

per family, while still reducing our national debt and funding important priorities.

I'm asking all Americans to examine this plan, and I'm asking for your support. The Constitution charges the Congress with the responsibility to write our tax laws, and I respect that responsibility. But it is my obligation to lead, and that's what I'm going to do. My plan is good for the long-term health of our economy. It is good for the businesses that create jobs. It is good for America and for the American families that make our country so unique and strong.

Thank you for coming.

Q. Mr. President, do you think the tax cut should be retroactive to the first of the year?

The President. A lot of Members of Congress have talked to me about that. And I do. And we look forward to working with Congress to expedite money into the pockets of the American people. I strongly believe that a tax relief plan is an important part of helping our country's economy recover. And I think expediting money into people's pockets is going to be a key ingredient. I look forward to working with Congress, Members of both parties, to accommodate the budgetary needs and, at the same time, help get money into people's pockets quicker.

Q. Mr. President, Democrats in Congress think that this plan, as it's structured now, is weighted too heavily to the higher income brackets. Are you willing to work with them to perhaps change the ratios a little bit, if that's what it takes to get their support?

The President. I believe the plan, strongly believe the plan that I have submitted is structured the right way. I've heard all the talk about class warfare and this only benefiting the rich. I think when people take a good, hard look at the rate reduction and who benefits and the fact that our plan erases inequities in the Tax Code or eases inequities in the Tax Code and that the biggest—the bottom end of the economic

ladder receives the biggest percentage cuts, people will come to realize it. I think it's important to cut all tax rates.

Yes.

Q. Mr. President, in addition to making the tax cut retroactive, your economic adviser said yesterday you would also support bringing more of the benefits forward to the first year of the plan. Is that correct?

The President. What I'm referring to is enhancing the cashflow of the taxpayer as quickly as possible, and that's what we're going to work on. I also saw some comments which I thought made a lot of sense, that some in Congress view this as an opportunity to load up the tax relief plan with their own vision of tax relief. I want the Members of Congress and the American people to hear loud and clear: This is the right size plan; it is the right approach; and I'm going to defend it mightily.

Q. There is no family, sir, representing the last tax bracket, the bracket that would get the highest dollar return. Why is that?

The President. Well, I beg your pardon, I'm representing—[laughter]—I got a little pay raise coming to Washington from Austin. I'll be in the top bracket. [Laughter]

Former President Clinton

Q. Mr. President, on another note, sir, it appears the Clintons may have taken some gifts that were actually given to the White House. Do you feel that they should return any of these gifts?

The President. It's important for all the facts to be laid out on the table, and I'm confident that the President—the former President and First Lady will make the right decision.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:18 a.m. in the Diplomatic Room at the White House.