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THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

March 9, 1992

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
TO THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES

The Washington Hilton Hotel  
Washington, D.C.

11:36 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Glenda, thank you so much for that kind introduction. And to all of you -- and may I salute the members of Congress that have been with us here -- let me say good morning to them, and please do us right up on Capitol Hill. (Laughter.) My greetings to all the special guests here at the head table; to Don Borut and Wallace Stickney, who is with us.

Let me just say that I'm very pleased to join you today. I enjoyed -- Glenda referred to it -- I enjoyed speaking to you over the television hookup in December -- it's much better face to face. And I hear that you have had a very energetic, very well attended series of meetings. And I salute your leadership, present leadership; and then, of course, an old former colleague of mine -- or, put it this way -- a still young, but former colleague of mine in the House of Representatives who will be your leader -- what, starting next November, is it -- Don Frazier.

In January, as Glenda said, I had a follow-up meeting with ten of your members. And like your organization as a whole, they represented a broad cross section of urban America's leadership -- Republicans and Democrats, liberals, conservatives, officials from large and small and mid-sized cities.

And, of course, we're all concerned -- all of us here -- about the big issues -- jobs and family, and world peace. And even so, I was struck at this meeting by the unanimity of the message that your members wanted to deliver. It can't be repeated often enough in Washington, or any state capitol or any city hall. Your message was simply this: the enormous problems facing cities today -- from infant mortality to high dropout rates to runaway crime -- are partly, at least, symptoms of one larger problem, the deterioration of the American family.

Now, I understand the breadth of the issues that you deal with daily, poverty to potholes to property taxes. And in addressing myself to this one subject, I don't want you to think that we are less concerned about these enormous problems you face every day.

But this morning, I would like to discuss that same serious issue that you all raised with me: the family. The restoration of the American family is at the heart of much of what we have done these last three years.

Leaving aside for a moment the enormous costs -- the wasted human resources or the billions spent to repair the damage of broken homes -- family breakdown ultimately endangers our position in a world increasingly driven by economic competition.

MORE

Certainly, the integrity of the family is critical on its own merit. As Barbara Bush, my favorite philosopher, says, "What goes on at the White House is not nearly as important as what goes on in your house." And there's a lot of truth in that. But particularly at a time when our efforts must focus on economic growth, the family's disintegration endangers -- for all of us -- our ability to create and to preserve jobs, and to create an economy open to participation by all our citizens.

So we must start with a clear-eyed look at what is really happening to the family in American communities today -- not just in poor urban neighborhoods, but all across America. And then we've got to look inside ourselves, to establish the principles that will shape our approach. And then we must act.

The urgency is clear. We all know the statistics -- perhaps you know them better than most Americans -- the dreary drumbeat that tells of family breakdown. Today, one out of every four American children is born out of wedlock; in some areas the illegitimacy rate tops 80 percent. A quarter of our children grow up in households headed by a single parent. More than two million are called latch-key kids -- who come home from school each afternoon to an empty house. And a large number of our children grow up without the love of parents at all, with nobody knowing their name.

We know from experience the consequences of family decline. Neglected children are more susceptible to the lure of crime and drugs, they're more likely to have poor health, drop out of school early, more likely to lead a life without hope.

Each of you is in a position to know the human costs that these statistics can only dimly sketch. You know, as I do, that for every blip on a chart or dot on a graph, there is a human story to tell, and too often the story is a tragedy.

About 10 days ago, I was in Bear County, Texas, in San Antonio, meeting with Latin American leaders to intensify our war on drugs. And while there, I saw a front-page story in the San Antonio Light. A cabdriver had been murdered last September -- another act of random, selfless violence -- and his murderer had just been found guilty.

But what was truly horrifying -- what would horrify any American -- was this: the murder of a 12-year-old boy. And as the deputies took the boy from the courtroom, according to the newspaper story, they had trouble fitting him with shackles and handcuffs, so slender were his wrists. This youngster was four feet tall, not yet a teenager, but now a convicted murderer.

The drumbeat continues: two teenagers shot dead in a New York public school -- an LSD ring busted up in an affluent Northern Virginia suburb -- or the harrowing stories of runaway kids and the horrors that befall them.

I know that almost all of you could tell stories equally distressing -- stories from your neighborhoods in your cities where the unthinkable has become the commonplace. I am sure that many of you here took office with high confidence in the power to solve these problems, only to discover -- sooner rather than later, I suspect -- that they were far more stubborn than we could imagine. Let's not forget that the trials our citizens face each and every day were generations in the making. We can't expect change overnight. But make no mistake: Change will come because change simply must come.

Let's face it. We can only change things if we work in common purpose. We must call a cease-fire in the war of words that too often consumes us. Casting blame brings no solutions. Nor will questioning each other's motives. We have got to focus every ounce

of our energy to turn back this assault upon the American family and act as one nation to defend and strengthen it. As public servants, we must never forget that the best Department of HHS -- of Health and Human Services -- is, indeed, the family. In restoring the family, we restore to coming generations the values, the sense of right and wrong, the will and confidence to succeed that only a family can provide a child. And in doing this, we will reinvigorate our cities and our communities as well.

We needn't look far for principles to guide us. They are old home truths: Rely on what works -- discard what doesn't. Never be afraid to innovate. Remember that government closest to the people responds best to the needs of the people. And let's not forget this as a guiding principle: If people are to be responsible, they must be given responsibility.

The government's first duty is like that of the physician: Do no harm. But the fact is, with the best of intentions, many past government policies have worked against the institution of the family, undermined young people's desire to marry and stay married, to provide for their children, to plan for their future.

As a practical matter, doing no harm means in part that we ensure parents retain the authority to make the big decisions for their families. This doesn't absolve parents of responsibility; it's just the opposite.

Even if we're able to reform our education system -- and I am determined that the federal government assist all of you in every way in revolutionizing the education system -- but even if we are, parents must still read to their children. The point is that government harms the family when it restricts its autonomy or usurps the authority of responsible parents.

Let me give you another example. Those of us in government can never plausibly claim to fight for families if we insist that government, not parents, must choose who cares for their children. So two years ago our administration waged a fight in Congress over this very issue, and we won. We kept choice of child care out of the hands of government and put it where it belongs -- in the hands of parents.

And now we're engaged in a similar fight, over whether parents should have the right to choose their children's schools. We know the benefits of competition; it is the linchpin of American prosperity. And competition among schools will be the linchpin of education excellence, too. From Minnesota to Milwaukee to East Harlem -- school choice works. (Applause.)

But you see, it's important for other reasons: It restores authority and responsibility to parents. And just as it makes our schools accountable, it also makes parents accountable for the decisions they make. Not only in child care and school choice, but in other areas as well; a key to healing the American family will be restoring parental authority and accountability.

Another example: The initiative that we call HOPE -- H-O-P-E. It took more than a year to get that program through Congress and another year to get even partial funding for it. But HOPE will be crucial to our success by offering low-income families a greater opportunity to own their own homes. HOPE is based on a simple principle: To survive, people need the intangible values of dignity and self-respect. Government can't provide those. But homeownership can. An education can. A job can. And being part of a family can.

The federal government has a positive role in preserving the family, and we welcome that role. It's guided the decisions that we make every single day. Since 1989, for example, we have more than doubled the funding for the program that I bet everybody in this room supports, Head Start. A program that brings children and parents into the classroom, strengthens family ties and reinforces parental responsibility. For the first time in the program's history, we can support now Head Start for all eligible four-year-old children whose parents choose to have them participate.

There are many other examples. We've increased the earned income tax credit for low-income families. And since '89, we've increased the funding for WIC, the supplementary food program for Women, Infants and Children, by 47 percent to \$2.8 billion next year. We've increased other nutrition programs by similar percentages. And this year federal support for childhood immunization grants will top \$340 million, an increase of 18 percent over last year's level.

So all told, funding for children's programs -- from nutrition, education to foster care and child immunization -- has increased 66 percent since we took office.

But, look, we will never measure -- and I think you all would be the first to agree with this -- we would never measure our compassion simply in dollars spent. We will measure it by results. The test will be the health and happiness of our children and, most important of all, the sense of well-being and self-reliance instilled by our families. Our administration has targeted funding to programs that efficiently fulfill government's role in supporting families and keeping them together, programs that work for the family.

Yet, at the same time, we must face another fact. Government can sometimes be a burden as well as a boon. Over the past 40 years, the child tax exemption has lagged far behind the soaring costs of child-rearing. And I have asked Congress to increase the exemption by \$500 per child. For a family with four children that's an increase of \$2000. And it's a crucial first step toward redressing the imbalance, and it's what we can afford to do right now.

And now I come to perhaps the most crucial matter of all. One that concerns you all. We must reform our nation's welfare system. Americans are the most generous people on Earth, but they want to see - and they are entitled to see -- some relationship between welfare and work. Welfare must never be what Franklin Delano Roosevelt warned it might become, "a subtle destroyer of the spirit." It is not meant to be a way of life or a family legacy passed from one generation to the next. Welfare can eat away at the ties that bind a family together.

And state and local governments are undertaking the brave work of reform -- Learnfare in Wisconsin; REACH, Realizing Economic Achievement in New Jersey; Washington State's FIP -- Family Independence Program. These are all demonstration projects that we support. And my administration is committed to reform and we are acting now on waivers, to loosen up on waivers, to waive unnecessary red tape that impedes reform.

There's no hidden agenda here. This administration, the mayors, the state leaders who press for drastic reform of welfare aren't modern-day Scrooges chiseling one more dime out of some poor family. Democrat or Republican, California, New Jersey, federal or state -- in our heart of hearts, we really believe reforming, reforming the welfare system is the best way to serve people. Break this sorry cycle of despair. Give people real hope. And we're going to keep on trying to do just that because every single American deserves to believe in the American Dream.

Today with family as the center I've highlighted the role of government -- both positive and negative -- because we're men and women of government. But let's never forget the work of private Americans dedicating themselves to the voluntary service of others, who create an environment where families can flourish. Each is a Point of Light, offering service with no thought of reward, though the reward will be reaped by every single American.

And let me be very clear: When I talk about Points of Light, they are not a substitute for the good that government can do, but it's more this -- we will simply not solve our most pressing problems without the dedication of those Points of Light, of those volunteers. And I urge all of you, when you return to your cities, to do all in your power to encourage these caring men and women, to make yours a community of light.

In my State of the Union address, I announced that we would soon institute a Commission on America's Urban Families. Your executive board of directors or whatever group it was -- I've never been sure with whom I was dealing -- but they were all big shots, believe me -- (laughter) -- came together. And their work will be one result of my meetings in January with some of your leaders.

And I have asked Governor Ashcroft of Missouri, a very caring man, Annette Strauss, the former Mayor of Dallas, a very able woman who also cares deeply, to lead the Commission and fulfill its mandate: To identify those government programs, at all levels, that weaken or strengthen urban families; to analyze ways to improve private efforts to strengthen urban families; and to recommend new policies to help families in our cities.

I am convinced that we can correct our mistakes, that we can learn from our failures and build on our successes. I do not exaggerate when I say that the future of America depends on our efforts. The family is the irreducible unit of comfort and love, and from families radiate neighborhoods, from neighborhoods come towns and cities, and their health determines the health of our country, for better or for worse. And, like you, I am committed to making our health whole, and to ensuring that our cities, as Theodore Parker said, "remain the fireplaces of America, radiating warmth and light against the darkness."

Thank you all very much for giving me this opportunity to visit with you today. And my God bless our great country. Thank you so much.

END

11:56 A.M. EST

NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES  
MARCH 9, 1992  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
11:40 A.M.

THANK YOU, GLENDA (HOOD) FOR THAT KIND  
INTRODUCTION. MY GREETINGS ALSO TO MAYOR SIDNEY  
BARTHELEMY, DON BORUT, AND WALLACE STICKNEY.

I'M PLEASED TO JOIN YOU TODAY. I ENJOYED SPEAKING  
TO YOU OVER TELEVISION HOOK-UP IN DECEMBER -- IT'S  
BETTER FACE TO FACE.

IN JANUARY, I HAD A FOLLOW-UP MEETING WITH TEN OF  
YOUR MEMBERS. LIKE YOUR ORGANIZATION AS A WHOLE, THEY  
REPRESENTED A CROSS-SECTION OF URBAN AMERICA'S  
LEADERSHIP -- REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS, LIBERALS AND  
CONSERVATIVES, OFFICIALS FROM LARGE AND SMALL AND MID-  
SIZED CITIES.

OF COURSE, WE'RE ALL CONCERNED ABOUT THE BIG ISSUES  
-- JOBS, FAMILY, WORLD PEACE. EVEN SO, I WAS STRUCK BY  
THE UNANIMITY OF THE MESSAGE YOUR MEMBERS WANTED TO  
DELIVER. IT CAN'T BE REPEATED OFTEN ENOUGH IN  
WASHINGTON, OR ANY STATE CAPITOL OR CITY HALL.

**YOUR MESSAGE WAS SIMPLY THIS: THE ENORMOUS PROBLEMS FACING CITIES TODAY -- FROM INFANT MORTALITY TO HIGH DROP-OUT RATES TO RUNAWAY CRIME -- ARE PARTLY SYMPTOMS OF ONE LARGER PROBLEM, THE DETERIORATION OF THE AMERICAN FAMILY.**

**I UNDERSTAND THE BREADTH OF ISSUES THAT YOU DEAL WITH DAILY, FROM POVERTY TO POTHoles TO PROPERTY TAXES. BUT THIS MORNING, I WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS THE SAME SERIOUS ISSUE THAT YOU RAISED WITH ME: THE FAMILY. THE RESTORATION OF THE AMERICAN FAMILY IS AT THE HEART OF MUCH OF WHAT WE HAVE DONE THESE LAST THREE YEARS.**

LEAVING ASIDE FOR A MOMENT THE ENORMOUS COSTS -- THE WASTED HUMAN RESOURCES OR THE BILLIONS SPENT TO REPAIR THE DAMAGE OF BROKEN HOMES -- FAMILY BREAKDOWN ULTIMATELY ENDANGERS OUR POSITION IN A WORLD INCREASINGLY DRIVEN BY ECONOMIC COMPETITION. CERTAINLY, THE INTEGRITY OF THE FAMILY IS CRITICAL ON ITS OWN MERIT. AS MY FAVORITE PHILOSOPHER SAYS, "WHAT GOES ON AT THE WHITE HOUSE IS NOT NEARLY AS IMPORTANT AS WHAT GOES ON IN YOUR HOUSE." BUT PARTICULARLY AT A TIME WHEN OUR EFFORTS MUST FOCUS ON ECONOMIC GROWTH, THE FAMILY'S DISINTEGRATION ENDANGERS -- FOR ALL OF US -- OUR ABILITY TO CREATE AND PRESERVE JOBS, AND TO CREATE AN ECONOMY OPEN TO PARTICIPATION BY ALL OUR CITIZENS.

SO WE MUST START WITH A CLEAR-EYED LOOK AT WHAT IS REALLY HAPPENING TO THE FAMILY IN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES TODAY -- NOT JUST IN POOR URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS BUT ALL ACROSS AMERICA. THEN WE MUST LOOK INSIDE OURSELVES, TO ESTABLISH THE PRINCIPLES THAT WILL SHAPE OUR APPROACH. AND THEN WE MUST ACT.

THE URGENCY IS CLEAR. WE ALL KNOW THE STATISTICS, THE DREARY DRUMBEAT THAT TELLS OF FAMILY BREAKDOWN. TODAY, ONE OUT OF EVERY FOUR AMERICAN CHILDREN IS BORN OUT OF WEDLOCK; IN SOME AREAS THE ILLEGITIMACY RATE TOPS 80 PERCENT. A QUARTER OF OUR CHILDREN GROW UP IN HOUSEHOLDS HEADED BY A SINGLE PARENT. MORE THAN TWO MILLION ARE CALLED LATCH-KEY KIDS -- WHO COME HOME FROM SCHOOL EACH AFTERNOON TO AN EMPTY HOME. AND A LARGE NUMBER OF OUR CHILDREN GROW UP WITHOUT THE LOVE OF PARENTS AT ALL.

WE KNOW FROM EXPERIENCE THE CONSEQUENCES OF FAMILY DECLINE. NEGLECTED CHILDREN ARE MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO THE LURE OF CRIME AND DRUGS, ARE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE POOR HEALTH, DROP OUT OF SCHOOL EARLY, MORE LIKELY TO LEAD A LIFE WITHOUT HOPE.

EACH OF YOU IS IN A POSITION TO KNOW THE HUMAN COSTS THAT STATISTICS CAN ONLY DIMLY SKETCH. YOU KNOW, AS I DO, THAT FOR EVERY BLIP ON A CHART OR DOT ON A GRAPH, THERE IS A HUMAN STORY TO TELL, AND TOO OFTEN THE STORY IS A TRAGEDY.

ABOUT TEN DAYS AGO, I WAS IN SAN ANTONIO, MEETING WITH LATIN AMERICAN LEADERS TO INTENSIFY OUR WAR ON DRUGS. WHILE THERE I SAW A FRONT-PAGE STORY IN THE SAN ANTONIO LIGHT. A CABDRIVER HAD BEEN MURDERED LAST SEPTEMBER -- ANOTHER ACT OF RANDOM, SENSELESS VIOLENCE -- AND HIS MURDERER HAD JUST BEEN FOUND GUILTY.

BUT WHAT WAS TRULY HORRIFYING -- WHAT WOULD HORRIFY ANY AMERICAN -- WAS THIS: THE MURDERER WAS A 12-YEAR-OLD BOY. AS THE DEPUTIES TOOK THE BOY FROM THE COURTROOM, ACCORDING TO THE NEWSPAPER STORY, THEY HAD TROUBLE FITTING HIM WITH SHACKLES AND HANDCUFFS, SO SLENDER WERE HIS WRISTS. THIS YOUNGSTER WAS FOUR-FEET TALL, NOT YET A TEENAGER, BUT NOW A CONVICTED MURDERER.

THE DRUMBEAT CONTINUES: TWO TEENAGERS SHOT DEAD IN A NEW YORK PUBLIC SCHOOL -- AN LSD RING BUSTED UP IN AN AFFLUENT NORTHERN VIRGINIA SUBURB -- OR THE HARROWING STORIES OF RUNAWAY KIDS AND THE HORRORS THAT BEFALL THEM.

I KNOW THAT ALMOST ALL OF YOU COULD TELL STORIES EQUALLY DISTRESSING -- STORIES FROM NEIGHBORHOODS IN YOUR CITIES WHERE THE UNTHINKABLE HAS BECOME THE COMMONPLACE. I AM SURE THAT MANY OF YOU HERE TOOK OFFICE WITH HIGH CONFIDENCE IN THE POWER TO SOLVE THESE PROBLEMS, ONLY TO DISCOVER -- SOONER RATHER THAN LATER, I SUSPECT -- THAT THEY WERE FAR MORE STUBBORN THAN WE COULD IMAGINE. LET'S NOT FORGET THAT THE TRIALS OUR CITIZENS FACE EACH AND EVERY DAY WERE GENERATIONS IN THE MAKING. WE CAN'T EXPECT CHANGE OVERNIGHT. BUT MAKE NO MISTAKE: CHANGE WILL COME. BECAUSE CHANGE MUST COME.

LET'S FACE IT. WE CAN ONLY CHANGE THINGS IF WE WORK IN COMMON PURPOSE. WE MUST CALL A CEASE-FIRE IN THE WAR OF WORDS THAT TOO OFTEN CONSUMES US. CASTING BLAME BRINGS NO SOLUTIONS. NOR WILL QUESTIONING EACH OTHER'S MOTIVES. WE HAVE GOT TO FOCUS EVERY OUNCE OF OUR ENERGY TO TURN BACK THIS ASSAULT UPON THE AMERICAN FAMILY AND ACT AS ONE NATION TO DEFEND AND STRENGTHEN IT. AS PUBLIC SERVANTS, WE MUST NEVER FORGET THAT THE BEST DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES IS INDEED, THE FAMILY.

IN RESTORING THE FAMILY, WE RESTORE TO COMING GENERATIONS THE VALUES, THE SENSE OF RIGHT AND WRONG, THE WILL AND CONFIDENCE TO SUCCEED THAT ONLY A FAMILY CAN PROVIDE A CHILD. AND IN DOING THIS, WE WILL REINVIGORATE OUR COMMUNITIES AND CITIES AS WELL.

WE NEEDN'T LOOK FAR FOR PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE US.  
THEY ARE THE OLD HOME TRUTHS. RELY ON WHAT WORKS --  
DISCARD WHAT DOESN'T. NEVER BE AFRAID TO INNOVATE.  
REMEMBER THAT GOVERNMENT CLOSEST TO THE PEOPLE RESPONDS  
BEST TO THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE. AND LET'S NOT FORGET  
THIS AS A GUIDING PRINCIPLE: IF PEOPLE ARE TO BE  
RESPONSIBLE, THEY MUST BE GIVEN RESPONSIBILITY.

THE GOVERNMENT'S FIRST DUTY IS LIKE THAT OF THE PHYSICIAN: DO NO HARM. BUT THE FACT IS, WITH THE BEST OF INTENTIONS, MANY PAST GOVERNMENT POLICIES HAVE WORKED AGAINST THE INSTITUTION OF THE FAMILY -- UNDERMINED YOUNG PEOPLE'S DESIRE TO MARRY AND STAY MARRIED, TO PROVIDE FOR THEIR CHILDREN, TO PLAN FOR THEIR FUTURE.

AS A PRACTICAL MATTER, "DOING NO HARM" MEANS IN PART THAT WE ENSURE PARENTS RETAIN THE AUTHORITY TO MAKE THE BIG DECISIONS FOR THEIR FAMILIES. THIS DOESN'T ABSOLVE PARENTS OF RESPONSIBILITY, JUST THE OPPOSITE. FOR EXAMPLE, EVEN IF WE ARE ABLE TO REFORM OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM, PARENTS MUST STILL READ TO THEIR CHILDREN. THE POINT IS THAT GOVERNMENT HARMS THE FAMILY WHEN IT RESTRICTS ITS AUTONOMY OR USURPS THE AUTHORITY OF RESPONSIBLE PARENTS.

LET ME GIVE YOU ANOTHER EXAMPLE: THOSE OF US IN GOVERNMENT CAN NEVER PLAUSIBLY CLAIM TO FIGHT FOR FAMILIES IF WE INSIST THAT GOVERNMENT, NOT PARENTS, MUST CHOOSE WHO CARES FOR THEIR CHILDREN. TWO YEARS AGO, MY ADMINISTRATION WAGED A FIGHT IN CONGRESS OVER THIS VERY ISSUE, AND WE WON. WE KEPT CHOICE OF CHILD CARE OUT OF THE HANDS OF GOVERNMENT AND PUT IT WHERE IT BELONGS -- IN THE HANDS OF PARENTS.

NOW WE'RE ENGAGED IN A SIMILAR FIGHT, OVER WHETHER PARENTS SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE THEIR CHILDREN'S SCHOOLS. WE KNOW THE BENEFITS OF COMPETITION; IT IS THE LINCHPIN OF AMERICAN PROSPERITY. AND COMPETITION AMONG SCHOOLS WILL BE THE LINCHPIN OF EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE, TOO. FROM MINNESOTA TO MILWAUKEE TO EAST HARLEM -- SCHOOL CHOICE WORKS.

BUT SCHOOL CHOICE IS IMPORTANT FOR OTHER REASONS:  
IT RESTORES AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY TO PARENTS.  
AND JUST AS IT MAKES OUR SCHOOLS ACCOUNTABLE, IT ALSO  
MAKES PARENTS ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE DECISIONS THEY MAKE.  
NOT ONLY IN CHILD CARE AND SCHOOL CHOICE BUT IN OTHER  
AREAS AS WELL, A KEY TO HEALING THE AMERICAN FAMILY  
WILL BE RESTORING PARENTAL AUTHORITY AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE: THE INITIATIVE WE CALL HOPE. IT  
TOOK MORE THAN A YEAR TO GET HOPE THROUGH CONGRESS, AND  
ANOTHER YEAR TO GET EVEN PARTIAL FUNDING FOR IT. BUT  
HOPE WILL BE CRUCIAL TO OUR SUCCESS, BY OFFERING LOW-  
INCOME FAMILIES A GREATER OPPORTUNITY TO OWN THEIR OWN  
HOMES. HOPE IS BASED ON A SIMPLE PRINCIPLE: TO  
SURVIVE, PEOPLE NEED THE INTANGIBLE VALUES OF DIGNITY  
AND SELF-RESPECT. GOVERNMENT CAN'T PROVIDE THOSE. BUT  
HOMEOWNERSHIP CAN. AN EDUCATION CAN. A JOB CAN. AND  
BEING PART OF A FAMILY CAN.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS A POSITIVE ROLE IN PRESERVING THE FAMILY. WE WELCOME THAT ROLE; IT HAS GUIDED THE DECISIONS WE MAKE EVERY DAY. SINCE 1989, FOR EXAMPLE, WE HAVE MORE THAN DOUBLED FUNDING FOR HEAD START, A PROGRAM THAT BRINGS CHILDREN AND PARENTS INTO THE CLASSROOM, STRENGTHENS FAMILY TIES AND REINFORCES PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE HISTORY, WE CAN SUPPORT ~~(ONE YEAR OF)~~ HEAD START FOR THOSE WHOSE PARENTS CHOOSE TO

*League of Cities*

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THERE ARE MANY OTHER EXAMPLES: WE HAVE INCREASED THE EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT FOR LOW-INCOME FAMILIES, AND, SINCE 1989, WE'VE INCREASED THE FUNDING FOR WIC - - THE SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN -- BY 47 PERCENT, TO \$2.8 BILLION NEXT YEAR. WE'VE INCREASED OTHER NUTRITION PROGRAMS BY SIMILAR PERCENTAGES. AND THIS YEAR FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR CHILDHOOD IMMUNIZATION GRANTS WILL TOP \$340 MILLION, AN INCREASE OF 18 PERCENT OVER LAST YEAR'S LEVEL. ALL TOLD, FUNDING FOR CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS -- FROM NUTRITION AND EDUCATION TO FOSTER CARE AND CHILD IMMUNIZATIONS - - HAS INCREASED 66 PERCENT SINCE WE TOOK OFFICE.

BUT PLEASE UNDERSTAND: WE WILL NEVER MEASURE OUR COMPASSION IN DOLLARS SPENT. WE WILL MEASURE IT BY RESULTS -- THE TEST WILL BE THE HEALTH AND HAPPINESS OF OUR CHILDREN AND, MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL, THE SENSE OF WELL-BEING AND SELF-RELIANCE INSTILLED IN OUR FAMILIES. MY ADMINISTRATION HAS TARGETED FUNDING TO PROGRAMS THAT EFFICIENTLY FULFILL GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING FAMILIES AND KEEPING THEM TOGETHER -- PROGRAMS THAT WORK FOR THE FAMILY.

AT THE SAME TIME, WE MUST FACE ANOTHER FACT: GOVERNMENT CAN SOMETIMES BE A BURDEN AS WELL AS A BOON. OVER THE PAST FORTY YEARS, THE CHILD TAX EXEMPTION HAS LAGGED FAR BEHIND THE SOARING COSTS OF CHILD-REARING. I HAVE ASKED CONGRESS TO INCREASE THE EXEMPTION BY \$500 PER CHILD. FOR A FAMILY WITH FOUR CHILDREN, THAT'S AN INCREASE OF \$2,000. IT'S A CRUCIAL FIRST STEP TOWARD REDRESSING THE IMBALANCE, AND IT'S WHAT WE CAN AFFORD NOW.

AND NOW I COME TO PERHAPS THE MOST CRUCIAL MATTER OF ALL: WE MUST REFORM OUR NATION'S WELFARE SYSTEM. AMERICANS ARE THE MOST GENEROUS PEOPLE ON EARTH, BUT THEY WANT TO SEE -- AND THEY'RE ENTITLED TO SEE -- SOME RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WELFARE AND WORK. WELFARE MUST NEVER BE WHAT FDR WARNED IT MIGHT BECOME: A SUBTLE DESTROYER OF THE SPIRIT. IT IS NOT MEANT TO BE A WAY OF LIFE, OR A FAMILY LEGACY PASSED FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT. WELFARE CAN EAT AWAY AT THE TIES THAT BIND A FAMILY TOGETHER.

STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ARE UNDERTAKING THE BRAVE WORK OF REFORM -- LEARNFARE IN WISCONSIN, REACH (REALIZING ECONOMIC ACHIEVEMENT) IN NEW JERSEY, WASHINGTON STATE'S FIP -- FAMILY INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM - - THESE ARE ALL DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS WE SUPPORT. MY ADMINISTRATION IS COMMITTED TO REFORM AND WE ARE ACTING NOW TO WAIVE UNNECESSARY RED TAPE THAT IMPEDES REFORM.

THERE'S NO HIDDEN AGENDA HERE. THIS ADMINISTRATION, THE MAYORS, THE STATE LEADERS WHO PRESS FOR DRASTIC REFORM OF WELFARE AREN'T MODERN DAY SCROOGES -- CHISELING ONE MORE DIME OUT OF SOME POOR FAMILY. DEMOCRAT OR REPUBLICAN, CALIFORNIA OR NEW JERSEY, FEDERAL OR STATE -- IN OUR HEART OF HEARTS, WE REALLY BELIEVE REFORMING WELFARE IS THE BEST WAY TO SERVE PEOPLE -- BREAK THIS SORRY CYCLE OF DESPAIR -- GIVE PEOPLE REAL HOPE. AND WE'RE GOING TO KEEP ON TRYING TO DO JUST THAT -- BECAUSE EVERY SINGLE AMERICAN DESERVES TO BELIEVE IN THE AMERICAN DREAM.

I HAVE HIGHLIGHTED TODAY THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT -- BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE -- BECAUSE WE ARE MEN AND WOMEN OF GOVERNMENT. BUT LET US NEVER FORGET THE WORK OF PRIVATE AMERICANS DEDICATING THEMSELVES TO THE VOLUNTARY SERVICE OF OTHERS, WHO CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE FAMILIES CAN FLOURISH.

EACH IS A POINT OF LIGHT, OFFERING SERVICE WITH NO THOUGHT OF REWARD, THOUGH THE REWARD WILL BE REAPED BY EVERY AMERICAN. THEY ARE NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE GOOD THAT GOVERNMENT CAN DO, BUT WE WILL NOT SOLVE OUR MOST PRESSING PROBLEMS WITHOUT THEIR DEDICATION. I URGE ALL OF YOU, WHEN YOU RETURN TO YOUR CITIES, TO DO ALL IN YOUR POWER TO ENCOURAGE THESE CARING MEN AND WOMEN, TO MAKE YOURS A COMMUNITY OF LIGHT.

IN MY STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS, I ANNOUNCED THAT WE WOULD SOON INSTITUTE A COMMISSION ON AMERICA'S URBAN FAMILIES. THEIR WORK WILL BE ONE RESULT OF MY MEETING IN JANUARY WITH SOME OF YOUR LEADERS. I HAVE ASKED GOV. JOHN ASHCROFT OF MISSOURI AND ANNETTE STRAUSS, THE FORMER MAYOR OF DALLAS, TO LEAD THE COMMISSION AND FULFILL ITS MANDATE: TO IDENTIFY THOSE GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS, AT ALL LEVELS, THAT WEAKEN OR STRENGTHEN URBAN FAMILIES; TO ANALYZE WAYS TO IMPROVE PRIVATE EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN FAMILIES; AND TO RECOMMEND NEW POLICIES TO HELP FAMILIES IN OUR CITIES.

I AM CONVINCED THAT WE CAN CORRECT OUR MISTAKES, LEARN FROM OUR FAILURES, AND BUILD ON OUR SUCCESSES. I DO NOT EXAGGERATE WHEN I SAY THAT THE FUTURE OF AMERICA DEPENDS ON OUR EFFORTS. THE FAMILY IS THE IRREDUCIBLE UNIT OF COMFORT AND LOVE, AND FROM FAMILIES RADIATE NEIGHBORHOODS, FROM NEIGHBORHOODS COME TOWNS AND CITIES, AND THEIR HEALTH DETERMINES THE HEALTH OF OUR COUNTRY, FOR BETTER OR WORSE. LIKE YOU I AM COMMITTED TO MAKING OUR HEALTH WHOLE, AND TO ENSURING THAT OUR CITIES, AS THEODORE PARKER SAID, REMAIN THE FIREPLACES OF AMERICA, RADIATING WARMTH AND LIGHT AGAINST THE DARKNESS.

THANK YOU, AND MAY GOD BLESS THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

# # # #

NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES  
MARCH 9, 1992  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
11:40 A.M.

92 MAR 9 A 8: 58

THANK YOU, GLENDA (HOOD) FOR THAT KIND  
INTRODUCTION. MY GREETINGS ALSO TO MAYOR SIDNEY  
BARTHELEMY, DON BORUT, AND WALLACE STICKNEY.

I'M PLEASED TO JOIN YOU TODAY. I ENJOYED SPEAKING  
TO YOU OVER TELEVISION HOOK-UP IN DECEMBER -- IT'S  
BETTER FACE TO FACE.

IN JANUARY, I HAD A FOLLOW-UP MEETING WITH TEN OF  
YOUR MEMBERS. LIKE YOUR ORGANIZATION AS A WHOLE, THEY  
REPRESENTED A CROSS-SECTION OF URBAN AMERICA'S  
LEADERSHIP -- REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS, LIBERALS AND  
CONSERVATIVES, OFFICIALS FROM LARGE AND SMALL AND MID-  
SIZED CITIES.

OF COURSE, WE'RE ALL CONCERNED ABOUT THE BIG ISSUES  
-- JOBS, FAMILY, WORLD PEACE. EVEN SO, I WAS STRUCK BY  
THE UNANIMITY OF THE MESSAGE YOUR MEMBERS WANTED TO  
DELIVER. IT CAN'T BE REPEATED OFTEN ENOUGH IN  
WASHINGTON, OR ANY STATE CAPITOL OR CITY HALL.

YOUR MESSAGE WAS SIMPLY THIS: THE ENORMOUS PROBLEMS FACING CITIES TODAY -- FROM INFANT MORTALITY TO HIGH DROP-OUT RATES TO RUNAWAY CRIME -- ARE PARTLY SYMPTOMS OF ONE LARGER PROBLEM, THE DETERIORATION OF THE AMERICAN FAMILY.

I UNDERSTAND THE BREADTH OF ISSUES THAT YOU DEAL WITH DAILY, FROM POVERTY TO POTHoles TO PROPERTY TAXES. BUT THIS MORNING, I WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS THE SAME SERIOUS ISSUE THAT YOU RAISED WITH ME: THE FAMILY. THE RESTORATION OF THE AMERICAN FAMILY IS AT THE HEART OF MUCH OF WHAT WE HAVE DONE THESE LAST THREE YEARS.

LEAVING ASIDE FOR A MOMENT THE ENORMOUS COSTS -- THE WASTED HUMAN RESOURCES OR THE BILLIONS SPENT TO REPAIR THE DAMAGE OF BROKEN HOMES -- FAMILY BREAKDOWN ULTIMATELY ENDANGERS OUR POSITION IN A WORLD INCREASINGLY DRIVEN BY ECONOMIC COMPETITION. CERTAINLY, THE INTEGRITY OF THE FAMILY IS CRITICAL ON ITS OWN MERIT. AS MY FAVORITE PHILOSOPHER SAYS, "WHAT GOES ON AT THE WHITE HOUSE IS NOT NEARLY AS IMPORTANT AS WHAT GOES ON IN YOUR HOUSE." BUT PARTICULARLY AT A TIME WHEN OUR EFFORTS MUST FOCUS ON ECONOMIC GROWTH, THE FAMILY'S DISINTEGRATION ENDANGERS -- FOR ALL OF US -- OUR ABILITY TO CREATE AND PRESERVE JOBS, AND TO CREATE AN ECONOMY OPEN TO PARTICIPATION BY ALL OUR CITIZENS.

SO WE MUST START WITH A CLEAR-EYED LOOK AT WHAT IS REALLY HAPPENING TO THE FAMILY IN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES TODAY -- NOT JUST IN POOR URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS BUT ALL ACROSS AMERICA. THEN WE MUST LOOK INSIDE OURSELVES, TO ESTABLISH THE PRINCIPLES THAT WILL SHAPE OUR APPROACH. AND THEN WE MUST ACT.

THE URGENCY IS CLEAR. WE ALL KNOW THE STATISTICS, THE DREARY DRUMBEAT THAT TELLS OF FAMILY BREAKDOWN. TODAY, ONE OUT OF EVERY FOUR AMERICAN CHILDREN IS BORN OUT OF WEDLOCK; IN SOME AREAS THE ILLEGITIMACY RATE TOPS 80 PERCENT. A QUARTER OF OUR CHILDREN GROW UP IN HOUSEHOLDS HEADED BY A SINGLE PARENT. MORE THAN TWO MILLION ARE CALLED LATCH-KEY KIDS -- WHO COME HOME FROM SCHOOL EACH AFTERNOON TO AN EMPTY HOME. AND A LARGE NUMBER OF OUR CHILDREN GROW UP WITHOUT THE LOVE OF PARENTS AT ALL.

WE KNOW FROM EXPERIENCE THE CONSEQUENCES OF FAMILY DECLINE. NEGLECTED CHILDREN ARE MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO THE LURE OF CRIME AND DRUGS, ARE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE POOR HEALTH, DROP OUT OF SCHOOL EARLY, MORE LIKELY TO LEAD A LIFE WITHOUT HOPE.

EACH OF YOU IS IN A POSITION TO KNOW THE HUMAN COSTS THAT STATISTICS CAN ONLY DIMLY SKETCH. YOU KNOW, AS I DO, THAT FOR EVERY BLIP ON A CHART OR DOT ON A GRAPH, THERE IS A HUMAN STORY TO TELL, AND TOO OFTEN THE STORY IS A TRAGEDY.

ABOUT TEN DAYS AGO, I WAS IN SAN ANTONIO, MEETING WITH LATIN AMERICAN LEADERS TO INTENSIFY OUR WAR ON DRUGS. WHILE THERE I SAW A FRONT-PAGE STORY IN THE SAN ANTONIO LIGHT. A CABDRIVER HAD BEEN MURDERED LAST SEPTEMBER -- ANOTHER ACT OF RANDOM, SENSELESS VIOLENCE -- AND HIS MURDERER HAD JUST BEEN FOUND GUILTY.

BUT WHAT WAS TRULY HORRIFYING -- WHAT WOULD HORRIFY ANY AMERICAN -- WAS THIS: THE MURDERER WAS A 12-YEAR-OLD BOY. AS THE DEPUTIES TOOK THE BOY FROM THE COURTROOM, ACCORDING TO THE NEWSPAPER STORY, THEY HAD TROUBLE FITTING HIM WITH SHACKLES AND HANDCUFFS, SO SLENDER WERE HIS WRISTS. THIS YOUNGSTER WAS FOUR-FEET TALL, NOT YET A TEENAGER, BUT NOW A CONVICTED MURDERER.

THE DRUMBEAT CONTINUES: TWO TEENAGERS SHOT DEAD IN A NEW YORK PUBLIC SCHOOL -- AN LSD RING BUSTED UP IN AN AFFLUENT NORTHERN VIRGINIA SUBURB -- OR THE HARROWING STORIES OF RUNAWAY KIDS AND THE HORRORS THAT BEFALL THEM.

I KNOW THAT ALMOST ALL OF YOU COULD TELL STORIES EQUALLY DISTRESSING -- STORIES FROM NEIGHBORHOODS IN YOUR CITIES WHERE THE UNTHINKABLE HAS BECOME THE COMMONPLACE. I AM SURE THAT MANY OF YOU HERE TOOK OFFICE WITH HIGH CONFIDENCE IN THE POWER TO SOLVE THESE PROBLEMS, ONLY TO DISCOVER -- SOONER RATHER THAN LATER, I SUSPECT -- THAT THEY WERE FAR MORE STUBBORN THAN WE COULD IMAGINE. LET'S NOT FORGET THAT THE TRIALS OUR CITIZENS FACE EACH AND EVERY DAY WERE GENERATIONS IN THE MAKING. WE CAN'T EXPECT CHANGE OVERNIGHT. BUT MAKE NO MISTAKE: CHANGE WILL COME. BECAUSE CHANGE MUST COME.

LET'S FACE IT. WE CAN ONLY CHANGE THINGS IF WE WORK IN COMMON PURPOSE. WE MUST CALL A CEASE-FIRE IN THE WAR OF WORDS THAT TOO OFTEN CONSUMES US. CASTING BLAME BRINGS NO SOLUTIONS. NOR WILL QUESTIONING EACH OTHER'S MOTIVES. WE HAVE GOT TO FOCUS EVERY OUNCE OF OUR ENERGY TO TURN BACK THIS ASSAULT UPON THE AMERICAN FAMILY AND ACT AS ONE NATION TO DEFEND AND STRENGTHEN IT. AS PUBLIC SERVANTS, WE MUST NEVER FORGET THAT THE BEST DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES IS INDEED, THE FAMILY.

IN RESTORING THE FAMILY, WE RESTORE TO COMING GENERATIONS THE VALUES, THE SENSE OF RIGHT AND WRONG, THE WILL AND CONFIDENCE TO SUCCEED THAT ONLY A FAMILY CAN PROVIDE A CHILD. AND IN DOING THIS, WE WILL REINVIGORATE OUR COMMUNITIES AND CITIES AS WELL.

WE NEEDN'T LOOK FAR FOR PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE US.  
THEY ARE THE OLD HOME TRUTHS. RELY ON WHAT WORKS --  
DISCARD WHAT DOESN'T. NEVER BE AFRAID TO INNOVATE.  
REMEMBER THAT GOVERNMENT CLOSEST TO THE PEOPLE RESPONDS  
BEST TO THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE. AND LET'S NOT FORGET  
THIS AS A GUIDING PRINCIPLE: IF PEOPLE ARE TO BE  
RESPONSIBLE, THEY MUST BE GIVEN RESPONSIBILITY.

THE GOVERNMENT'S FIRST DUTY IS LIKE THAT OF THE PHYSICIAN: DO NO HARM. BUT THE FACT IS, WITH THE BEST OF INTENTIONS, MANY PAST GOVERNMENT POLICIES HAVE WORKED AGAINST THE INSTITUTION OF THE FAMILY -- UNDERMINED YOUNG PEOPLE'S DESIRE TO MARRY AND STAY MARRIED, TO PROVIDE FOR THEIR CHILDREN, TO PLAN FOR THEIR FUTURE.

AS A PRACTICAL MATTER, "DOING NO HARM" MEANS IN PART THAT WE ENSURE PARENTS RETAIN THE AUTHORITY TO MAKE THE BIG DECISIONS FOR THEIR FAMILIES. THIS DOESN'T ABSOLVE PARENTS OF RESPONSIBILITY, JUST THE OPPOSITE. FOR EXAMPLE, EVEN IF WE ARE ABLE TO REFORM OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM, PARENTS MUST STILL READ TO THEIR CHILDREN. THE POINT IS THAT GOVERNMENT HARMS THE FAMILY WHEN IT RESTRICTS ITS AUTONOMY OR USURPS THE AUTHORITY OF RESPONSIBLE PARENTS.

LET ME GIVE YOU ANOTHER EXAMPLE: THOSE OF US IN GOVERNMENT CAN NEVER PLAUSIBLY CLAIM TO FIGHT FOR FAMILIES IF WE INSIST THAT GOVERNMENT, NOT PARENTS, MUST CHOOSE WHO CARES FOR THEIR CHILDREN. TWO YEARS AGO, MY ADMINISTRATION WAGED A FIGHT IN CONGRESS OVER THIS VERY ISSUE, AND WE WON. WE KEPT CHOICE OF CHILD CARE OUT OF THE HANDS OF GOVERNMENT AND PUT IT WHERE IT BELONGS -- IN THE HANDS OF PARENTS.

NOW WE'RE ENGAGED IN A SIMILAR FIGHT, OVER WHETHER PARENTS SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE THEIR CHILDREN'S SCHOOLS. WE KNOW THE BENEFITS OF COMPETITION; IT IS THE LINCHPIN OF AMERICAN PROSPERITY. AND COMPETITION AMONG SCHOOLS WILL BE THE LINCHPIN OF EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE, TOO. FROM MINNESOTA TO MILWAUKEE TO EAST HARLEM -- SCHOOL CHOICE WORKS.

BUT SCHOOL CHOICE IS IMPORTANT FOR OTHER REASONS:  
IT RESTORES AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY TO PARENTS.  
AND JUST AS IT MAKES OUR SCHOOLS ACCOUNTABLE, IT ALSO  
MAKES PARENTS ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE DECISIONS THEY MAKE.  
NOT ONLY IN CHILD CARE AND SCHOOL CHOICE BUT IN OTHER  
AREAS AS WELL, A KEY TO HEALING THE AMERICAN FAMILY  
WILL BE RESTORING PARENTAL AUTHORITY AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE: THE INITIATIVE WE CALL HOPE. IT  
TOOK MORE THAN A YEAR TO GET HOPE THROUGH CONGRESS, AND  
ANOTHER YEAR TO GET EVEN PARTIAL FUNDING FOR IT. BUT  
HOPE WILL BE CRUCIAL TO OUR SUCCESS, BY OFFERING LOW-  
INCOME FAMILIES A GREATER OPPORTUNITY TO OWN THEIR OWN  
HOMES. HOPE IS BASED ON A SIMPLE PRINCIPLE: TO  
SURVIVE, PEOPLE NEED THE INTANGIBLE VALUES OF DIGNITY  
AND SELF-RESPECT. GOVERNMENT CAN'T PROVIDE THOSE. BUT  
HOMEOWNERSHIP CAN. AN EDUCATION CAN. A JOB CAN. AND  
BEING PART OF A FAMILY CAN.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS A POSITIVE ROLE IN PRESERVING THE FAMILY. WE WELCOME THAT ROLE; IT HAS GUIDED THE DECISIONS WE MAKE EVERY DAY. SINCE 1989, FOR EXAMPLE, WE HAVE MORE THAN DOUBLED FUNDING FOR HEAD START, A PROGRAM THAT BRINGS CHILDREN AND PARENTS INTO THE CLASSROOM, STRENGTHENS FAMILY TIES AND REINFORCES PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE PROGRAM'S HISTORY, WE CAN SUPPORT ~~ONE YEAR OF~~ HEAD START FOR <sup>4 YR @ CDS</sup> ALL ELIGIBLE CHILDREN WHOSE PARENTS CHOOSE TO HAVE THEM PARTICIPATE.

THERE ARE MANY OTHER EXAMPLES: WE HAVE INCREASED THE EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT FOR LOW-INCOME FAMILIES, AND, SINCE 1989, WE'VE INCREASED THE FUNDING FOR WIC - - THE SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN -- BY 47 PERCENT, TO \$2.8 BILLION NEXT YEAR. WE'VE INCREASED OTHER NUTRITION PROGRAMS BY SIMILAR PERCENTAGES. AND THIS YEAR FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR CHILDHOOD IMMUNIZATION GRANTS WILL TOP \$340 MILLION, AN INCREASE OF 18 PERCENT OVER LAST YEAR'S LEVEL. ALL TOLD, FUNDING FOR CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS -- FROM NUTRITION AND EDUCATION TO FOSTER CARE AND CHILD IMMUNIZATIONS - - HAS INCREASED 66 PERCENT SINCE WE TOOK OFFICE.

BUT PLEASE UNDERSTAND: WE WILL NEVER MEASURE OUR COMPASSION IN DOLLARS SPENT. WE WILL MEASURE IT BY RESULTS -- THE TEST WILL BE THE HEALTH AND HAPPINESS OF OUR CHILDREN AND, MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL, THE SENSE OF WELL-BEING AND SELF-RELIANCE INSTILLED IN OUR FAMILIES. MY ADMINISTRATION HAS TARGETED FUNDING TO PROGRAMS THAT EFFICIENTLY FULFILL GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING FAMILIES AND KEEPING THEM TOGETHER -- PROGRAMS THAT WORK FOR THE FAMILY.

AT THE SAME TIME, WE MUST FACE ANOTHER FACT: GOVERNMENT CAN SOMETIMES BE A BURDEN AS WELL AS A BOON. OVER THE PAST FORTY YEARS, THE CHILD TAX EXEMPTION HAS LAGGED FAR BEHIND THE SOARING COSTS OF CHILD-REARING. I HAVE ASKED CONGRESS TO INCREASE THE EXEMPTION BY \$500 PER CHILD. FOR A FAMILY WITH FOUR CHILDREN, THAT'S AN INCREASE OF \$2,000. IT'S A CRUCIAL FIRST STEP TOWARD REDRESSING THE IMBALANCE, AND IT'S WHAT WE CAN AFFORD NOW.

AND NOW I COME TO PERHAPS THE MOST CRUCIAL MATTER OF ALL: WE MUST REFORM OUR NATION'S WELFARE SYSTEM. AMERICANS ARE THE MOST GENEROUS PEOPLE ON EARTH, BUT THEY WANT TO SEE -- AND THEY'RE ENTITLED TO SEE -- SOME RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WELFARE AND WORK. WELFARE MUST NEVER BE WHAT FDR WARNED IT MIGHT BECOME: A SUBTLE DESTROYER OF THE SPIRIT. IT IS NOT MEANT TO BE A WAY OF LIFE, OR A FAMILY LEGACY PASSED FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT. WELFARE CAN EAT AWAY AT THE TIES THAT BIND A FAMILY TOGETHER.

STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ARE UNDERTAKING THE BRAVE WORK OF REFORM -- LEARNFARE IN WISCONSIN, REACH (REALIZING ECONOMIC ACHIEVEMENT) IN NEW JERSEY, WASHINGTON STATE'S FIP -- FAMILY INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM - - THESE ARE ALL DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS WE SUPPORT. MY ADMINISTRATION IS COMMITTED TO REFORM AND WE ARE ACTING NOW TO WAIVE UNNECESSARY RED TAPE THAT IMPEDES REFORM.

THERE'S NO HIDDEN AGENDA HERE. THIS ADMINISTRATION, THE MAYORS, THE STATE LEADERS WHO PRESS FOR DRASTIC REFORM OF WELFARE AREN'T MODERN DAY SCROOGES -- CHISELING ONE MORE DIME OUT OF SOME POOR FAMILY. DEMOCRAT OR REPUBLICAN, CALIFORNIA OR NEW JERSEY, FEDERAL OR STATE -- IN OUR HEART OF HEARTS, WE REALLY BELIEVE REFORMING WELFARE IS THE BEST WAY TO SERVE PEOPLE -- BREAK THIS SORRY CYCLE OF DESPAIR -- GIVE PEOPLE REAL HOPE. AND WE'RE GOING TO KEEP ON TRYING TO DO JUST THAT -- BECAUSE EVERY SINGLE AMERICAN DESERVES TO BELIEVE IN THE AMERICAN DREAM.

I HAVE HIGHLIGHTED TODAY THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT -- BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE -- BECAUSE WE ARE MEN AND WOMEN OF GOVERNMENT. BUT LET US NEVER FORGET THE WORK OF PRIVATE AMERICANS DEDICATING THEMSELVES TO THE VOLUNTARY SERVICE OF OTHERS, WHO CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE FAMILIES CAN FLOURISH.

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THANK YOU, AND MAY GOD BLESS THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

# # # #

WHITE HOUSE STAFFING MEMORANDUM

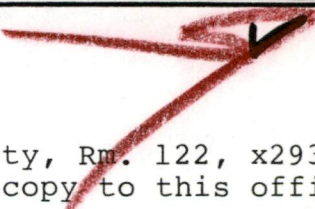


DATE: 3/6/92 ACTION/CONCURRENCE/COMMENT DUE BY: SAT. 3/7/92 10:00am

SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES  
MARCH 9, 1992 - 11:40 am

	ACTION	FYI		ACTION	FYI
VICE PRESIDENT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	HORNER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
SKINNER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MCBRIDE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SCOWCROFT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	MOORE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
DARMAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	PETERSMEYER	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BRADY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PORTER <i>6/63</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BROMLEY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	ROGICH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CALIO <i>nk</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	ROLLINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DEMAREST	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	SMITH <i>NLC</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
FITZWATER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	YEUTTER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
GRAY <i>Pauletta Bengtson 2898 7804</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	FINDLAY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
HOLIDAY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	ANDERSON	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			KAUFMAN		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
			MCGROARTY		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

REMARKS:



Please forward your comments directly to Dan McGroarty, Rm. 122, x2930, no later than 10:00 a.m., SATURDAY, MARCH 7, with a copy to this office. Thank you.

RESPONSE:

PHILLIP D. BRADY  
 Assistant to the President  
 and Staff Secretary  
 Ext. 2702

(Ferguson/Gershowitz)  
March 5, 1992  
Draft One  
NLC2

02 MAR 6 P3:35

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES  
MARCH 9, 1992  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
11:40 A.M.

[Acknowledgments]

I'm pleased to be here today. I know I spoke to many of you over television hook-up last December, and it's nice to climb down from the silver screen to speak with you face to face.

Since December, I've had a chance to talk with several of you in depth about the problems you face. In January, I had an important meeting in the White House with some of your members. Like your organization as a whole, they represented a marvelous cross-section of urban America's leadership -- Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives, officials from large and small and mid-sized cities.

Of course, we're all concerned about the big issues -- jobs, family, world peace. Even so, I was struck by the unanimity of the message your board wanted to deliver. It was an insight that we have been acting on for three years, but it can't be repeated often enough in Washington.

X Their message was simply this: The enormous problems facing cities today -- from infant mortality to <sup>(increased school</sup> high drop-out rates to runaway crime -- are in part symptoms of one larger problem, the deterioration of the American family.

That is the extraordinarily serious issue I would like to discuss with you today. I have made the restoration of the

American family a priority of this administration. It lies at the heart of much of what we have done for three years.

We must start with a clear-eyed look at what is really happening to the family in American communities today -- not just in poor urban neighborhoods but all across America. Then we must look inside ourselves, to establish the principles that will shape our approach. And then we must act.

The urgency is clear. We all know the statistics, the dreary drumbeat that tells of family breakdown. Today, one out of every four American children is born out of wedlock. Some communities have even begun passing out condoms in school -- not from a lax attitude toward premarital sex, but from sheer desperation.

Twenty-five percent of our children grow up in households headed by a single parent. More than two million are called latch-key kids -- who come from school each afternoon to an empty home. And a large number of our children grow up without the love of parents at all.

We know from experience the consequences of family decline. Neglected children are more susceptible to the lure of crime and drugs, are more likely to have poor health and to drop out of school early, to lead a life without hope.

You on the frontlines know the human costs that statistics can only dimly sketch. You know, as I do, that for every blip on a chart or dot on a graph there is a human story to tell, and too often the story is a tragedy.

About ten days ago, I was in San Antonio, meeting with other American heads of state to intensify our war on drugs. And while there I noticed a front-page story in the San Antonio Light. A cabdriver had been murdered last September -- another act of random, senseless violence -- and his murderer had just been found guilty.

But what was truly horrifying -- what would horrify any American -- was this: the murderer was a 12-year-old boy.

As the deputies took the boy from the courtroom, according to the newspaper story, they had trouble fitting him with shackles and handcuffs, so slender were his wrists. This youngster was four-feet tall, not yet a teenager, and now a convicted murderer.

The drumbeat continues: two teenagers shot dead in a New York public school -- an LSD ring busted up in an affluent Northern Virginia suburb -- and the harrowing stories of runaway kids and the horrors that befall them.

I know that almost all of you could tell stories equally distressing -- stories from neighborhoods in your cities where the unthinkable has become the commonplace. Something's wrong when elderly city-dwellers, with triple-bolted doors, dare not leave their homes for fear of attack; when babies are born addicted to crack cocaine; when school children shoot one another over a pair of sneakers.

Something is terribly, terribly wrong. I am sure that all of you in this room took office with high confidence in our

ability to solve these problems, only to discover -- sooner rather than later, I suspect -- that they were far more stubborn than any of us had supposed. Let's not forget that the trials our citizens face today were generations in the making. We can't expect change overnight.

But make no mistake: We will change things. And we will do it by digging to the root, to the deepest problem underlying so many others. Each day, as public servants, we must redouble our efforts to restore the family to its place of primacy in American life. It's been said that the family is the best Department of Health of Human Services ever devised. That is a singularly American insight. The genius of our system has always been its reliance on the family, not government, as the fundamental unit of social progress.

Families open up the world to individuals. They give older family members a stake in the future and connect children to their past.

In restoring the family we restore to coming generations the values, the sense of right and wrong, the will and confidence to succeed that only a family can provide a child. And in doing this, we will reinvigorate our cities as well.

We needn't look far for principles to guide us. They are the old home truths. Rely on what works, discard what doesn't. Never be afraid to innovate. The government that is closest to the people responds best to the needs of the people. And let's

not forget this as a guiding principle: if people are to be responsible, they must be given responsibility.

As a practical matter, that means we must ensure that parents retain the authority to make the big decisions for their families. The government's first responsibility is like that of the physician: Do no harm. And let us never doubt that government only harms the family when it restricts the family's autonomy or usurps the authority of responsible parents.

Let me give you an example: Those of us in government can never plausibly claim to fight for families if we insist that government, not parents, must choose who cares for their children. Two years ago, my administration waged a fight in Congress over this very issue, and we won. We kept choice of child care out of the hands of government and put it where it belongs -- in the hands of parents.

Now we're engaged in a similar fight, over whether parents should have the right to choose their childrens' schools. We know the benefits of competition; it is the linchpin of American prosperity. And competition among schools will be the linchpin of educational excellence, too.

But school choice is important for other reasons: It restores authority and responsibility to parents. And just as it makes our schools accountable, so does it make parents accountable for the decisions they make. Restoring authority and accountability -- not only in child care and school choice but in

other areas as well -- will be a key to healing the American family.

Another example: For more than a year now we have been trying to get through Congress our HOPE initiative, which would offer low-income families a greater opportunity to own their own homes. HOPE is based on a simple principle: to survive, people need the intangible values of dignity and self-respect. Government can't provide those. But homeownership can. An education can. A job can. And being part of a family can.

Of course we will never shirk the federal government's affirmative role in preserving the family. Our belief in that role has guided the decisions we've made over the past three years. Since 1989, for example, we have more than doubled funding for Head Start, a program that brings children and parents into the classroom, strengthening family ties and reinforcing parental responsibility. For the first time in the program's history, our new budget provides that every eligible four-year-old will be able to start school ready to learn.

There are many other examples: over the past three years, we've increased the funding for WIC -- the Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children -- by 47 percent, to \$2.8 billion next year. We've increased other nutrition programs by similar percentages. And this year federal support for childhood immunizations will increase by \$52 million, an increase of 18 percent over last year's level.

All told, funding for children's programs -- from nutrition and education to foster care and child immunizations -- has increased 66 percent since we took office.

But please understand: we do not measure our success in dollars spent. We measure it by results -- by the degree to which it keeps children healthy and happy and, most important of all, increases a family's self-reliance. My administration has concentrated on funding the programs that work for the family -- that efficiently fulfill government's role in supporting families and keeping them together.

At the same time, we must face another fact: government can sometimes be a burden as well as a boon. Over the past forty years, the child tax exemption has lagged far behind the soaring costs of child-rearing. I have asked Congress to increase the exemption by \$500 per child. For a family of four, that's an increase of \$2,000. It's a crucial first step toward redressing the imbalance, and it's what we can afford. We have also successfully increased the earned income tax credit for low-income families. A strain on the family budget is a strain on the family -- and families don't need the added pressure.

And there's another thing we must do: we must reform our nation's welfare system. Americans are the most generous people on earth, but they want to see -- and they're entitled to see -- some relationship between welfare and work. Welfare must never be what FDR warned it might become: a subtle destroyer of the spirit. It is not meant to be a way of life, or a family legacy

passed from one generation to the next. Welfare can eat away at the ties that bind a family together.

States are beginning to undertake the brave work of reform. My administration has vowed to help them. We are acting now to waive federal requirements that impede reform, for every state that asks for it.

I have dwelled today on the role of government -- both positive and negative -- because we are men and women of government. But let us never forget the work of private Americans dedicating themselves to the voluntary service of others, who create an environment where families can flourish. Right now, as we're gathered here, somewhere in America a volunteer is reading to a child; a businessman offers job training to a young man he's just met; a woman teaches young expectant mothers how to care for the children they will soon bring into the world; neighbors band together to rid their neighborhoods of the scourge of drugs.

Each of them is a point of light, offering service with no thought of reward, though the reward will be reaped by every American. I urge all of you, when you return to your cities, to do all in your power to encourage these caring men and women, to make yours a community of light.

Today I will sign an executive order establishing a commission on America's urban families. This panel is one result of my meeting in January with your executive council. I have asked Gov. John Ashcroft of Missouri to lead the commission and

fulfill its mandate: to identify those government programs, at all levels, that weaken or strengthen urban families; to analyze ways to improve private efforts to strengthen families; and to recommend new policies to help families in our cities.

I am convinced that we can correct our mistakes, learn from our failures, and build on our successes. The future of America depends on our effort. The family is the irreducible unit of comfort and love, and from families radiate neighborhoods, from neighborhoods come towns and cities, and their health determines the health of our country, for better or worse. Like you I am committed to making our health whole, and to ensure that our cities, as Theodore Parker said, remain the fireplaces of America, radiating heat and light in the darkness.

# # # #

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN  
3-9-92

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

12 MAR 7 P3:51  
March 7, 1992

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT  
THROUGH: DAVID DEMAREST  
FROM: ANDY FERGUSON  
SUBJECT: NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES

On Monday, March 9 at 11:40 a.m., you will address 3000 attendees at the National League of Cities' annual legislative conference. Your remarks (18 minutes, teleprompter) focus on the relationship between urban problems and the deterioration of the family, and your approach in restoring the American family.

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(Ferguson/Gershowitz)  
March 5, 1992  
Draft Three  
NLC2

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES  
MARCH 9, 1992  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
11:40 A.M.

Thank you, Glenda (Hood) for that kind introduction. My greetings also to Mayor Sidney Barthelemy, Don Borut, and Wallace Stickney.

I'm pleased to be here today. I know I spoke to many of you over television hook-up last December, and ~~it's nice to climb down from the silver screen to speak with you face to face.~~ *better to be here*

Since December, I've had a chance to talk with several of you in depth about the problems you face. In January, I had an important meeting in the White House with ten of your members. Like your organization as a whole, they represented a cross-section of urban America's leadership -- Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives, officials from large and small and mid-sized cities.

Of course, we're all concerned about the big issues -- jobs, family, world peace. Even so, I was struck by the unanimity of the message your members wanted to deliver. It was an insight that we have been acting upon since I took office, but it can't be repeated often enough in Washington, or any state capitol or city hall.

Your message was simply this: The enormous problems facing cities today -- from infant mortality to high drop-out rates to

runaway crime -- are partly symptoms of one larger problem, the deterioration of the American family.

That is the very serious issue I would like to discuss with you today. As my favorite philosopher says, "What goes on at the White House is not nearly as important as what goes on in your house." The restoration of the American family is central to the efforts of my Administration. It lies at the heart of much of what we have done for three years.

Leaving aside for a moment the enormous costs -- the wasted human resources or the billions spent to repair the damage of broken homes, family breakdown ultimately endangers our position in a world increasingly driven by economic competition. Certainly, the integrity of the family is critical on its own merit. But particularly at a time when our efforts must focus on economic growth, the family's disintegration endangers -- for all of us -- our ability to create and preserve jobs, and to create an economy open to participation by all our citizens.

So we must start with a clear-eyed look at what is really happening to the family in American communities today -- not just in poor urban neighborhoods but all across America. Then we must look inside ourselves, to establish the principles that will shape our approach. And then we must act.

The urgency is clear. We all know the statistics, the dreary drumbeat that tells of family breakdown. Today, one out of every four American children is born out of wedlock; in some areas the illegitimacy rate tops 80 percent. A quarter of our

children grow up in households headed by a single parent. More than two million are called latch-key kids -- who come home from school each afternoon to an empty home. And a large number of our children grow up without the love of parents at all.

Venereal disease and AIDS are at alarming levels in younger populations. A few communities now pass out condoms in school. I believe that is clearly the wrong approach -- but in my heart I can understand the sheer desperation that drives public officials to do such things.

We know from experience the consequences of family decline. Neglected children are more susceptible to the lure of crime and drugs, are more likely to have poor health, drop out of school early, more likely to lead a life without hope.

You on the frontlines know the human costs that statistics can only dimly sketch. You know, as I do, that for every blip on a chart or dot on a graph, there is a human story to tell, and too often the story is a tragedy.

About ten days ago, I was in San Antonio, meeting with Latin American heads of state to intensify our war on drugs. While there I noticed a front-page story in the San Antonio Light. A cabdriver had been murdered last September -- another act of random, senseless violence -- and his murderer had just been found guilty.

But what was truly horrifying -- what would horrify any American -- was this: the murderer was a 12-year-old boy.

As the deputies took the boy from the courtroom, according to the newspaper story, they had trouble fitting him with shackles and handcuffs, so slender were his wrists. This youngster was four-feet tall, not yet a teenager, but now a convicted murderer.

The drumbeat continues: two teenagers shot dead in a New York public school -- an LSD ring busted up in an affluent Northern Virginia suburb -- or the harrowing stories of runaway kids and the horrors that befall them.

I know that almost all of you could tell stories equally distressing -- stories from neighborhoods in your cities where the unthinkable has become the commonplace. Something is terribly, terribly wrong when grandparents triple-bolt their doors, stay isolated and alone, not daring to venture outside for fear of attack; when school children shoot each other over a pair of sneakers, and babies are born addicted to crack cocaine.

I am sure that all of you here took office with high confidence in our ability to solve these problems, only to discover -- sooner rather than later, I suspect -- that they were far more stubborn than we could imagine. Let's not forget that the trials our citizens face each and every day were generations in the making. We can't expect change overnight. But make no mistake: We will change things.

Let's face it. We can only change things if we work together. We must call a cease-fire in the war of words that too often consumes us. Casting blame brings no solutions. Nor will

questioning each other's motives. We have got to focus every ounce of our energy to turn back this assault and act as one nation to defend and strengthen the American family.

We will do it by digging to the root, to the deepest problem underlying so many others. Each day, as public servants, we must redouble our efforts to restore the family to its place of primacy in American life. The genius of our system has always been its reliance on the family, not government, as the fundamental unit of social progress. A singularly American insight is that the best Department of Health and Human Services is indeed, the family.

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Families open up the world's horizons to individuals. They give older family members a stake in the future and connect children to their past. In restoring the family, then, we restore to coming generations the values, the sense of right and wrong, the will and confidence to succeed that only a family can provide a child. And in doing this, we will reinvigorate our communities and cities as well.

We needn't look far for principles to guide us. They are the old home truths. Rely on what works -- discard what doesn't. Never be afraid to innovate. Remember that the government closest to the people responds best to the needs of the people. And let's not forget this as a guiding principle: if people are to be responsible, they must be given responsibility.

The government's first duty is like that of the physician: Do no harm. And the fact is, with the best of intentions, many

government policies in the past have worked against the institution of the family -- undermined young people's desire to marry and stay married, to provide for their children, to plan for their future.

As a practical matter, "doing no harm" means in part that we ensure parents retain the authority to make the big decisions for their families. This doesn't absolve parents of responsibility, just the opposite. For example, we can reform our education system, but parents must read to their children. The point is that government harms the family when it restricts its autonomy or usurps the authority of responsible parents.

Let me give you another example: Those of us in government can never plausibly claim to fight for families if we insist that government, not parents, must choose who cares for their children. Two years ago, my administration waged a fight in Congress over this very issue, and we won. We kept choice of child care out of the hands of government and put it where it belongs -- in the hands of parents.

Now we're engaged in a similar fight, over whether parents should have the right to choose their children's schools. We know the benefits of competition; it is the linchpin of American prosperity. And competition among schools will be the linchpin of educational excellence, too.

But school choice is important for other reasons: It restores authority and responsibility to parents. And just as it makes our schools accountable, so does it make parents

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example

accountable for the decisions they make. Not only in child care and school choice but in other areas as well -- a key to healing the American family will be restoring parental authority and accountability.

Another example: The initiative we call HOPE. It took more than a year to get HOPE through Congress, and another year to get even partial funding for it. But HOPE will be crucial to our success, by offering low-income families a greater opportunity to own their own homes. HOPE is based on a simple principle: to survive, people need the intangible values of dignity and self-respect. Government can't provide those. But homeownership can. An education can. A job can. And being part of a family can.

Of course the federal government has a positive role in preserving the family. We welcome that role; it has guided the decisions we make every day. Since 1989, for example, we have more than doubled funding for Head Start, a program that brings ✓ children and parents into the classroom, strengthens family ties and reinforces parental responsibility. For the first time in the program's history, our new budget supports one year of Head Start for all eligible children whose parents choose to have them participate.

There are many other examples: since 1989, we've increased the funding for WIC -- the Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children -- by 47 percent, to \$2.8 billion next year. We've increased other nutrition programs by similar percentages. And this year federal support for childhood immunization grants

will increase by \$52 million, an increase of 18 percent over last year's level. [better stats to come]

All told, funding for children's programs -- from nutrition and education to foster care and child immunizations -- has increased 66 percent since we took office.

But please understand: we will never measure our compassion in dollars spent. We will measure it by results -- the test will be the health and happiness of our children and, most important of all, the sense of well-being and self-reliance instilled in our families. My administration has targeted funding to programs that efficiently fulfill government's role in supporting families and keeping them together -- programs that work for the family.

At the same time, we must face another fact: government can sometimes be a burden as well as a boon. Over the past forty years, the child tax exemption has lagged far behind the soaring costs of child-rearing. I have asked Congress to increase the exemption by \$500 per child. For a family with four children, that's an increase of \$2,000. It's a crucial first step toward redressing the imbalance, and it's what we can afford now.

We have also successfully increased the earned income tax credit for low-income families. A strain on the family budget is a strain on the family -- and families just don't need the added pressure. And now I come to perhaps the most crucial matter of all: we must reform our nation's welfare system.

Americans are the most generous people on earth, but they want to see -- and they're entitled to see -- some relationship

between welfare and work. Welfare must never be what FDR warned it might become: a subtle destroyer of the spirit. It is not meant to be a way of life, or a family legacy passed from one generation to the next. Welfare can eat away at the ties that bind a family together.

State and local governments are undertaking the brave work of reform -- Learnfare in Wisconsin, REACH (Realizing Economic Achievement) in New Jersey, Washington State's FIP -- Family Independence Program -- these are all demonstration projects we support. My administration is committed to reform and we are acting now to waive unnecessary red tape that impedes reform.

There's no hidden agenda here. This Administration, the mayors, the state leaders who press for drastic reform of welfare aren't modern day Scrooges -- chiseling one more dime out of some poor family. Democrat or Republican, California or New Jersey, federal or state -- in our heart of hearts, we really believe reforming welfare is the best way to serve people -- break this sorry cycle of despair -- give people real hope. And we're going to keep on trying to do just that -- because every single American deserves to believe in the American Dream.

I have highlighted today the role of government -- both positive and negative -- because we are men and women of government. But let us never forget the work of private Americans dedicating themselves to the voluntary service of others, who create an environment where families can flourish.

~~Right now, as we've gathered here, somewhere in America~~

Right now, as we're gathered here, somewhere in America a volunteer is reading to a child; a businessman offers job training to a young man he's just met; a woman teaches young expectant mothers how to care for the children they will soon bring into the world; neighbors band together to rid their neighborhoods of the scourge of drugs.

Each of them is a Point of Light, offering service with no thought of reward, though the reward will be reaped by every American. I urge all of you, when you return to your cities, to do all in your power to encourage these caring men and women, to make yours a community of light.

In my State of the Union address, I announced that we would soon institute a commission on America's urban families. Their work will be one result of my meeting in January with some of your leaders. I have asked Gov. John Ashcroft of Missouri and Annette Strauss, the former Mayor of Dallas, to lead the commission and fulfill its mandate: to identify those government programs, at all levels, that weaken or strengthen urban families; to analyze ways to improve private efforts to strengthen families; and to recommend new policies to help families in our cities.

I am convinced that we can correct our mistakes, learn from our failures, and build on our successes. I do not exaggerate when I say that the future of America depends on our efforts. The family is the irreducible unit of comfort and love, and from families radiate neighborhoods, from neighborhoods come towns and

cities, and their health determines the health of our country, for better or worse. Like you I am committed to making our health whole, and to ensuring that our cities, as Theodore Parker said, remain the fireplaces of America, radiating warmth and light against the darkness.

Thank you, and may God bless the United States of America.

# # # #

(Ferguson/Gershowitz)  
March 5, 1992  
Draft Three  
NLC2

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES  
MARCH 9, 1992  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
11:40 A.M.

Thank you, Glenda (Hood) for that kind introduction. My greetings also to Mayor Sidney Barthelemy, Don Borut, and Wallace Stickney.

I'm pleased to be here today. *I enjoyed speaking to you*  
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over television hook-up last December, and it's nice to climb *better face to*  
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~~important meeting in the White House~~ with ten of your members.  
Like your organization as a whole, they represented a cross-section of urban America's leadership -- Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives, officials from large and small and mid-sized cities.

Of course, we're all concerned about the big issues -- jobs, family, world peace. Even so, I was struck by the unanimity of the message your members wanted to deliver. ~~It was an insight that we have been acting upon since I took office,~~ but *It* can't be repeated often enough in Washington, or any state capitol or city hall.

Your message was simply this: The enormous problems facing cities today -- from infant mortality to high drop-out rates to

runaway crime -- are partly symptoms of one larger problem, the deterioration of the American family.

~~That is the very serious issue I would like to discuss with you today.~~ As my favorite philosopher says, "What goes on at the White House is not nearly as important as what goes on in your house." The restoration of the American family ~~is central to the efforts of my Administration.~~ It lies at the heart of much of what we have done for three years.

Leaving aside for a moment the enormous costs -- the wasted human resources or the billions spent to repair the damage of broken homes, family breakdown ultimately endangers our position in a world increasingly driven by economic competition.

Certainly, the integrity of the family is critical on its own merit. But particularly at a time when our efforts must focus on economic growth, the family's disintegration endangers -- for all of us -- our ability to create and preserve jobs, and to create an economy open to participation by all our citizens.

So we must start with a clear-eyed look at what is really happening to the family in American communities today -- not just in poor urban neighborhoods but all across America. Then we must look inside ourselves, to establish the principles that will shape our approach. And then we must act.

The urgency is clear. We all know the statistics, the dreary drumbeat that tells of family breakdown. Today, one out of every four American children is born out of wedlock; in some areas the illegitimacy rate tops 80 percent. A quarter of our

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~~Even though *had a similar* Venereal disease and AIDS are at alarming levels in younger populations. A few communities now pass out condoms in school.~~

~~I believe that is clearly the wrong approach -- but in my heart I can understand the sheer desperation that drives public officials to do such things.~~

We know from experience the consequences of family decline. Neglected children are more susceptible to the lure of crime and drugs, are more likely to have poor health, drop out of school early, more likely to lead a life without hope.

~~You on the frontlines~~ *Each of you is in a position to* know the human costs that statistics can only dimly sketch. You know, as I do, that for every blip on a chart or dot on a graph, there is a human story to tell, and too often the story is a tragedy.

About ten days ago, I was in San Antonio, meeting with Latin American heads of state to intensify our war on drugs. While there I noticed a front-page story in the San Antonio Light. A cabdriver had been murdered last September -- another act of random, senseless violence -- and his murderer had just been found guilty.

But what was truly horrifying -- what would horrify any American -- was this: the murderer was a 12-year-old boy.

As the deputies took the boy from the courtroom, according to the newspaper story, they had trouble fitting him with shackles and handcuffs, so slender were his wrists. This youngster was four-feet tall, not yet a teenager, but now a convicted murderer.

The drumbeat continues: two teenagers shot dead in a New York public school -- an LSD ring busted up in an affluent Northern Virginia suburb -- or the harrowing stories of runaway kids and the horrors that befall them.

I know that almost all of you could tell stories equally distressing -- stories from neighborhoods in your cities where the unthinkable has become the commonplace. ~~Something is terribly, terribly wrong when grandparents triple-bolt their doors, stay isolated and alone, not daring to venture outside for fear of attack; when school children shoot each other over a pair of sneakers, and babies are born addicted to crack cocaine.~~

I am sure that all of you here took office with high confidence in our ability to solve these problems, only to discover -- sooner rather than later, I suspect -- that they were far more stubborn than we could imagine. Let's not forget that the trials our citizens face each and every day were generations in the making. We can't expect change overnight. But make no mistake: We will change things.

Let's face it. We can only change things if we work together. We must call a cease-fire in the war of words that too often consumes us. Casting blame brings no solutions. Nor will

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~~Families open up the world's horizons to individuals. They give older family members a stake in the future and connect children to their past.~~ In restoring the family, then, we restore to coming generations the values, the sense of right and wrong, the will and confidence to succeed that only a family can provide a child. And in doing this, we will reinvigorate our communities and cities as well.

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The government's first duty is like that of the physician: Do no harm. And the fact is, with the best of intentions, many

government policies in the past have worked against the institution of the family -- undermined young people's desire to marry and stay married, to provide for their children, to plan for their future.

As a practical matter, "doing no harm" means in part that we ensure parents retain the authority to make the big decisions for their families. This doesn't absolve parents of responsibility, just the opposite. For example, <sup>even if we are able to</sup> we ~~can~~ reform our education system, <sup>still</sup> ~~but~~ parents must <sup>still</sup> read to their children. The point is that government harms the family when it restricts its autonomy or usurps the authority of responsible parents.

Let me give you another example: Those of us in government can never plausibly claim to fight for families if we insist that government, not parents, must choose who cares for their children. Two years ago, my administration waged a fight in Congress over this very issue, and we won. We kept choice of child care out of the hands of government and put it where it belongs -- in the hands of parents.

*Examples of choice*

Now we're engaged in a similar fight, over whether parents should have the right to choose their children's schools. We know the benefits of competition; it is the linchpin of American prosperity. And competition among schools will be the linchpin of educational excellence, too.

But school choice is important for other reasons: It restores authority and responsibility to parents. And just as it makes our schools accountable, so does it make parents

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At the same time, we must face another fact: government can sometimes be a burden as well as a boon. Over the past forty years, the child tax exemption has lagged far behind the soaring costs of child-rearing. I have asked Congress to increase the exemption by \$500 per child. For a family with four children, that's an increase of \$2,000. It's a crucial first step toward redressing the imbalance, and it's what we can afford now.

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neighborhoods of the scourge of drugs.~~

Each ~~of them~~ is a Point of Light, offering service with no  
thought of reward, though the reward will be reaped by every  
American. <sup>*They are not a substitute for the good that government can do, but we will not solve  
our most pressing problems without their dedication*</sup> I urge all of you, when you return to your cities, to  
do all in your power to encourage these caring men and women, to  
make yours a community of light.

In my State of the Union address, I announced that we would  
soon institute a commission on America's urban families. Their  
work will be one result of my meeting in January with some of  
your leaders. I have asked Gov. John Ashcroft of Missouri and  
Annette Strauss, the former Mayor of Dallas, to lead the  
commission and fulfill its mandate: to identify those government  
programs, at all levels, that weaken or strengthen urban  
families; to analyze ways to improve private efforts to  
strengthen families; and to recommend new policies to help  
families in our cities.

I am convinced that we can correct our mistakes, learn from  
our failures, and build on our successes. I do not exaggerate  
when I say that the future of America depends on our efforts.  
The family is the irreducible unit of comfort and love, and from  
families radiate neighborhoods, from neighborhoods come towns and

cities, and their health determines the health of our country, for better or worse. Like you I am committed to making our health whole, and to ensuring that our cities, as Theodore Parker said, remain the fireplaces of America, radiating warmth and light against the darkness.

Thank you, and may God bless the United States of America.

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