

the line-item veto, the country can be better off. Yes, the country can be better off if we work together than if we don't.

But that should be taken in no way as a diminishing in my eyes of what happened in the last 2 years, which was terrific. Even if the voters didn't agree or didn't even know about it, it was good for the country, and the country's better off. So the country's better off today than it was 2 years ago.

What our moral and legal obligation is, is to make sure that the country will be better off 2 years from now. I think the people are sick, literally sick of seeing all this partisan infighting up here. I just showed up here 2 years ago, and I was bewildered by it. I was astonished by it. And I was revolted by it. And I think the American people are, too.

Now, the others who were in that room with me today, starting with Speaker Gingrich and Senator Dole, they've been part of the Washington scene for a lot longer than I have, for decades. And I understand that. But they said

they wanted to see an end to the partisan infighting. The Democrats, to their everlasting credit, said that they had learned from the Republicans how to stop things, but they thought that was not their job. Their job was to make things happen. So that's what we're trying to do. And I'm going to do my best to make good things happen for America. I do not want to see a series of partisan battles.

We need first to identify what we can agree on and move this country forward. And we ought to start with lobby reform and these other reforms. Then we ought to move on to responsible tax reform that I hope will focus on the middle class bill of rights and giving people education deductions because that will build the economy.

This is Mike McCurry's press conference, and I've already said enough.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:46 p.m. in the Briefing Room at the White House.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Agenda for the 104th Congress *January 5, 1995*

Dear _____:

We have an opportunity to make historic change in the way that Washington works and the government does the people's business.

This week, the Congress has begun to take important and positive steps to change its operations for the better. Shrinking the number of committees, reducing staff, and other measures are valuable, and long overdue. The passage of legislation that would apply to Congress the laws that apply to the public is only fair, is simple common sense, and is also long overdue. I hope that this time, unlike the last session of Congress, the Senate follows the House's action. I congratulate you on these steps.

But true congressional reform must reduce the power of lobbyists and special interests. The power of organized money in Washington hurts the middle class, bloats spending and the deficit, and blocks needed change. Today, some 90,000 people in Washington are associated with lobbying Congress on behalf of specific interests, which too often are able to manipulate the con-

gressional process to insert spending projects or tax provisions in legislation that do not serve the larger public's interest. Lobby power coupled with the ever-escalating cost of campaigns, which has risen fourfold over the past two decades, gives wealthy interests and wealthy candidates disproportionate influence in decision-making.

These are not partisan concerns; they are American concerns. I urge you, as you undertake the task of reforming Congress, to take on these real political reform issues.

First, as you enact legislation to apply general laws to Congress, it is vital that professional lobbyists be barred from giving gifts, meals and entertainment to members of Congress—just as they are now barred from giving these benefits to executive branch officials.

Second, Congress should also quickly enact legislation to bring professional lobbyists into the sunlight of public scrutiny. The current lobby disclosure statute is cumbersome and antiquated. Lobbyists should disclose who their cli-