

PRESIDENT WILLIAM JEFFERSON CLINTON
OPENING STATEMENT
PRESS CONFERENCE
APRIL 18, 1995

Good evening. I want to begin by saying that Hillary and I send our deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of the eight people killed in the Air Force aircraft in Alabama last night.

Before its Easter Recess, Congress produced a blizzard of ideas and proposals. Some are good; some need work, and some should be defeated. When Congress returns, they must get to work passing bills that will build a stronger America and that I can sign into law.

My job as President is to lead the quiet, reasoned voices in both parties, in both houses, to decide what is really best for our country. As I have said: I was not elected President to produce a pile of vetoes. This Congress was not elected to produce a stack of political issues for the next election. We were all elected to move America forward. That's what I have spent the last two years doing. If Congress is willing, we can get even more accomplished.

We have much in common. I was elected to slash the federal deficit, to shrink the size of the federal government, to end welfare as we know it and to strengthen the middle class. Two years later, we have cut the deficit by \$600 billion; reduced the federal bureaucracy by 100,000 positions -- on the way to its

smallest size since John Kennedy was President. Except for interest on the debt run up between 1981 and 1992, our budget would be in balance today. My administration is the only one in 30 years to run an operating surplus. The economy is up, with more than six million new jobs. There is more security around the world and we have a new crime law that is working to make our streets safer at home.

But too many Americans haven't felt enough benefit from the economic recovery. Too many feel uncertain about the future and about the social and moral problems of our society.

We have much more work to do. There are many areas where Congress and I agree. We both want tax cuts. Less government regulation. The line item veto. In recent months, we have made progress on all of these.

But, as we move forward, we must not betray our legacy of compassion, decency and common sense. Some of the House proposals go too far. They will hurt, not help, working families. If they cross that line, I will lay down the law.

[I want to cut regulations. But I will not allow unsafe planes to fly or contaminated meat to be sold. I will use my power to protect clean air, clean water, and uphold toxic waste rules. And I will defend our national heritage of seashores and wetlands.

There are too many lawsuits in this country. But legal reform must not put justice out of reach for Americans, with a "loser pays" rule. When it comes to the conduct of our foreign policy, I refuse to approve the so-called peacekeeping legislation passed by the House.]

This is not a time for ideological purity; that is for partisan extremists. We need practical solutions based on what works, so we can go forward as a nation. As I said over the weekend, we must find those solutions right now [this year?] on three areas that are key concerns of the American people. Here is my "must list": First, we must continue to fight crime by building on last year's crime bill, not tearing it down. If Congress sends me a bill that weakens our 100,000-new-police effort or repeals the assault weapons ban, I will veto it. Second, we must have spending cuts that reduce the budget deficit and tax cuts that are targeted at giving people the training they need and at reducing our nation's education deficit. And, third, we must have real welfare reform.

Welfare reform is a prime example of where Republicans and Democrats should be able to agree. We all know we need time limits for welfare recipients, strict work requirements, tough child support enforcement and more flexibility for the states. Around the country, that is what leaders in both parties are doing. So far, 25 states -- half the country -- are reforming

welfare in their states because my administration cut through federal red-tape to let them. Tonight, I am announcing that we have approved welfare waivers for Missouri -- where there's a Democratic governor -- and Montana -- where the governor is a Republican.

They are getting this right around the country. Here in Washington, we must not lose sight of those common sense answers. The fundamental goal of real welfare reform must be to move people from welfare to work. But the House Republican bill's only goal is to cut costs by cutting people off. The only way we are going to cut costs over the long haul is to make sure that people have the education, training and skills they need to get and keep jobs when they leave welfare.

We cannot cut costs if we punish children for their parent's mistakes. We must help them build better lives than they were born into. The House bill cuts off aid to children just because their mothers are young or unmarried. That is wrong. The American people know it. Governors in both parties know it. And religious leaders who take a big hand in these concerns -- in shelters, in after-school programs, in ministering to people in need -- know it very well.

Those religious leaders understand this issue better than anyone. They know this is not a partisan issue. This is about what kind

of people we are and what kind of a country we are going to leave our children. That is why tonight, I am inviting religious leaders from across faiths to come to Washington to meet with me and members of Congress from both parties to continue our discussions about the steps we must take next to reform welfare. I want us to roll up our sleeves, get together and reform welfare the right way.

I am looking forward to Congress coming back. We have a great moment of opportunity. It is time to put aside the overwrought rhetoric and to get on with the job at hand.

[first question]

[Welfare insert]

Welfare reform is a prime example of where Republicans and Democrats should be able to agree. We all know we need time limits for welfare recipients, strict work requirements, tough child support enforcement and more flexibility for the states to experiment with new ideas.

That's what we're helping leaders in both parties, around the country, to do. We have already freed 25 states -- half the country -- from federal rules and regulations so they can reform welfare on their own. Tonight, we are cutting red tape for two more -- Missouri, where there's a Democratic governor, and Montana, where the governor is a Republican. Both states want to demand that people on welfare go to work within two years, as I called for in my welfare plan last year.

Out there in the country, most people are in agreement on this. They have been waiting for us to fix this broken system for a long while. It's time for everyone in Washington to roll up their sleeves, stop playing political games, and get this done.

I know that some people in Washington want to fold welfare reform into the budget process. That way, they can bury it in a pile of other issues and block any real bipartisan work. Welfare reform is too important for that kind of Washington game. It should be

open, it should be bipartisan, and they should get on with it right away. I want Congress to pass a bipartisan welfare reform bill and send it to my desk by July Fourth. Let's celebrate Independence Day by giving people on welfare a real chance to earn their independence.

We know that this does not have to be a partisan issue. In 1994, I introduced the most sweeping welfare reform plan ever put forward by any administration. In 1994, Senator Dole, Senator Brown, Senator Packwood, and Senator Gramm co-sponsored a pretty good bill. In 1994, Congressman Gingrich and 162 of 175 House Republicans sponsored a bill that was a lot like mine. All three of these bills were based on the same idea: The fundamental goal of welfare reform must be to move people from welfare to work.

But the bill passed by the House Republicans is weak on work and tough on children. It saves money in the short run at the expense of our long-term interest: Promoting responsible parents working for a living instead of staying on welfare. The only way we are going to save money over the long haul is to make sure that people have the education, training, and skills they need to get and keep jobs when they leave welfare.

And it is wrong to cut off children just because their mothers are young or unmarried. A child is a child, a baby is a baby. Whether they're white, black, or brown; whether they're born in

or out of wedlock, if anybody, anywhere deserves a chance, it's a baby. We simply shouldn't punish children for their parents' mistakes. Let's give all children the chance they deserve to grow up with a good education and the opportunity to build a good life.

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DRAFT 4/17/95 7:40PM.

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Good evening. For the last two years we've been working to reform government so we could create opportunity, shrink bureaucracy, enhance our security, and empower people through education to make the most of their own lives.

And the economy is up. The deficit is down. We have dramatically cut government. There is more security around the world, and the Crime Bill is working to make our children safer at home.

But it is not enough. The middle-class is splitting apart -- and the fault line is education. Many Americans haven't felt any benefit from the economic recovery. Most feel uncertain about their future. They are justifiably concerned about the social and moral problems of our society.

Before their Easter Recess, the Republican House passed a series of bold initiatives. Now, it is my job as President to lead the quiet, reasoned voices in both parties, in both houses, to sift through the rhetoric and decide what is really best for America. We must keep the spirit and momentum for change alive. But we must not betray our legacy of compassion, decency, and common sense.

This is a new era. The old labels: liberal and conservative, spender and cutter, even Democratic and Republican, are not what matter most. Ideological purity is for partisan extremists. What matters most is finding practical solutions based on what we know works, so we can go forward together as a nation.

We stand at a crossroads. In one direction lies confrontation and gridlock. In the other lies achievement and progress. I appeal to Republicans and Democrats alike to get together and keep the momentum for change going. We share much common ground. The real test is whether we have the wisdom and courage to walk on it.

In 1992, I was elected to end welfare as we know it, to slash the federal deficit, and to shrink the size of the federal bureaucracy. I introduced the most comprehensive welfare reform in our history, cut the deficit by \$600 billion, and have cut 100,000 bureaucratic positions, on the way to making government the smallest since President Kennedy. I will work with Congress to do more.

We both want tax cuts. Less government regulation. The line item veto. The toughest possible fight on crime. These are all part of the New Covenant of opportunity and responsibility I ran for President on and of the Republican Contract. We have made progress on all of them. But we have much more to do.

should be tough, and tough on kids when they should be fair.

The fundamental goal of real welfare reform must be to move people from welfare to work. The Republican bill's only goal is to cut costs by cutting people off. We must cut costs, but we also must be sure that people have the education, training, and skills to get jobs when they leave welfare. If we don't, it will cost us more money down the road than it will save.

And we shouldn't punish children for their parent's mistakes. The House bill cuts off aid to children who are on welfare just because their mothers are young or unmarried. That is plain wrong. I know it's wrong, governors in both parties know it's wrong, and the American people know it's wrong. And the people we all turn to for spiritual direction, religious leaders of all faiths, know that it is wrong. This is a nation that was founded by people of faith, to give their children a better future. Walking away from that heritage goes against everything we have always believed.

In that spirit, I would like to invite religious leaders from across faiths and around the nation, and elected officials from both parties to join us here at the White House for an honest and thoughtful discussion on welfare reform. I believe that if we all roll up our sleeves and join hands, we can get this right.

It is time to prove to the American people that we can reform welfare without letting this issue divide us. It is time to end welfare as we know it, and put people to work, without punishing children.

Good evening. [Condolence statement about Assistant Sec. of Defense et al.]. Before Congress left for its Easter Recess, it spent the first hundred days producing a blizzard of ideas and proposals. Some of them are good; some need more work, and some of them should be defeated. When Congress returns, the next hundred days must be about passing bills in both houses that will build a stronger America and that I can sign into law.

My job as President is to lead the quiet, reasoned voices in both parties, in both houses, to wade through the rhetoric and decide what is really best for our country. As I have said: I was not elected President to produce a pile of vetoes. And this Congress was not elected to produce a stack of political issues for the next election. We were all elected to change the direction of America. That's what I have spent the last two years doing. Now, if Congress is willing, we can get even more accomplished together.

I appeal to Republicans and Democrats alike to get together and keep the momentum for change going. We share much in common.

I was elected to slash the federal deficit, to shrink the size of the federal government, to end welfare as we know it and to strengthen the middle class. Two years later, we have cut the deficit by \$600 billion. We have reduced the federal bureaucracy by 100,000 positions -- on the way to cutting it by 272,000 positions to its smallest size since John Kennedy was President. The economy is up, with more than six million new jobs. There is more security around the world and we have a new crime law that is working to make our streets safer at home.

The new Congress was elected to carry forward on many of ~~the fronts that I have been advocating~~ for years. We both want tax cuts. Less government regulation. The line item veto. All this and more

*John I have advocated
for a long time.
I am ready to move forward together.*



*Crime
reform*

When Congress gets back from their recess in a few weeks, they will begin to sift through all the bills passed by the House and, in some cases, by the Senate as well. The first 100 days of this Congress produced a blizzard of ideas and proposals. Some of them are good, some of them need work, and some of them should be defeated. The next 100 days must be about passing bills in both Houses that will help to build a stronger America, and that I can sign into law.

I have said this before, but I do not want to leave any room for doubt. Some House proposals simply go too far, will not help the middle-class, and are not good for this country. If Congress sends those proposals to my desk, I will veto them.

I will not let unsafe planes fly or contaminated meat be sold. I will not put justice out of the reach of ordinary Americans with a "loser pays" rule. I will use my power to protect clean air, clean water, and toxic waste rules. I will defend our national heritage of seashores, wetlands, and open spaces. I refuse to approve the so-called peacekeeping legislation passed by the House. *at*

Getting tough on criminals is a top priority for me, ~~but~~ ^{at} I will not let anyone tear down last year's Crime Bill. If Congress sends me a bill that weakens our commitment to put 100,000 new police on the street, I will veto it. If Congress sends me a bill that repeals the ban on assault weapons -- in clear defiance of the will of the American people -- I will veto it.

That's where I draw the line. But I know that I was not elected President of the United States to produce a stack of vetoes. I was elected to change the direction of America. That's what I have spent the last two years doing. And if Congress is willing, that is what we can do together.

When they get back, I want to make sure that a few very important issues are not lost in the shuffle. As I said on Saturday, there are three areas that I assign the highest priority. My "must" list: Real welfare reform, tax and spending cuts that reduce the budget deficit and the education deficit, and more steps to fight crime.

Let's talk about welfare reform for a minute. Republicans and Democrats agree that we need time limits for welfare recipients, strict work requirements, the toughest possible child support enforcement, and more flexibility for states. I am happy to announce today that my Administration has approved waivers for Missouri -- where there's a Democratic Governor -- and Montana -- where the Governor's a Republican. 28 states are working to end welfare as we know it because we have cleared the way for them to do so. *And I hope we can agree on something else -- that any new legislation will be passed with bipartisan support.*

We have a lot of agreement -- but we still have our differences. All of the Republican proposals so far are weak on work when they

The American people have reached a consensus

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Welfare reform is a prime example of where Republicans and Democrats should be able to agree. We all know we need time limits for welfare recipients, strict work requirements, tough child support enforcement and more flexibility for the states. Around the country, that is what leaders in both parties are doing. So far, 25 states -- half the country -- are reforming

welfare in their states because my administration cut through federal red-tape to let them. Tonight, I am announcing that we have approved welfare waivers for Missouri -- where there's a Democratic governor -- and Montana -- where the governor is a Republican.

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We cannot cut costs if we punish children for their parent's mistakes. We must help them build better lives than they were born into. The House bill cuts off aid to children just because their mothers are young or unmarried. That is wrong. The American people know it. Governors in both parties know it. And religious leaders who take a big hand in these concerns -- in shelters, in after-school programs, in ministering to people in need -- know it very well.

Those religious leaders understand this issue better than anyone. They know this is not a partisan issue. This is about what kind

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Statewide two-year time limits

Out there in the country, people have wanted us to fix this broken system for a long while. It's time for everyone in Washington to roll up their sleeves, stop playing political games, and get this done.

Tonight, I am calling on Congress to send me a bipartisan welfare reform bill that I can sign in the next 100 days. We must not let welfare reform get bogged down in the budget process. It's too important for that. Let's do it right, but give it the priority it deserves. *by July 4th. Let's celebrate Independence Day by making every people free*

I know some people who believe we just tacked into budget process, when it can be passed by itself. *which open by then get after round Ind. Day.*

This does not have to be a partisan issue. In 1994, I introduced the most sweeping welfare reform plan ever put forward by any administration. In 1994, Senator Dole, Senator Brown, Senator Packwood, and Senator Gramm co-sponsored a pretty good bill. My bill and that bill both recognized that the fundamental goal of welfare reform is to move people from welfare to work.

But the ^{overriding} ~~only~~ goal of the House Republicans' ^{Asks} welfare bill is to ^{promoting resp} cut costs by cutting people off. ^{people making} Their ^{for living, instead} bill is ^{It puts savings to} weak on work and ^{in short run} tough on children. ^{at expense of long run} The only way we are going to save money over ^{dep. citizens are long run} the long haul is to make sure that people have the education, training, and skills they need to get and keep jobs when they leave welfare.

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And it is wrong to punish children for their parents' mistakes. We ought to be helping those children build better lives than they were born into. We should demand that teen mothers live at home, stay in school, and turn their lives around. We shouldn't just cut them off because they're young and unmarried.

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