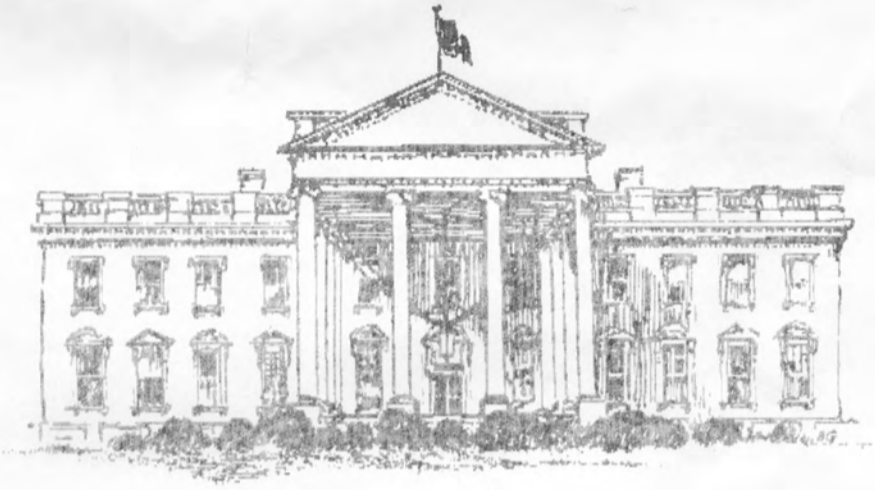


To: Edna Louise Saffy

From: Marilyn DiGiacobbe

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THE WHITE HOUSE

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

May 4, 1996

RADIO ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO THE NATION

10:06 A.M. EDT THE MAP ROOM

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. This week was another good week for America. We learned that growth is up and unemployment is down. That's good for American jobs and good for America's families. We also had more good news on America's families today involving the Family and Medical Leave Act, which I was proud to sign in 1993. This week the bipartisan panel Congress created to study it reported that the law has helped more than one in six American employees take time off because of a serious family health problem, without any danger of losing their jobs. And almost 90 percent of the businesses found that complying with Family and Medical Leave cost them little or nothing. This is making America's families stronger, promoting work and family.

That's what we have to do with welfare reform, too. Our job is to fix a welfare system that too often pulls families apart and turns it into one that helps families pull together, to fix a system that traps too many people in a cycle of dependency that ends up snaring their children as well, and, instead, to create one that promotes jobs and independence.

For the last three years, we have been working hard to turn the welfare system around. All across America, the welfare rolls are down, food stamp rolls are down, teen pregnancy rates are down, compared to four years ago. And compared to four years ago, more and more people on welfare today are working as a condition of receiving welfare.

A lot of this has happened because our administration has worked very hard to free states from federal rules and regulations which have built up over the years and which contribute to the flaws in the present system. We have slashed this red tape to 37 states, covering 75 percent of all the people on welfare in America, so that they can take steps to fix the broken system. State by state, we are building a welfare system that demands work, requires responsibility, and protects our children.

But more needs to be done. The American people need a welfare system that honors American values: work, family, and personal responsibility. In 1994, and again this year, I sent Congress a sweeping welfare reform plan that would impose strict time limits on how long people can stay on welfare and strict work requirements for people when they are on welfare. My plan would also provide more funding for child care, so single parents can go to work. And it would crack down on parents who skip out on their responsibility to pay child support.

If Congress sends me a welfare reform bill that is tough on work instead of tough on children and weak on work, I will gladly and proudly sign it. Meanwhile, I am going to keep moving ahead to fix the welfare system by promoting work and looking out for our children.

Today, I'm acting to help teen mothers break free from the cycle of dependency for good. The only way for teen mothers to escape the welfare trap is to live at home, stay in school, and get the education they need to get a good job. We must make sure the welfare system demands that teen mothers follow the responsible path to independence.

Ohio has used freedom from federal rules to implement a terrific program they call LEAP -- Learning, Education, and Parenting. LEAP cuts welfare checks when teen mothers don't go to school, and rewards them when they do. And it works. A report released just this week by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation shows that for an important group of teens LEAP significantly increased the number of teen mothers who finished school, got jobs, and got off welfare. Every state should follow this example.

That's why, today, I'm announcing that every state must put in place a plan to keep teen mothers on welfare in school. We are going to audit the progress of every state and make the results public.

Second, we are going to make teen mothers who drop out of school go back to school and sign contracts that spell out exactly how they are going to take responsibility for their own lives.

And third, we are giving states immediate authority to provide bonuses to teen mothers who go to school and graduate, and to cut back the checks of those who don't.

Finally, I'm challenging every state in the country to use its power to keep children who have children at home where they belong. There should be no incentive to leave home for a bigger welfare check. Unfortunately, even though they can, most states don't require teen mothers to live at home. That's wrong. Of course, if there is an abusive situation at home, children should be living in another safe, responsible setting.

But we have to make it clear that a baby doesn't give you a right, and won't give you the money, to leave home and drop out of school. Today, we are moving to make responsibility a way of life, not an option.

These commonsense steps have bipartisan support. They will help teen parents escape the cycle of dependency and start down the path to a successful future for themselves and their children. Now Congress needs to get the job and pass welfare reform. I'm glad that a group of bipartisan lawmakers is working on welfare reform. If Congress sends me a clean welfare reform plan that demands work, demands responsibility, protects children, and helps families stay together -- I will sign it. Until then, I'll keep working to do everything in my power to reform welfare, step by step and state by state.

Thanks for listening.

END 10:12 A.M. EDT