

## Remarks to the National Conference of Mayors February 5, 1993

Let me say, first of all, welcome to the White House.

Mayor Jackson, I saw your brother earlier today at the signing of the Family and Medical Leave Act, and he was bragging on you, said you're now as thin as he is. I assured him I would still be able to recognize you when I saw you. [*Laughter*]

This has been a wonderful day here at the White House. Congress adjourned—[*laughter*]—but only after passing the Family and Medical Leave Act. We had a great signing this morning. It was a great bipartisan effort; about a third of the Republicans in the Senate voted for it. And it was a really good, good way to start the day.

I'm glad you're here. I know you've been meeting with Secretary Cisneros, who's one of your own. There are times when we meet when I can't tell whether he's changed positions or not—[*laughter*]—which I suppose from your point of view is a good thing.

Most of you in this room I know well. I've spent a lot of time in your communities, and you have played a major role in my political education. I assure you that I think every day about many of the places we've been and the things we've seen and the things that I have learned from you. I think that the time I spent in our country's cities in this last election, that was in many ways the most instructive time that I spent. And one of the things that impressed me so much is that so many things, against all the odds, are being done that work. And I want you to help me now figure out how to make those things that work the rule rather than the exception in American life.

I told the Governors when they came in here and spent some time with me earlier this week on the subject of health care that if somebody asked me to name my greatest failing as a Governor after 12 years, it was that I never could quite figure out a way to make the exception the rule, to take those things that worked and make them work everywhere.

In that connection, I have been working with Secretary Cisneros and have sent, after working it out with him, a directive to him today to deal with a number of specific things that I know are important to all of you:

First, to establish a weekly mechanism for communication with the State and local leaders of our country on issues of housing and urban development. And I hope we'll have a chance to talk about both of them because they are related, but they aren't the same.

Second, to try to expedite the programs that are already there now, to unclog some \$6 billion that have been inexplicably tied up in the pipeline of the Federal Government that have already been appropriated; to speed up by 3 to 4 months the processing of the over \$3 billion in public housing funds that are available and to try to accelerate the real implementation of the HOME Program where there's \$2.5 billion in largely unmovable funds because the administrative system of this Department has been largely paralyzed.

I told Henry when I asked him to take this position that there was some risk because of the pall which had been cast over HUD and the problems of past years and because there had been a lot of rhetoric but not enough action out of the Department in recent years. We're going to do what we can to marry rhetoric and action. We don't promise to shut up, but we promise to try to do some things.

I also want to tell you that I'm going to do the best I can in this upcoming stimulus and economic package to do what I said I would do: to bring down the deficit but to increase investment at the same time in ways that will make available more funds for the cities.

I remember, Mayor White, when we were in Cleveland with Congressman Stokes, you said you thought we ought to increase the community development block grant funds because you could move those more quickly to create jobs. And there will be a fairly sizable increase in that in the proposed stimulus package to try to help you create jobs.

Let me just make a couple of general remarks about where we are on this whole economic approach, and then I'd like to hear from you, and I'd like to just be as informal and conversational as possible.

The economic news is good but mixed and incomplete. That is, starting in the last quarter