

Jan. 28 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1993

is an important——

The President. I think it's going to fit, don't you? That's great.

Mrs. Hatton. Thank you so much, Mr. President.

The President. I'm proud of you.

Mrs. Hatton. And I'm proud of you. Great things happen to great people.

The President. Thank you.

Meetings With Members of Congress

Q. Mr. President, are you building incentives to help the economy and working with Congress? Are you getting momentum having all these meetings with the Hill, with Chairman Greenspan?

The President. Well, I think so. You know, we've got a lot more meetings ahead. I'm going to have a huge number of meetings, I hope, next week with Members. I needed this first week just to kind of get our feet on the ground here and get organized and get ready. But I have held a lot of meetings with Congress, and I'll do many more next week. I'll do as many as I can leading up to the February 17 address to the joint session. And after that I'll do as many more as I can.

Homosexuals in the Military

Q. Mr. President, are you confident that you'll ever get the ban on gays in the military lifted?

The President. Well, we're working on the resolution in the Senate, as you know. And I've been working mostly on economic issues today, so I just heard from my staff. But they seem to think we're pretty close to——

Q. Are you satisfied with 6 months down the road?

The President. I'm satisfied with what I hope the resolution will be. You'll have to come back to me when there's final language there.

I think the Joint Chiefs should have 6 months to deal with the practical issues involved. This is not free of difficulty. There are certain factual problems involved.

But the principle—let me answer the question Mark [Mark Halperin, ABC News] asked me this morning about the principle. The principle behind this for me is that Americans who are willing to conform to the requirements of conduct within the military services, in my judgment, should be able to serve in the military and that people should be disqualified from serving in the military based on something they do, not based on who they are. That is the elemental principle.

There is actually an enormous amount of agreement on this. The Joint Chiefs agree, for example, that we should not anymore ask people about their sexual orientation when they enlist. And I believe that any sort of improper conduct should result in severance. The narrow issue on which there is disagreement is whether people should be able to say that they're homosexual—and do nothing else—without being severed. But there are a whole lot of very complicated practical questions that flow from that very narrow issue. And that's what I want to have 6 months to give them a chance to work on. So, I hope we can.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:50 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With Representatives of the Close-Up Foundation

January 29, 1993

Homosexuals in the Military

Q. Mr. President, when are you going to announce your policy on gays in the military? What time today?

The President. Well, we're waiting for an analysis of the court decision now and how it affects what we would have to do anyway. So, that sort of—we were here, as you know, last night

with Senator Nunn, and I thought it was quite close to an agreement that would give the military what I think ought to be done without anybody agreeing to change their position now—give them a chance to look into what the practical problems are. But this court decision may change that, and we are looking at it. And I will probably have something to say later today.