

PRESIDENT CLINTON AND VICE PRESIDENT GORE: PUTTING AMERICA'S INTERESTS BEFORE SPECIAL INTERESTS

September 28, 2000

Today, President Clinton will meet with the members of his Cabinet to outline his legislative priorities for the remainder of this Congress. In February, the ~~President's~~ President sent Congress a budget proposal ~~was~~ based on a balanced approach that maintains fiscal discipline, provides a targeted tax cuts for middle-class families, pays down the debt, and invests in our domestic priorities. There are now only four days left in this fiscal year, and the Republican Congress has completed only two of 13 spending bills. Moreover, Congress is overlooking vital priorities ~~and are~~ in favor of bills loaded with election-year, earmarked projects for special interests. President Clinton will call on Congress to reduce wasteful spending and insist that they focus on the issues that matter for real people.

CONGRESS' INSISTENCE ON SPECIAL-INTEREST, PORK-BARREL POLITICS PLACES KEY INITIATIVES IN JEOPARDY. For example:

- **INVESTING IN AMERICA'S EDUCATION PRIORITIES.** President Clinton proposed to help communities make urgent repairs at 25,000 schools over five years and to create leverage \$25 billion in School Modernization Bonds to build and modernize 6,000 more. Congress has not acted on these proposals. Congress ~~It has also failed to fund the President's \$1.75 billion proposal to continue hiring 100,000 qualified teachers to reduce class sizes and provides only \$600 million of his \$1 billion effort to create more after-school learning opportunities. They shortchange teacher quality and recruitment programs, and do nothing to help ensure a qualified teacher in every classroom. fails to make a serious investment in teacher quality. It provides only \$600 million of his \$1 billion effort to create after-school learning opportunities for children who need them. It.~~ Congress would freeze the GEAR UP initiative to prepare disadvantaged students for college at \$200 million, \$125 million below the President's request, denying help to 600,000 students; and ~~And it fails to institute real~~ would not strengthen accountability for turning around failing schools. ~~by turning them around or putting them under new management.~~
- **PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT.** We must provide permanent funding to preserve America's green, open space for future generations. The Clinton-Gore Clean Water Action Plan Gore focuses on three remaining challenges for restoring and protecting our waterways: preventing polluted runoff, protecting public health, and ensuring community-based watershed management. The House and Senate are both at least \$335 million below the President's request of \$2.5 billion. The President also asked for a large effort to combat global climate change.
- **ENSURING THAT ALL AMERICANS SHARE IN OUR PROSPERITY.** President Clinton has called on Congress to provide new housing vouchers to help low-income families live closer to job opportunities, the creation of the new Delta Regional Authority, and large investment to better serve Native American communities. Other examples include:
 - **Opening New Markets.** The President's New Markets Initiative provides tax credits and loan guarantee incentives to stimulate billions in new private capital investments in economically distressed communities around the country. It would also build a network of private investment institutions to funnel credit, equity and technical assistance to businesses in America's new markets.
 - **Turning the Digital Divide into Digital Opportunity.** Congress has ignored President Clinton's plan for \$2 billion over 10 years in tax incentives to encourage donation of computers, sponsorship of community technology centers, and training for workers. Congress did not fund the \$50 million, public-private Connecting America's Families initiative for low-income families and cut funds from the President's plans to create 1,000 community technology centers in low-income urban and rural communities and train all new teachers to use technology effectively.

- **IMPROVING OUR HEALTH CARE.** The President's budget includes \$40 billion in provider restorations to ensure that hospitals and other providers can continue to provide quality care to our Medicare beneficiaries. It also funded diabetes research and the Ricky Ray Trust Fund. The President has also called for access to Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program for legal immigrants, Medicaid for certain low-income women with breast and cervical cancer, Medicaid coverage of children with disabilities, and insure funding for community access programs. Other important Clinton-Gore health care initiatives include:
 - **"FamilyCare."** The proposed FamilyCare initiative would give states the option to cover parents in the same plan as their children. States would use the same systems and follow most of the same rules as they do in Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (S-CHIP) today, and the program would be overseen by the same state agency. State spending for FamilyCare would be matched at the same higher matching rate as S-CHIP (up to 15 percentage points higher than the Medicaid rate).
 - **COBRA.** The Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA), passed in 1985, allows workers in firms with more than 20 employees to pay a full premium to buy into their employers' health plan for up to 18 to 36 months after leaving their job. However, fewer than 25 percent of people eligible for this coverage participate, in part due to cost. The Administration's budget includes a 25 percent tax credit for COBRA premiums to reduce the number of Americans who experience a gap in coverage due to job change.
 - **Workers in Small Businesses.** Nearly half of uninsured employees work in firms with fewer than 25 employees. The President proposes to give small firms that have not previously offered health insurance a tax credit equal to 20 percent their contribution towards health insurance obtained through purchasing coalitions. In addition, tax incentives would be given to foundations to help pay for start-up costs of these coalitions, and the Federal Employees' Health Benefits Program would make available technical assistance to purchasing coalitions.
- **PROTECTING OUR NATION'S HEALTH AND HOLDING TOBACCO COMPANIES ACCOUNTABLE.** President Clinton supports ~~for~~ the Department of Justice's litigation to recover billions of dollars in federal tobacco-related health costs. ~~He has also fought~~ The tobacco companies' and their powerful allies have worked efforts to obtain special protections shielding them from financial responsibility for the harm they've caused. The President will continue to fight hard to make sure that the American people have their day in court. — the legal responsibility of the tobacco companies should be decided by the judicial process, not the political process.
- **PROVIDING SERVICE TO OUR COMMUNITIES:** Since the launch of AmeriCorps six years ago, more than 150,000 Americans have served on the front lines in hard-pressed neighborhoods – tutoring in schools, responding to natural disasters, building homes, and more. This year, the President requested a \$73 million increase in AmeriCorps. The House chose to zero-fund AmeriCorps, and the Senate wants to cut last year's budget by \$27 million which would deny 12,000 new AmeriCorps members the opportunity to serve and cut 3,000 current AmeriCorps members from their duty.
- **PROMOTING U.S. LEADERSHIP IN THE WORLD.** Diplomacy is our first line of defense in keeping the nation safe and secure. President Clinton's budget provides the resources needed to contain the spread of weapons of mass destruction and help the people of Kosovo build a democratic society. It would also provide debt relief to heavily indebted poor countries, make vaccines more accessible, combat abusive child labor, and support the Peace Corps and the Inter-American Development Bank.

FIGHTING GUN VIOLENCE. ~~The President's efforts have helped lead to a 35 percent decline in gun crime.~~ This year, the President proposed a \$280 million ~~the~~ National Gun Enforcement Initiative, the largest of its kind in U.S. history. It would fund: ~~includes~~ 500 new ATF firearms agents and inspectors; over 1,000 federal, state, and local gun prosecutors; ~~expanded comprehensive~~ crime gun tracing; the first ever national

ballistics testing network; ~~a three-fold increase in funding for ballistics testing programs; and~~ \$10 million for local anti-gun violence media campaigns; and \$10 million for smart gun research. ~~Of the President's \$280 million request, the House has provided only \$108 million and the Senate only \$77 million.~~ So far, Congress has failed to fund over half of this initiative – including key funding for 1,000 more state and local gun prosecutors and smart gun research. In addition, Congress has allowed the gun lobby to stall passage of common sense gun safety legislation for over one year. This legislation, which passed with a tie-breaking vote by Vice President Gore in the Senate last May, would close the gun show loophole; mandate child safety locks with every handgun sold; ban the importation of high capacity ammunition clips; and prohibit the most violent juvenile offenders from possessing guns as adults.

- **~~STRENGTHENING FOOD SAFETY.~~** ~~The President proposed a food safety initiative to inspect risky food establishments, increase imported food exams, strengthening the capacity of public health laboratories to respond to disease outbreaks, and expanding research, risk assessment and education activities. Of the \$423 million request, the House provided \$401 million and the Senate \$422 million. <<Why are we including this example?? The congressional numbers don't seem to justify it.>>~~
- **PROTECTING CIVIL RIGHTS.** This year, President Clinton requested a 13 percent increase ~~\$646 million~~ to improve ~~the federal enforcement of~~ civil rights enforcement – bringing the federal commitment to more than \$1 billion per year. The House has underfunded the President's request by \$136 million, and the Senate by \$108 million. ~~each provided only \$587 million.~~ This week ~~the House~~ Congress finally passed ~~reauthorized~~ the Violence Against Women Act legislation, as requested by the President, ~~but~~ but the Senate still has not acted, despite the fact that authorization for these critical programs expires on September 30. The Senate ~~it~~ has not yet met his request for \$296 million for Department of Justice programs to combat domestic violence. The House allocated \$208 million and the Senate provided ~~\$285~~ \$284 million for this effort.
- **EXPANDING FAMILY PLANNING.** The President's budget would allow family planning clinics to provide reproductive health services and clinical care to over 5 million low-income women. It would also prevent over a million unintended pregnancies per year through comprehensive reproductive health services, including sexually-transmitted disease and cancer screening, HIV prevention and counseling, programs to discourage adolescent sexual activity, and contraceptive counseling and services. The President's budget requested \$274 million for this initiative, but the ~~congressional budget~~ conference report provides only ~~\$254~~ \$239 million.
- **INVESTING IN NANOTECHNOLOGY RESEARCH.** Nanotechnology—the ability to manipulate individual atoms and molecules—could allow breakthroughs like molecular computers capable of storing the Library of Congress in a device the size of a sugar cube, new materials ten times stronger than steel and a fraction of the weight, and the ability to detect cancerous tumors that are a few cells in size. The President's budget requested \$498 million for the nanotechnology initiative, but the House provided only \$427 million and the Senate \$378 million.

--[FOR DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE INCLUSION]--

CONGRESS SHOULD ALSO ENACT THE PRESIDENT'S LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS. In addition to passing his budget, Congress should enact his legislation, including:

- **INCREASING THE MINIMUM WAGE.** The President first called for a \$1 increase in the minimum wage in his State of the Union Address in January 1999. For more than a year and a half, the Republican leadership has stalled the measure; tried to weaken it by spreading the increase over three years instead of two; and burdened it with provisions that would roll back important overtime and pension protections and

provide a huge tax cut for businesses. So far, delay has cost a full-time minimum-wage worker more than \$1,000 in lost wages. The proposed \$1 increase would merely return the real value of the minimum wage to the level it was in 1982 and benefit more than 10 million workers, including millions of women and hard-pressed families.

- **ENACTING OUR MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG PROPOSAL.** The President is committed to a voluntary Medicare prescription drug benefit that is affordable, meaningful and accessible to the 40 million elderly and disabled on Medicare. We should continue to press Congress to enact our \$253 billion benefit during our budget negotiations. In addition, we should support Congress' efforts to pass drug reimportation legislation that includes appropriate and adequately funded FDA safety standards.
- **PASSING A REAL PATIENTS BILL OF RIGHTS.** We must continue to fight for the House version of the Patients Bill of Rights legislation that covers all Americans, ensures adequate legal enforcement, covers clinical trials, and provides access to specialists and emergency room care. We oppose so-called "access" tax provisions in the Senate version that are expensive, benefit only the wealthy, and raise private insurance premiums, without providing coverage to the uninsured.
- **EXPANDING FEDERAL HATE CRIMES LAW.** This legislation would enhance the Federal government's ability to prosecute violent crimes motivated by race, color, religion, or national origin and would authorize Federal prosecution of crimes motivated by sexual orientation, gender, or disability. Although state and local law enforcement agencies still have primary responsibility for investigating and prosecuting hate crimes, this legislation provides much-needed assistance for agencies that seek it. It provides financial assistance through grants and help with investigations and prosecutions so that Federal, state, and local law enforcement can partner together to ensure that perpetrators of hate crimes are brought to justice.
- **EXTENDING THE COPS PROGRAM.** The President is committed to reauthorizing the Administration's COPS program, first created in the 1994 Crime Act, for another five years. The President's legislation would fund the hiring of up to 50,000 more officers on the street; provide law enforcement with the latest crime-fighting technologies; and provide \$200 million to hire new community prosecutors. In addition, we support the reauthorization of the Violent Crime Reduction Trust Fund to continue to protect criminal justice funding through FY 2005.
- **REFORMING IMMIGRATION LAW.** People who have been living in the United States for many years and have developed strong ties to their communities deserve the opportunity to normalize their immigration status. Congress should address injustices in the immigration system by changing the registry date to extend amnesty to resident immigrants, amending the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act to allow certain Latin American immigrants to apply for their green cards, and restoring Section 245(i) of the immigration law to allow illegal immigrants to wait for their visa in the United States.

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PRESIDENT CLINTON CHALLENGES CONGRESS TO COMPLETE WORK ON AMERICA'S PRIORITIES

September 28, 2000

Today, before a meeting of the Cabinet, President Clinton will call on Congress to put progress before partisanship, and get back to work for the American people. It has been nearly a month since Congress returned from its summer recess, but Republican Congressional leaders continue to block action on America's priorities such as an affordable prescription drug benefit for all Medicare beneficiaries, a meaningful Patients' Bill of Rights, and expanded health care coverage for low-income families. Congress also has made virtually no progress over the last month toward passing a minimum wage, despite a commitment from Speaker Hastert to do so, and Congressional leaders have admitted that they will fail to meet the deadline for passing a budget. President Clinton promised to do his part to avoid a government shutdown by signing the continuing resolution passed by Congress this week. However, the President will note the lack of accomplishment of the latest do-nothing Republican Congress and call on the Republican leaders to use the remaining weeks of the session to address America's priorities and pass a fiscally responsible budget that maintains America's prosperity by paying down the debt, provides targeted middle class tax cuts and makes key investments in improving education, protecting the environment and fighting crime.

PRESIDENT CLINTON WILL CALL ON CONGRESS TO MAINTAIN AND EXPAND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY: President Clinton's economic strategy of maintaining fiscal discipline, making investments in the American people and opening foreign markets has created the conditions for the longest economic expansion in history and put us on track to pay off the national debt by 2012. Before the 106th Congress adjourns it should take actions that will expand and maintain our prosperity for future generations:

- **Increase the minimum wage:** At a time when we are experiencing the longest economic expansion in history, the proposed \$1 increase before Congress would merely return the real value of the minimum wage to the level it was in 1982. This small raise would help more than 10 million workers, including millions of women and hard-pressed families make ends meet. Full time workers would receive an annual raise of about \$2,000 a year – enough to pay for nearly 7 months of groceries or 5 months of rent.
- **Provide targeted tax cuts:** President Clinton's package of responsible, targeted tax cuts provides more tax relief for middle class families at less than half the cost of Republican plans. It would allow America to maintain our fiscal discipline, strengthen the solvency of Social Security and Medicare, invest in key priorities, and pay off the debt by at least 2012. President Clinton's fiscally responsible plan provides marriage penalty relief for couples and tax credits that reward retirement savings, expand college opportunity, help families with the rising costs of long term care and child care, and promote philanthropy for all Americans by encouraging charitable giving. The President is also committed to working with Congress to achieve targeted estate tax relief for small businesses and farmers.
- **Maintain fiscal discipline:** The Clinton-Gore administration turned \$290 billion deficits into the largest surpluses in our history and has put us on track to pay off the entire national debt by at least 2012. Fiscal discipline has produced lower interest rates while encouraging productivity and investment. Republican tax cuts passed this year, combined with those they have proposed for next year, squander the entire projected surplus leaving America permanently in debt and making it impossible to invest in priorities like improving education or adding a Medicare prescription drug benefit.

PRESIDENT CLINTON WILL ALSO CALL ON CONGRESS TO COMPLETE WORK ON AMERICA'S KEY PRIORITIES:

Provide an Affordable, Accessible Prescription Drug Benefit Option For All Medicare Beneficiaries:

Three out of five Medicare beneficiaries have inadequate prescription drug coverage or none at all. In the context of broader reform that ensures that Medicare revenues are only used for Medicare, the President has proposed a voluntary, affordable Medicare prescription drug benefit for all beneficiaries. Beginning in 2002, it would provide prescription drug coverage that would have a zero deductible and cover half of all prescription drug costs up to \$5,000 when fully phased in. It would limit all out-of-pocket medication costs to \$4,000. This optional benefit would also provide negotiated discounts that would guarantee that Medicare beneficiaries no longer pay the highest prices in the marketplace. And, it would explicitly pay for the cost of prescription drugs in managed care plans beginning next year to ensure that they continue to offer this important benefit.

Enact A Meaningful Patient's Bill Of Rights: The majority of the United States Senate supports passing a strong, enforceable, Patients' Bill of Rights, similar to the bipartisan Norwood-Dingell Patients' Bill of Rights. Unfortunately, the Republican leadership continues to support an approach that leaves over 135 million people without protections and does not assure that plans are held accountable when they make decisions that harm patients. The Norwood-Dingell legislation, endorsed by over 200 health care provider and consumer advocacy groups, is the only bipartisan proposal currently being considered that protects state-based accountability provisions already available under current law and includes: protections for all Americans in all health plans; protections for patients accessing emergency room care from financial sanctions; guarantees that assure access to necessary and accessible health care specialists; and meaningful enforcement mechanisms that ensure recourse for patients who have been harmed as a result of a health plan's actions.

Provide Affordable Health Insurance Coverage for Low-Income Families: The President has proposed a new state option to cover millions of uninsured parents and their children in CHIP FamilyCare, workers in between jobs, 55 to 65 year olds, young adults between 19 and 20, and legal immigrants. The Administration's approach is supported by two recent studies by the independent Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) and the White House Council of Economic Advisors (CEA). The CBPP report concludes that coverage expansions including parents increase enrollment among eligible but unenrolled children by nearly 25 percent. The CEA report documents that tax approaches such as those advocated by the Republican leadership are highly inefficient, expensive, and ineffective mechanisms to expand coverage, while policies such as the FamilyCare initiative proposed by the President efficiently and effectively assure coverage.

Reauthorize and strengthen the Older Americans Act (OAA). For more than 35 years, the OAA has helped millions of seniors lead more independent lives by enabling communities to offer them vital, everyday basics like transportation and meals-on-wheels. Today, President Clinton will urge the Congress to reauthorize the OAA and strengthen it by funding our Family Caregivers Program. This nationwide program would support families who care for elderly relatives with chronic illnesses or disabilities by enabling states to utilize a visible, reliable network to provide quality respite care and other support services. This program, which costs more than \$1.25 billion over 10 years, would assist approximately 250,000 families nationwide. Recent studies have found that services like respite care can relieve caregiver stress and delay nursing home entry, and that support for families of Alzheimer's patients can delay institutionalization for up to a year.

Pass A Fiscally Responsible Budget That Invests In Education and Other Key Priorities: The President proposed a balanced and fiscally responsible budget that extends the solvency of Social Security and Medicare and makes investments in key priorities for the American people. The President's budget includes important investments in education – such as modernizing 6,000 schools and repairing 25,000 more, meeting our commitment to hire 100,000 quality teachers to reduce class size, funding teacher training to help put qualified teachers in every classroom, increasing accountability including identifying and turning around failing schools, increasing after school opportunities, and preparing at-risk youth for college success. To pay for fiscally irresponsible tax cuts, Congressional Republicans have cut key priorities. The Republican budget, resulting in fewer quality teachers for schools, fewer law enforcement officers and prosecutors to fight crime, reduced environmental protection, and less funding for National Science Foundation research. The President will also call on Congress to put the people's interest above the interests of big tobacco by fully funding federal tobacco litigation and letting the American taxpayers have their day in court to recover federal tobacco-related health care costs.

Approve Common Sense Gun Safety Legislation and Fully Fund Largest National Gun Enforcement Initiative in History: Congress has allowed ~~Sensible~~ sensible gun safety legislation ~~has to languished~~ in Congress for over a year. Meanwhile, an estimated 30,000 Americans have lost their lives to gun violence. The Senate passed common sense gun safety measures in May 1999, with Vice President Gore casting the tie-breaking vote to close the gun show loophole. Since then, Republican leaders have delayed and bottled up this legislation at the behest of the gun lobby, despite the fact that 10 children are killed by gunfire every day. The President will call on the Republican Leadership to put the safety of America's children first as they return to school by passing a bill that closes the gun show loophole, requires child safety locks to be sold with handguns, bans the importation of large capacity ammunition clips and ~~prevents~~ prohibits the most violent juvenile offenders from buying guns as adults. In addition, the President will call on Congress to fully fund his unprecedented \$280 million National Gun Enforcement Initiative to hire 500 new ATF firearms agents and

inspectors; fund over 1,000 federal, state and local gun prosecutors; expand crime gun tracing and ballistics testing; fund local anti-gun violence media campaigns; and invest in smart gun research. So far, Congress had failed to fund key provisions of this initiative, including 1,000 state and local gun prosecutors and smart gun research.

Pass Legislation to Prevent Hate Crimes and Legislation to Combat Violence Against Women: The President will also urge Congress to pass bipartisan legislation to prevent hate crimes and further respond to violence against women. ~~The Senate has already passed hate crimes legislation that will punish hate crimes based on a victim's sexual orientation, gender, or disability — areas not covered by current law. The President will urge the House to act expeditiously to pass this critical proposal. In addition, this legislation also recognizes that state and local law enforcement still have primary responsibility for investigating and prosecuting hate crimes.~~ The President will urge Congress to send him meaningful hate crimes legislation to sign into law immediately. This legislation would enhance the Federal government's ability to prosecute violent crimes motivated by race, color, religion, or national origin and would authorize Federal prosecution of crimes motivated by sexual orientation, gender, or disability. The President will also call on Congress to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act. This Act provides support for the work of prosecutors, law enforcement officials, victim advocates, and health and social service professionals as they respond to the problems of violence against women in communities throughout the country.

Provide Service to Our Communities: Since the launch of AmeriCorps six years ago, more than 150,000 Americans have served on the front lines in hard-pressed neighborhoods — tutoring in schools, responding to natural disasters, helping to make our streets safer, building homes, and more. This year, the President requested a \$73 million increase in AmeriCorps to allow more 62,000 volunteers to serve in 2001, the first step towards the President's goal of reaching 100,000 AmeriCorps members a year by 2004. The House chose to zero-fund AmeriCorps, and the Senate wants to cut last year's budget by \$27 million which denies the President's request to fund 12,000 new AmeriCorps members and would force the Corporation for National Service to cut 3,000 current AmeriCorps members. The President has also called on Congress to reauthorize the National and Community Service Act, which both the House and Senate leadership have failed to bring up for a

Enact Legislation to Reauthorize the COPS Program. The President is committed to reauthorizing the Administration's COPS program, first created in the 1994 Crime Act, for another five years. The President's legislation would fund the hiring of up to 50,000 more officers on the street; provide law enforcement with the latest crime-fighting technologies; and provide \$200 million to hire new community prosecutors. In addition, the Administration strongly supports the reauthorization of the Violent Crime Reduction Trust Fund to continue to protect criminal justice funding through FY 2005.