

Jan. 4 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 2000

The President. I don't know yet. What we're working on now up in West Virginia is sort of figuring out what the process for the next few days is going to be. And then we have to start working on that and figuring out what the specific jobs are that we would be asked to help finance, whether we could get any others to help, and over how many years it would have to be done. Then I'll have to go talk to the Congress. And I'm just not in a position yet to say what dollar amount I would ask our Congress for.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration Regulations

Q. Were you aware of these OSHA regulations, sir, about people having to have OSHA regulations when they work at home? Did you hear anything about that?

The President. No, not until I read about them.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:40 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks on the Legislative Agenda and an Exchange With Reporters January 5, 2000

The President. Good afternoon. I just had a very good meeting with Senator Daschle and Congressman Gephardt about our legislative priorities for the coming year and the unparalleled opportunity we now have to take actions that could benefit America for the rest of the new century.

This is truly a remarkable moment. Who would have thought 7 years ago, when we had record budget deficits and high unemployment, that we would begin the new century with record surpluses, the lowest unemployment in 30 years, and next month the longest economic expansion in the history of the United States?

Never before have we enjoyed at once so much prosperity, social progress, and national self-confidence with so little internal crisis or external threat. Never have we had such an opportunity and, therefore, such a responsibility to address our long-term challenges, keeping our prosperity going by maintaining fiscal discipline and making America debt-free for the first time since 1835, the challenge of spreading our prosperity to people in places still left behind, helping parents to succeed at home and at work, preparing for the retirement of the baby boom generation, and most of all, meeting the challenge of giving all our children a world-class education.

President Kennedy once said the time to fix the roof is when the Sun is shining. Well, today the Sun is shining on America, and the roofs that need most fixing in America are the roofs of our Nation's schools. Anyone who visits

schools regularly, as I have, will not be surprised to learn that a third of all our schools need extensive repairs or replacement. I've been to schools not only with leaky roofs but with window frames so old that if you try to powerwash the windows, the glass would pop out; with electrical service so inadequate that if you plug a new computer into the wall, the circuit breaker cuts out.

We can't expect our students to meet high academic standards if their schools don't even meet high building standards. We know that antiquated classrooms do get in the way of learning. One study found that students in high quality school buildings did better on achievement tests than those in low quality school buildings, even when both sets of students were from similar economic and social backgrounds.

That's why I'm pleased to announce today that in the budget my administration is preparing, I will call for a new initiative to repair, renovate, and renew our Nation's school buildings. First, my budget will offer a new program, funded at \$1.3 billion in the first year, of grants and interest-free loans to help the Nation's neediest school districts make urgent repairs on their schools. If we continue this over 5 years, we could renovate 41,000 schools.

Second, the budget will include, as it has in the past, a tax credit to help build or modernize 6,000 schools nationwide so we can take our children out of trailers and put them in modern classrooms.