

Jan. 5 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1996

was being furloughed. But I want you to know, as much as I hate to see these problems, I cannot change a single, solitary decision I would make, because you don't want me to make a bad decision for the long run because of a problem we've got in the short run.

So the time has come to stop playing politics with this. Let's do what our country has always done: Let the Government go on and perform its basic services, and let's get back to work. Every day we miss in these negotiations is a day we're putting off balancing the budget. Let's just go back to work, roll up our sleeves, balance a budget, but do it in a way that protects the fundamental interests of the American people. That's what I'm trying to do.

And I hope by coming here today—and I not only got a very good meal—[laughter]—and had a lot of conversations. Lots of days I just eat lunch alone at my desk. I had much more fun today than I normally do. [Laughter] But I hope we will send a message across this country that this is a good and worthy program. And if the House of Representatives votes to put it back into funding today, we will applaud them and give them a pat on the back. But we want to go all the way. We shouldn't have any of the essential functions of Government shut down.

You know, those young people ought to be able to get loans to start their businesses. Those

folks ought to be able to get permission from the Government to sell our products to foreign countries. We're all buying things from other countries here every day. We ought to be selling our things overseas. And those young families that are having a chance because interest rates are low to move into homes for the first time, they ought to be able to do it. We should not leave this work undone.

So again I say thank you. If you need it, we're going to provide the money to keep the Meals on Wheels program going. And we will be there. But I think what we all want is for our country to stop—stop all this political squabbling in Washington, put all the partisanship aside, and get back to the work of balancing the budget in a way that protects our obligations to our parents and our children and to the future of this country.

We can do this. This is a very great country. This is hardly the biggest problem we ever faced. We can do it, and do it right if we'll do it in the kind of spirit that I have felt in this room today.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:34 p.m. in the Rectory Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Rev. Daniel Darko, pastor, St. Monica's Episcopal Church, and Mayor Marion Barry of Washington, DC.

The President's Radio Address *January 6, 1996*

Good morning. Today I want to talk with you about the great debate on the budget. This debate is not just about abstract numbers, and it certainly goes far beyond party politics as usual. It is instead about vital principles and momentous issues for our country. We're addressing profound questions about what kind of country we are and what kind of country we're going to be, about what we owe to each other and what we owe to our children and to America's future. These questions have dominated our politics for quite a long time now. And now it is decision time, time to move beyond arguments and come to conclusions.

For 3 weeks, the Federal Government has been shut down because Republicans in Congress refused to enact legislation to keep it open. This shutdown has had a real and unfortunate impact on the lives of millions of Americans. Now, I'm pleased to report that Congress has acted to bring Government employees back to work and to reopen most services to the public. This sets the stage for constructive, honest, and focused discussions on how to balance the budget while remaining true to our values and true to our future.

America is at a crossroads. One path leads to continual partisan conflict, where nothing is ever really resolved and each decision simply