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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(New Brunswick, New Jersey)

For Immediate Release

March 1, 1993

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
IN DISCUSSION WITH NATIONAL SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

Adult Learning Center
New Brunswick, New Jersey

11:20 A.M. EST

Q Welcome, Mr. President. We are so thrilled and pleased and honored to have you with us today. And we also would like to welcome Governor Florio, the Attorney General, Eli Segal from your office who works with national community service.

This is just such a treat. My name is Judy Kesin, and I am the principal of the Adult Learning Center of the New Brunswick Public Schools. We are so thrilled you could visit our program.

The Adult Learning Center -- we here view it as a place where the American Dream really plays itself out. We have adults who did not benefit from the first chance system, who have an opportunity to achieve in the second chance system. So we're excited that you can recognize that.

We have three main themes at our center. We have literacy programs -- people who come back to improve their reading; and we serve adults who need to improve their skills as well as deaf adults who come back to improve their skills. We have programs that we call second chance diploma program. So many of our students come back to school like Patty behind you here. She dropped out in the 10th grade. Patty is a 65-year-old grandmother of a 13, and she's got five great grandchildren. And this is the first opportunity that she had to come back to school.

We have lots of students who come to us for English as a second language. We have Elena Montavo. She has nine children -- and many other students as well. We have Elena back here -- is one of our ESL students. And Elena Montavo has nine children, never had the opportunity to go to school. She's from Puerto Rico and she's now moved up a level in ESL and is hoping to go on to become a nursing assistant. So it's very exciting.

We serve welfare mothers, people who are unemployed, people who need to improve their skills so that they can continue in the work force, young people who dropped out of school, like our Youth Corps students who have come back to school.

We're very proud of our center and I'd like you to know that last June when we had our graduation we honored our 1,000th graduate, high school graduate, since the program began in 1980.

In addition to all of the education programs that we offer, which we hope to help people be better prepared as citizens and parents and workers, community service is no stranger to us. We receive it and we provide it.

As in this room you will see several representatives from our community service experience. We've worked with Rutgers Civic

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Education and Community Service Program and have tutors in many of our instructional programs who have been working with us. For the last three years we've worked with them.

In addition we have --

THE PRESIDENT: Who are students at Rutgers?

Q Who are undergraduates from Rutgers.

THE PRESIDENT: How many of you are here who are undergraduates from Rutgers? Everybody in the black tee-shirts.

I've got it. Okay.

Q We also have represented Rutgers students who are working with the big sister-little sister program, where they are mentors at both the Lord Sterling School and Paul Robson School -- elementary schools in our school district at this table over here. And they are mentoring young students at the school from fifth to eighth graders. And these are also Rutgers undergraduates.

As well as at this table we have folks from a special creative arts program. We have art students from Nathan Gross, a part of Rutgers, who are teaching modern dance to children in the elementary school and Paul Robson school, I believe it is, after school. So those are very exciting connections.

Now, we are especially proud of our Youth Corps program -- can't you tell? (Laughter). Through a special unique partnership with the University of Medicine and Dentistry, my colleague here, Dr. Pauletta Heines and I have worked together on developing this program, which is one of 11 in our state. I might like to add also that we have been very fortunate that our Governor Jim Florio has been a very strong supporter of this program.

In Youth Corps -- our Youth Corps members receive assistance from -- Kenny is one of the interns -- from volunteers who work with the program. And in addition to that, they also serve. Our Corps members have been working in the community -- we have Corps members who are tutoring children at our after school program. We have Corps members who are working to renovate a community center. And at that community center they will be including the soup kitchen -- they're building facilities for a soup kitchen where many of our Corps members work as well. Some of our Corps members have worked at an Alzheimer's day program for adults. So we have them doing all kinds of wonderful things in the community.

I might add that Corps members across the state -- each year there have been 1,100 Corps members who have provided 200,000 hours of work in the state. So we know a lot about community service and we are really proud of it.

So these are the folks that you see before you. Mr. President, we would just like you to know how much -- how pleased we are. And we feel that our program really exemplifies the values that you have so often articulated. And because of that, we have a special presentation for you. Our students at the Learning Center, who all wish that they were a part of this, but were so pleased that you got to speak with them -- wanted to present this to you.

And it says, "In recognition of your unwavering support of community service and adult education, and for your efforts to encourage and promote this partnership, we adult learners hereby present to you, President Bill Clinton, this token of our deep appreciation, presented on this 1st day of March in the year 1993 at the New Brunswick Public Schools Adult Learning Center." And we had

as many of our students as we could fit -- but not all of them, because we had 22,000 -- sign this for you.

THE PRESIDENT: That's wonderful. Thank you.
(Applause.) Thank you very much.

Q It's our pleasure.

And now I would like to turn this over to a few of our people who would like to share some of their thoughts with you.

Q Good morning, President Clinton, Governor Florio, and Mayor Cahill and other distinguished guests. I'd like to welcome you to the Adult Learning Center in New Brunswick.

My name is David McKnight. I'm a Rutgers College student majoring in sociology with a minor in philosophy. I was asked today to speak to you -- or to, I guess, give you a brief testimonial about my life growing up here. As the eldest of five children growing up in an economically disadvantaged area in Trenton, I've experienced some rewarding as well as some challenging times. My family -- of course, it was very large. And therefore, my mother -- she was unable to work. And my father -- he supported the family. However, his income wasn't enough. So he had to, as a result, become -- we became recipients of public assistance. This has had a great -- I guess a psychological impact on me growing up and everything like that.

And so I guess if I could describe one instance or one incident which greatly precipitated my desire to help others, it would have to be the time -- I believe it was about nine or ten years ago. It was on a Thanksgiving Eve -- right before Thanksgiving. There was a knock at the door around 7:00 p.m. or 8:00 p.m. at night. And we weren't really expecting any guests. And my mother opened the door and there were some people from the community -- from a church down the street. And they had two turkeys for us and some trimmings and different things like that for my family so that we could have a decent Thanksgiving meal. And that really touched our hearts.

As I saw my mother standing in the doorway crying and my father standing next to her, just smiling, not knowing what to say -- and my sisters and brothers and I standing up at the top of the stairs just looking down, laughing and jumping for joy because we had something to eat for the next night, I just -- that then and there showed me the unselfishness that the community had. And that really greatly impacted my life.

And as a result, I decided that I would devote my life to community service so that I could help others. Today, as an honor student at Rutgers University, which is one of the most prestigious universities -- residences of the country, I can stand before you and say that I didn't fall through the cracks, but I stepped over the cracks so I could become where I am today.

And I would like -- I'm standing here today because I feel that I'm a bellwether to the students here and that I would be able to help them in their future endeavors. And I would like to -- I don't know -- my parents, they did graduate from high school. And as I see so many adults sitting here, I feel that I can just share with them some of my experiences. Because, although I am in college and you may not be able to tell by the way I speak or by the appearance of me that I came from this type of background, it's true. And I have something to relate to them with. And I look forward to going to Yale Law School, your alma mater, next year. And hopefully I'll get in. That's about it. (Laughter and applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Who's next?

Q I'm Betty Shockley. I'm on welfare right now, and I'm really trying to try to get off of it. I've never been on it in my life until about 10 months ago. My husband was in the service for 15 years. His leg got run over by a helicopter, so had to get out of the Army. After he got in the Army, he only was making \$80 a month. And now I'm on welfare and I'm trying to better my life, trying to get my GED. After I get my GED -- because I only have a third grade level. And once I get up to at least the ninth grade, tenth grade level, I can find a better job. And I want to find a better job, but I can't because of my -- Thank you very much for listening to me. (Applause.)

Q Hello, Mr. President. My name is Danyelle Marshall and I'm 18 years old. I'm a single parent of two. I'm a present member of the New Jersey Youth Corps.

THE PRESIDENT: Take your time. Let's give her a hand. (Applause.)

Q Hello, Mr. President. My name is Danyelle Marshall and I am 19 years old, a single parent of two, a -- member of the New Jersey Youth Corps. Being in this program I have learned to make my character stronger. And I now know that my voice helps others. The teachers here are willing and able to help us in any way possible. Along with everything that I have told you, I also get a high school diploma and work experience. By participating in community service -- all this comes from the community. And I feel if the community is so willing to help me, that I can perform my share of work at -- Johnson High School to give back what's been given to me.

This is to the young mothers who feel they cannot be a mother and a student at the same time. I'm here to tell you, bear on. And I'm learning tools to show you that it can be done.

Thank you, Mr. President, for listening and caring. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Who's next? Anybody else?

Well, first of all, I want to thank everyone who spoke. And maybe in a minute I could give some of you who haven't spoken a chance to say something if you want to say something.

Let me tell you why I came here today. First of all, I've been very impressed by a lot of the efforts that the state of New Jersey has already made to serve people who need an education and need a second chance and to give people a chance to serve their communities.

Secondly, this center reflects two very important things that I'm trying to do in my national economic program that I'm asking the Congress to pass. The first is what I came here to talk about, and I'm going over to Rutgers to talk to the students about in a few moments -- and that is the idea of giving people a chance to serve their country in their community, and in return, giving them the opportunity to further their education.

I've got the gentleman who was introduced here a minute ago with me to my right -- Eli Segal and I have been friends since we were about your age -- since we were very young. And I've asked him to head up our national and community service program. What we want to do is to provide young people the opportunity to do the following things:

Number one, if you go to college and you have loans outstanding, we want to give people the opportunity to go out in the community and do community work -- work as teachers or police officers, or work with the homeless, or work in hospitals, or work on

immunizing children who need it. And doing that for a lower rate of pay for a couple of years and then pay off their college loans by doing the same.

Number two, we want to give people some credit for community service they do while they're in college. And number three, we want to give people like you the opportunity to earn some credits to get college or job training by doing community service before you go.

So the idea is to make higher education available to more people, in return for the service they give to the community.

Now, in addition to all that, we're going to change the way young people pay their college loans back. We're going to make it possible for people who get out of college to pay their loans back as a percentage -- a limited percentage of their income. Because what happens now is a lot of young people get out of college, they have big college loans, so they take -- because they have to pay the loans back, they might want to get out, let's say, and do community service work which doesn't pay very much, but instead they may take a job paying a higher salary just to make their loan repayment. So we're going to try to restructure the college loan program so that if people want to serve over a long period of time they won't be discouraged from taking community service type jobs just because they pay less. They'll be able to pay their loans back as a percentage of their income.

Now, the other thing I want to emphasize is there's also an investment in this education program that helps centers like this. More money for adult education for people who come back after dropping out of school; more money to help welfare mothers move from dependence to independence; more money to help young people who drop out of school and come back.

When I was Governor of my state over the period of about 1983 to 1992, we increased by about six times the amount of investment in remaking education programs like this. It just exploded the number of people in it.

Now, why is that an important economic investment? Because this lady with her three children -- it wasn't her fault that her husband, first of all, is out of the service and then gets hurt, right? She can either draw taxpayer dollars by taking public assistance, or get an education and pay taxes to educate other people's children. One of the things we have to realize in this country is that economic investment is not just building an airport or a road or investing in new technology. It's also investing in people who are prepared to help themselves, to make sure that all of you can contribute in a world that is dominated by knowledge -- in a world in which the living you make depends on what you know and what you can learn.

And if every person, if every single mother in the United States could stand up and give the speech you just gave with the determination you just gave, it would not only help people like you, but you'd be helping people like me. Right? I mean, we're all better off, right? We are. And if you look at our country -- if you look at all the different racial and ethnic groups in our country, all the different levels of education, if you look at all the different levels of income, if you look at all the problems we've got, you just think about it -- if everybody in our country had a chance to get a really good high school diploma or a GED, and then get at least two years of education and training beyond that in some way or another, and if all the while they were doing it they were doing community service work, we'd have about half as many problems than we've got -- wouldn't we?

So that's why I wanted to come here today -- to emphasize that this economic program that I'm trying to persuade the Congress to pass will help people to do what you've been doing in service, will help people who do it to pile up education credits, and we'll invest more money in programs like those here at this center.

Developing the capacity of the American people to be all they can be is perhaps the most important job that I have as President. And people now all across America will see you today, and you may have no idea how many people you will inspire today because you had the courage to do what you did -- you, or you, or you, or all of you for being here. And I really -- I thank you very much. You were great. (Applause.)

Would anybody else like to say anything or ask a question? Yes, the lady with nine children. You're a beautiful mother to have nine children. We're one of you going to talk? Yes, go ahead. Tell us your name and how you happen to be here.

Q I'm a junior from Rutgers College and my home town is Atlantic City. And on behalf of the Rutgers community I am pleased to present you with this sweatshirt in appreciation for your outstanding commitment and dedication to the youth of America and the future of community service. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: I wish I had this this morning in Washington. (Laughter.) The wind chill factor was 13 when I was on my jog this morning. Thank you very much. It's beautiful.

Q My name is Shantel Ehrenberg. I'm a dance major at the School of the Arts, and I'm originally from Minnesota. I have a question as during our program with the children and teaching them about art and through art, eliminating prejudice and educating them on something that they find kind of foreign to them. I was wondering what you were going to do, if you have any plans for the arts, funding the arts.

THE PRESIDENT: Programs like the one you're in will be funded basically based on the initiative of people at the local level. So if there's a program like this one at the local level which you're participating in, then it will be eligible to get community service funding.

So the answer is maybe yes, maybe no. And let me tell you why that's important. We don't want to set up a big new national bureaucracy to tell every state in every community what they should teach and what they should do. What we want to do is to build on the strengths of existing community programs like the one you're involved in. In other words, why should we come into New Jersey and create some big bureaucracy and waste a lot of money hiring people to administer programs when you've got a perfectly good program here who can access the money and use it all to put people to work teaching art or whatever else you're doing.

So the answer is that the people who are interested in arts education throughout America, once this national program is passed, should make sure that that is an important part of the community service efforts in every state and every community. Because they will be certainly eligible for it, but we're not going to tell people what to do.

As a matter of fact, we'll have relatively few mandates in this program. The two things we are going to do is to require every state to try to provide opportunities for college graduates to be either teachers or police officers because we know we've got a shortage of both of them in every state. But otherwise, particularly with the college students themselves or with young people who are like you who are in school and may be earning credit toward going to

college or getting job training -- we're going to let that be highly decentralized so that you can meet the needs in each community and state.

Q I'm a Rutgers College graduating senior in May. And I was wondering when you think that law you're trying to instate or whatever is going to come into effect. I'm worrying, like, when I graduate in May, whether I'm going to go pursue chiropracting college or because I may not have the money for it, I may have to get a job or get in more debt to try to get into chiropracting school. And I think it's a good program that you're trying to instate, but how soon would it come that we would have a chance to excel?

THE PRESIDENT: It's up to the Congress. We'll present the law, the bill, soon. And I'm hoping it will pass this year and become immediately effective.

Q My name is Judy Levy Roth. I'm from Israel. I went three months ago to get my citizenship, and they failed me because I spelled -- wrong. And some people do not test -- (inaudible) -- as a test to get my citizenship. (Inaudible.) (Applause.) Not good for me -- I didn't get my citizenship.

THE PRESIDENT: I have a feeling you will. (Laughter.)

Yes, ma'am. Do you really have five great grandchildren?

Q Yes. Mr. President, I'm just overwhelmed just sitting with you in the room -- just to look at you. (Laughter.) This was a dream that I had in my youth; one day I hoped that I'd be able to see one of our Presidents in person. And on Friday, last Friday, I was sitting in the science and I was taking my test, and my English teacher -- he came in, he said, go to the office when you're finished.

I stopped then -- oh, what did I do now? (Laughter.) So I went in the office and she said, "Sit down, Hattie." I sit down. She says, "The teachers have chosen you to be in the room with the President." And when she said that I'd like to pass out. (Laughter.) Oh, this is wonderful -- something I'd been wanting to do for years. And I just thank the Lord for being here. And listening to your speech on the radio, I knew that you were a God-sent man because every time you would say something you would say God -- by the help of God we will make it. And soon I realized that we will make it. We have a good President and we'll back you up, and I know we'll make it. (Applause.)

And I was a dropout in 1945, right -- so I come back in 1992, right? So this year I'll be graduating with my diploma, 1993. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Anybody else want to say anything?

Q I do, I do. (Laughter.)

Q On behalf of the New Jersey Youth Corps it's my pleasure to give you this as a token of thanks for caring so much about the youth of America today. (Applause.)

Q It's my pleasure to have you here, not only because you're the President but because you're a President we all like. (Laughter.) And I just wanted to ask you one question. As a minority student in the United States I have experience of some kind of prejudice in the country and how we have to struggle a little bit harder than everyone else. And I just wanted to ask you -- wanted to tell you that all this that you're doing is great, especially for Hispanics, Latinos, blacks -- we all recognize how you're trying to

make it seem that this is not only a white country anymore, but all a mixture of all different cultures.

And one of the groups that I've seen that has not been seen and they are a minority group, and there has not been putting any attention toward the handicapped people. And I think that I wanted to ask you that -- are you thinking of doing anything for them, because I think that they're there and we should put some kind of value to them and some kind importance. I'm very close to one family that they have experienced with their handicapped child many different problems. And one of the things was the Reagan administration, they always had been cutting down on those programs, especially for the handicapped. And they had to have been placed in different schools, which is not appropriate for handicapped people. And they have, you know, have many problems because it's not where they should be. Do you plan to do anything for them?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, I'm glad you brought that up. Let's talk about two or three things. Let me say, first of all, a lot of people with disabilities have problems that aren't easy to solve, as you know. But they also have enormous potential to contribute to this country. I can make the same argument for people with disabilities I made for all of you -- that it is in our interest to see that everyone develops to the maximum of his or her capacity and serve to the maximum of his or her capacity.

Let me just mention two or three things. Number one, last year before I became President, the Congress passed -- Congress passed and President Bush signed a bill called the Americans For Disabilities Act. It has not been fully implemented. One of the commitments I made in this campaign is to try to bring that law to life for Americans with disabilities. It provides all kinds of extra effort to make America accessible and to invest in the potential of people with disabilities.

The second thing is, I hope that a lot of these service programs will involve special services to people with disabilities, working toward independence, not dependence. There are a lot of government programs now which if you know someone with disabilities, you know it's basically -- it favors funding that is designed almost to keep disabled people dependent instead of independent. And more and more disabled people want to and are able to, given technological supports, to live on their own, to work on their own, to live and at least assist in living environments. And this is a very big deal for me and for my administration.

My Domestic Policy Advisor has a child whom I've known since he was a little boy who had cerebral palsy and is now living out on his own in an assisted-living environment. And he will soon get his high school diploma. So I believe in that.

The third thing I would say is we're going to do a lot of work through the Department of Education to try to make sure that children get appropriate placements and at least have the chance that they need to get a public education.

I don't know if you've noticed this, but not this Saturday, the Saturday before last I did a little town meeting like this with children. And there was a nine-year-old child with cerebral palsy who was very eloquent on the show. And she said she had a twin sister who was also in a wheelchair, but her twin sister couldn't speak except with the use of a computer, which is not uncommon. And she said because she could speak, she was in a regular classroom; because her sister had to use the computer to speak, she was in a special ed classroom. And she felt that they had the same mental capacity.

So she said "Can you help get my sister in my classroom?" And I asked -- it was an interesting thing to question I

asked her, I said, "Would you, if your sister couldn't do the work, would you then favor her getting special assistance?" And she said, yes. And I said, "What you really want is for your sister just to have a chance to do what you do?" And she said, that's what I want. I just want her to have a chance. It was very moving.

But a lot of schools and school districts are just now learning what they can do. And we're always learning more and more about proper placements of these children. So anyway, those are some of things that I will work on for persons with disabilities. (Applause.)

I appreciate the other comment you made, because I am trying to demonstrate to the American people that we are all one country. We have to live together not only with tolerance for one another, but with absolute appreciation for one another's differences. We shouldn't just put up with one another; we should actually enjoy the fact that this is a country of people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

When you look at what's going on today in the former Yugoslavia with the ethnic hatred -- the Serbs and the Croats and the Bosnian-Muslims shooting and killing each other and starving each other with differences -- cultural and historic differences that are deep and long-lasting, but at least to the naked eye not near as different as the cultural differences represented just in this room -- for all of the problems we have in this country, we are moving forward on that.

And I really believe that a great test of whether we will go into the next century and maintain our position as the greatest and strongest nation in the world may well be whether we can learn to live together across racial and ethnic lines and not just put up with one another, but absolutely enjoy the fact and make the most of it.

One of our counties -- Los Angeles County in California -- has 150 different racial and ethnic groups within one county. I once spoke at a university there that had students from 122 different countries.

This can be an enormous strength of us in a world that is getting smaller and smaller and smaller. If you look around this room, the fact that some of you can come from such different cultures is a very big positive in a world that's getting smaller. The fact that we have a huge Hispanic population, for example, will be an enormous asset to us as more and more of our trade goes to Mexico, Central America, and South America to try to build up their economy. That's just one example.

If you look at the fact that we have a substantial Asian population, it can be an enormous strength to us with the fastest growing economies in the world being in Asia. There are lots of examples. The fact that we have a big African American population will be an enormous strength to us when 20 years from now we might find out that Africa then has the fastest growing economy in the world if they can solve some of their political problems.

So America is in an incredible position to have another great century as a nation if we can learn to really build on the strength of our diversity.

Oh, yes. I want you all to be -- you've been invited to ride a bus over to the speech. And I'm going to go with you. (Applause.) Ready?

Q Mr. President, I have a question before you go if you don't mind. (Laughter.) It's not directly related to this

event. But if you could, I know the American public is really interested in knowing what is going on with the World Trade Center explosion. Was it a terrorist incident?

THE PRESIDENT: I'm not in a position to say that now. And I don't mean because I know something that I'm not telling you. I think you know that there was severe structural damage done to the World Trade Center. And as I think Governor Cuomo has already announced, you know the federal and state and local people have been working together ever since the incident occurred. It took a substantial amount of time just to get people down in the crater that the bomb made to begin the analysis.

I can tell you this -- that we have put full, full resources -- the federal law enforcement agencies, all kinds of agencies, all kinds of access to information at the service of those who are working to figure out who did this and why and what the facts are. But I cannot answer your question yet.

Q Mr. President, on national service, you campaigned on the promise that anybody who wanted to go to school could go and then repay their loans in national service. I think in your economic plan under investment there's \$3 billion allotted for national service.

THE PRESIDENT: More now.

Q Which would not be enough to provide this to everyone. How long would it take to phase it in? And do you think that you're not really fulfilling your campaign promise?

THE PRESIDENT: No. As a matter of fact, we are --in the campaign, we only talked about making it available as an option. We talked about making it available for everybody to pay off their loans as a percentage of their income; and then the funding of national service slots will be college graduates. That's all we talked about in the campaign. Now, we're actually going to start funding slots for people before they go to high school. And we think we'll start -- we think we'll have 35,000 of them, which is twice as many people as were ever in the Peace Corps in any given year, in addition to those coming out of college.

What we don't know, and we may have to modify the funding I asked for from Congress over the next four years, but it is impossible to know how many people will choose the service option. So the funding we asked for is based on our best available effort to estimate how many people will choose the service option. All the students will be able to choose to pay their loans back as a percentage of their income immediately. And we think we'll be able to accommodate over the next four years, everybody who chooses the service option. We think we will.

But we have to build it up a little in the first year or two so we learn how to do it. There has been a pilot project going, as you probably know, under legislation that was sponsored in the previous Congress by, I think, Senator Nunn, Senator Wofford -- and others. And we're going to expand it just as quickly as we can, and we're going to do our level best, once we get the system worked out over the next year or so, to make service available to everybody who wants it. We think their numbers are about right. We think we have funded it about the level of maximum participation for college graduates. But we're adding on pre-college students, which we think is a good thing. This is something I had not planned to do basically until I kept seeing programs like the LA Conservation Corps, City Year, programs like the ones the young people are involved in here.

Q Are you concerned, sir, that it may become a kind of a new entitlement, that it will grow beyond the ability fund and out of control?

THE PRESIDENT: No, if we can't fund it, we'll just have to -- we'll have to -- the entitlement will be access to a loan you can pay back based on a percentage of your income, which will be a huge -- we're going to strengthen collection procedures, cut defaults, cut the cost of administering the program until we can fund a lot of that.

The service issue cannot become an entitlement. If all of a sudden in one year a million people want to convert from a loan to service, we won't be able to afford that. But based on the experiences we have seen in the past, we think that this will be by far the biggest service program in the history of America. And we think we'll be able to take everybody who will choose the service option. We're just going on historical precedence now. We think we can more than fund the people who will choose the service option in the first four years. If they don't, I would consider going back. But we can't let that become an absolute entitlement.

Q -- economic aid, sir, to New York, and are you prepared to do that? Governor Cuomo has asked for it.

THE PRESIDENT: We are processing -- this morning, I got a report on that. And it's my understanding that we are going through the regular agencies and that the request will be processed promptly. I don't think that there is any problem with the request that he made as far as I understand it. And we're giving that a high priority.

Q Mr. President, why did you choose Rutgers for this announcement? And what impressed you about their community service program here?

THE PRESIDENT: I chose Rutgers because, first of all, the university was involved in this facility and because I want to keep highlighting adult education, education of welfare recipients, education of kids that drop out of school, and because I like this New Jersey Youth Program here. Under Governor Florio's administration they started, I think, 9, 10, 11 of these. Something like that. And I want to encourage -- again, I do not want this to be a bureaucratic program. I want to encourage kind of an entrepreneurial spirit out there at the state and local level. I want states to be encouraged to set up youth corps. I want comprehensive community service centers like this to be able to get people doing national service.

So I wanted to come here to say I really appreciate what these folks are doing, but also to give the rest of America an idea of what we mean by community service, what we mean by national service, and how it can embrace people of different ages and different backgrounds with different needs; because it's very important that to make this work, we're going to have to rely on the creativity of people at the grassroots level. And the last thing I want is another centralized bureaucracy telling people how to serve.

As I said, right now, the only decisions we have made for categories of service that have to be approved in every state are in the area of police and teaching, because we know as a practical matter we need more community policing in high-crime areas where we can reduce crime and work with kids and not just be there after it happens. And we know we need more teachers in a lot of core areas to reduce the student-teacher ratio and increase learning.

So we've done that. But otherwise, this program is not going to have a huge set of national requirements or bureaucracy.

Q Mr. President, how closely, if at all, did you work with Senator Bradley's neighborhood corps bill?

THE PRESIDENT: We reviewed it very closely. That's why we invited -- I think he's going to meet us over at Rutgers today. I was very impressed by it. And as a matter of fact, I had a personal conversation with him about it. That's one of the reasons we wanted to come up here, too. And I invited him to come today, and I think he's going to be over there.

Q Mr. President, do you fear that a fear of terrorism in America might change the way of life that most Americans have, if this bombing proves to be terrorism?

THE PRESIDENT: I certainly hope not. We've been very blessed in this country to have been free of the kind of terrorist activity that has gripped other countries. Even a country like Great Britain, that has a much lower general crime rate, has more of that sort of activity because of the political problems it has been involved in.

I don't want the American people to overreact to this at this time. I can tell you, I have put the -- I will reiterate -- I have put the full resources of the federal government, every conceivable law enforcement information resource we could put to work on this we have. I'm very concerned about it.

But I think it's also important that we not overreact to it. After all, sometimes when an incident like this happens, people try to claim credit for it who didn't do it, and if sometimes if folks like that can get you to stop doing what you're doing, they've won half the battle. If they get you ruffled, if they get us to change the way we live and what we do, that's half the battle.

So I can't give -- I would discourage the American people from overreacting to this. It's a very serious thing. And I'm heartbroken for the people who were killed and their families and those who were injured. There was some significant business disruptions, too, as you probably know and as I'm afraid we'll find out more about in the next day or two, just by shutting down the World Trade Center and all the activities that go on there. But I plead with the American people and the good people of New York to right now keep your courage up, go on about your lives. And we're working as hard as we can to get to the bottom of this.

Q I just first want to say that when I saw you on video when you were first running for office, you had a clip of how you met President Kennedy at Boys Nation. And I, too, was at Girls Nation in 1990, when I was a junior in high school. But I didn't have the fortunate chance of meeting President Bush. But I am just very thankful that I could meet a President, especially one who I can support.

But besides that, I would like to thank Rutgers and my college -- I'm a sophomore -- for giving us the opportunity to meet with you today and instill a lot of hope in New Jersey and everyone else who watches this, because if people see the importance in helping one another, I think that's the only way our nation will become stronger. It's investing and reinvesting in our nation. And if people don't come outside of themselves and help one another there's no way that we will move forward in life. So I'm very happy that you're here today because I think that people will now see how important it is for us to help one another. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

Q The National Rifle Association right now in New Jersey is actively seeking to overturn the assault weapons ban that

marksmanship and to be secure in their own homes and own a weapon to be secure. I just don't believe that.

So I hope that is a debate that will continue. And I think, as I said, what Governor Florio did and what Governor Wilder did, I think will contribute to Americans facing this and trying to reconcile our absolute obligation under the Constitution to give people the right to handle a firearm responsibly and our obligation to try to preserve peace and keep these kids alive in our cities.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

12:12 P.M. EST

Governor Florio put on the books in 1990. They say if they're successful, then no other state will be able to enact rigid gun control and that you'll have a very tough time getting the Brady bill through Congress. Are you concerned about that?

THE PRESIDENT: I think Governor Florio is right. And I'm going to sure try to pass the Brady bill. I think Americans who want safer streets and still want people to be able to hunt and fish and pursue their sporting activities should take a lot of heart in the success that Governor Wilder had in Virginia recently. And Virginia it has become a source, as you know, of weapons for a lot of illegal activity all up and down the Atlantic seaboard. And they've gone to that once-a-month limitation on the purchase of guns.

I think -- you know, we can't be so fixated on our desire to preserve the rights of ordinary Americans to legitimately own handguns and rifles -- it's something I strongly support -- we can't be so fixated on that that we are unable to think about the reality of life that millions of Americans face on streets that are unsafe, under conditions that no other nation -- no other nations -- has permitted to exist. And at some point I still hope that the leadership of the National Rifle Association will go back to doing what it did when I was a boy and which made me want to be a lifetime member because they put out valuable information about hunting and marksmanship and safe use of guns. But just to know of the conditions we face today in a lot of our cities and other places in this country and the enormous threat to public safety is amazing.

I've got young Americans now in Somalia trying to create conditions of peaceful existence there in a country where it is difficult, but there are a lot of young Americans who are living in neighborhoods today that are about as dangerous or worse than what kids are facing in Somalia in terms of shots. Not in terms of hunger and access to medicine and shelter -- that's different.

But I have to tell you I think that Governor Florio did a gutsy thing here. I think Governor Wilder did a brave thing. I had my own encounters back home in Arkansas, and I just hope to be able to pass the Brady bill and do some other sensible things that do not unduly infringe on the right of the law-abiding citizen to keep and bear arms, but will help make these children's future safer. And I think we ought to do that.

Q Do you think that the NRA's contributing to that threat that you just talked about because it is opposing these gun control measures?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I don't want to get into character. I think that it is an error for them to oppose every attempt to bring some safety and some rationality into the way we handle some of the most serious criminal problems we have. And these things do not unduly affect the right to keep and bear arms. It's not going to kill anybody to wait a couple of days to get a handgun while we do a background check on somebody that wants to buy a gun.

I have a lot of -- I have personal experience with this. I live in a state where half the people have a hunting or a fishing license. I know somebody who once sold a weapon to a person who went out and killed a bunch of people because he was an escapee from a mental hospital. And the guy liked to never got over it. And if he had just had a law where he was supposed to wait two or three days to check, they would have found that out.

That is a -- I know that happens. I don't believe that everybody in America needs to be able to buy a semiautomatic or an automatic weapon -- built only for the purpose of killing people -- in order to protect the right of Americans to hunt and to practice

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

March 20, 1995

RECOMMENDED TELEPHONE CALL

TO: Senator Barbara Mikulski

DATE: As soon as possible

RECOMMENDED BY: Patrick Griffin
Eli Segal

PURPOSE: To encourage her to work with Senator Bond to keep AmeriCorps out of the rescissions package.

BACKGROUND: On Friday, March 24 the Senate VA/HUD Subcommittee will mark up its 1995 rescission package. Mikulski is the ranking Democrat on the subcommittee and we believe that she can be persuasive in maintaining full funding for AmeriCorps.

As you know, the House reduced funding for AmeriCorps for 1995 from \$580 million to \$160 million, which would force AmeriCorps to close its doors in a few months. Even if AmeriCorps is funded at \$370 million, it is "on a clear path to incremental phase out", in the words of House VA/HUD subcommittee chairman Jerry Lewis.

Our fear is that Senator Bond, the chairman of the VA/HUD subcommittee, is inclined to feel that \$370 million in funding for AmeriCorps is a compromise between the House position and the Administration's position. However, this level of funding would force thousands of AmeriCorps volunteers to go home immediately.

We believe that Senator Mikulski, who enjoys a good working relationship with Senator Bond, can keep AmeriCorps out of the Senate rescission package altogether, especially since Chairman Hatfield has not put Bond under pressure to make major cuts.

In asking Senator Mikulski for her help on

this matter, it is important to note that she considers herself the "godmother of national service", having shepherded through a demonstration bill in 1990. Mikulski does not feel that the White House has always recognized her efforts on this issue, and may raise this with you.

A call to Senator Mikulski, referencing the mark-up on Friday, reinforcing your commitment to national service as one of your highest personal priorities, along with your recognition of the intellectual and emotional capital that she has invested in this initiative would be extremely helpful. The key message to her how important it is to you that AmeriCorps is not in the VA/HUD subcommittee rescission package, which means full funding for 1995.

TOPICS OF DISCUSSION:

1. Thank Senator Mikulski for her long-standing leadership on this issue and tell her that you need her help to keep this program alive.
2. Emphasize that you view national service as "a movement" and a "new paradigm" (her terms) and not just a government program. While we don't have it perfect yet, with her leadership we will.
3. Ask for her support in working with Senator Bond to spare AmeriCorps from the rescission package.

CONTACT PERSON AND
TELEPHONE NUMBER(S):

White House Operator

DATE OF SUBMISSION:

March 20, 1995

ACTION: _____
