

Remarks During a Visit to the East Capitol Center for Change and an Exchange With Reporters

February 26, 2002

[The President's remarks are joined in progress.]

The President. —with healers, people of great and deep faith, who have come from some of the toughest circumstances known, to be leaders in their communities; people—one-time crack addicts, a heroin user, both of whom now are a good mom and dad; people who are helping others to learn that there's a better way.

And I just want to thank you all for sharing with me your experiences and your thoughts. You know, my dream for the country is that the welfare system work side by side with the faith-based programs, which can do a heck of a good job about changing people's hearts and their souls and, therefore, their minds and, therefore, their behavior. And you're living proof of what I'm talking about.

So I want to thank you for sharing your testimony with us. It only strengthens my resolve to make a good law that will propel the healers of America forward. And it only strengthens my knowledge about where the true strength of the country is, and it's in the hearts and souls of our citizens.

Thank you for your time, Curtis. Thank you for your leadership. I appreciate you inviting us to your program. I look forward to sharing some thoughts about some legislation.

Welfare Reform

Q. Are there enough jobs—

The President. I'm going to make sure the economy grows. And yes, there are.

Q. You stiffened the requirements. Do you think there's enough jobs in this economy?

The President. Yes, I do.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:47 p.m. in the gymnasium at St. Luke's Catholic Church. In his remarks, he referred to Curtis Watkins, executive director, East Capitol Center for Change. The press release issued by the Office of the Press Secretary did not include the complete opening remarks of the President. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language tran-

script of these remarks. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on the Welfare Reform Agenda

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Thank you very much for that warm welcome, and thank you for your kind introduction, Tommy. Tommy, as Bob Woodson noted, was on the leading edge of welfare reform in the State of Wisconsin, and the people of Wisconsin were better off for it. And fortunately, he's agreed to come to Washington, DC, to serve an incredibly important position as the Secretary of Health and Human Services. And the American people are going to be better off for his leadership, as well.

I appreciate Bob Woodson's spirit. I like to call Bob a social entrepreneur. And there's a lot of social entrepreneurs here in this room, and I want to thank you for caring about your communities. I had the privilege and honor of meeting with some neighborhood healers here a little earlier, soldiers in the armies of compassion, people whose lives were one time dark and hopeless, who now see a bright and clear future because of faith and are willing to share that future with others.

It was a powerful meeting for me. I sometimes get encapsulated in a bubble. It is important for me to, as often as I can, to hear the true stories of America. It reminds me of the strength of our country, and the strength of the country is in the hearts and souls of compassionate citizens. So thank you all very much for sharing your stories with me today.

I see that we've got some Members of the United States Congress here. I see a Senator, a couple of House Members. I want to thank you all for coming. I appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedules to come and to hear what I hope happens when it comes to the welfare bill, its reauthorization. I'm really honored you took time.

And I also want to thank a couple of my Governor buddies. I see the Governors of Wisconsin, Colorado, and Tennessee are here. You all are awfully kind to come. Thank