

Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet

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DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
001. script	re: Foster Care Show (6 pages)	05/01/2000	b(6)

COLLECTION:

Clinton Presidential Records
First Lady's Office
Lissa Muscatine
OA/Box Number: 23214

FOLDER TITLE:

Adoption [Folder 1]

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RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

- P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
- P2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
- P3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
- P4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
- P5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
- P6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

C. Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in donor's deed of gift.

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RR. Document will be reviewed upon request.

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

- b(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
- b(2) Release would disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA]
- b(3) Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA]
- b(4) Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential or financial information [(b)(4) of the FOIA]
- b(6) Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(b)(6) of the FOIA]
- b(7) Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]
- b(8) Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
- b(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information concerning wells [(b)(9) of the FOIA]

MEMORANDUM

TO: HRC
FROM: Lissa, Erika
RE: Rosie O'Donnell Show on Foster Care
DATE: May 5, 2000

You are scheduled to appear on the Rosie O'Donnell show to discuss your efforts to reform our nation's foster care system and promote adoption. You'll be the only guest on stage with Rosie (although several others will speak from the audience) and you're on for the full hour. Unlike your previous appearances, **Monday's show will air live.**

We have given Rosie a good amount of background about your long commitment to reforming the foster care system, including your role in passage of the Adoption and Safe Families Act and the Foster Care Independence Act. She'll ask you about both pieces of legislation as well as your personal interest in these issues. Following is a rundown of each segment of the show.

Segment 1

Scott Viera and his foster mother, Judy Couture, will do the show's opening announcement from the audience. A short video highlighting the story of the Costello family will follow. The Costellos have 9 kids – 3 adopted, 3 foster kids, 3 biological. Rosie will introduce them in the audience.

Segment 2

Rosie will introduce you and you'll join her on stage. She'll ask about your personal interest in foster care and the experiences (in law school, etc.) that inspired your commitment to these issues.

Segment 3

This segment will focus on the Adoption and Safe Families Act and the Foster Care Independence Act. Following an opening discussion, Rosie will ask you about Alex Braggs, the subject of the video for which you recorded the voice over. (You met Alex at an event in West Islip, NY. His foster parents wanted to adopt him but his mother and father never terminated their parental rights. The foster parents did adopt his younger brothers and moved to Florida. Alex plans to attend school in the state to be close to his family.)

Rosie will turn to you to introduce the video (intro will be scripted on teleprompter). Following the video, Braggs and his foster mother will be introduced in the audience.

Segment 4

A short video will be shown about Gladstone, a group home in Miami for sexually and physically abused girls ages 2-17. Following the video, Shawn McGhee, the North American Director for Home Depot, will present a check for \$1 million to Steve Manne, director of Gladstone. The funds will be used to build new group homes around the country and to wire them for the Internet.

Segment 5

You and Rosie will briefly discuss challenges still facing our foster care system — lack of qualified foster parents, need for more foster parents of color, etc. Sharon Davis, author of *Do You Want to Be a Foster Parent?*, will speak from the audience.

The show will wrap up in segments 6 and 7.

Additional briefing material follows, including:

- 1) Memo on your record on foster care and adoption
- 2) Fact sheet on the Adoption and Safe Families Act
- 3) Fact sheet on the Foster Care Independence Act
- 4) Fact sheet on Administration progress report on adoption efforts
- 5) Remarks from adoption and foster care events

MEMORANDUM ON FOSTER CARE

TO: Rosie O'Donnell
FROM: Lissa Muscatine, Erika Batcheller
RE: First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton's accomplishments on foster care
Date: April 20, 2000

The First Lady has worked tirelessly for more than 30 years to reform our nation's foster care system and promote adoption. She has devoted her time to numerous child advocacy groups, including the Carnegie Council on Children, the Children's Defense Fund, and Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, and as an attorney she has represented both prospective parents and foster children. As First Lady, she has been the Administration's most prominent advocate on these issues, and her leadership has been instrumental to the passage of groundbreaking legislation to make it easier for children to move from foster care to permanent homes and to increase the number of adoptions. Her deep commitment to children in foster care also has been key to raising public awareness of the importance and rewards of adoption.

The First Lady's interest in foster care and adoption dates to her first year at Yale Law School. After reading an article in Time magazine about child advocate Marian Wright Edelman and her lobbying group, the Washington Research Project (which later evolved into the Children's Defense Fund), Mrs. Clinton contacted Edelman and secured an internship with the organization for the summer. Her experience there would set the stage for a lifelong commitment to a wide range of children's and family issues.

Returning to New Haven her sophomore year, Mrs. Clinton volunteered at Yale's Child Study Center and the New Haven Hospital, where she worked with the staff to draft guidelines for the treatment of abused children. She also volunteered at Legal Services, a legal aid group that provided free assistance to the poor.

One of Mrs. Clinton's first legal aid cases left an indelible imprint on her thinking about the needs of children in foster care. The case involved a black child and her low-income, white foster mother, who wanted to adopt the girl. Mrs. Clinton argued successfully that the mother should not be denied permanent custody simply because of racial or financial reasons. She argued that the child's best interest was to stay with her foster mother, who had provided a safe, stable home and family for more than two years. The many foster care cases she handled at Legal Services would give her a deep appreciation for the importance of ensuring the best interests of the child remain paramount during placement proceedings.

During a postgraduate year at Yale's Child Study Center, Mrs. Clinton wrote a chapter for a family law professor's book, *Beyond the Best Interests of the Child*, that documented her conviction that America's judicial system had failed abused and neglected children. She also challenged deeply rooted traditions about the factors that should inform adoption decisions, presenting a legal argument that a child's happiness should outweigh considerations such as wealth, race or birth family.

After her husband was elected governor of Arkansas, Mrs. Clinton continued to press forward to protect children from abuse and neglect. In 1977, she founded Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, an organization dedicated to providing parenting skills and health and education services for Arkansas children. She also joined the Board of Directors of the Children's Defense Fund in 1976, and chaired the board from 1986 to 1992.

Throughout her husband's presidency, Mrs. Clinton has used her position as First Lady to champion a host of children's and family issues, focusing on some of our nation's most vulnerable children – those trapped in the foster care system. In the summer of 1995, she convened a meeting of policy experts to examine some of the most pressing issues surrounding adoption, including long-term foster care and institutional barriers within the child welfare system, including cross-racial adoptions.

That year, Mrs. Clinton, together with the President, launched a national public awareness campaign to promote the benefits of adoption and improvements to foster care. During National Adoption Month in 1995, she hosted the first in a series of events on the issue at the White House. She held numerous meetings and public events with adoptive families and children in foster care, and devoted a significant number of speeches and writings to the cause of adoption. Her efforts during this period would culminate in one of her most rewarding achievements, passage of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, landmark legislation that reformed our nation's child welfare system by putting considerations of children's health and safety first.

Throughout 1995 and 1996, Mrs. Clinton quietly convened a series of meetings with officials at the Department of Health and Human Services, foundation leaders and other policy experts to discuss ideas for reforming foster care and speeding up adoption procedures. Publicly, Mrs. Clinton also pressed for passage of new tax credits for those who adopt and the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act, which would remove race or ethnicity as an obstacle to adoption. She also strongly supported an extension of Family and Medical Leave Act benefits to adoptive parents who wished to take time off work to care for their children. Her vocal advocacy helped usher these key bills through Congress.

As a result of her meetings with adoption policy experts, Mrs. Clinton and her staff in 1996 began to formulate specific proposals for legislative reforms. In November, she held a White House forum on adoption that was broadcast live from the Oval Office. At the event, she announced that the President would sign an Executive Order directing his administration to develop a plan to double the number of adoptions by 2002.

Mrs. Clinton was deeply involved in the development of the report and worked closely with Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala to craft policies that would ensure the health and safety of the child remained the guiding principles during placement proceedings. The formal report, "Adoption 2002," was unveiled on Valentines Day 1997 and included a series of incentives for states to expedite adoption procedures and limit the amount of time children spend in foster care. The goal was to double the number of children moving into permanent homes from 27,000 a year in 1996 to 54,000 a year by 2002. The report was based on three key principles; that every child deserves a safe, permanent family; that children's health and safety should be the paramount concern; and that foster care is by definition temporary.

With the unveiling of the report, Mrs. Clinton turned to Capitol Hill to pursue legislative reforms. The White House secured bipartisan co-sponsors in the House who introduced a bill based on Mrs. Clinton's recommendations, and she began holding numerous private meetings with members of Congress on both sides of the aisle to generate support for the measure. The legislation, backed by Reps. David Camp, R-Mich., and Barbara Kennelly, D-Conn., easily passed the House that summer.

Throughout the fall of 1997, Mrs. Clinton continued to work quietly behind the scenes, holding countless meetings and personally lobbying lawmakers to ensure the bill had bipartisan sponsors in the Senate. She also continued to deliver speeches and hold other events to draw public support for the measure. The First Lady's strong leadership on behalf of the Adoption and Safe Families Act led to its passage on November 14, and it was signed into law four days later. The bill took historic steps to prevent children from languishing in foster care by dramatically speeding up adoption procedures, limiting the amount of time children can spend in foster care to 12 months, removing institutional barriers to adoption and including innovative financial incentives for states to improve adoption rates each year.

The First Lady's most recent efforts on foster care have focused on addressing the unique challenges faced by older, unadopted foster children as they age out of the system. She provided key leadership in the development and enactment of the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, a bill designed to assist older teens in foster care as they transition into independent living as adults. She worked very closely with Republican and Democratic sponsors in the House and Senate to shepherd the legislation through Congress. The bill, signed into law in December 1999, will help ensure that young people who leave foster care have the tools they need to succeed, including better educational opportunities, access to health care, training and housing assistance, counseling and other services.

Mrs. Clinton's efforts to make foster care work better, to find and assist adoptive families, and to break down barriers to adoption have transformed our nation's child welfare system. Between 1996 to 1998, the number of adoptions nationwide rose 29 percent and is on pace with the President's goal of 56,000 adoptions in 2002. This is the first significant increase in adoptions since the national foster care program was established nearly 20 years ago.

Attached you will find additional background information, including:

- Remarks by the President and First Lady at Presentation of Adoption 2002 Report (2/14/97)
- Remarks by the President and First Lady at signing of Adoption and Safe Families Act (11/19/97)
- Background press briefing on Adoption and Safe Families Act (11/19/97)
- Fact sheet on Adoption and Safe Families Act (11/19/97)
- Remarks by First Lady on New Efforts to Support Transitioning Foster Care Youth (1/29/99)
- Remarks by the President and First Lady at White House Adoption Event (9/24/99)
- Fact Sheet on Administration Progress Report on Adoption Efforts (9/24/99)
- Remarks by the President and First Lady at signing of Foster Care Independence Act (12/14/99)
- Fact Sheet on Foster Care Independence Act (12/14/99)

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

November 19, 1997

PRESIDENT CLINTON SIGNS
THE ADOPTION AND SAFE FAMILIES ACT OF 1997

November 19, 1997

Today, President Clinton signs into law the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, to help thousands of children waiting in foster care move more quickly into safe and permanent homes. This overwhelmingly bipartisan legislation was based in large part on the recommendations of the Administration's Adoption 2002 report. The report takes its name from one of the President's central goals which is, at a minimum, to double the number of adoptions to 54,000 by the year 2002.

The Act makes sweeping changes in federal law on adoption and foster care enacted in 1980. The new law makes clear that the health and safety of children must be the paramount concerns of state child welfare services. It sets swifter time frames for making permanent placement decisions and terminating parental rights for children. For the first time, states will have financial incentives to increase adoptions. Children with special needs and ongoing medical needs are ensured health care coverage. Federal funds will continue for programs that work to keep families together when it is appropriate and safe to do so.

Ensuring that Children are Safe

Clarifies Reasonable Efforts: As the President proposed, the new law ensures that children's health and safety are the primary concerns of the public child welfare system. It clarifies that there are instances when states are not required to make reasonable efforts to keep children with their parents, such as when a parent has been convicted of murdering another child or a child has been abandoned, tortured, or chronically abused.

Doubling the Number of Children
Adopted or Permanently Placed by 2002

Creates Financial Incentives: The new law contains the President's plan to offer a financial bonus to states that increase the number of children who are adopted from the public foster care system. These incentives will help to double the number of children adopted. For every additional child adopted, a state will receive \$4,000, with an additional \$2,000 paid for each child with special needs. The Act authorizes \$20 million for each of 5 years (FY 1999 to FY 2003) for the bonuses, though eventually the bonuses will be offset by savings in foster care expenses.

Establishes Tighter Time Limits: Children who cannot safely return to their own families often wait far too long in foster care -- typically over 3 years, and many times even longer. Under the new law, permanency hearings will now be held no later than 12 months after a child enters foster care, 6 months earlier than under previous law, and states must initiate termination of parental rights proceedings, except in specified circumstances, for any child who has been in foster care

for 15 of the previous 22 months.

Breaking Down Barriers, Promoting Safe and Stable Families, and Achieving Accountability

Eliminating Obstacles: The new law prohibits delaying or denying adoptions across state or county lines, thereby breaking geographic barriers to adoption.

Providing Supportive Services: The new law ensures that children with special needs keep health insurance coverage when they are adopted, either through Medicaid or through the new children's health program. In addition, the new law reauthorizes the Family Preservation and Family Support Services Program, renamed Promoting Safe and Stable Families, which provides services to strengthen families before crises occur and to ensure safe, stable homes for children who return to their families.

Emphasizing Results for Children: The new law authorizes HHS, in consultation with states, to develop new measures to track and rate state performance efforts in providing child welfare services to ensure successful results for children.

Recognizing Success: Prior to the bill signing today, HHS recognized 13 awardees for significant achievement in helping both adopted children and those waiting for adoption. Among the awardees are families, foundations, members of the media, and states that have improved the management of child welfare programs.

THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION RECORD ON ADOPTION

November 19, 1997

"I am pleased that the Senate and the House of Representatives have passed historic, bipartisan legislation to promote adoption and improve our nation's child welfare system, giving our nation's most vulnerable children what every child deserves -- a safe and permanent home."
-- Statement by President Clinton, November 13, 1997

The Clinton Administration has previously taken several important steps to encourage and increase adoptions and to support the families who choose to open their hearts and their homes to these children. Since taking office in 1993, the President has championed programs that find and assist adoptive families, and has committed his Administration to breaking down barriers, including high adoption costs and complex regulations. These steps include:

MAKING ADOPTION AFFORDABLE FOR FAMILIES. Last year, President Clinton signed into law the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996, which provides a \$5,000 tax credit to families adopting children, and a \$6,000 tax credit for families adopting children with special needs. This provision has alleviated a significant barrier to adoption, helping middle class families for whom adoption may have been prohibitively expensive and making it easier for families to adopt children with special needs. Since President Clinton took office, the number of children with special needs who have been adopted with federal adoption assistance has risen by 60 percent. This year, in signing the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, President Clinton ensured more support for families who adopt children with the \$500 Per-Child Tax Credit.

GIVING STATES FLEXIBILITY AND SUPPORT. To test innovative strategies to improve child welfare systems, the Clinton Administration has granted child welfare waivers to California, Delaware, Indiana, Illinois, Maryland, North Carolina, Ohio and Oregon, giving the states more flexibility in tailoring services to meet the needs of children and families. Up to two more states will receive approval for waivers under previous authority. Under the new Adoption and Safe Families Act, HHS will grant up to 10 waivers per year to states. In addition, this Administration has provided states with enhanced technical support and helped improve court operations. In September, HHS awarded 40 demonstration grants totalling \$7.9 million, to states, local agencies, courts, private organizations, and others committed to promoting adoption for innovative programs to increase adoptions and reduce the number of children in foster care. To prevent children from entering foster care in the first place, in 1993, the Clinton Administration secured federal funding for the Family Preservation and Family Support Program to help states, local governments and service providers develop effective programs to serve children and families at risk.

BREAKING DOWN RACIAL AND ETHNIC BARRIERS TO ADOPTION. The Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996, also ensures that the adoption process is free from discrimination and delays on the basis of race, culture and ethnicity by strengthening the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act which the President signed in 1994.

PROVIDING SUPPORTS FOR CHILD PROTECTION AND ADOPTION. In 1993, President Clinton signed into law the Family and Medical Leave Act which enables parents to take time off to adopt a child without losing their jobs or health insurance. In addition, the welfare reform bill that the President signed into law maintains the guarantee of child protection and adoption, and does not reduce funds for child welfare, child abuse, foster care and adoption services.

RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS. Through speeches, writings, events and public service announcements, the President and First Lady have promoted the importance and benefits of adoption.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

December 14, 1999

PRESIDENT CLINTON SIGNS LANDMARK LAW
TO HELP FOSTER CARE YOUTH PREPARE FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

December 14, 1999

President Clinton today will sign into law the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999. This legislation, based on an initiative proposed by the President and the First Lady, will help ensure that young people who leave foster care get the tools they need to make the most of their lives. It empowers those leaving foster care by providing them better educational opportunities, access to health care, training, housing assistance, counseling and other services. The new law is only the latest instance of the Administration's longstanding commitment to children and families.

FOSTER CARE YOUTH FACE CHALLENGES AS THEY ENTER ADULTHOOD. Nearly 20,000 young people leave foster care each year when they reach age 18 without an adoptive family or other guardian. Without the emotional, social and financial support that families provide, many of these youth find themselves inadequately prepared for life on their own. Studies show that within two to four years of leaving foster care, only half have completed high school, fewer than half are employed, one-fourth have been homeless for at least one night, 30 percent do not have access to needed health care, 60 percent of the women have given birth, and less than one in five are completely self-supporting.

NEW LEGISLATION PROVIDES NEW HOPE FOR THESE YOUTH. Under previous laws, federal financial support for these young people ended just as they were making the transition to independence. The Act the President will sign today authorizes \$700 million over five years to help these young people cross this critical bridge:

Doubling the Federal Independent Living Program. The Independent Living program, run through the states, helps older foster care children earn a high school diploma, participate in vocational training or education, and learn daily living skills such as budgeting, career planning and securing housing and employment. Today's new law doubles the program's funding to \$140 million per year, and invests \$350 million more over five years in these services. Under the new law, states are now required to serve youth up to 21 years old, enabling more young people to obtain a college education. It also enables states to provide time-limited financial assistance to help these youth with living expenses as they develop the skills and education needed to move successfully into the workforce. The Act the President will sign today also renames the program in honor of John Chafee, the late Senator who so effectively championed the needs of children.

Providing Health Insurance. Today, when young people emancipate from foster care, they face numerous health risks, but too often lose their health insurance. The new law grants states the option for these young people to remain eligible for Medicaid up to age 21. Today, HHS will issue guidance to all State Medicaid Directors encouraging them to take up this option.

Honoring America's Heroes. In an unrelated provision, the Act provides a special monthly cash benefit to Filipino veterans who served under the U.S. Armed Forces during World War II if they were eligible for

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and later choose to move outside the United States. Previously, Filipino veterans who were eligible to receive SSI benefits would lose them if they were to return to the Philippines.

A RECORD OF ACCOMPLISHMENT FOR FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION. With today's new law, the Administration adds to an unprecedented record of promoting the well-being of children and providing them permanent, loving homes. In 1998 there were a record 36,000 adoptions from foster care, the first significant increase in the history of the program. From 1996 to 1998, the number of adoptions nationwide rose 29 percent -- from 28,000 to 36,000 -- and is on a pace to meet the President's goal of 56,000 adoptions in 2002. Among the President's other steps to improve child welfare and encourage adoption:

Increasing the Transitional Living Program. Last month the President secured in the budget agreement a 40 percent increase in the Transitional Living program, which provides funds to local community-based organizations for residential care, life skills training, and other support services to homeless adolescents. The program will now be funded at \$20.7 million.

Enacting the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997. Based on the Administration's Adoption 2002 report, this landmark law made the health and safety of children a clear priority, provided the first-ever financial incentives for states to increase adoptions, tightened the time frames for making permanent placements of children, and removed other barriers to adoption.

Making Adoption Affordable. In 1996, President Clinton enacted a \$5,000 tax credit for families adopting children, and a \$6,000 tax credit for families adopting children with special needs. In the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, the President provided more support for families who adopt with a \$500 per-child tax credit. And under the Family and Medical Leave Act, parents can take time with a newly adopted child without losing their jobs or health insurance.

Breaking Down Racial and Ethnic Barriers to Adoption. New inter-ethnic adoption provisions signed into law by the President ensure that the adoption process is free from discrimination and delays on the basis of race, culture and ethnicity.

Giving States Flexibility and Support. The Clinton Administration has given 25 states waivers to test innovative strategies for improving state child welfare systems. The Administration has provided states technical support to improve court operations and grants to support local adoption projects, and has also secured federal funding for the Promoting Safe and Stable Families program to serve at-risk children and families.

Using the Internet to Promote Adoption. In November 1998, the President issued a directive to the Department of Health and Human Services to expand the use of the Internet as a tool to find homes for children waiting to be adopted from foster care. HHS will develop a national Internet site by the year 2002.

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For Immediate Release

September 24, 1999

PRESIDENT CLINTON ANNOUNCES FIRST ADOPTION BONUS AWARDS TO STATES AND
UNVEILS REPORT THAT SHOWS ADMINISTRATION STRATEGY IS WORKING
September 24, 1999

Today, the President and First Lady will announce bonus awards of \$20 million to 35 states that have increased the number of children adopted from the public foster care system. These bonuses, awarded for the first time today, were first proposed by President Clinton's Adoption 2002 initiative and included in the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997.

The President also will announce \$5.5 million in grants to innovative programs that remove barriers to adoption, and he unveiled a national progress report on adoption that documents the success of the Administration's strategy. From 1996 to 1998, the number of adoptions nationwide rose 29 percent - from 28,000 to 36,000 - and is on a pace to meet the President's goal of 56,000 adoptions in 2002. This is the first significant increase in adoptions since the national foster care program was established nearly 20 years ago.

INCENTIVE AWARDS SUCCEED IN INCREASING ADOPTIONS. In the Administration's Adoption 2002 proposal and the adoption law of 1997, the President created the first-ever financial incentive for states to increase adoptions of children from the foster care system. Today, the President will release \$20 million in bonus awards to 35 states that in 1998 exceeded their average adoption rate from 1995 to 1997. The \$20 million in bonuses provide for up to \$4,000 per adopted child, and \$6,000 for each child with special needs. In fact, the states' performance in 1998 was so strong that it would have entitled them, under the law, to an additional \$22.5 million.

INNOVATIVE GRANTS REDUCE BARRIERS TO ADOPTION. The President today also will announce \$5.5 million in new awards under the Adoption Opportunities program. This program provides grants to public and private organizations to eliminate barriers to adoption, particularly for children with special needs. This year's grants reward a variety of initiatives, including efforts to increase adoptions of minority children, targeted field research, and awards for collaborative planning to increase adoptions across jurisdictional lines.

REPORT SHOWS CLINTON ADMINISTRATION STRATEGY IS WORKING. Since taking office, the President has championed efforts to make foster care work better, to find and assist adoptive families, and to break down barriers to adoption. Today, the President will receive a progress report from the Department of Health and Human Services that documents the effectiveness of the Administration's strategy.

- Reforming the Child Welfare System. In 1997, the President signed the Adoption and Safe Families Act. This landmark law was based largely on recommendations from the Administration's Adoption 2002 report, which the President requested by executive memorandum in order to meet his goal of doubling adoptions by 2002. The law expedited permanent placement decisions for children, ensured health insurance coverage for all special-needs children in subsidized adoptions, and created the bonus awards released today.

- Making Adoption Affordable for Families. The Small Business Job

Protection Act of 1996, signed by the President in 1996, provides a \$5,000 tax credit to families adopting children and a \$6,000 tax credit for families adopting children with special needs. This provision helps middle class families for whom adoption - particularly of children with special needs - might have been prohibitively expensive.

- Giving States More Flexibility and Support. The Administration has granted waivers to 20 states and the District of Columbia to test innovative strategies for improving child welfare systems. In addition, it has secured new funds to support state implementation of the 1997 law and has, through the Adoption Opportunities program, supported local initiatives to promote adoption and provide post-adoptive services.

- Using the Internet to Make Adoption Easier. In 1998, the President directed HHS to develop Internet tools to link children in foster care more quickly to possible adoptive families. Secretary Shalala reported that HHS will launch a national web site by September 2001 to break down geographic barriers to adoption.

- Removing Racial and Ethnic Barriers to Adoption. New inter-ethnic adoption provisions, passed as a part of the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996, help ensure that the adoption process is free of delays and discriminatory practices driven by race, culture and ethnicity. These provisions strengthened the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act, which the President signed in 1994.

- Providing Supports for Child Protection and Adoption. The Family and Medical Leave Act, signed by the President in 1993, enables working parents to take time off to adopt a child without losing their jobs or health insurance coverage. The 1996 welfare reform law signed by the President also maintains child protection and adoption guarantees.

NOW IS THE TIME TO TAKE IMPORTANT NEXT STEPS. To follow through on this record of achievement, the President and First Lady today will urge Congress to provide new support for young people leaving foster care. Under the current system, federal financial assistance for young people in foster care ends just as they are making the critical transition to independence. The President's FY 2000 budget request increases funding by nearly \$300 million to help these youth secure health care, life skills training, and educational opportunities. With the Administration's strong support, the House has already passed bipartisan legislation to address these needs. The President today urged the Senate to take prompt action on the companion measure and to safeguard the interests of vulnerable young people leaving foster care.

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REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AND FIRST LADY
AT ADOPTION BILL SIGNING

The East Room

1:53 P.M. EST

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you and welcome to the East Room. Please be seated. We are delighted to have all of you join us today for this very important event and one that many of you in this room have worked for and looked for for many years.

There are some people that I would like to acknowledge and introduce before we get started. You will hear from the four members of Congress who are here on the stage, Representative Kennelly, Representative Camp, Senator Chafee and Senator Rockefeller. Also attending are Senator Craig, Senator DeWine, Senator Landrieu, Representative Levin, Representative Oberstar, Representative Maloney, and Representative Morella. And I'd like to ask all the members of Congress to please stand. (Applause.)

This was truly a bipartisan piece of legislation. It could not have been passed without the strong support of the members whom you see, including the sponsors who are here on the stage. It was also a work that was very much in the heart of Secretary Donna Shalala and her team from HHS -- Richard Tarplin, Mary Bourdette, and Carol Williams. And I'd like to ask the Secretary and her team to stand please. (Applause.)

There were also a number of members of the White House staff who worked very hard with members of Congress and with members of the HHS contingent, and I'd like to acknowledge just a few of them -- John Hilley, Bruce Reed, Elena Kagan, and in particular Jen Klein and Nicole Rabner. I want to thank all of them. (Applause.)

I'm also pleased that we have Governor Romer of Colorado. We have children, families, advocates, and leaders of the child welfare constituency here in our audience.

Nearly a year ago, the President and I met with children waiting in the foster care system for caring families to call their own. There the President pledged to reform the child welfare system to work better for the children it serves, to put their health and safety first, and to move children more quickly into safe and permanent homes. Today we as a nation make good on that pledge.

And for the thousands of American children who wait for a stable, loving home that will always be there, it is not a moment too soon. Right now there are nearly half a million children in foster care. For most, foster care is a safe haven on the road to a permanent home or back home. Too many, however, make countless detours along the way, shuffling from family to family without much hope that they will ever find permanent parents to love and take care of them. These children who will enter this holiday season unsure about whether the family they celebrate this year will be there with them next year deserve better.

We know it makes a difference for children to have permanent loving homes. It's not only research that tells us this; we know it by our intuition, by our own experience and we have all seen it firsthand. It was here in this room two years ago that a young woman named Deanna -- a child waiting to be adopted in foster care stood up and read a poem about what she wanted in life, and it wasn't real complicated. It is what all of us want. I'm happy that because of that event here in the East Room, she was able to meet a family who did adopt her. And I saw her last year at an event in Kansas City and almost didn't recognize her -- from a shy, withdrawn 13-year-old, she had blossomed into a cheerful, outgoing, confident teenager with a brilliant smile.

This landmark legislation that the President is about to sign will see to it there are more stories like Deanna's. This legislation stands as proof of what we can accomplish when we come together. As we see today, the national government does have an important role to play in reforming our foster care system, and giving guidance to courts and states in offering incentives to speed up and increase the numbers of adoptions, and in making sure that the health and safety of our children is always the first priority.

But we know even more, all Americans have a role and a responsibility. Businesses can make it easier for their employees to adopt a child. And I want to single out Dave Thomas of Wendy's, who has led the way in showing all of us how that can be done. (Applause.)

Religious leaders can help spread the word about the joys of adoptions. Parents thinking about adoption can expand their search to reach out to kids in foster care. And if we reform the system so that it works the way that it should, more Americans will look to American children to adopt and not feel compelled to go overseas to adopt children. (Applause.)

With us today are some extraordinary Americans who have answered this call. This morning, the Department of Health and Human Services observed National Adoption Month by honoring outstanding achievements with the 1997 Adoption 2002 Excellence Awards. Secretary Shalala developed these awards at the request of the President. The winners are dedicated individuals and organizations, both large and small, who have worked to move children out of the foster care system and into permanent, loving homes. Some of them have been at the forefront of this issue for years; some have promoted and supported adoption in their communities; and some are parents who have opened their homes and hearts to our nation's most vulnerable children.

I'd like to ask all the honorees who were honored this morning to please stand. (Applause.) We want to thank you for the work you have done, for the example you have set. And we hope that through these awards, in conjunction with this legislation, there will be many, many more in your ranks in the years to come.

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THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sue Ann. Thank you, Aaron (phonetic). And I want to thank the Badeau family for showing up. I think it's fair to say it was a greater effort for them than for anyone else here. (Laughter.) I appreciate the rest of your presence. It was easier for me than anybody; I just had to come downstairs. (Laughter.) But I'm grateful that they're here.

Secretary Shalala, I thank you and your staff for your remarkable work on this. And I thank the members of the White House staff, all the

members of Congress who are present here. And especially I thank Senators Rockefeller and Chafee and Congressmen Camp and Kennelly for their work and for what they said here.

Congratulations to the Adoption 2002 Excellence Award winners. I thank all the advocates who are here. And I say a special word of thanks, along with all the others who have said it, to the First Lady, who has been passionately committed to this issue for at least 25 years now that I know. Thank you, Governor Romer, for coming. And thank you, Dave Thomas, for what you've done.

Again let me say to all the members of Congress who are here, Republicans and Democrats alike, I am very grateful for what you've done. This, after all, is what we got in public life for, isn't it?

Before I make my brief remarks, if you'll forgive me and understand, I have to make one public statement today about the situation in Iraq.

As I have said before, I prefer to resolve this situation peacefully, with our friends and allies, and I am working hard to do just that. But I want to be clear again about the necessary objective of any diplomacy now underway. Iraq must comply with the unanimous will of the international community and let the weapons inspectors resume their work to prevent Iraq from developing an arsenal of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. The inspectors must be able to do so without interference. That's our top line; that's our bottom line. I want to achieve it diplomatically. But we're taking every step to make sure we are prepared to pursue whatever options are necessary.

I do not want these children we are trying to put in stable homes to grow up into a world where they are threatened by terrorists with biological and chemical weapons. It is not right. (Applause.)

It's hard to believe now, but it was just a little less than a year ago when I directed our administration to develop a plan to double the number of children we move from foster care to adoptive homes by the year 2002. We know that foster parents provide safe and caring families for children. But the children should not be trapped in them forever, especially when there are open arms waiting to welcome them into permanent homes.

The Adoption and Safe Families Act, which I am about to sign, is consistent with the work of the 2002 report and our goals. It fundamentally alters our nation's approach to foster care and adoption. And fundamentally, it will improve the well-being of hundreds of thousands of our most vulnerable children. The new legislation makes it clear that children's health and safety are the paramount concerns of our public child welfare system. It makes it clear that good foster care provides important safe havens for our children, but it is by definition a temporary, not a permanent, setting.

The new law will help us to speed children out of foster care into permanent families by setting meaningful time limits for child welfare decisions, by clarifying which family situations call for reasonable reunification efforts and which simply do not. It will provide states with financial incentives to increase the number of children adopted each year. It will ensure that adopted children with special needs never lose their health coverage -- a big issue. Thank you, Congress, for doing that. It will reauthorize federal funding for timely services to alleviate crisis before they become serious, that aid the reunification of families that help to meet post-adoption needs.

With these measures we help families stay together where reunification is possible and help find safe homes for children much

more quickly when it is not. We've come together in an extraordinary example of bipartisan cooperation to meet the urgent needs of children at risk. We put our differences aside, and put our children first.

This landmark legislation builds on other action taken in the last few years by Congress: the Adoption Tax Credit I signed into law August to make adopting children more affordable for families, especially those who adopt children with special needs; the Multiethnic Placement Act, enacted two years ago, ensuring that adoption is free from discrimination and delay, based on race, culture, or ethnicity; and the very first law I signed as President, the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993, which enables parents to take time off to adopt a child without losing their jobs or their health insurance.

We have put in place here the building blocks of giving all of our children what should be their fundamental right -- a chance at a decent, safe home; an honorable, orderly, positive upbringing; a chance to live out their dreams and fulfill their God-given capacities.

Now, as we approach Thanksgiving, when families all across our country come together to give thanks for their blessings, I would like to encourage more families to consider opening their homes and their hearts to children who need loving homes. You may not want to go as far as the Badaeus have -- (laughter) -- but they are a shining example of how we grow -- (applause) -- they are a shining example of how we grow when we give, how we can be blessed in return many times over. We thank them and all -- all of the adoptive parents in the country.

For those who are now or have been foster or adoptive parents, I'd like to say thank you on behalf of a grateful nation, and again say at Thanksgiving, let us thank God for our blessings and resolve to give more of our children the blessings they deserve.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

END

2:19 P.M. EST

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AND THE FIRST LADY
AT ADOPTION EVENT

Presidential Hall

10:00 A.M. EDT

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you, and please be seated. And welcome to the White House for a celebration and a wonderful announcement for so many children and families around our country.

I'm delighted that we've been joined by members of Congress, including Senator Carl Levin and Representative Dave Camp and Representative Nancy Johnson and Representative Tom DeLay and Representative Ben Cardin and Representative Maxine Waters.

This is an issue that has been at the real heart of our efforts in the last several years to do what we could to give every child a chance to have a permanent loving home. And there are many people who have played a role in bringing us to this day. I want to acknowledge Olivia Golden and Pat Montoya, from HHS. I want to acknowledge the Brown, the Manis, the Keane and the Vasquez family. Carol Williams, the former Children's Bureau director and a champion of adoption; the many adoption advocates who are here.

And there's one very special champion of foster children who I would like to introduce to you. She is an eight-year-old girl who heard about how many foster children could not afford to use anything but garbage bags for luggage when they were told they had to move. So she decided to collect suitcases for them, and so far she has collected 1,000. And I'd like to ask Makenzi Snyder to stand, please.
(Applause.)

This summer I saw a photograph that reminded me why the work we're doing to promote adoption in our country is so vitally important. It was a picture of a young woman in a green silk evening gown, with high heels and a lace shawl, and you could see the anticipation and excitement in her eyes. That was a picture of 17-year-old Deanna Collins. It was taken by her parents, her adoptive parents, on the night of her high school prom.

Looking at that picture, it was difficult for me to believe that the smiling, confident young woman was the same girl I had welcomed to the White House just four years ago. Back then, she was 13, and she'd already spent eight years in foster care. With her shoulders slumped forward, and her eyes downcast, she told the audience gathered in the East Room for National Adoption Month about her dreams of living in a place she could call home, with a room of her own and a family she could love.

Not long after that visit, Deanna's dream came true. And it's been my privilege to watch this young woman's life transformed by her adoption. With the love of her parents and the confidence that comes from knowing that, indeed, she always will have a place to call

home, no matter what else happens to her in life, she is thriving. She's a senior in high school, now, and plans to go to college and major in social work.

Every time I need inspiration for our fight to strengthen and increase adoption in America, I think of Deanna. I think of so many of the other children whom I've know. I think of the adult adoptees, who are telling us their stories, including Washington D.C.'s own Mayor, Tony Williams, who told us at another Adoption Month commemoration last year how, at the age of three, he was about to be declared unadoptable, and institutionalized by the state, when Virginia Williams opened her arms and welcomed him into her family.

Mrs. Williams is here today, and all of us are grateful for the love you gave that young three-year-old boy, and the second chance you gave to him. And I'd like to ask Mrs. Williams to please stand. (Applause.)

But we can't gather today and celebrate Dianna or Mayor Williams without thinking of the thousands of foster children in America who are still waiting for the same chance, either to go back safely to their own families where they will be given the love and the attention and the discipline that every child needs, or be given the chance in a new family.

For more than 25 years, as an advocate and an attorney, I have tried to work with so many others to address the challenges of foster care and adoption. I've represented perspective parents in court. I've represented foster children. I've worked on behalf of changes in legislation. I've listened to the frustrations that social workers and judges and police officers and parents and others feel about the red tape that so often keeps them from sharing their lives with children who badly need their love.

I've met foster children who have spent childhoods feeling alone and unloved, moving from home to home. Children such as the teenage boy the President and I met in the Oval Office two years ago. When we asked him where he lived, he looked down and he said, "All over Fairfax County."

In many ways, giving more of our children the chance to know the love and support of a family is a personal crusade for us. I know that many of you have been at the meetings and the roundtables and the celebrations of National Adoption Month that we've held here at the White House. And I've been very pleased and grateful to work with so many advocates like Wendy's founder, or Dave Thomas, who as an adopted child himself has dedicated much of his time and personal resources to promoting adoption.

With each meeting I became, along with all of you, more and more convinced that it was past time to reform our foster care system, to identify and eliminate the obstacles to change the placement procedures so that we could expedite the movement of children either home or into new homes.

We've made a lot of progress. We've helped adoptive parents carve out the time they need to care for their new children. The first bill the President signed into law was the Family and Medical Leave Act, which allows new parents -- including adoptive parents -- to take time off and care for their children without fear of losing their jobs or health insurance.

We've put an end to racial discrimination in adoption. The President signed and strengthened the Multiethnic Placement Act, prohibiting adoption agencies from keeping children of one race from the

to all of those of you who have been the mothers and fathers that have helped move our children into homes, and into a sense of love and security, we say thank you -- for opening your homes and your hearts.

And now it's my privilege to introduce someone who has done just that -- who with her husband, Steven, and her son Sean, have just finalized the adoptions of Sarah and Brian. Please join me in welcoming Dawn Keane. (Applause.)

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THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. When we have events here in this room, with people who have come to share their experiences, very often I feel like a fifth wheel. I think everything that needs to be said has already been said. (Laughter.) But I want to begin by thanking Dawn Keane for her wonderful statement; her husband, Steve; and Sean, Brian and Sarah. They're beautiful children. They did a good job at the microphone, didn't they? (Laughter.) I want to thank Olivia Golden and Pat Montoya for their work at HHS on this important issue.

I'd like to thank this remarkable bipartisan delegation from the House of Representatives here -- Dave Camp and Nancy Johnson and Ben Cardin and Maxine Waters, Sandy Levin and Congressman DeLay. This may be the only issue all six of these people agree on. (Laughter.) And -- Tom's nodding his head up and down. (Laughter.)

I'll tell you a funny story -- this is a true story. The other day I was reading a profile of Tom DeLay in the newspaper. And I got about halfway through, and he was giving me the devil for something; you know, he's very good at that. (Laughter.) And he started grinding on my golf game and saying that I didn't count my scores and all this, and I was getting really angry. (Laughter.) And then I get to the next part of the story, and it talks all about his experience and his commitment to adoption and to foster children, and the personal experience that he and his wife had. And my heart just melted. And all of a sudden, I didn't care what he said about my golf game. (Laughter.)

And I say that to make this point: The Keane family -- the Manis, the Brown, the Vasquez families who are behind me today -- they represent what we all know is basic and fundamental about our families and our country -- more important than anything else we can think of. And they open their homes and their hearts to children, and they open our hearts to them -- and to each other as we work for more stories like those we celebrate today.

I'd also like to say a special hello to the Badeau family. Some of you may remember this. Two years ago, almost, Sue and Hector Badeau joined us at the White House when I signed the Adoption and Safe Families Act. They brought 18 of the 22 children they have adopted. Now, you need to know that, as if they didn't have enough to deal with, this summer they also welcomed into their home a family of eight Kosovar refugees. So if you ever need proof that there's no limit to human goodness, you can look at Sue and Hector Badeau.

I'd like for them to stand. Where are they? There you go. They've got some of their kids here. Stand up. (Applause.) Thank you. God bless you. Thank you. (Applause.)

I would also like to say just a very brief word to Hillary. You heard her tell the story of her involvement in this, but when we were in law school together, before we were married, she was talking to me about how messed up the foster care and adoption laws were in the country, how many ridiculous barriers there were. And not long after

we moved to Little Rock and I became Attorney General of our state, she took a case for a young couple who had had a child from foster care for three years that they desperately wanted to adopt -- this is over 20 years ago. And together they changed the law in our state so that foster parents could be considered for adoption, something that used to be verboten in most states in the country.

So I've watched her work on these issues now for almost 30 years, and I am very grateful that one of the many blessings of our time in the White House has been the chance to make a difference on these adoption and foster care issues, and I thank her for making it possible. (Applause.)

Finally, let me say, again, I want to say a special word of thanks to the members of Congress in both parties who have come to this event today. We have had a raging, often stimulating, occasionally maddening, debate on what should be the role of government over the last five years in this town. But we have all agreed that government has a role to try to protect children, but to facilitate the most rapid, reasonable, orderly process for both foster care and for transition to adoption.

Hillary said that the House had adopted this provision to let kids coming out of foster care keep their Medicaid until they're 21. I'll just give you one more example of how these issues unify us. Within a 36-hour period, about six months ago, my cousin, who runs the public housing unit in the little town where I was born in Arkansas -- which has 8,000 or 10,000 people -- came up to a HUD conference. And she spent the night with me and were having breakfast, drinking coffee, and she says, you know, you've got to do something about these foster kids. They keep going out of the -- they come out of the foster homes and they've got no money and they need to do some things. And then the next day, literally within 36 hours, I'm talking to these people from New York City who tell me it's maybe the biggest social problem they have now, with all these kids coming out of foster care.

So this is an issue that spans the experience of America, the whole sweep of it. And I'm very grateful -- I'm grateful that we have this consensus and I'm grateful that they've acted on it. I urge the Senate to follow suit.

Now, you've already heard about the things that we're doing to try to double the number of children we help move into permanent homes. We have new evidence that these efforts are bearing fruit. The Department of Health and Human Services has just given me a report that tracks our progress in meeting our adoption goals. It shows that the number of adoptions from the foster care system increased from 28,000 in 1996, to 36,000 in 1998. That is the first significant increase in adoptions since the National Foster Care Program was created almost 20 years ago.

Now, that's an amazing thing. That's more than -- it's about a 30-percent increase. That's a very impressive increase in two years. And we are well on our way to meeting our goal of 56,000 in 2002, doubling the number. For all of you that had anything to do with that, I say thank you. You should be very proud of yourselves.

Now, if you look at this HHS report -- and I urge those of you who are interested in it to actually get it and scan it, at least -- you will see how much this bipartisan cooperation I talked about and the work that's being done by people in the trenches to clear away the barriers is making a difference -- a stunning example of what we can do when we put our children first. You will see that we have acted on each and every one of the 11 recommendations set forth in the original Adoption 2002 report. Breaking down barriers to adoptions, ensuring

accountability, rewarding innovation, supporting adoptive families themselves.

One of the key recommendations we adopted into law in 1997 was to give states, for the first time, financial incentives to help children move from foster to adoptive homes. Under the new bonus system, states are entitled to up to \$4,000 or \$6,000, depending on whether the child has special needs, for each adoption above their previous average.

Today, I have the honor of presenting the first round of these awards, worth \$20 million, to 35 of our 50 states. The good news is that these states did this, using creative new approaches and exceeding their own high goals. Illinois, for example -- listen to this -- the state of Illinois increased its options by 112 percent -- 112 -- yes, you can clap for Illinois. That's good. (Applause.)

Now, the bad news, if you can call it that, is that even though we believed this would work, we didn't think it would work this well this quickly -- (laughter) -- and we didn't put enough money in to give all the states all the money to which they're entitled. So I hope we can rectify that, because I think we all think that we want to give the states the incentives to figure out how best to do this.

But the fact is, I think all of us are very proud of what these states have done for some of their most vulnerable citizens. And I look forward to working with the Congress to make up this shortfall and get the other 15 states above their goals as well.

Today, I am also awarding \$5.5 million in adoption opportunity grants to outstanding public and private organizations in 16 of our states to help fund research and new ways of increasing inter-state adoptions, and adoptions of minority children. Together these efforts will help to accelerate the remarkable progress we've seen.

Now, again let me say, I think the big goal we ought to have for this legislative session is to get the Senate to follow the lead of the House, and schedule a vote on the Chafee-Rockefeller bill to ensure that the foster children are not cast out in the cold when their time in foster care ends. I hope -- I know if we can get it up and get it on the calendar, it will pass with the same overwhelming bipartisan support that we've seen in the House. So I urge all of you to do what you can to make sure that that is a big priority for the Senate, and I will do my part.

Together, we can help our foster children -- all of them -- first grow up in good homes, and, if they turn 18 as foster children, to make a good transition from transit to independence -- with health care, education, counseling and housing.

Now, ultimately, let me say the credit in all this does not really belong to all of the political leaders, even though they've worked very hard, all of us have together. It does not belong to all the public servants, even though there is a real new attitude, I think, in the organizations, the social services organizations, to try to do the right thing and move this along.

But none of this will work if there aren't good people in every community like the Keanes, the Manises, the Browns, the Vasquezes, the Badeaus, who are willing to give a child unconditional love and a good upbringing. They are the proof of the unlimited goodness of the human heart. All the rest of us are trying to do is to unleash it. And we need to keep right on doing that.

Thank you and God bless you all. (Applause.)

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AND THE FIRST LADY
AT FOSTER CARE EVENT

Presidential Hall

5:45 P.M. EST

MRS. CLINTON: Welcome to the White House, and please be seated. This is a truly wonderful day. In a few minutes the President will sign into law landmark legislation that will strengthen our foster care system, and give hope and help to thousands of young people struggling to make a safe transition to adulthood and independence.

None of this would have been possible without so many of you in this room. I want to thank Secretary Donna Shalala and her team at HHS, including Mary Burdette and Pat Montoya; and former commissioner, Carol Williams. I want to thank many members of Congress, and particularly those who are here with us today -- Senator Rockefeller and Senator Collins, Senator Chafee, and Representative Cardin.

I want to thank Mayor Williams and his mother, Virginia, who welcomed him into her family when he was 3 years old and authorities were about to declare him unadoptable. They are among the best advertisements for the rewards and possibilities of adoption in America.

I want to thank the Child Welfare League of America, the Children's Defense Fund, and all of the tireless child advocates who work to raise awareness about this issue. The Casey Family Program and the Annie E. Casey Foundation have give great support to young people in transition.

And I'd also like very much to thank someone who I'm sure is with us in spirit, the late Senator John Chafee. (Applause.) On the Friday before he died, I called Senator Chafee to wish him a happy birthday. I also managed to do a little lobbying for the Foster Care Independence Act, which had hit a few roadblocks in the Senate. By the end of our conversation, I think we were both feeling reenergized and inspired to work even harder for the young people who were counting on this bill.

I understand that one of his last instructions to his staff was to set up meetings with senators he felt could be swayed to support the bill. We all know that had he lived, John Chafee would not have rested until he had won all of the votes he needed. So we are very grateful today to be joined by his colleagues and, particularly, his son, Senator Lincoln Chafee.

Since the President took office we have seen a transformation in America's efforts to strengthen our foster care and adoption systems. With the Family and Medical Leave Act, we've helped adoptive parents, and all new parents, take time off to care for their children without fear of losing their jobs or their health insurance. We've put an end to racial discrimination in adoption, prohibiting agencies from denying qualified parents of one race to adopt a child of another.

In 1997, we passed the Adoption and Safe Families Act, which

cut dramatically the amount of time a child can spend in foster care, and set an ambitious goal of doubling the number of annual adoptions by the year 2002. And, as the President was able to announce just a few months ago, in September, we are well on our way to meeting that goal.

But it wasn't long after we passed the Adoption and Safe Families Act that we recognized we needed now to turn our efforts to a new challenge: helping those young people, who never did have the opportunity either to return home or be placed in a permanent family, fulfill their promise in adulthood.

Now, for many Americans, the 18th birthday is an important one. Turning 18 means you can vote. It means you can often go away to get a job or to school. But it should never mean that you're left on your own. For too many young people, turning 18 has been just the beginning of a lonely and sometimes harrowing journey toward adulthood. Just half of all young people who have aged out of foster care complete high school. Fewer than one in three have health care coverage. One in four have been homeless.

Two years ago, I went to California to meet a group of young people who had aged out of foster care. They told me about being forced out of their foster homes on their birthdays; about staying in a cold dorm room alone during the holidays because they had nowhere to go; about getting sick and having no insurance to get any medical care; about having literally no one to call for any kind of help.

They reminded me of the many small things we all take for granted in our own families. One young woman said to me, you know, it's almost Thanksgiving, and I have no one to call and ask how to bake a turkey.

I've been very moved and humbled by the resilience and determination I've seen in the young people I've met. Some of them are standing behind me. One is Joy Warren, who spent all of her teen years in foster care. Yet, she still found the commitment and strength not only to continue her education in college, but to attend the law school and become a powerful voice for foster children around America.

I think of Terry Harak, whom I had the honor of meeting at the White House last January. On her 18th birthday, in the middle of her senior year, she found herself without foster care, without a job and without a place to call home, because the rule has been you're out of foster care if you turn 18 or you finish high school, whichever happens first.

But Terry didn't give up. She spent the night at teachers' and friends' houses and metro terminals, even in hospital emergency rooms. And every morning she would wake up and get herself to school. And last June she graduated and today she is working and is a student in college.

But for every Terry or every Joy or any of the other success stories behind me, think of all those young people who don't finish high school and who risk slipping through the cracks of our society. That is why, last winter, I was very pleased to unveil a new proposal in the President's budget that would extend the foster care safety net to the young people who have aged out of the foster care system, but still need our help. And today I'm very pleased that that bill is about to become law.

The Foster Care Independence Act recognizes one fundamental principle: All of us must take responsibility for helping these young people build lives worthy of their spirit and potential. From this day forward we say to all Americans, no young person, especially those who

have not known the support of a safe, loving, permanent family, should have to make the passage to adulthood alone.

This has been a truly bipartisan achievement. And I want to thank everyone in Congress who helped, the former foster children who stepped forward to make their stories known, the newspapers and television stations that publicized their plight, the researchers who backed up their heartbreaking stories with hard statistics, and the advocates and private citizens who lobbied the Congress. In this season of giving, I can think of no better gift to give our children and our future.

Now I'm very proud to introduce two people who can tell us why this law is so important. Alfred Perez is one of the eloquent young people I met two years ago in California. He will speak first. He will be followed by Kristi Jo Frazier, of Cincinnati, Ohio. Both of them will tell us more about their challenges, and even more importantly, about their capacity to persist, their resilience, and their triumphs.

Please welcome Alfred Perez. (Applause.)

* * * *

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Thank you, please be seated. At this moment, about all I can think of is, Merry Christmas. (Laughter.)

Senator Rockefeller, Senator Collins, Representative Cardin, thank you all for being here. And, Senator Chafee, thank you for being here, and with you, the spirit of your father, for all his great work on this.

I want to say a special word of thanks to our Mayor, Tony Williams, and his mom, Mrs. Virginia Williams. He has become America's Exhibit A of the potential for foster care success. He is a good man and she is a magnificent woman, and we thank them for being here. Thank you. (Applause.)

I thank Secretary Shalala and all of her staff. And I thank Alfred Perez and Kristi Jo Frazier, and the other young people behind me, for whom they spoke. They spoke so well and so bravely and so frankly. What they have achieved in their own lives is truly heroic, and we should all be very grateful that they are determined to make that kind of difference in the lives of other young people.

I want to thank the groups that have done so much to champion the cause of foster children -- the Child Welfare League of America, the Children's Defense Fund, the Annie Casey Foundation, the Casey Family Program. I want to thank especially -- I won't mention them, but they know who they are -- the people who have come up to me personally and lobbied me on this issue over the last couple of years. (Laughter.)

I've got a cousin that's been a friend of mine over 50 years, all my life; we were little kids together. She runs a public housing program in the little town in Arkansas where we were born. And she came up here to a HUD conference on kids aging out of foster care. And she spent the night with me at the White House. I got up the next morning -- I never know, you know, what's on her mind -- this is about a year ago. And she said, Bill, you have got to do something about these kids that are aging out of foster care. She said, it's a huge problem in New York and California, but believe it or not, it's a problem at home, too. And nobody's doing anything about it. I want to thank all those people, and they know who they are.

And most of all, I want to thank Hillary. (Applause.) When we were in law school, she worked at the Yale Child Studies Center. Her

War II. It creates a special cash benefit under Social Security for veterans who want to leave the United States and return to their homelands.

We have 10 such veterans, 10 Filipino veterans, who are here with us today. I want to thank them for their service, and I ask them to stand and be recognized. We thank you. (Applause.)

So this bill keeps a promise to our children and a promise to our veterans. It was passed with overwhelming support from both parties, proving that we can put partisanship aside, and when we do, it's good for America.

I hope that we will see more of this in the new year. I hope that we can use the historic millennial year to take the rest of the steps we need to deal with the aging of America, by securing Social Security and Medicare, to give our children health coverage, to raise the minimum wage, to pass the common-sense legislation on gun safety and hate crimes, to do the things that we need to do to support working family, including the patients' bill of rights.

These young people here should give us all a lot of courage -- and a lot of heart. They represent, out of the most difficult circumstances, the very best not only of our country, but of what is at the core of human nature. And in this special season for so many of the world's great religious faiths, we should be very grateful for the gifts they have given us, the gifts they will give us, and the gifts so many other children will be able to give because of this legislation.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

Now I'd like to ask the members of Congress to come up here, we'll sign the bill.

(The bill is signed.) (Applause.)

END 6:20 P.M. EST

Withdrawal/Redaction Marker

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DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
001. script	re: Foster Care Show (6 pages)	05/01/2000	b(6)

COLLECTION:

Clinton Presidential Records
First Lady's Office
Lissa Muscatine
OA/Box Number: 23214

FOLDER TITLE:

Adoption [Folder 1]

2015-0275-S
rc1898

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

- P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
- P2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
- P3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
- P4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
- P5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
- P6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

C. Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in donor's deed of gift.

PRM. Personal record misfile defined in accordance with 44 U.S.C. 2201(3).

RR. Document will be reviewed upon request.

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

- b(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
- b(2) Release would disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA]
- b(3) Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA]
- b(4) Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential or financial information [(b)(4) of the FOIA]
- b(6) Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(b)(6) of the FOIA]
- b(7) Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]
- b(8) Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
- b(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information concerning wells [(b)(9) of the FOIA]