Republican Congress not terribly good during most of the latter half of your administrations. And now you have research being done on both sides about, well, maybe this will get thrown to the Congress, and can we disqualify electors. Do you see, A, with the election being so close, and then, B, with the very difficult fight over who wins, can whoever gets this job reasonably govern, in your view?

The President. Well, I would make two points. First of all, it is true that I faced an unusually partisan group of Republicans. But it's also true that we got a lot done. I mean, I've noticed with some pleasure, I confess, that students of American history, several of them have come out in the last few weeks saying that I had kept a higher percentage of my campaign promises than any President in modern history. And we've gotten a lot done with this Republican Congress, in spite of all the partisanship in the last 6 years.

We got a balanced budget agreement. We got welfare reform. We got just this year a sweeping measure on debt relief for the world's poorest nations and any number of other things. I don't want to go through all that, but the point I want to make is that even in a difficult atmosphere, where the Congress is closely divided, and the President is elected by a narrow margin, we should not assume that they won't be able to get something done. If they're willing to work hard, fight for their positions, and then in the end, make principled compromises, quite a lot can be done. That's the first thing I want to say.

The second thing is, if you look at American history, it is not inevitable that the person who wins the White House under these circumstances will have a deeply divided country. Now, in 1876, when President Hayes won, he promised to only serve one term. So we don't know whether he could

have been reelected or not, when he lost the popular vote and won the electoral college.

In 1824 John Quincy Adams won in the House of Representatives when he lost the popular vote, and he was voted out, although he came back and had a wonderful career opposing slavery. But when Thomas Jefferson was forced to go for many, many ballots into the House of Representatives, he came out of it as a more unifying figure, with a commitment to be more unifying. And in effect, he was so successful that he got two terms, and the opposition party, the Federalist Party, disappeared. And then two members of his party, James Madison and James Monroe, succeeded him, and they both had two terms. And arguably, that 24-year period was the biggest period of political stability in the whole history of the republic, until you had the dominance of the Republicans after the Civil War, and then Roosevelt-Truman years and the Depression and World War II.

So I think you—I wouldn't—I don't think we should have all these hand-wringing, dire predictions. We've got a system. It's underway, and yes, these guys are—the advocates for either side are under enormous pressure. And of course, they're being pretty snippy with each other from time to time. But look, you'd expect it. I mean, 100 million people voted, and there's 1,000 votes, more or less, at stake in Florida.

So everybody ought to just relax, let the process play out. But don't assume that no matter who wins and no matter what happens, it's going to be bad for America. It might be quite good, because it might be sobering for the country to realize we're in a completely new era. Nobody's got a lock on the truth. We're all trying to understand the future. It's still clear that about two-thirds of the American people want a dynamic center that pulls the people together and moves us forward. And I think we still have a fair chance to achieve that.

Perspective on the Presidency

Mr. King. We're short on time, indeed, out of time, but just in a sentence or two, you've been at this 8 years, and I think you have 8 weeks. What runs through your head

when you get up to go to the office every day?

The President. I want to get everything done I can possibly do while I'm here. And for the rest, I just feel grateful. America is in much better shape than it was 8 years ago. We got to implement the ideas and the policies that I ran on in '92 and '96. I didn't do everything I wanted to do, but the overwhelming majority of things I wanted to do I was able to accomplish, and I'm grateful that it worked out for the country.

And then a lot of other things came up along the way which were good for the country. So I'm happy now, and I'm grateful. And of course, I'm thrilled about Hillary's election to the Senate. And I just feel enormous gratitude. But there's still a lot of things I'd like to do, and so I'll work right up to the end.

Mr. King. Mr. President, we thank you very much for your time.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview began at 4:30 p.m. at the Caravelle Hotel and was taped for later broadcast, and the transcript was embargoed by the Office of the Press Secretary until 6 p.m. In his remarks, the President referred to President Kim Dae-jung of South Korea; General Secretary Kim Chong-il of North Korea; President Vladimir Putin of Russia; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; and Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Nguyen Bich and Dan Sutherland of Radio Free Asia International

November 19, 2000

The President. Hello?

Q. Yes. Good evening, Mr. President.

The President. Yes. Good evening.

President's Visit to Vietnam

Q. You must be very exhausted by now. [Laughter] That is why we are so grateful for you to grant RFA your very first post-Vietnam interview.

My name is Nguyen Bich, or you can call me just Bich for short. And I am the director of the Vietnamese service at Radio Free Asia. And sitting by me in our studio is Dan

Sutherland, who is vice president for programming.

So, Mr. President, my first question to you is, how do you feel? Do you feel you have accomplished your goal by this first trip ever made by a President of the United States to a reunified Vietnam?

The President. Yes, I think it was a very successful trip; first, because we were able to see and support the attempts that are being made there to recover the missing in action from the Vietnam conflict and to continue our cooperation with the Vietnamese Government in that regard.

We also gave them several hundred thousand pages of documents to help them identify the—some 300,000 people still missing who are Vietnamese.

Then, I think it was important because we contributed, I believe, to the continuing economic progress of the country which I think will lead to more openness.

And thirdly, I think it was important because I was able to speak on television to the country about the kind of future I hope we will share with Vietnam and the fact that I hope there will be more openness and more freedom in it. And I also had, finally, some very good discussions and some constructive disagreements with the leadership of Vietnam.

President's Impressions of Vietnam

Q. Your speech at Hanoi University certainly was very impressive. And so I think that made a really big impression on the country. As this was your first trip to Vietnam, could you give us a general impression of the country, at least what you saw of it, and of the people? Were they warm and welcoming?

The President. They were very warm and very welcoming and clearly interested in the trip. And the young people with whom I talked were clearly interested in having closer ties with America. So I felt very good about that.

I also was interested in all the changes that are occurring in the northern part of the country. I think there's clearly a lot of new investment going on in Hanoi, a lot of new businesses coming out, a lot of changes there that I think will tend to make the south and

the north perhaps less different in terms of the economic lives and maybe the political outlooks of the people at least in the cities. Now, the only village that I went to was the one where the search for the pilot was going on.

Economic Future of Vietnam

Q. People say that, in Vietnam, it is still some distance between the potential and realization. Do you get a feeling that the people are impatient for progress, especially among the young, or do you think, as the Government says, that they are pretty satisfied with the present pace of things?

The President. Well, I would say that they understand that the country is doing better, and they like that. But my impression is that they want to move forward as rapidly as they can. After all, 60 percent of the country now is under 30. And I think they have a keen awareness that they have to make a lot of changes in order to keep creating jobs. I think they need 1.4 million new jobs every year.

On the morning of my last day there, I had an amazing roundtable discussion with a number of young Vietnamese men and women who ranged in age from early twenties to midthirties, and who did everything from working for Cargill, the big international grain company, to running the Vietnam office of Saachi and Saachi, which is a big London advertising agency—excuse me.

Then there was one young man who had a job in the party and others who had other jobs. But what was interesting to me is, they were all thinking about the big questions, you know, how much personal freedom is needed in life, what kinds of decisions should be made by the individual, and what kind of decisions should be made by families or villages or the nation, the Government, and how much of the economy should be private and how much should be public.

The man who runs the city government in Ho Chi Minh City was quite proud of the fact that they had done a remarkable job of creating jobs in the private sector, that he had downsized the government, that poverty had been reduced by 70 percent, and homelessness was reduced by 70 percent. So I think there are a lot of people there who have

this feeling that if they go more to a private economy and they have more entrepreneurial spirit, that there will also be more personal freedom associated with it.

First Lady's Discussion of Human Rights

Q. Yes. I understand that the First Lady also had some strong words to recommend human rights at her talk in the morning of Sunday.

The President. Yes. She met with a group of women there. It was something she tries to do in every country in the world she visits. She's been speaking about that, especially as human rights affect women and young girls, ever since she went to the Beijing Women's Conference several years ago.

U.S.-Vietnam Bilateral Trade Agreement

Q. That's wonderful. Now, what is your reading of the progress so far made about the U.S.-Vietnam bilateral trade agreements? Did you get any indication while you were there as to when the Vietnamese National Assembly might get to ratify that?

The President. I think they will ratify it pretty soon. I think—I had the feeling they want to make absolutely sure that we're going to ratify it. And they understand that the timing is not good for ratification now, but I think as soon as we ratify it, they will. And then I think that we told them that we would be spending a couple million dollars a year over the next 3 years to help ensure the rapid and thorough implementation of the agreement. And we told them that we would like to have a high-level meeting, at least annually, to plot a joint economic strategy for the future, and they agreed to that. So my instinct is that they do want to get the maximum benefits out of this trade agreement.

Q. But then, what would be your impression as to when the U.S. Congress might ratify that?

The President. I think they will do it as soon as they have a chance, probably early next year. You know, I wish I could do it now, but I just don't know if it's practical. So I think that—I don't think there is any shot that it won't be approved by the Congress. There is just too much support for it.

Press Secretary Jake Siewert. Last question, please.

Discussions With Vietnamese Leaders

Q. [*Inaudible*]*—*being very diplomatic in handling the question of human rights, religious, and other democratic freedoms in Vietnam. But Hanoi's sensitivity to this question is all too obvious. Did you make any headway in your talk with Secretary General Le Kha Phieu or Prime Minister Phan Van Khai on this front. Or, do you think the U.S. could work with Vietnam on this matter in a more open fashion?

The President. I had very open conversations with all of them, with the Prime Minister, with the secretary general, and the President. And what I believe is that once they realize that we're not trying to tell Vietnam how to run every aspect of their lives and that we feel that we're going to be in a friendly relation, we have to be honest about our disagreements, and we have to say what we think human rights and religious rights and individual freedom have meant to our country.

I think we will be in a dialog there, and I think that, plus the process of economic and social change which is going on in Vietnam will lead the country in a positive direction. That's what I believe. I think it will be very important for my successor to continue that dialog. I don't think we can drop human rights or religious freedom from our concerns anywhere in the world.

Q. Can we ask you just one last quick question

The President. Sure.

Musicians in Vietnam

Q. Did you have a chance to play your saxophone while you were there?

The President. No. [*Laughter*] But I love the music. I did—however, I heard a Vietnamese saxophone player at the entertainment after the state dinner, and he was really, really good. All the musicians were great. I was very impressed by the musical performances that were done after the state dinner.

Q. You wouldn't allow us maybe just—
Press Secretary Siewert. No, I think we have to wrap-up. Sorry.

The President. We're in Alaska, and we have to get back on the plane to go home. I'm sorry. Thank you.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President

The President. Goodbye.

NOTE: The interview began at 6:20 p.m. and was taped for later broadcast. The President spoke via telephone from Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska. In his remarks, he referred to Le Kha Phieu, secretary general, Central Committee, Vietnamese Communist Party; and Prime Minister Phan Van Khai and President Tran Duc Luong of Vietnam. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 20. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Statement on the Death of Charles F.C. Ruff

November 20, 2000

Hillary and I were deeply saddened to learn of the death of Charles F.C. Ruff, who served as my White House Counsel from 1997 to 1999. All of us at the White House admired Chuck for the power of his advocacy, the wisdom of his judgment, and the strength of his leadership. We loved him for his generous spirit and his keen wit, which he used to find humor in even the most challenging circumstances.

Chuck had an extraordinary and distinguished career in private practice with Covington & Burling, and in public service as Special Prosecutor, Acting Deputy Attorney General, and United States Attorney and Corporation Counsel for the District of Columbia. We will miss his counsel and friendship deeply.

Hillary and I extend our condolences to his wife Sue, his daughters Carin and Christy, and his mother Margaret.

Statement on the Department of Housing and Urban Development's 2020 Management Reform Plan

November 20, 2000

The Department of Housing and Urban Development's 2020 Management Reform Plan has changed the way that HUD does business for good. That's the verdict from a report issued today by the Public Strategies Group, a leader of the "reinventing Government" movement. The confirmed success of Secretary Cuomo's management reforms is

great news for HUD, the administration, and most importantly, the millions of Americans served by HUD's programs.

When we first took office, Al Gore and I promised the American people that we would improve the way our Government serves them. We had no greater challenge than HUD, which was mired in bureaucracy and which Congress had targeted for elimination. That was then, but this is now. Today, we have a Department that has turned itself around and, as this report clearly states, can serve as a role model for all Federal agencies.

I want to congratulate Secretary Cuomo, his team at HUD, and all of the Department's 9,000 employees for this significant achievement. I have no doubt it will serve as a milestone in HUD's history and foreshadow the kind of service that the Department will offer the American people in the years to come.

Statement on Labor Department Regulations on Private Health Care Plans

November 20, 2000

Today I am pleased to announce that the Labor Department is issuing final regulations requiring private health plans covering 130 million Americans to provide a fast and fair internal appeals process for patients when coverage has been denied or delayed. Under this new rule, for the first time, health plans would be required to make coverage decisions quickly—within 72 hours for urgent requests—and to provide consumers with meaningful information on their rights and benefits. Currently, many health plans do not have the medical expertise to make such decisions, and approval of necessary services can take as long as 300 days.

Under the strong leadership of Secretary Herman, we are taking an important step towards providing Americans the health care protections they need. It is the final executive action I can take to provide critical protections to patients in private health plans. It builds on my administration's previous action to provide critical patient protections to the 85 million Americans in Federal health plans. But the only way to give every American in

every health plan the right to see a specialist, to go to the nearest emergency room—not the cheapest—and to hold health care plans accountable when they cause harm, is to pass a real, enforceable Patients' Bill of Rights. Whether it is this year or next year, Congress should come together to pass this long overdue legislation.

Statement on the Death of Lars-Erik Nelson

November 21, 2000

Hillary and I are deeply saddened to learn of the death of Lars-Erik Nelson, one of New York's most distinctive voices and one of America's leading journalists. He was a fearless, independent, no nonsense reporter and columnist who believed in getting to the heart of a story and getting it right.

Lars-Erik Nelson distinguished himself as a foreign correspondent and as a skilled Russian translator, but his real gift was translating complex stories about our democracy for the American people. He did it with humor and a dogged pursuit for the truth. As his friends knew, beneath his gruff exterior was a gentle spirit and a warm heart. Hillary and I will miss him and the unique insight that he shared with New York and the entire Nation. Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Mary, and his entire family.

Remarks at the Thanksgiving Turkey Presentation Ceremony

November 22, 2000

The President. I want to thank Secretary Glickman and National Turkey Federation Chairman Jerry Jerome and President Stuart Proctor for being here. And I want to welcome the young people who are here, especially those who are from the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Washington.

[At this point, there was a noise from the far end of the Rose Garden.]

The President. I am—what's all that noise up there? *[Laughter]* What is it? It sounds like another turkey about to fly down here. *[Laughter]*

I want to thank the National Turkey Federation for once again donating this year's tom turkey. This is the eighth I've had the privilege to meet and set free in the Rose Garden. [Laughter]

I'm told that Jerry, the turkey, traveled all the way here from Wisconsin, proving that the Cheese State is about more than good cheese. It's also, I might add, about a very well-behaved turkey. [Laughter]

Tomorrow we will celebrate the first Thanksgiving of the new millennium and the last one of our Presidency. As Hillary and Chelsea and I sit down to our dinner, we will give special thanks for the privilege it has been to live here and to serve for the last 8 years.

It's still a bit of a mystery when exactly the first Thanksgiving was actually held. Some say it was in 1513, when Ponce de Leon landed in Florida. But the expert opinions about that are divided, and a recount is still underway down there. [Laughter] Others say it occurred in 1541, when Francisco Vasquez de Coronado arrived on the Texas panhandle. Some conspiracy theorists say neither of those are true.

The most popular story, of course, and the one all of us learned as kids, is that Native Americans and Pilgrims shared a feast of thanks to celebrate their first harvest in 1621, soon after the Pilgrims arrived in Plymouth, Massachusetts. It was a famous meal of maize, squash, and venison and lasted 3 whole days. Now, that would take a lot of turkey.

But no matter what its roots, Thanksgiving is a tradition that has been celebrated in this country since our beginning. George Washington was the first President to declare a national day of thanks, in 1789. And Abraham Lincoln made the tradition a permanent one in 1863, in the darkest days of the Civil War, because he recognized, as he put it, "the blessings of fruitful years and healthful skies."

The times have changed, but the message hasn't: To give thanks for all God's blessings, for our strong families, our spirited communities, and the good fortune of living in our country's most prosperous and peaceful time.

I am profoundly grateful on this Thanksgiving that we have now more than 22 million

new jobs, poverty and unemployment at record lows, and the highest homeownership in history. The American people worked hard for these results, and I hope they're thankful for them as well.

We should also be grateful for the strength of our democracy and the freedom we enjoy, thanks to the courage and patriotism of our men and women in uniform and the strength and abiding power of the Constitution and the rule of law.

As we gather around our dinner tables with family and friends and celebrate our great bounty, we must not forget, also, those who will be hungry this holiday season. That's why it is so important that all Americans, like the young people here today, not only give thanks but give something back to their communities to help those who are less fortunate than themselves.

Almost 50 years ago, President Truman began the tradition of keeping at least one turkey off the Thanksgiving dinner table. And I am very pleased to follow in his footsteps and to hereby officially pardon this turkey in order that he be sent to the petting zoo in Fairfax County, Virginia, to live his remaining days in peace and happiness making children happier, if not more peaceful.

Thank you, and Happy Thanksgiving. Let's bring the turkey up.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:20 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jerry Jerome, chairman, and Stuart Proctor, Jr., president, National Turkey Federation. The President also referred to Kidwell Farm at Frying Pan Park in Fairfax County, VA, future home of the turkey.

Remarks at the Capital Area Food Bank and an Exchange With Reporters

November 22, 2000

The President. First of all, I want to thank Secretary Glickman and all the people that he mentioned for the work that they've done that he discussed today. And I want to say a special word of appreciation to Lynn Brantley. Thank you for your kind comments, but actually, the District of Columbia could

better do without me than you. You have been great, and I thank you so much for everything you have done. This lady has been working on hunger issues since she marched with Dr. King. She's been at it a long time, and she's still a young lady. [Laughter] So she's got a long way to go, and we thank her.

I want to thank the wonderful DC Delegate, Eleanor Holmes Norton, and DC City Council chair Linda Cropp and Vincent Orange, Ward 5 councilmember. And I want to say a special word of appreciation—this may be my last public chance to do it—to Representative Tony Hall from Ohio, who, for years and years and years, when it was popular and when no one paid attention, has been the number one opponent of hunger in the United States and around the world in the entire United States Congress. Thank you, Tony Hall, for everything you have done. Thank you.

I also want to point out that we have some participation here from one of my favorite accomplishments as President, the establishment of AmeriCorps, the national service corps. We have AmeriCorps volunteers, and I think we even have some alumni here. And I want to acknowledge Senator Harris Wofford, the director of the Corporation for National Service, and thank him for all that AmeriCorps has done, including this project and their participation here over the last 8 years. Thank you, sir.

I also want to say appreciations, thanks to all the people that are working here who let me work with them. The folks in the back were tolerant when I couldn't remember what box I was supposed to put which item of food in. [Laughter] And the young people there were tolerant when I couldn't remember how many cans of what I was supposed to put in the box. And we got through it all right.

The students are from Garfield Terrace. And I think as we prepare our own Thanksgivings, the people in our country should give thanks for people like all these volunteers here, young and old and those in the middle, who keep the spirit of Thanksgiving alive every day by giving to others. And I thank them. This is a great lesson for these young people to learn early in life, and I hope

they'll keep it up. Let's give them a big hand. [Applause] Thank you.

I always try to do some community service at Thanksgiving to highlight something good that's going on in our community, in our country. This year I wanted to come here because I think it's too easy for Americans to forget, when we have the strongest economy in our history and we've had the biggest drop in child poverty in 34 years and the lowest overall poverty rate in 20 years—that all sounds really good, and it is really good. It's good that we've got 22 million new jobs. It's good that all sectors of the economy have their incomes going up, from the lowest fifth to the top fifth and everybody in between. It's all really good. But this is a very big country, and it's very important at Thanksgiving that we not forget that in the midst of all of our plenty and all of our prosperity, there are still Americans of all ages who have trouble getting enough decent food to eat every single day. And a lot of Americans do not know that.

I hope by coming here, one of the things that will happen—and Secretary Glickman mentioned it earlier—is that more Americans will be aware of this and will support this institution or their local food bank, wherever they live, or their local religious institutions or whoever else is involved in every community. There's somebody in every community trying to feed people that don't have enough food, and they need help in getting the food.

And so that's the main reason I wanted to come here today. We see these people who don't have enough to eat sometimes living on the street. But we don't see them if they're senior citizens on very small fixed incomes. We don't see them sometimes if they're working families getting by on the minimum wage with more kids than can live on a minimum wage. By the way, it's another argument for raising the minimum wage. We've got one more chance to do that when the Congress comes back in December. And a shockingly high number of people who don't have enough to eat are kids.

As Lynn said a moment ago—I want to reemphasize it because somebody might have missed what she said—one in three Washington, DC, children, the Capital of the country that has the strongest economy in

the world, lives every single day at some risk of going to bed hungry. One in three in the Capital of the country with the best economy in the world, with the best economy we've ever had, is at risk of going to bed hungry at night.

The Capital Area Food Bank helps to right that wrong by distributing 20 million pounds of food a year to community kitchens, children's programs, and other emergency feeding centers. How many people—did you say you had over 750 groups that come here to get food? Around the Nation, a network of private organizations, religious groups, and civic-minded individuals are doing the same thing, just like our friends from Giant Food here are helping.

Now, this commitment, this grassroots citizens commitment to fighting hunger, is a great national treasure for us. The challenge for people like us in Government is to find ways to work with community groups and businesses and farmers to end hunger in America, and not just on Thanksgiving or Christmas but every day. And we need citizen help there, as well.

Secretary Glickman talked about our community food security initiative and the progress we've made, and I really thank him for his personal leadership and commitment. Soon after I named him Agriculture Secretary, Dan told me about a program he'd started in his home State in Kansas to collect food that would otherwise be wasted and pass it on. He told me then, and he just whispered in my ear again today, one of his—he wants to make sure I remember this, so he said it again—that our country loses about 96 billion—that's "b," not million, billion—pounds of food a year that could be consumed, but instead it's thrown out or allowed to spoil. So we established a program that allows Federal agencies to send excess food to food banks like this one. In 10 agencies and the United States House of Representatives—thank you, Tony and Eleanor—and several local military bases are now taking part in this.

But now we've got to meet the longer term challenge, to make sure low-income Americans and seniors get the food at affordable prices they need in the neighborhoods where they live. This is a real problem for people

in inner cities and in rural areas, where more than 20 percent of the stores carry no fresh produce at all, or there simply aren't any stores at all. It's a tragedy for children who especially need vitamins when they're growing up and for older people who need fruits and vegetables to fight diseases like diabetes and hypertension.

So today I'm going to announce three new initiatives that will at least help to change that and will help America's small farmers find new markets for their produce.

First, we're going to make available \$10 million in grants to help seniors take advantage of farmers markets. There are farmers markets all over this country that offer good produce at affordable prices, but you can't take food stamps to them. And so we've asked the States and the Indian tribal governments to apply to the Department of Agriculture by December the 1st to use the funding to create coupons that will allow as many as a half-million seniors on limited incomes to shop directly at farmers markets or buy from local farms directly. And when seniors and low-income people are able to purchase fresh local produce, their health improves and so does the health of the local farm economy.

Capital City Food Bank has demonstrated that here by starting the Anacostia farmers market, which I imagine a lot of you are familiar with, and bringing local growers to Southeast, DC, as well as being one of only four farmers markets in the Nation to accept food stamps. That's why we've got to do this coupon thing, because most of them don't.

Second, the Department of Agriculture will spend \$200 million more next year to buy fruits and vegetables and donate them to community kitchens, schools, and other emergency feeding centers. That means millions more healthy snacks in senior centers, fresh vegetables in school lunches, and full shelves at the Capital City Food Bank and others like it across our country.

Third, we're going to spend about \$2½ million in new community food project grants to 16 nonprofits in 13 States to help build community gardens at public schools and in vacant lots. They'll then fund training in gardening, nutrition, and food preparation

for young people to help create farmers markets in underserved areas, by using land that's out there in communities and towns now to let people grow some food that can either be consumed or sold.

Now, all these initiatives are good for our seniors, our working families, our kids, and our farmers. They will build a direct connection between people who grow food and people who need it. They will take another step toward ensuring that, in this land of plenty, no child—no American—should go to bed hungry.

That ought to be a national goal. It ought to transcend political parties, race, age, and region. But there are people in cities and little country towns, on Indian reservations, who are hungry. And I will say again: If we—I know I have said this so many times about so many of our problems, but if you take this problem—if we cannot deal with this now, when we have the strongest economy in our history, the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, the highest work force participation in our history, and at least a manageable number of people struggling with this, when are we ever going to deal with it?

So, at this Thanksgiving, we should all be thankful for our blessings. We should all look around at people who need help and try to give them a little. But we ought to make a commitment to deal with this systematically. If Lynn can spend a lifetime dealing with this, the rest of us ought to spend a year fixing it so that she'll have the resources she needs to actually meet the problem that's out there. I hope these steps will help. I'm sure they will, but there's more to be done.

Thank you, and Happy Thanksgiving.

**Republican Vice Presidential Candidate
Dick Cheney**

Q. Any thoughts on Secretary Cheney?

The President. Just that I hope he'll be well and fine. I just found out right before I came over here, and I'm going to go back to the White House now to either call him or write him a note. I hope he's fine.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:22 p.m. at the food bank's warehouse. In his remarks, he referred to Lynn Brantley, executive director, Capital Area Food Bank.

**Videotape Remarks on the
Observance of Ramadan**

November 22, 2000

It is a privilege to deliver again this year, on behalf of the American people, a message of friendship and respect to Muslims around the world as they begin the sacred month of Ramadan.

As America's 6-million-member Muslim community grows in numbers and prominence, Americans of every religious tradition are learning more about the origins and meaning of Islam—that on “the Night of Power,” the Angel Gabriel appeared to the Prophet Muhammad and revealed to him the first verses of the Koran; that the Koran declares that Ramadan was the month Allah's words were sent down and so should be spent in fasting.

The rigors undertaken by devout Muslims inspire respect for Islam among people of all faiths. And this can bring hope of greater understanding for good will. It can overflow old boundaries when wholehearted devotion to one's own faith is matched with a devout respect for the faith of others.

That is why we welcome Islam in America. It enriches our country with Islam's teachings of self-discipline, compassion, and commitment to family. It deepens America's respect for Muslims here at home and around the world, from Indonesia to Pakistan, the Middle East, and Africa.

We all had hoped that when this month's crescent Moon first appeared and the month of Ramadan was announced, fasting would begin in a time of peace. Yet, tragically, violence continues, and lives are being lost in the land that is holy to Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. For all Americans, these deaths are a source of great sorrow. The Muslim chaplain at Georgetown University, where I attended college, has told me of a verse in the Koran in which Allah tells us that He created nations and tribes so we may know one another, not so we might despise one another.

As the fasting of Ramadan begins, I pray people of all faiths may come to appreciate this precious wisdom of the Koran. And when next month's Moon appears and the Muslim

world celebrates Eid al-Fitr, we may also celebrate the revival of our hopes for peace throughout the world.

Ramadan Kareem.

NOTE: The address was videotaped at approximately 11:15 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room for later broadcast on the Department of State American Embassy Television Network. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this address.

Statement on the Death of David Hermelin

November 22, 2000

Hillary and I are deeply saddened to learn of the death of our good friend Ambassador David Hermelin.

All of us who knew David admired him deeply for his remarkable combination of energy, wit, optimism, and commitment to family, faith, and the common good. From the businesses he built to the charities he supported to the causes he championed, David demonstrated the qualities of active citizenship which have made our country the greatest democracy in history. He was a magnificent man. I will be forever grateful for his friendship, support, and outstanding service as our Ambassador to Norway. With characteristic energy, he made impressive contributions to U.S.-Norway relations, something I saw firsthand when he persuaded me to make the first-ever visit to Norway by a sitting U.S. President in November of 1999. I will miss him very much.

Hillary and I extend our condolences to his wife, Doreen, their children, and grandchildren.

Statement on Signing the District of Columbia Appropriations Act, 2001

November 22, 2000

Today I am signing into law H.R. 5633, the "District of Columbia Appropriations Act, 2001."

I commend the House and Senate for passing a version of the District of Columbia appropriations bill that I can sign. I am pleased that the Majority and Minority were

able to come together on this legislation under the leadership of Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton, the District's stalwart champion. While I continue to object to the riders in the enrolled bill, some of the most highly objectionable provisions that would have intruded upon D.C. citizens' right to make decisions about local matters have been deleted or modified from previous versions of the bill. This bill is a fair compromise.

I commend the Congress for providing virtually all of the Federal funds I requested for the District of Columbia. The bill includes essential funding for Courts, Corrections, and the Offender Supervision Agency, and for the tuition assistance program for District of Columbia residents. The bill fully funds the New York Avenue Metro station and provides a start on funding for brownfields remediation and economic development in Anacostia.

I continue to object to remaining riders that violate the principle of home rule, including, but not limited to, provisions infringing on voting rights, HIV/AIDS prevention, abortion, implementation of the Domestic Partners Act, special education, and the Mayor's personnel authorities.

The Act also includes troubling provisions with regard to needle exchange programs in the District. While I am pleased that it does not prohibit private entities from using their own funds for needle exchange programs, the Act does retain a ban on local funds for that purpose, an infringement of "home rule." Even more objectionable is the language that prohibits the exchange of needles in large portions of the city. In the form in which it passed the House, this language would have had the practical effect of ending needle exchange programs in the District of Columbia. My Administration worked hard to remove this language from the final bill, and we appreciate the work of the conferees to make this provision less harmful and allow for those conducting needle exchange programs to adapt and continue operation. However, even though the language has been improved upon, these provisions are an encroachment on the District's prerogatives, create an unnecessary burden on the District, and could seriously disrupt current HIV prevention efforts.

The Act also prohibits the District from legislating with respect to controlled substances and from freely crafting effective programs for nonviolent, drug-dependent offenders. This provision also significantly encroaches on the District's autonomy, and undermines its ability to deal effectively with this serious problem.

The people of the District of Columbia deserve the same respect in ordering their local affairs that the people of our States enjoy. These provisions must be re-examined in the future.

Today marks an important occasion for the District of Columbia. In 1995, the District faced a severe fiscal and managerial crisis, city services were in a shambles, and the city faced deficits as far as the eye could see. Today, thanks to the leadership of Mayor Anthony Williams, the District's finances are in order, city services are being restored, and the city stands on sound financial footing. Later this year, the District will be able to certify 4 straight years of balanced budgets, with growing surpluses, paving the way for cessation of the Financial Authority and a full return to Home Rule.

For our part, we have tried to be a sure and steady friend of the residents of the District of Columbia. In January 1996, I proposed a plan to revitalize the District as the Nation's Capital, and to improve prospects for "home rule" to succeed. The plan was designed to relieve the District of Columbia government of major financial and managerial responsibilities that were beyond its capacity and that are commonly performed by States, rather than municipalities; to invest considerable resources to improve the city's criminal justice system and infrastructure; and to strengthen its economic base.

The National Capital Revitalization and Self-Government Improvement Act of 1997 significantly restructured the Federal-District of Columbia government relationship. The Act increased the Federal match rate for Medicaid from 50 to 70 percent; assumed certain state justice functions, including incarceration of adult felons, supervision of parolees, and financial oversight of the District's courts; relieved the city of \$5 billion of unfunded pension liabilities that the

District had inherited from the Federal Government in the late 1970s; and provided tax relief to District of Columbia residents and businesses. Last year, my Administration persuaded the Congress to pass further changes to the Medicaid formula, saving the District \$9 million per year. The Revitalization Act implementation will save the District well over \$2 billion over the next 5 years.

In addition, I signed into law \$1.2 billion in Federal tax incentives over 5 years, including a wage credit to hire D.C. residents, additional small business deductions, tax exempt bond financing, a first time home buyer credit, and a zero capital gains rate. In addition to funding to implement the Revitalization Act, we have also obtained additional Federal appropriations for the District: \$239 million in FY '99, \$34 million in FY '00, and over \$55 million in FY '01. These appropriations have been used for critical economic development initiatives, including \$25 million to capitalize the National Capital Revitalization Corporation, \$25 million to fund a new Metro station at New York Avenue, and funding for key infrastructure projects, management reforms, education, and public safety. I also signed into law the College Access Act, providing \$17 million per year for D.C. high school students to attend out-of-state schools at in-state tuition rates.

Lastly, let me mention that since 1995, under the leadership of the Office of Management and Budget, Federal agencies on our D.C. Task Force have been involved in a range of activities designed to draw on the Federal Government's technical expertise and available Federal grants to improve the city's tax collection, education and training, housing, transportation, health care delivery, economic development, and other governmental functions. These activities are ongoing and touch upon virtually every aspect of District government.

I am proud of our support for the District, and even prouder of what the residents and government of the District have been able to accomplish. As the Congress concludes its business for the year, we look forward to

working together to address other important issues affecting the District of Columbia.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
November 22, 2000.

NOTE: At the time of publication, H.R. 5633, approved November 22, had not been received by the Office of the Federal Register in time for assignment of a public law number.

Statement on Signing the Minority Health and Health Disparities Research and Education Act of 2000

November 22, 2000

Today I am pleased to sign the “Health Care Fairness Act” into law. This legislation provides long overdue attention to the dramatic disparities in the incidence of disease and health care outcomes in minorities as compared to the overall population. It is unacceptable that African-American men have a higher overall cancer incidence and infant mortality rates than any other racial or ethnic group; Hispanic and Native Americans suffer much greater rates of diabetes; and Asian-American and Pacific Islanders are afflicted with extraordinarily high levels of cancer of the liver.

The legislation being enacted today authorizes over \$150 million to create a new national center for research on minority health and health disparities at NIH, increases funding for research on race and health disparities at the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, and creates a new program to attract health disparity researchers into this critically important field. We must build on today’s achievement by assuring adequate funding for these and other initiatives that will help close the health status gap in this Nation. It will make a major contribution toward eliminating these disparities by 2010—a nationwide goal we established over 2 years ago and one which must be pursued with the same rigor with which we have worked towards eliminating barriers to basic civil rights.

NOTE: At the time of publication, the “Health Care Fairness Act,” S. 1880, approved November

22, had not been received by the Office of the Federal Register in time for assignment of a public law number.

Statement on Signing the Minority Health and Health Disparities Research and Education Act of 2000

November 22, 2000

Today I am pleased to sign into law S. 1880, the “Minority Health and Health Disparities Research and Education Act of 2000.” This Act will enhance biomedical and behavioral research on minority health and health disparities, support medical training for minorities and others, and improve the study and collection of data regarding minorities and other populations.

This important legislation builds on the work of my Administration, particularly the efforts of the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), Donna Shalala, to develop a truly national commitment to end disparities in health through research, training, and data gathering. Under Secretary Shalala, HHS committed to eliminate disparities in health by race and ethnicity by the year 2010. Eliminating disparities will require additional research and new approaches, but in the process of addressing the health needs of our most vulnerable populations, we will improve the Nation’s health care system for everyone. This Act was made possible through the bipartisan efforts of the Congress; a multiracial coalition of leaders in public health, business, education, and charitable foundations; and my Administration.

The Act creates a National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). This Center will fund research programs on health disparities and minority health; support training of members of health disparity populations as researchers; and provide education loan relief for health professionals who commit themselves to perform health disparities research. The Center will also coordinate all NIH research efforts in this area. The Center promises to help all Americans who bear the burden of health disparities regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, or geographic location.

This legislation also authorizes the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality to conduct and support activities and research to measure health disparities and identify causes and remedies. In addition, it authorizes the Health Resources and Services Administration to support research and demonstration projects to train health professionals on reducing health care disparities.

I would like to thank many individuals who helped develop and pass this landmark law, particularly Senators Kennedy, Frist, Jeffords, and Hatch, as well as Representatives Thompson, Lewis, Jackson, Jr., Watts, Norwood, Strickland, Brown, Bilirakis, Christensen, Towns, Rodriguez, Underwood, and Roybal-Allard. I also would like to acknowledge the diligent efforts of Secretary Shalala; David Satcher, the Surgeon General; Ruth Kirschstein, Principal Deputy Director of NIH; and the many others who worked tirelessly to bring this legislation forward.

The elimination of health disparities will require a comprehensive effort, involving both the Federal Government and the private sector. The Federal Government must continue to make measurable progress against diseases and conditions that are major contributors to health disparities, and our commitment to health disparities research must ensure that new knowledge generated in federally supported laboratories and clinics benefits all of our citizens. We must also ensure that there is a diverse health care and research workforce in the future by making efforts to attract and train a generation of scientists and health care professionals who are prepared to dedicate themselves to helping eliminate health disparities.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
November 22, 2000.

NOTE: At the time of publication, S. 1880, approved November 22, had not been received by the Office of the Federal Register in time for assignment of a public law number.

Statement on Signing the Reports Consolidation Act of 2000

November 22, 2000

Today I am pleased to sign into law S. 2712, the "Reports Consolidation Act of 2000." This Act, which passed with bipartisan support, provides permanent authority for Federal agencies to consolidate certain financial and performance reports into a single, comprehensive annual report.

This Act builds on the success of a pilot program started in 1994 and represents an important step in the maturity of financial management reporting by the Federal Government. An agency can now combine its audited financial statements, as required by the Chief Financial Officers Act, and its performance reports, required by the Government Performance and Results Act.

These new consolidated reports will give the American people a more comprehensive and useful picture of the many important services we provide to the Nation.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
November 22, 2000.

NOTE: At the time of publication, S. 2712, approved November 22, had not been received by the Office of the Federal Register in time for assignment of a public law number.

Exchange With Reporters in Thurmont, Maryland

November 23, 2000

Thanksgiving

The President. Hi, guys. Happy Thanksgiving.

Q. What are you thankful for, Mr. President?

The President. I have a lot to be thankful for this year. I've got my family here. They're all in good health; they're all doing well. I've got my two nephews here. I'm very grateful for how good the people of New York were to Hillary, and I'm very grateful the country's in good shape. I've got a lot to be grateful for.

2000 Presidential Election

Q. Sir, do you think the Supreme Court will get involved in the Florida situation?

The President. I think the law on that is pretty clear, and there's no point on my commenting on that. I don't think I should comment about it.

Q. Thankful you're not in this election this year? Wish you were?

The President. I think that the less I say about this right now, the better. I just want everybody who tried to vote—legally voted—to have their votes count, including the service people—everybody. I think that's what they're trying to do, and I hope there will be time to do it. I think that the position that I've taken on this all along is, we ought to just do the right thing and enfranchise everybody that could possibly do it but let the thing play out. There's a process under way, and the courts will do what they're going to do. That's the way it ought to be. And I don't think I should comment.

I'll tell you, I am thankful that I live in a country with enough faith in its democracy that we're all letting this thing play out. Comedy shows are having fun with it. We're all laughing about it. The two candidates seem to be in a fairly good humor about it. When I was in Asia, I had a couple of people tell me that in some countries people would be in the streets over this. Instead, we trust our system. We just have to trust it, whether we agree with it or disagree with it. Let it play out. I just hope that we don't run out of time.

Thank you.

NOTE: The exchange began at 2:25 p.m. at Maple Run Golf Course. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

**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.

November 18

In the morning, the President and Hillary Clinton traveled from Hanoi, Vietnam, to Tien Chau Village, Vietnam, and in the afternoon, they returned to Hanoi.

In the early evening, the President met with Le Kha Phieu, general secretary, Vietnamese Communist Party, in the Reception Room at Party Headquarters. Later, he met with President Tran Duc Luong of Vietnam in Room A at the Presidential Palace.

In the evening, the President participated in a repatriation ceremony on the tarmac at Noi Bai Airport for recovered remains of American soldiers. He then traveled to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

The President announced his intention to appoint Mubashar A. Choudry and Allan M. Dabrow to the President's Commission on Drug-Free Communities.

The President announced his intention to appoint Larry L. (Butch) Brown, Sr., as a member of the Board of Governors of the United Service Organizations, Inc.

November 19

In the morning, the President participated in a roundtable discussion in the courtyard of the Ho Chi Minh City Fine Arts Museum on the next generation of leadership in Vietnam.

In the evening, the President and Hillary Clinton traveled to Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska. Aboard Air Force One on the tarmac, the President made a telephone call expressing condolences to Susan Ruff, wife of former White House Counsel Charles F.C. Ruff, who died earlier in the day. Later, the President and Hillary Clinton returned to Washington, DC, arriving the following morning.

November 20

In the morning, the President made a brief condolence visit to the Washington, DC, home of Charles F.C. Ruff.

November 21

The President announced his intention to reappoint Alan H. Schecter as a member of the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board.

November 22

In the afternoon, the President went to Camp David, MD.

The President announced his intention to appoint Calvin V. French as a member of the Board of Governors for the United Service Organizations, Inc.

**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 November 18

Transcript of a press briefing by Ambassador Douglas (Pete) Peterson on the President's visit to Vietnam

Transcript of an interview of Daniel and David Evert, sons of Lt. Col. Lawrence G. Evert

Fact sheet: U.S. Humanitarian Demining in Vietnam

Citation of the Presidential Citizens Medal presented to Ambassador Peterson

Released November 19

Transcript of a press briefing by National Economic Council Director Gene Sperling on the President's visit to Vietnam

Fact sheet: President Clinton: New Opportunities for the United States and Vietnam Through Expanding Economic Ties, Trade, and Investment

Released November 21

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Jake Siewert

Announcement: President Clinton Announces Winners of the 2000 Baldrige Award

Released November 22

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Jake Siewert

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing the President's selection of U.S. representatives to serve on the Digital Opportunity Taskforce

**Acts Approved
by the President**

Approved November 13

H.R. 782 / Public Law 106-501
Older Americans Act Amendments of 2000

H.R. 1444 / Public Law 106-502
Fisheries Restoration and Irrigation Mitigation Act of 2000

H.R. 1550 / Public Law 106-503
To authorize appropriations for the United States Fire Administration, and for carrying out the Earthquake Hazards Reduction Act of 1977, for fiscal years 2001, 2002, and 2003, and for other purposes

H.R. 2462 / Public Law 106-504
To amend the Organic Act of Guam, and for other purposes

H.R. 2498 / Public Law 106-505
Public Health Improvement Act

H.R. 3388 / Public Law 106-506
Lake Tahoe Restoration Act

H.R. 3621 / Public Law 106-507
To provide for the posthumous promotion of William Clark of the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Commonwealth of Kentucky, co-leader of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, to the grade of captain in the Regular Army

H.R. 5239 / Public Law 106-508
To provide for increased penalties for violations of the Export Administration Act of 1979, and for other purposes

S. 700 / Public Law 106-509
Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail Act

S. 938 / Public Law 106-510
Hawaii Volcanoes National Park Adjustment Act of 2000

S. 964 / Public Law 106-511
To provide for equitable compensation for the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, and for other purposes

S. 1474 / Public Law 106-512
Palmetto Bend Conveyance Act

S. 1482 / Public Law 106-513
National Marine Sanctuaries Amendments Act of 2000

S. 1752 / Public Law 106-514
Coastal Barrier Resources Reauthorization Act of 2000

S. 1865 / Public Law 106-515
America's Law Enforcement and Mental Health Project

S. 2345 / Public Law 106-516
Harriet Tubman Special Resource Study Act

S. 2413 / Public Law 106-517
Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Act of 2000

S. 2915 / Public Law 106-518
Federal Courts Improvement Act of 2000

Approved November 15

H.R. 4986 / Public Law 106-519
FSC Repeal and Extraterritorial Income Exclusion Act of 2000

H.J. Res. 125 / Public Law 106-520
Making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 2001, and for other purposes