

think the American people will get their balanced budget; they will get these education tax cuts; they will get the next step of welfare reform to create jobs for people who are going to be moving from welfare to work; and it will be a very, very good time. The atmosphere so far feels good to me, and if we just keep working on it, I think we can get there.

Q. Mr. President, have you made all of your final budget decisions? And is there any possibility of your reopening any of those decisions, specifically on Medicare?

The President. Well, let me answer you this way. I have completed sometime ago the work on the budget. We still have to work around the edges from time to time. It is a good budget; it is a credible budget. I also am pleased that the OMB and the Congressional Budget Office have been working together to try to narrow the gaps between them in all these assumptions they have for the budget. And I'm confident that we can produce one that will bring balance under either set of assumptions, and I intend to do that. And the budget will reflect the priorities I laid before the American people in the campaign and will be consistent

with what I have said over the last 4 or 5 years about this.

Now, I also expect there to be a negotiating process with the Congress, and I will work with them in good faith, as I have said all along. But I think this budget will show that I am making a clear effort to reach out to them, to meet them halfway, and to get this job done.

Q. In what year will the budget you present in February actually reach a balanced budget?

The President. In 2002, the same year we—

Q. The same year.

The President. —all along.

Q. Does that mean that on Medicare you are going to go for raising the premiums and so forth? And you spoke in generalities, but is there anything you can—

The President. Well, it means I don't want to remove all the suspense from my budget presentation. [Laughter]

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:31 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Fiona Rose, University of Michigan student who introduced the President.

Remarks on Presenting the Arts and Humanities Awards

January 9, 1997

Thank you very much. When Hillary said that, I was so hoping that there wouldn't be even one loud stage whisper saying, "I wish he had made that choice." [Laughter]

I am so delighted to be here to honor the 1996 recipients of the National Medal of the Arts and the Charles Frankel Prize. They are men and women whose accomplishments speak to the breadth and depth of our creative and intellectual genius.

I want to begin by thanking Jane Alexander, Sheldon Hackney, Diane Frankel, and John Brademas for their energetic and wise leadership in promoting the arts and humanities across our country. I thank them for what they have done. This cold day is a rather apt metaphor for a lot of what they have labored through the last couple of years, and we are all in their debt for standing firm.

I thank the United States Marine Band for being here. I'm always so proud of them and the work they do for our country. I thank the magnificent Harlem Boys Choir for their wonderful music and for being here. All of you who are supporters of the arts who are here, I thank you for being here, supporters of the humanities. I see Secretary and Mrs. Riley and Congressman Dicks and Congressman Rangel. There may be other Members here; I apologize for not introducing you, but for those of you in other positions of public responsibility, in particular, I thank you for standing up for the arts and humanities.

Each year this ceremony gives us an opportunity to celebrate the extraordinary contributions of individual American artists, writers, and thinkers, to reflect on the role of the arts and humanities in our own lives and in the life of our great democracy. We are a nation whose