

Remarks

to the White House Traveling Press.

Chappaqua, New York

1/6/00

PHOTOCOPY  
PRESERVATION

THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary  
(Chappaqua, New York)

For Immediate Release

January 6, 2000

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
AND THE FIRST LADY  
TO THE WHITE HOUSE TRAVELING PRESS

Outside Chappaqua Residence  
Chappaqua, New York

11:28 A.M. EST

MRS. CLINTON: Good morning!

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning, everybody.

Q So are you now officially New Yorkers?

THE PRESIDENT: We're here. Let me say to start that we're delighted to be here. We like this house very much and we, at least, have put up all the boxes we brought up here so far. This is the first home we have had since January of 1983, 17 years ago, when we moved back into the Governor's Mansion in Little Rock. So it's exciting. We're seeing some things we haven't seen since we moved to the White House and some things we haven't seen in 17 years.

We've got a table in there that we bought shortly after we got married, in 1975, that we haven't used in a long time. So we've had a lot of fun and I've enjoyed it very much.

MRS. CLINTON: We're glad to have you here this morning because this is a lot of excitement and hard work for us, but we're so pleased that we are finally here and moved in and looking forward to many, many happy days here in the days and months ahead.

THE PRESIDENT: We also want to thank our neighbors who have been long-suffering with all the attention --

MRS. CLINTON: Right.

THE PRESIDENT: -- that the house has received.

MRS. CLINTON: And all of the officials here in Chappaqua and New Castle and Westchester County, who have been so helpful and cooperative with the Secret Service and the other people who are a part of the President's official duties.

Q Mr. President, will you be shifting your voter registration to New York, so you can vote for a certain Senate candidate?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, I've got a particular interest in the election up here next year, so I want to make sure my vote counts. I expect to vote in the election in New York.

Q What did you do last night? What did you do for dinner? Did you have friends in?

MRS. CLINTON: We had friends -- we've had a lot of friends helping us and one of my good friends here who lives nearby came over with her son and brought dinner for us, and then her son helped Bill move some things that needed to be moved. And we had other friends come over who have been helping us. But mostly what we did was unpack boxes, put things up, try to make decisions about where to hang paintings or move furniture and make a long list of all the things we have to do that aren't done yet that are going to have to be tended to.

Q Are you going back to Washington today to do that?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, we're going back today and we'll be packing up more things and moving more things in the next couple of weeks. So it will be a process. We're not going to be totally moved in and everything in place for a while. But it's a lot of fun for us to be able to do this again, for the first time in such a long time -- because we, of course, worked very hard in the White House and spent an enormous amount of time and effort trying to keep the White House in good shape and do some additional work that needed to be done there, but it's different when you're doing it in your own home.

Q Have you thought any more about a schedule for how often you will both be here?

Q Mrs. Clinton and also Mr. President, the Mayor, as you may have heard a couple of days ago, said that both of you, the Clintons, he said, have been egregious violators of soft money, both in how it's collected and how it's distributed. Your reaction, both of you?

MRS. CLINTON: We're going to talk about our house this morning, which we are very happy about being in, and being New Yorkers. And we'll leave that to another time.

Q Mr. President, are you going to -- we haven't heard from you. (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: No. (Laughter.) No, I keep reading all these things. I've not given very much thought to this. I'm going to work very hard on finishing my library and center. And I'm going to devote all my attention to being President. I've got a big agenda this year. We're going back now, and I have to go back to Shepherdstown this afternoon. But I've had no

discussions with anybody about that kind of move. And I was amazed to see that in the paper. No one's even suggested that.

Q Mr. President, last night the Vice President in the debates said that he'll ask military commanders about their feelings on gays serving in the military before appointing people to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Is this litmus test the way it should work?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think the real problem is -- let me go back to what happened, because, as you know, my view was -- and I will restate my view. The Uniform Code of Military Justice prohibits homosexual contacts. So my view was, if someone was willing to take the pledge to observe the Uniform Code of Military Justice, they shouldn't have to lie about being gay and being in the military. Then, let me remind you what happened. The Congress voted, by a veto-proof majority, against that position. So that's how we got to "don't ask, don't tell."

My focus has been on trying to make the policy work the way the military commanders said it would work back in 1993, which it has not been doing. No one disputes that. To Secretary Cohen's credit, back in August we announced some new guidelines, which have now been implemented, for training and for implementation, which I think will significantly improve the present situation over the next few months.

Now, the Vice President and Senator Bradley say they want to go back to the position that I advocated in '92 and '93. In order to do that, the Congress will have to change the law, I believe. I don't think that the military and the President have the authority to do it. Now, you could go back and look at the constitutional arguments and do some research, but I think a lot of this debate, I think a lot of people have actually forgotten that Congress put into the law the present policy.

And so what I'm going to do is spend the next year trying to make sure that we do what was intended and what I announced would be done, after extensive consultation with our commanders back in 1993. I believe that the next President, if he wants to change the policy, will have to get the Congress to change the law.

Q A quick follow-up on that. Wouldn't litmus tests like that have disqualified somebody like Colin Powell from serving as Joint Chiefs?

THE PRESIDENT: I think that I'm going to leave the appointment process to the next President. I'm not going to get involved in this election right now. I think that there have been, we know, going back all the way to the first world war, we have clear evidence that there have been gays in the military who have served with great distinction. I think it's quite interesting that most of the Vietnam veterans, combat veterans, in the United States Congress, including Senator Robb and Senator Kerry, just to mention two, have felt that -- both Senator Kerry and Kerrey, and Senator Robb -- have felt that the policy ought to be changed and supported my original position.

So I would like to find some way for people to be honest, to obey the law, and to serve with distinction in the military. So I think that is where our focus ought to be, and the next President will have to figure out how to do that. But I think there will have to be a change in the law.

Q Mr. President, the polls show that your wife is trailing right now. Do you have any advice for her?

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you so much.

Q What was the first night like?

THE PRESIDENT: We had a wonderful time. We don't have a television yet.  
(Laughter.)

Q So how did you watch the debate?

THE PRESIDENT: We didn't. They have a tape for me. I'm going to watch it tonight when I get home. So I had a tape. So we brought up our CD player, and I gave Hillary one of those South African radios that you crank -- have you seen them?

MRS. CLINTON: Solar-powered radios.

THE PRESIDENT: We bought them -- and I got it in Washington at that Discovery store. You crank it up and it's run either by solar power or by hand crank, but you never need a plug or anything. So we listened to the radio last night. It was quite wonderful.

Q -- what it was like being in the house for the first time in 17 years, your own house?

MRS. CLINTON: We loved it. Well, it was a little overwhelming because there is so much to be done, and we stayed up very late, working on getting things organized and put away. And then we're going to be back together next week and we'll keep the process going until we finally get things moved in.

But it was wonderful having a chance to be here. My mother is with us. We just had a great time.

Q How late were you up?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, gosh.

THE PRESIDENT: Past 1:00 a.m.

MRS. CLINTON: Past 1:00 a.m. (Laughter.) Thanks.