

Docs re:
legislative

INTERNAL TALKING POINTS: ADOPTION LEGISLATION

- With the strong urging and support of the President and the First Lady, the Congress is working to pass historic, bipartisan legislation on adoption before the congressional recess.
- Last spring, the House of Representatives passed the Adoption Promotion Act of 1997, sponsored by Representatives Camp and Kennelly, with the strong support of the President.
- On Saturday evening, November 8, 1997, with the strong urging of the Administration, the Senate passed by unanimous consent the Promotion of Adoption, Safety, and Support for Abused and Neglected Children Act, sponsored by Senators Chafee and Rockefeller.
- With the close involvement of the Administration, the House of Representatives and the Senate are working to resolve the differences in their two bills and pass an adoption bill before the recess to ensure that a bill reaches the President's desk this year.
- The pending legislation builds on the commitment of the President to at least double the number of children from the child welfare system who are adopted or placed in permanent homes by the year 2002. It incorporates recommendations made by the Administration's *Adoption 2002* report to provide states with financial incentives to increase the number of children adopted and to make other changes in federal law that will make adoption easier and move children more quickly out of foster care and into permanent homes.
- The President and the First Lady are committed to improving our nation's child welfare system for the thousands of children who come to rely on it because their own homes jeopardize their health or well-being. Today, approximately 500,000 of America's children live in our nation's foster care system.
- The President and the First Lady have worked hard on this legislation. Last December, the President directed the Secretary of Health and Human Services to conduct wide consultations and report to him with specific recommendations for legislative and administrative strategies to move children more rapidly from foster care to permanent homes and to meet the goal of at least doubling adoptions and other permanent placements by the year 2002.
- Issuing the Executive Memorandum on adoption in a radio address, the President said, "With this effort we're saying no child should be trapped in the limbo of foster care; no child should be uncertain what the word "family" or "parent" or "home" mean, particularly when there are open arms waiting to welcome these children into safe and strong households, where they can build good, caring lives." [December 16, 1997]
- On Valentine's Day, 1997, the President received the formal recommendations for legislative and administrative action -- in a report called *Adoption 2002* -- in an Oval Office ceremony. There, he committed to (1) making sure that children's health and safety are the paramount

concerns of the child welfare system; (2) meeting the goal of doubling the number of adoptions each year by working with states to set state-by-state annual targets and to provide assistance for innovative strategies; (3) proposing legislation to give bonuses to states for each adoption over the prior year's total, with larger bonuses for adoptions of children with special needs; (4) working with Congress to shorten the time a child in foster care waits for a court hearing; (5) establishing national awards for excellence in promoting adoption; and (6) redoubling efforts to make sure that no child of one race is deprived of a loving home when a child of another race is prepared to give it.

- Committing to aggressive legislative and administrative action, the President said "Putting this plan into place today will mean that we are ensuring that no child will languish in foster care." [February 14, 1997]
- The Adoption Promotion Act of 1997, which the House of Representatives passed last spring and the President's strongly supported, reflects the President's priorities. The Senate bill currently under consideration also reflects the President's priorities and commitment to improving our nation's child welfare system. The Administration is very hopeful that a bill will reach the President's desk this year.
- If passed, this legislation would build on the President's strong record on promoting adoption. For example, the President has:

Made adoption more affordable for families by signing into law the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996, which provides a \$5,000 tax credit for families adopting children and a \$6,000 tax credit for families adopting children with special needs;

Broke down racial and ethnic barriers to adoption by signing the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act in 1994 and by strengthening it through the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996 to ensure that the adoption process is free from discrimination and delays on the basis of race, culture and ethnicity; and

Provided supports for child protection and adoption by signing the into law the Family and Medical Leave Act in 1993, which enables parents to take time off to adopt a child without losing their jobs or health insurance and ensuring that the welfare reform law maintained the guarantee of child protection and adoption, and did not reduce funds for child welfare, child abuse, foster care and adoption service.

- November is National Adoption Month. Last week, the President issued a proclamation, which urged, "As a Nation, we have before us an opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of our most vulnerable children. As we observe National Adoption Month, we reaffirm our commitment to adoption as a new beginning for thousands of children, and we celebrate the many American families who have embraced these children by accepting the rewards and responsibilities of adoption." [November 4, 1997]

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

November 13, 1997

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I am pleased that the Senate and the House of Representatives have passed historic, bipartisan legislation to promote adoption and improve our nation's child welfare system, giving our nation's most vulnerable children what every child deserves -- a safe and permanent home. I very much look forward to signing the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 into law.

This legislation makes clear that children's health and safety are the paramount concerns of the public child welfare system. I am particularly pleased that the bill incorporates my Administration's recommendations to provide states with financial incentives to increase the number of children who are adopted and to make other changes in federal law that will make adoption easier and move children more rapidly out of foster care and into permanent homes. The legislation also strengthens support to states for services that help families stay together when that is possible and promote adoption when it is not. Most important, this legislation will help us meet the goal of doubling, by the year 2002, the number of children who are adopted or permanently placed each year.

I want to thank the many members of the Senate and the House of Representatives who worked so hard on this bipartisan achievement, but I particularly want to thank the congressional leadership and the sponsors of this legislation, Senators Chafee and Rockefeller and Representatives Camp and Kennelly, for their commitment. And I would like to add a special word of thanks to the First Lady for her tenacity and dedication to this important issue.

I can think of no better way to celebrate National Adoption Month than to sign this legislation into law.

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11/12, 5 pm

DRAFT

Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997
November 13, 1997

This bill will protect children's health and safety, move children out of foster care faster, increase adoptions and support adoptive families.

Reasonable Efforts. The requirement that States make "reasonable efforts" to preserve and reunite families that have maltreated their children is rewritten to ensure that such efforts make the health and safety of the child paramount. States are not required to make efforts to keep families together in cases of "aggravated circumstances" (such as abandonment, torture, chronic abuse, and sexual abuse) or murder or assault of another of their children. States are required to make reasonable efforts to place the child for adoption or with a legal guardian in a timely manner.

Termination of Parental Rights (TPR). States must initiate proceedings to terminate parental rights after a child has been in foster care for 15 of the previous 22 months, except in specified circumstances.

Adoption Incentive Payments. \$20 million is authorized for each of 5 years (FY 1999-2003) for bonus payments to states that increase adoptions of foster children above prior levels. Incentive payments equal \$4,000 for each adoption of a foster child above the base number, plus an additional \$2,000 for a total of \$6,000 per special needs adoption.

State Report Cards. The Secretary will annually rate State performance on a number of factors including the number of adoptions and length of stay in foster care.

Reauthorization and Renaming of the Family Preservation Program. This capped entitlement grant program to the States is substantially revised and reauthorized for 3 years. The goals of the program are expanded to include time-limited family reunification and adoption promotion. The 3-year total reauthorization of funding is \$875 million, \$65 million in outlays above the current funding level.

Health Care Coverage for Adopted Children with Special Needs. States are required to provide health insurance coverage for any child with an adoption assistance agreement who has special needs and who the State has determined would not be adopted without medical assistance.

Eligibility for Adoption Assistance in Cases of Dissolved Adoptions. Children with special needs will no longer lose their eligibility for federally subsidized adoption agreements because their adoption dissolves or their adoptive parents die.

Child Welfare Demonstration Projects. HHS is permitted to approve up to 10 additional child welfare and foster care demonstration projects each year.

Adoptions Across Geographic Lines. States may not postpone or deny adoption while looking for an in-state placement when a suitable out-of-state adoption is possible.

Criminal Record Checks. States are required to make criminal records checks for prospective foster or adoptive parents. States could opt out of this provision through written notice from the Governor or through state law.

Technical Assistance to Promote Adoption. The legislation authorizes \$10 million per year for 3 years for the Secretary of HHS to provide technical assistance to the states to promote adoption, half of which must be used to help courts facilitate permanent placements.

fyi - memo to
POTUS re:
legislation.

WEEKLY SUBMISSION

On Thursday, November 13, the Senate and the House of Representatives passed the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, which represents an enormous victory for your agenda to promote adoption and improve our nation's child welfare system. The legislation includes your priorities for child welfare reform, as outlined in your executive memorandum on adoption to members of your Cabinet (which you issued in a radio address on December 14, 1996), and in the *Adoption 2002* report that HHS presented to you last Valentine's Day, February 14, 1997. We are working on a bill signing ceremony with key Members of Congress, advocates and foster and adopted children in the East Room next Thursday, November 20.

Staff from the DPC, the First Lady's Office, and HHS have worked with bi-partisan congressional staff on this legislation since you issued the executive memorandum on adoption less than a year ago. As you know, Representatives Camp and Kennelly sponsored an adoption bill which passed in the House last Spring and which you strongly endorsed. The Senate passed its bill, sponsored by Senators Chafee and Rockefeller, on Saturday, November 8, 1997 -- after much deliberation and negotiation. As you know, the First Lady was intimately involved, helping to shape the substance of the legislation and making important calls to Members of Congress (her leadership was noted in the public statements of the Members before the final passage of the legislation).

The legislation:

- Makes clear that children's health and safety are the paramount concerns of the public child welfare system;
- Clarifies the "reasonable efforts" standard;
- Speeds up court hearings for children in foster care and requires that States initiate proceedings to terminate parental rights after a child has been in foster care for 15 of the previous 22 months, except in specified circumstances;
- Provides States with financial incentives to increase the number of children who are adopted (through bonus payments to States that increase adoptions of foster children above prior levels -- \$4,000 for each adoption above the base number, plus an additional \$2,000 for a total of \$6,000 per special needs adoption (the full bonus outlined in the *Adoption 2002* report);
- Directs the Secretary of HHS to rate State performance on a number of factors including the number of adoptions and length of stay in foster care;
- Reauthorizes the Family Preservation Program (staving off an expected battle next year), while also expanding the goals of the program to include time-limited family reunification and adoption promotion and increasing its funding levels.
- Ensures health coverage for adopted children with special needs (by requiring states to provide coverage through Medicaid or the new child health program);
- Expands HHS authority to authorize child welfare waivers to states through child welfare and foster care demonstration projects (the Republicans had wanted to

- authorize unlimited waivers, and compromised at 10 additional waivers per year);
- Breaks down barriers to adoptions across State lines by making clear that States may not postpone or deny adoption while looking for an in-state placement when a suitable out-of-state adoption is possible;
- Requires States to check criminal records of prospective foster or adoption parents (but allows Governors to request to opt out of requirement); and
- Authorizes HHS to provide \$10 million per year of technical assistance to States to promote adoption, half of which must be used to help courts facilitate permanent placements.

The bill authorizes \$76 million over five years of additional funding (principally representing an increase in the Family Preservation Program, the requirement of health coverage for special needs adoptions, and technical assistance funding). The cost were off-set by a temporary adjustment of contingency fund for State welfare programs, which the Congress plans to take up next year for reform.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

February 14, 1997

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AND THE FIRST LADY
AT PRESENTATION OF ADOPTION 2002 REPORT

The Oval Office

12:51 P.M. EST

MRS. CLINTON: I want to welcome all of you to the White House and wish you a happy Valentine's Day. I am delighted that we are holding this event on a day when we think about all kinds of love, and we are gathered to announce a plan that we hope can bring the love of a permanent family to the hundreds of thousands of children waiting in our foster care system.

Two months ago the President directed Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala to investigate the barriers that keep so many of our children in the limbo of foster care. He asked the Secretary to report to him with specific recommendations on how best to move children more rapidly from foster care to permanent homes, and how to meet a national goal of doubling the number of children placed annually in permanent homes by the year 2002.

In a few minutes, Olivia Golden, Acting Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services, will present her department's findings to the President. I'm very impressed by the hard work that went into this report. It is based on extensive interviews, surveys and consultations with placement agencies, adoption and child welfare advocates, and social workers nationwide. I'm particularly pleased that careful attention was paid to the thoughts and observations of adoptive and foster parents because they know better than anyone the strengths and shortcomings of our system.

This report makes it very clear that foster care should never be a permanent solution. No child should grow up in foster care. Children deserve prompt, efficient decision-making from the adults who serve them. They deserve schedules for permanent placement that respect their developmental needs. And they deserve federal leadership to make that happen.

Ensuring the safety and timely placement of a child with a permanent loving family should be the mission of our foster care system. But for too many years this mission has been obscured as too many children have literally grown up or spent the majority of their childhoods in the system. They have led transient lives, moving from one foster family to the next, experiencing few constants but growing case files and dreams for permanent families. We can no longer afford these delays.

In recent years we have learned much about the tremendous influence that adults caring for children in their earliest years can have on their intellectual, neurological, and emotional development. Children who have adults to talk to them, read to them, make them feel secure and loved throughout their earliest years will thrive. And we cannot afford to let any child who could be in such a loving situation go without it.

That is why steps to secure permanent, safe, and loving homes for children, whether they are with their biological families

or others, should begin as soon as a child enters the foster care system, not after four days or five months or six years of shuttling from placement to placement.

We have already witnessed important steps to remedy the situation. Two years ago, the President and Congress made it illegal to deny or delay an adoption simply because the adoptive parents and children were not of the same race. Last year, the administration and Congress strengthened that legislation. The President also signed a \$5,000 tax credit for families who adopt. And families who adopt children with special needs can receive \$6,000.

Decorating the Oval Office today are valentines created by some of the 600 children waiting in Iowa in foster care. Each valentine, sponsored by the Iowa Citizens Foster Care Review Board, tells the story of a child waiting to be adopted. The paper hearts list the age the child came into the foster care system, the age the child became free for adoption, and the number of days they have been waiting for a family.

Every year these valentines are placed on trees at the Iowa State Capitol. This Valentine's Day, the children decided to send their valentines to the White House, as well. Some of them sent letters to accompany their valentines -- letters such as this one: "Dear President, my name is Rollie. I am 12. I live in Iowa. I like to play football and basketball. I've been waiting eight years for an adoptive family. I'm hoping for a family with pets, a brother and a sister, and nice parents."

Let's all work together so that Rollie and thousands of other children waiting in foster care can see their dreams come true.

Now, it is my great pleasure to introduce the acting Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services, Olivia Golden, who will tell us more about today's report.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GOLDEN: Mrs. Clinton, thank you for that introduction and for your leadership. And thank you, Mr. President, for giving us the opportunity to be here today. Secretary Shalala wished she could be here, and it's an honor for me to be here in her place.

Mr. President, in December you told us that you wanted

to double the number of children who are adopted or permanently placed from foster care by the year 2002. You wanted to move children more rapidly from foster care to permanent homes, and you told us to come back in 60 days with a plan for how to do it. Let me tell you what we've done.

To prepare our report to you we consulted with leaders in Congress, in state and local governments, child welfare experts, community leaders and foster and adoptive parents. Hundreds of people talked with us; 200 sent us letters. It was an enormously exciting process, because what we heard was a sense of joy and excitement from all over the country that under the leadership of the President and the First Lady the nation was ready to join together to address this issue. And we learned a tremendous amount from this process. What we learned from this consultation will guide our work on this initiative and on all of our work with children in the child welfare system.

So again, I want to thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to do this work.

The report, Adoption 2002, that I have the honor to present today is an action plan to make sure that all of the 450,000 children in foster care have a real chance for a loving, permanent home, and that we're able to meet the President's goal of doubling by the year 2002 the number of children adopted or placed in permanent homes.

Let me give you just a few highlights of the report. The report begins with the 10 principles that we learned from our consultations and that will guide our work. The first, as the First Lady said, is that every child deserves a safe, permanent family. The report commits us to setting goals with every state to double adoptions by the year 2002. And for the first time that we know of in federal child welfare spending, we've put dollars behind results, paying for performance to make sure that states receive incentives if they in fact move ahead on adoption.

The report proposes several major changes in federal legislation to help more children find permanent homes and remove procedural barriers. And it proposes targeted funding for states to help them dismantle procedural and other barriers to permanency. And it proposes activities to break down racial and ethnic barriers to adoption. And finally, the report proposes a comprehensive technical assistance plan to bring the best talent in the nation to help the

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Exec. Summary
of Adoption 2002
report & remarks
from event

Adoption 2002 responds to President Clinton's Executive Memorandum and takes its name from one of its central goals -- to double by the year 2002 the number of children adopted or placed in other permanent homes each year. On December 14, 1996, the President directed the Secretary of Health and Human Services to conduct wide consultations and report to him with specific recommendations for strategies to move children more quickly from foster care to permanent homes and to meet the goal of at least doubling adoptions and other permanent placement over the next five years.

The Department developed *Adoption 2002* as a blueprint for bipartisan Federal leadership in adoption and other permanency planning for children in the public child welfare system. To prepare this report, the Department of Health and Human Services consulted with child welfare professionals, policy experts, advocates, and foster and adoptive parents at the national, State and local levels. *Adoption 2002* first examines the existing barriers to expediting the placement of children from foster care to permanent homes. Delays in making timely permanency decisions result from high caseloads for judges and caseworkers; incorrect beliefs and outdated assumptions about the adoptability of children; the limited pool of permanent families for children with special needs; and the varied interpretation of the "reasonable efforts" requirement to reunify a child in foster care with his or her birth family before another goal, such as adoption, can be pursued for the child.

Adoption 2002 outlines an agenda to help overcome these barriers and to accelerate the path to permanency for all waiting children in the public child welfare system. First, the report articulates a guiding set of principles centered on the needs of the child to give direction to the overall agenda. These principles include that every child deserves a safe, permanent family; that the child's health and safety should be the paramount considerations in all placement and permanency planning decisions; and that foster care is a temporary situation -- it is not an appropriate place for children to grow up. *Adoption 2002* establishes unequivocally that the Federal goals for children in the child welfare system are safety, permanency, and well-being.

The *Adoption 2002* agenda is multifaceted to address the range of barriers and challenges that exist in the child welfare system. The report presents strategies to establish, track, and meet State-by-State annual, numerical targets for adoptions and other permanent placements -- targets that will bring us to a national doubling of adoptions and permanent placements in the year 2002. To help States reach their targets, the Department commits to providing expanded technical assistance, rewarding States for incremental increases in adoption levels with per-child financial bonuses, and otherwise recognizing successful performance. The bonus system proposed in *Adoption 2002* is an example of common-sense government, as it not only provides an incentive for increasing the number of adoptions, but also pays for itself, with the cost of the bonuses offset by savings in foster care costs. *Adoption 2002* also includes a proposal to establish competitive grants available to States for dismantling barriers to permanency.

In addition to providing incentives to States to meet new targets, *Adoption 2002* outlines ways in which the Federal government can assume leadership in breaking down barriers to permanency for children in foster care. The Department will issue strong guidance on the implementation of the law signed by President Clinton which established penalties for denying or delaying the placement of a child based on race, color, or national origin.

Perhaps most important, while working with Congress on its legislative proposals that seek to define the "reasonable efforts" provision, the Department will issue guidance that clarifies its meaning. This guidance will make it clear that in determining whether and when to remove a child from his or her family and whether and when to reunify the family, Federal law requires that the child's health and safety shall be the paramount concern.

The Department also will issue model guidelines for State legislation to emphasize that the child's health and safety is the paramount concern in decisions to terminate parental rights. In addition, the Department commits to exploring alternative permanency options for children for whom adoption is not possible. Furthermore, the *Adoption 2002* report urges that the Administration seek legislation that shortens the time before a child's first dispositional hearing -- the hearing in which a permanency decision is first made -- from 18 months to 12 months and changes its name to a "permanency planning hearing."

Information gained by the Department in developing the details of the *Adoption 2002* agenda will form the basis of the public awareness campaign that the President directed the Secretary of Health and Human Services to undertake, in cooperation with other heads of Federal Departments or Agencies, as part of his Executive Memorandum. The strategies outlined in *Adoption 2002*, coupled with a strong public information campaign and joined by efforts by State and local officials and by community, business and religious leaders, will ensure that we live up to President Clinton's call that "no child should be trapped in the limbo of foster care; no child should be uncertain about what the word 'family' or 'parent' or 'home' means, particularly when there are open arms waiting to welcome these children into safe and strong households where they can build good, caring lives." (12/14/96)

Presidential Directive
& Radio Address
Issuing Directive
& Clips, fyi

The White House
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

December 14, 1996

Radio Address By The President
The Oval Office

10:06 A.M. EST

Good morning. Today we're taking important new steps to make adoption easier and to move children out of foster care faster. These efforts will help to give even more children what every child needs and deserves, loving parents, and a strong and stable home.

I'm delighted to be joined in the Oval Office today by a remarkable group of children and parents who know firsthand the tremendous possibilities of adoption; and by the First Lady who has worked so long and hard on this issue and whose efforts have made today possible.

I'm especially pleased to be able to take this action now, in this season of hope and light. The holidays we celebrate this month teach us that through faith and love we can truly repair the world. I can think of no better way to fulfill the promise of this season than to bring a child into a family and a family to a child.

There are more than 450,000 children in the nation's foster care system. They are placed there because of abuse, neglect or a home life that is neither safe, nor secure. While most of these children eventually return to their original homes, nearly 100,000 of them simply don't have that option. Those children wait far too long, typically three years or more, to find permanent homes and families to love them.

Promoting adoption has been at the heart of our administration's efforts to protect our children and strengthen our families. Earlier this year I was proud to sign a \$5,000 tax credit to help families adopt children. We put an end to racial preferences for adoption. No longer can laws keep children of one race from nurturing arms of adoptive parents of another. This is a good start, but we must do more.

That is why I have just signed a presidential directive with a clear goal: We will double the number of children we move from foster care to permanent homes, from 27,000 a year today, to 54,000 a year by the year 2002. With this effort we're saying no child should be trapped in the limbo of foster care; no child should be

uncertain about what the word ``family`` or ``parents`` or ``home`` mean, particularly when there are open arms waiting to welcome these children into safe and strong households where they can build good, caring lives.

As part of this initiative, I'm directing the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Donna Shalala, who is also with us today, to launch an extensive effort to determine what steps we must take to meet our goal. I want the Secretary to report back to me with her recommendations in 60 days. This report must tell us how we can help states set and meet urgent new adoption targets. It must describe how we can improve coordination among local, state and federal authorities so that every community has access to the best ways to encourage adoption. And it must outline what sensible financial incentives we can provide states to raise adoption rates.

I also want the Secretary to determine what additional changes we can make in federal laws and regulations to ensure that children won't get trapped in foster care. And I want to know if there are any new provisions we can put in place to move children through the system faster and to protect them when they leave.

There are other steps we are taking immediately. I'm instructing the Departments of Treasury, Labor, Commerce, and Health and Human Services to launch an all-out effort to heighten public awareness about adoption and to recognize those in the private sector who are committing themselves to this important cause.

Let me also say how grateful I am to those in Congress of both parties who are working so hard to make adoption a reality for America's most vulnerable children. I want to thank especially Senators Rockefeller and DeWine, and Representatives Kennelly and Camp for their efforts.

The fact that we are commemorating the birth of a child that began life in a manger and became the Prince of Peace should remind us that the promise of God has been placed in every child. We must work tirelessly to make sure that every boy and girl in America who is up for adoption has a family waiting up to reach him or her. No child should be in foster care for one day longer than he or she needs to be.

This is a season of miracles, and perhaps there is no greater miracle than finding a loving home for a child who needs one.

Thanks for listening.

Text of Presidential Directive on Adoption

WASHINGTON, Dec. 14 /U.S. Newswire/ -- Following is a memorandum from President Clinton to the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Secretary of the Treasury, Secretary of Labor, Secretary of Commerce and the director of the Office of Personnel Management:

During this Holiday Season, as we reflect on the importance of family in our own lives, let us remember the tens of thousands of our Nation's children in the public child welfare system who live without permanent and caring families. Foster care provides temporary shelter and relief for children who have been abused or neglected.

I am committed to giving the children waiting in our Nation's foster care system what every child in America deserves -- loving parents and a healthy, stable home. The goal for every child in our Nation's public welfare system is permanency in a safe and stable home, whether it be returning home, adoption, legal guardianship, or another permanent placement. While the great majority of children in foster care will return home, for about one in five, returning home is not an option, and they will need another home, one that is caring and safe. These children wait far too long -- typically over 3 years, but for many children much longer -- to be placed in permanent homes. Each year, State child welfare agencies secure homes for less than one-third of the children whose goal is adoption or an alternate permanent placement. I know we can do better.

I believe we should increase the number of children who are adopted or permanently placed from the public foster care system each year toward the goal of at least doubling that number by the year 2002. Returning home is not an option for about 100,000 of the over 450,000 children in the Nation's foster care system, yet only approximately 20,000 were adopted last year and approximately 7,000 were permanently placed in legal guardianships. While the number of adoptions each year has been constant for many years, I believe that by working with States to identify and break down barriers to permanent placements, setting annual numerical targets, rewarding successful performance, and raising public awareness, we can meet the target of at least 54,000 children adopted or permanently placed from the public foster care system by the year 2002.

Today, therefore, I direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with State and civic leaders, to report to me within 60 days on actions to be taken to move children more rapidly from foster care to permanent homes and at least to double, by the year 2002, the number of children in foster care who are adopted or permanently placed out of the public foster care system.

I. To increase the number of children who are adopted or permanently placed each year, this report should include, but should not necessarily be limited to, recommendations in the following areas:

(a) Plans to work with States on setting and reaching State specific numerical targets, using the technical assistance of the Department of Health and Human Services National Resource Centers to make information on best practices available to States and to engage community leaders, parents, and the business and faith communities;

(b) Proposals to provide per child financial incentives to States for increases in the number of adoptions from the public welfare system. Options considered should have little to no net costs, as increases in the number of adoptions from the public system will reduce foster care costs, thereby offsetting much if not all of the incentive payments;

(c) A proposal to ensure continued aggressive implementation of the Multi-ethnic Placement Act, as amended by the Inter-ethnic Adoption Provision of the Small Business Job Protection Act;

(d) Plans to compile and publish an annual State-by-State report on success in meeting the numerical targets; and

(e) Plans to recognize successful States.

II. To move children more rapidly from foster care to permanent homes, the report shall also recommend changes to Federal law and regulations and other actions needed to emphasize the importance of planning for permanency as soon as a child enters the foster care system. The Secretary's report should include, but should not necessarily be limited to, recommendations in the following areas:

(a) Plans to provide States with funding to identify barriers to permanency and to develop targeted strategies to find permanent homes for children who have been in foster care a particularly long time;

(b) Proposals to shorten the period of time between a child's placement in foster care and his or her initial hearing at which a permanency determination is made;

(c) A proposal to clarify that the purpose of "dispositional hearings" is to plan for permanency and, as appropriate, to consider referrals for family mediation, termination of parental rights, adoption, legal guardianship, or other permanent placements;

(d) A proposal to clarify the "reasonable efforts" requirement and other Federal policy as it relates to permanency and safety;

(e) Plans to ensure that States give appropriate weight to permanency planning by establishing standards for securing permanency through adoption or guardianship, once a decision has been made that a child cannot be returned home; and

(f) Plans to examine alternative permanency arrangements, such as guardianship, when adoption is not possible.

Last month, I signed a proclamation designating November as National Adoption Month -- a time to increase awareness about the tens of thousands of children waiting for families and to encourage all Americans to consider the rewards and responsibilities of adoption. However, adoption must be a national concern throughout the year. Therefore, I direct:

(a) The Secretary of Health and Human Services to develop and lead a public awareness effort, including use of public service announcements, print materials, and the Internet;

(b) The Secretaries of Health and Human Services and the Treasury in consultation with State, civic, and private sector leaders to develop and disseminate information about the new adoption tax credits and other adoption benefits;

(c) The Secretaries of Labor and Commerce, in consultation with State and civic leaders, to identify and recognize companies in the private sector with model policies to encourage and ease adoption among employees; and

(d) The Director of the Office of Personnel Management to direct all Federal agencies to provide information and support to Federal employees who are prospective adoptive parents.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Clinton Seeks Doubling Of Adoptions

HHS Ordered to Find Foster Care Solutions

A1

By Al Kamen
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Clinton yesterday ordered administration officials to find ways to double by 2002 the number of children adopted from foster homes in hopes of reducing the time that children languish in that system.

Clinton's call for changes in the process comes as Congress is working on overhauling legislation of adoption policies that promise to be one of the major social policy debates in the next session.

"I can think of no better way to fulfill the promise of this season than to bring a child to a family and a family to a child," Clinton said in his weekly radio address from the Oval Office.

There are more than 450,000 children in the nation's foster care system, Clinton said, placed there because of abuse, neglect or other reasons. Most eventually return to their homes, he said, but nearly 100,000 do not. "Those children wait far too long, typically three years or more, to find permanent homes," he said.

Clinton said his goal was to make adoption easier and "to make moving children out of foster care easier," in order to increase adoptions of foster children each year from 27,000 to 54,000.

As a first step, Clinton ordered Health and Human Services Secretary Donna E. Shalala to report back to him in 60 days on what new measures, including financial incentives to the states, will be needed to meet the administration's new goal.

The recommendations coincide with draft legislation circulating in Congress that aims to accelerate the adoption process. Among its sponsors are Sens. Mike DeWine (R-Ohio) and John D. "Jay" Rockefeller IV (D-W.Va.) and Reps. Dave Camp (R-Mich.) and Barbara B. Kennelly (D-Conn.).

Some of the areas likely to be addressed in the legislation, and in Shalala's report include:

- Making it far easier for states to remove children from families where the child has been tortured, subject to severe physical or sexual abuse or where a sibling has died from abuse or neglect.
- Requiring states to evaluate the

See CLINTON, A19, Col. 1

CLINTON, From A1

status of children in foster homes earlier and more frequently so that they will not languish there for unnecessarily long periods.

■ Providing financial bonuses to states that move children out of long-term foster care and into permanent, adoptive families. The money most likely will come from reducing the federal assistance available for foster care after a certain period of time. HHS officials expect any new financial incentive would pay for itself, because increasing adoptions would reduce foster care costs, which are about \$15,000 a year per child.

The current adoption law, passed in 1980, requires states to pursue "reasonable efforts" to keep families together to qualify for federal money for foster care.

"Reasonable efforts" have been broadly interpreted by the courts, and some members of Congress feel that too often little emphasis is put on "reasonable."

Despite the bipartisan support for change, adoption legislation is may be controversial because of concerns by the "parental rights" movement that the states will too quickly put a child up for adoption without consideration of the biological parents' rights. States may also object to proposed penalties for failing to move children out of foster care fast enough, according to social policy specialists who have followed the issue.

In his Oval Office address yesterday, attended by first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, Shalala, several adoptive parents and their children as well as and four children waiting to be adopted, Clinton said that he was "proud" to sign a \$5,000 tax credit to help families adopt and to ban racial preferences in adoption. That measure passed Congress earlier this year.

There had been some speculation, fueled by a comment by Hillary Clinton in a Time magazine interview last May, that the Clintons were considering adopting a child.

The White House yesterday said the Clintons had decided against adopting a child while they are in the White House because they would not be able to give the child enough attention.

A spokesman said Clinton, in several pre-Christmas interviews not yet made public, "didn't rule it out for later in life but he basically said it wouldn't work here in the White House," Reuter reported.

Hillary Clinton ignored a question yesterday about their adopting a child.

Staff writer Judith Havemann contributed to this report.

The Washington Post

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15, 1996

President Tells Government To Promote More Adoptions

By ALISON MITCHELL

WASHINGTON, Dec. 14 — President Clinton today directed the Federal Government to take steps to double the number of children moved from foster care to adoption over the next six years.

He announced the initiative in his weekly radio address, and was joined on the air by his wife, Hillary, by adoptive families and by children hoping for a permanent home.

"I can think of no better way to fulfill the promise of this season than to bring a child into a family, and a family to a child," Mr. Clinton said.

This drive to increase adoption continues the family-centered themes that he promoted throughout his election campaign, and it is not likely to be contentious. House Republicans made an adoption tax-credit a plank in their Contract With America campaign agenda in 1994. Earlier this year, Mr. Clinton signed Republican-initiated legislation that gave a tax credit of \$5,000 to families adopting children and made it easier for parents to adopt children of a different race.

There are now 450,000 children in the nation's foster-care system, which is run by the states with Federal aid and supervision. Of those children, 100,000 are considered to have no parent to return to and are ready to be placed in a permanent new home. But only 27,000 of those children a year are moved from foster care to adoption, officials say.

Mr. Clinton today told the Department of Health and Human Services to report to him in 60 days on steps that can be taken to insure that 54,000 foster children a year are adopted by the year 2002. He said the department should consider possible changes in Federal laws and regulations.

Officials said that among steps the department is examining, the Federal Government would work with states to set specific targets for adoptions. In return, the Government would provide a new financial incentive per child for states to increase the number of adoptions from the public welfare system.

The officials said that as part of his budget proposal in February, Mr. Clinton would propose financial assistance to states for developing strategies to promote the adoption of difficult-to-place children who have been languishing in the foster care system and for studying what barriers block states from finding permanent homes for children.

Melissa T. Skolfield, a spokeswoman for the Department of Health and Human Services, said the amount of financial assistance that would be proposed for the states had not yet been determined. And although she said the financial incentive to states for each child adopted had not yet been settled on, the action was not expected to require new Federal funds because increased adoptions would reduce foster care spending.

Mr. Clinton today also called for a Government-wide public relations campaign to make Americans aware of adoption opportunities. As if beginning that campaign themselves, the Clintons asked the parents and children accompanying them to tell their

A goal is set for doubling the number of children moved from foster care.

stories on the air.

"My name is Daniel," said one 13-year old boy from a local foster care program, who was not further identified because he is a minor. "And I've been waiting for a family for a long time. And hopefully in a short amount of time I will probably get what I'm looking for in a family. My brother has already been adopted, and hopefully I'll get adopted by his family at one point of time."

Mrs. Clinton has been a strong proponent of adoption, even telling Time magazine earlier this year that she and her husband might consider an adoption because they would love to have another child. White House officials said the Clintons had decided to postpone any decision on an adoption until after the President is out of office because he would not have the time to devote to a new child.

DO NOT FORGET THE NEEDIEST!

The New York Times

Sunday, December 15, 1996 /

Clinton vows to speed children into adoption

By Joyce Price
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

President Clinton yesterday pledged to double the number of children moved from foster care to permanent adoptive homes in the next five years, but ruled out adopting a child of his own until after he leaves the White House.

"No child should be trapped in the limbo of foster care, particularly when there are families with open arms waiting," the president said in his weekly radio address.

Mr. Clinton said there are more than 450,000 children in the nation's foster care system. About 100,000 of them will wait years to be placed.

"Those children wait far too long, typically three years or more, to find permanent homes and families to love them," Mr. Clinton said.

In hopes of reducing the waiting period, the president said he had "just signed a presidential directive with a clear goal" of "doubling the number of children we move from foster care to permanent homes — from 27,000 a year today, to 54,000 a year by the year 2002."

"This is a season of miracles, and perhaps there is no greater miracle than finding a loving home for a child who needs one."

The directive orders Health and Human Services Secretary Donna

E. Shalala to report back in 60 days on how best to promote and increase adoptions, including "what sensible financial incentives we can provide states to raise adoption rates," Mr. Clinton said.

As for his plans, Mr. Clinton said through his staff that his duties as president would not permit him to adopt, at least not now.

During the presidential campaign, first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton told Time magazine she and her husband had discussed the possibility of adopting. They now have one daughter, Chelsea, 16.

But Assistant White House Press Secretary Barry Toiv told reporters the Clintons won't be adopting any time soon, because they believe "they would not be able to devote the time and attention a baby would need."

In an interview with Reuters news agency, Mr. Toiv cited a number of pre-Christmas presidential interviews, not yet published or aired, in which Mr. Clinton said he "didn't rule out" adoption "later in life" but that he felt "it wouldn't work here in the White House."

Mrs. Clinton ignored a question about the possibility of adoption at the radio address event yesterday, according to published reports. But she chatted with many of the guests on the air, asking them how they came to find their new families and homes.

The Washington Times

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15, 1996

Clinton Backs Tax Credit For Adoption

GOP Bill Is Endorsed; Interracial Placements Could Be Expedited

By Barbara Vobejda
Washington Post Staff Writer

A1

In a letter he will send to House Republican leaders today, President Clinton will endorse Republican legislation that would allow most adoptive families to claim a \$5,000 tax credit and penalize states whose adoption agencies delay placement of a child to find a family of the same race, White House sources said yesterday.

The president will embrace provisions that have traditionally been in the Republican domain. The adoption tax credit was part of the House GOP's "Contract With America," and Republicans have been most vocal in opposing racial matching in adoption placements.

"Promoting adoption is one of the most important things we can do to strengthen American families and give more children what every child in America deserves—loving parents and a healthy home," the president says in his letter, a copy of which was obtained by The Washington Post.

It will be the second time in three days that the president has gotten involved in measures affecting families, a topic likely to play a major role in this year's presidential election. And both times, the president staked out positions likely to alienate some liberals.

On Saturday, he announced he would require states to end welfare payments to teenage parents who refuse to stay in school or to live with a parent or guardian.

In endorsing the adoption bill, Clinton said he "strongly supported" the tax credit—which would be \$5,000 for families earning up to \$75,000 a year. The size of the credit would gradually decline for families earning between \$75,000 and \$115,000; families earning more than \$115,000 would not be eligible for a credit.

Also, he goes further than he has in the past to interject himself directly into the emotional and divisive issue of interracial adoption.

The bill, slated to go to the House floor this week, would prohibit states or adoption agencies from discriminating on the basis of race

ADOPT, From A1

against families who want to adopt. Agencies could consider race in placing a child if there are two or more qualified families, but may not delay placement while waiting for a parent of the same race.

That language, Clinton says in his letter, is consistent with "my long-standing goal to end the historical bias against interracial adoptions, which too often has meant interminable waits for children to be matched with parents of the same race."

Republicans said they welcome the endorsement, but pointed out that the president had vetoed a welfare bill last year that contained similar language on interracial adoptions.

"We're happy to have it," Rep. Susan Molinari (R-N.Y.) said of the endorsement. "I know he had tentative problems with trans-racial adoptions in the past. . . . I hope this signals to Democrats to join with us."

More than 400,000 children are in the foster care system, about half of whom are minorities. Minority children wait longer to be adopted than do white children, according to studies.

Among children in foster care, only about 21,000 are legally available for adoption, according to the Department of Health and Human Services. And of those, two out of three have "special needs," including emotional or physical disabilities or the need to be placed as part of a sibling group.

Many Republicans and some Democrats, including former senator Howard M. Metzenbaum (D-Ohio), have contended that the policy of race matching has kept thousands of African American children languishing in foster care for years. But social workers say that the high number in foster care stems from the difficulty in placing children with special needs.

Legislation was adopted in 1994

with the intention of banning race matching, but Metzenbaum and others were dissatisfied with Clinton administration regulations interpreting the law because they allowed agencies to consider race. Administration

officials say the law has been aggressively enforced, reducing the number of states that give an automatic preference to black families in the adoption of black children.

Still, Republicans have pushed for a new law that would ban racial placement outright, essentially establishing a colorblind system that would match children and families without regard to race.

While that was the original language in the bill when it went before

the Ways and Means Committee, it was amended to allow race to be considered when there is more than one qualified family seeking to adopt a child. The bill, which was approved by the committee on a voice vote, would also go further than current law to penalize states that do not comply.

Rep. Charles B. Rangel (D-N.Y.), who has argued vociferously against a "first-come, first-served" approach, said the new language does not change the current law. "The only reason the president's doing all of this is . . . because he wants to make it clear he's not opposed to interracial adoption. . . . But if he feels good saying it, okay."

David Liederman, executive director of the Child Welfare League of America, called the tax credit a "misdirection" of resources in a tight fiscal climate, essentially helping middle-class families while other proposals would cut funding for programs meant to help those willing to adopt special-needs children.

"I would have hoped the president would have spoken to that," Liederman said.

It is estimated the credit would cost the government \$1.7 billion over seven years, and the GOP bill would offset the revenue loss with income gained in enforcing new anti-fraud provisions on foreign trusts and from repeal of a tax exclusion for businesses purchasing energy conservation measures.

THE WASHINGTON POST
MONDAY, MAY 6, 1996

*"The only reason
the president's
doing all of this is
... because he wants
to make it clear he's
not opposed to
interracial
adoption."*

— Rep. Charles B. Rangel (D-N.Y.)

THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION RECORD ON ADOPTION

"We must work tirelessly to make sure that every boy and girl in America who is up for adoption has a family waiting up to reach him or her. No child should be in foster care for one day longer than he or she needs to be." -- President Clinton, Radio Address, December 12, 1996

President Clinton is following an ambitious legislative and administrative agenda to move children more rapidly from foster care to safe, permanent homes. This agenda is laid out in a report submitted to the President on February 14, 1997 by the Department of Health and Human Services, in response to an Executive Memorandum signed by President Clinton on December 14, 1996. The report, entitled "Adoption 2002," takes its name from one of the President's central goals -- to at least double by the year 2002, the number of children adopted or permanently placed each year. "Adoption 2002" is a blueprint for bipartisan Federal leadership in adoption and other permanency planning for children in the public child welfare system.

In receiving the "Adoption 2002" report, the President committed to following its ambitious action plan for federal leadership, including new assistance to states to set and meet urgent new adoption targets. Additionally, the President pledged to clarify, through legislation and guidelines to states, the laws, such as the "reasonable efforts" standard, that govern whether and when to remove a child from his or her family and when to reunify them. The President also committed to creating sensible financial incentives to states to increase adoption rates, and to providing technical assistance to states, courts and communities to move children more rapidly from foster care to permanent homes.

The Clinton Administration has previously taken several important steps to encourage and increase adoptions and to support the families that choose to open their hearts and their homes to these children. Since taking office in 1993, the President has championed programs that find and assist adopting families, and has committed his Administration to breaking down barriers, including high adoption costs and complex regulations. These steps include:

MAKING ADOPTION AFFORDABLE FOR FAMILIES

In August, President Clinton signed into law the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996 which provides a \$5000 tax credit to families adopting children, and a \$6,000 tax credit for families adopting children with special needs. This policy will alleviate a significant barrier to adoption, helping middle class families for whom adoption may be prohibitively expensive and making it easier for families to adopt children with special needs. Since President Clinton took office, the number of children with special needs who were adopted with Federal adoption assistance has risen by 60 percent.

BREAKING DOWN RACIAL AND ETHNIC BARRIERS TO ADOPTION

Strengthening the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act which the President signed in 1994, the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996 also ensures that the adoption process is free from discrimination and delays on the basis of race, culture and ethnicity.

PROVIDING SUPPORTS FOR CHILD PROTECTION AND ADOPTION

In 1993, President Clinton signed into law the Family and Medical Leave Act which enables parents to take time off to adopt a child without losing their jobs or health insurance. In addition, the welfare reform bill that the President signed into law maintains the guarantee of child protection and adoption, and does not reduce funds for child welfare, child abuse, foster care and adoption services.

RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS

Through speeches, writings, events and public service announcements, the President and First Lady have promoted the importance and benefits of adoption.