

Black leaders applaud President's address

Special to the NNPA

Washington, D.C.- African-American leaders praised President Bill Clinton for outlining in his State of the Union address an agenda relevant to the needs of African Americans.

Rep. Maxine Waters, chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, welcomed the President's address. "We particularly applaud the President's additional funding for civil rights enforcement. As we look toward the future and what it holds for all Americans, we must be diligent in our efforts to resolve the discriminations of the past," she said.

Dr. C. Delores Tucker, a long-time civil rights leader and political activist, commended President Clinton for "remaining focused, devoting considerable attention to domestic issues, and offering a substantive and progressive domestic agenda."

Rep. John Conyers, the ranking Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, said, "The President impressed me by not allowing any amount of allegations or excessive media coverage to deter him from carrying out the functions of his job. His State of the Union address was a bold and daring challenge to the Congress."

Rep. William L. Clay, leading Democrat on the House Education and Workforce Committee, said, "Once again the President is demonstrating his commitment to building world class public schools. These new initiatives will give parents, schools and teachers, powerful new tools to improve student achievement. The President's agenda stands in stark contrast to the Republican Party's irresponsible abandonment of America's public schools."

Rep. Cynthia McKinney



Rev. Jessie Jackson

Rep. Mel Watt

Rep. Maxine Waters

President Bill Clinton

applauded the President's proposal to provide new options for America's seniors in obtaining health insurance, for tackling "another issue critical to America's working families, that of affordable child care," and his initiative on education. "Clearly, the President has a vision," the Congresswoman said.

Rep. Jesse Jackson, Jr. lauded President Clinton "for laying before the American people a record of achievement and a con-

crete plan of action for the future. I am particularly excited about the President's initiative to raise the minimum wage."

In his address, President Clinton emphasized the following points:

"These are good times for America. We have more than 14 million new jobs; the lowest unemployment in 24 years, the lowest core inflation in 30 years, incomes are rising and we have the highest home ownership in history.

"Crime has dropped for a record five years in a row, and the welfare rolls are at their lowest levels in 27 years. Our leadership in the world is unrivaled. Ladies and gentlemen, the state of our union is strong.

"In an economy that honors opportunity, all Americans must be able to reap the rewards of prosperity. Because these times are good, we can afford to take one simple, sensible step to help millions of workers struggling to pro-

vide for their families. We should raise the minimum wage.

"I propose the first ever national effort to reduce class size in the early grades. My balanced budget will help to hire 100,000 new teachers who have passed the state competency tests. Now with these teachers, we'll actually be able to reduce class size in the first, second and third grades to an average of 18 students a class across America.

"We still have a lot more

to do, all of us, to make welfare reform a success, providing child care, helping families move closer to available jobs, challenging more companies to join our

Welfare Work Partnership, increasing child-support collections from deadbeat parents who have a duty to support their own children.

"I've launched this national initiative on race to help us recognize our common interests and to bridge the opportunity gaps that are keeping us from becoming one America. Let us begin by recognizing what we still must overcome. Discrimination against any American is un-American. We must vigorously enforce the laws that make it illegal. I ask your help to end the backlog at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Sixty thousand of our fellow citizens are waiting in line for justice, and we should act now to end this wait.

"We should also recognize that the greatest progress we can make toward building one America lies in the progress we make for all Americans, without regard to race. When we open the doors of colleges to all Americans, when we rid our streets of crime, when there are jobs available to people from all our neighborhoods, when we make sure all parents have the child care they need, we're helping to build one nation.

"We in this chamber and in this government must do all we can to address the continuing American challenge to build one America. But we'll only move forward if all our fellow citizens, including every one of you, is also committed to this cause.

"We must work together, learn together, live together, serve together. On the forge of common enterprise, Americans of all backgrounds can hammer out a common identity."

Watt says he supports Clinton's goals

Rep. Mel Watt (D-N.C.) issued the following statement, giving his assessment of President Clinton's State of the Union Address:

President Clinton gave a thoughtful and balanced speech highlighting the current strength of America's economy and outlining the actions we should pursue to further improve the lives of citizens across the country. Although the president will submit to Congress in 1999 the first

balanced budget in 30 years, he is right to caution against spending any budget surpluses until we make some long-term Social Security reforms. To talk about a tax cut, which would most likely disproportionately benefit the rich, before we assure that Social Security recipients are protected would, in my opinion, be irresponsible.

A few of the president's policy initiatives struck me as very important for my constituents:

I support his proposal to strengthen public schools and public education across the country by investing in school construction, reducing teacher-pupil ration, encouraging the training of more teachers and expanding high-tech job training.

I also think it is important to expand access to child care by using tax credits and targeted subsidies for low-income parents and it's especially important to increase the number of after-school programs for school-age

children. Many problems occur in our communities because young people are unsupervised between the end of the school day and the time parents get home from work.

I am especially excited about President Clinton's proposals to invest in our cities. Urban areas and inner city families would surely benefit from more tax incentives to develop housing, from establishing more empowerment and homeownership zones and from expanding community development banks.

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