

days ago in not having unacceptable cuts in Medicare and Medicaid as a condition of talking is wrong, is wrong, and we should not do that. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:39 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program *December 15, 1995*

Dear Mr. Leader:

I am increasingly concerned that, under the current continuing resolution, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance program (LIHEAP) is not meeting the needs of families requiring heating assistance.

With the onset of winter, low-income families need more help to keep their homes warm. Each year, LIHEAP assistance goes to about six million needy households, many of which have an elderly or disabled member or young children.

Normally, by this time of year, States' energy assistance programs would be adequately funded to help households tackle high energy bills and insulate drafty homes. This year, however, Congress still has not passed a full-year appropriations bill for Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies—the bill which funds LIHEAP. The House voted to end LIHEAP altogether.

Under the two continuing resolutions that have been enacted this fall, LIHEAP has been

funded at only \$232 million. Last year, over three times that amount was available to States between September and the end of December.

I strongly urge Congress to pass a full-year appropriation as soon as possible that includes funding for LIHEAP. At a minimum, Congress must enable the Administration to make available a seasonally appropriate share of the previously appropriated funds for LIHEAP.

Congress should act quickly. Since winter is almost upon us, a rising number of low-income Americans, particularly those living in colder regions, will continue to need more help to keep warm at home.

Sincerely,

BILL CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives; Robert Dole, Senate majority leader; Richard Gephardt, House Democratic leader; and Thomas Daschle, Senate Democratic leader.

Message on the Observance of Hanukkah *December 15, 1995*

Warm greetings to all who are celebrating Hanukkah.

Each year, as the days grow shorter and the nights colder, we welcome the return of this Festival of Lights, and each year we find fresh meaning in its ageless story of the triumph of the Maccabees. We are reminded of God's powerful presence in our lives, strengthening and sustaining us in times of struggle. We are inspired to reflect upon the meaning of courage, commitment, and faith. We are encouraged to

acknowledge our blessings—the love of family, the strength of community, the hope of peace. We rediscover the wisdom of pausing, in the rush and hurry of everyday life, to give joyful thanks for these blessings.

This year, especially, we need such reminders, for with the death of Yitzhak Rabin, a great man, a true friend, and a peacemaker was taken from our midst. But as families throughout our nation and around the world gather to rekindle the flames of the menorah, let us renew our

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faith that God will continue to guide our steps through adversity until we can all rejoice in the light of peace.

Hillary and I extend best wishes for a joyous Hanukkah and a wonderful holiday season.

BILL CLINTON

Statement on the Nomination of General Joseph W. Ralston to be Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

December 15, 1995

I am pleased to announce that I have nominated Gen. Joseph W. Ralston, U.S. Air Force, for assignment as Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, succeeding Adm. William A. Owens, who is retiring.

General Ralston currently serves as the Commander, Air Combat Command. In this capacity, he is responsible for training and equipping all active Air Force, Air National Guard, and Air Force Reserve combat wings and squadrons in the United States and Panama. During his distinguished career, General Ralston flew more than 2,500 flying hours, including 147 combat missions over Laos and North Vietnam. He also served as the Air Force's Director for Tactical Programs and its Director for Operational Requirements. In the latter capacity, his championing of the rapid transition of advanced technology to the battlefield was instrumental in determining the shape and force structure of tomorrow's Air Force. General Ralston brings to the job of Vice Chairman a wealth of experience in the development of military requirements and an in-depth knowledge of the defense acquisition

process. These and other attributes provide General Ralston the requisite leadership and management necessary for the post of Vice Chairman at a critical time in the history of the Armed Forces.

I will depend upon General Ralston to continue the initiatives of Admiral Owens which are designed to ensure that our Armed Forces best determine their warfighting requirements and capabilities. I commend Admiral Owens for his exemplary service to his Nation. His sound military advice on the use of military power to back U.S. diplomacy, his crucial role in shaping our forces to fight as a joint team, and the superlative leadership he provided in harnessing the information and technological revolution to our current and future defense posture will ensure that our military will remain the best in the world as we enter the 21st century. Admiral Owens will truly be missed in the senior decisionmaking ranks of our national security structure. Hillary and I join in wishing him the very best as he begins a new phase of his life.

The President's Radio Address

December 16, 1995

Good morning. At midnight last night, for the second time in a month, the Republican Congress shut down the Federal Government in an effort to force through their unacceptable cuts in health care, education, and the environment.

For weeks, my administration and the Republicans in Congress have been in serious negotiations over how to reach common ground on balancing the budget. A week ago, I forwarded to them a plan that would protect our principles and balance the budget in 7 years. I had hoped

that this time would be different, that we were past the Republican threats to shut down the Government just to get their way.

But yesterday, they broke off our talks. Unbelievably, they actually said that as a condition for our talks to continue, we had to agree right now to make deep and unconscionable cuts in Medicare and Medicaid. That is unacceptable.

The cuts they propose would deprive millions of people of health care: poor children, pregnant women, the disabled, seniors in nursing homes.