

You know, when the Democrats—let me just give you an example. When the Democrats had the Congress in 1993 and '94, we passed the most sweeping education reform we've passed in 30 years. I did not agree with every last line in every one of those bills. But I did not make the perfect the enemy of the good. I said, I want the education reform.

We passed a crime bill after 6 years of people talking about it before I got here. I did not agree with every line in the crime bill, but I said—and neither did the Attorney General. But we said, we're not going to make the perfect the enemy of the good. We're going to have

a principled, honorable compromise. We passed the crime bill. We put over 30,000 police on the street. Crime is going down in America.

So I would plead with the Republicans to think about that, to look at that example. They can have an election over the biggest differences they have with me. Let's not make the perfect the enemy of the good. We have already agreed to enough spending cuts to balance the budget and to give a modest tax cut. Let us do it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:24 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House, prior to a Cabinet meeting.

The President's News Conference *January 11, 1996*

The President. Good afternoon. I want to report to you this afternoon and to the American people about the progress we've made toward achieving a balanced budget that reflects our values. But first, let me tell you about the action we are taking to help the millions of people along the East Coast who are stranded and afflicted by the Blizzard of 1996.

I have asked the Director of FEMA, the Secretary of Transportation, and the Secretary of Defense to work together and to take all appropriate actions. Today I announced that we will provide Federal disaster assistance in situations where response is beyond the capability of State and local governments. In particular, we will provide funds to open up emergency routes in communities once States have applied for this assistance and FEMA verifies the need. This will allow ambulances, fire trucks, and other emergency workers to do their jobs.

Today I am announcing that this assistance will be provided to Maryland and the District of Columbia. FEMA has also received a request for assistance from New York, and we are expecting shortly to receive requests for assistance from New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, North Carolina, and Delaware. We will act on these requests quickly.

This has been a trying time for everybody affected. It's often the case that in natural disasters you see the best come out in people. As we continue to dig out from the Blizzard of

'96, I hope Americans in their communities will continue to look out for their neighbors, to help those in need, and to pull together. We will do what we can here.

Now I want to discuss the budget. After many weeks of public debate and private discussion, historic agreement on a balanced budget is within reach if we set aside partisanship and work to seize this moment. I'm optimistic that we will balance the budget, and I know we have come too far to let this opportunity slip away.

In the 12 years before I took office, for the first time in America's peacetime history, our Government deficit skyrocketed. Our administration has already cut the deficit nearly in half. But our need to pay off the interest on the debt run up in the last 12 years is giving us a deficit. Indeed, but for the interest payments on the debt run up in the 12 years before I became President, our budget would be in balance today.

We have already reduced the size of the Federal Government by more than 200,000, so that it is smaller than it has been at any time since 1965. As a percentage of the civilian work force, the Federal Government is the smallest it's been since 1933. We cut hundreds of programs. We're eliminating 16,000 pages of rules and regulations. But it's time to finish the job.

Let me be clear: We can balance the budget. We can do it in a way that invests in our people and reflects our values: opportunity for all, doing