

Clinton fields questions on packed agenda

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — President-elect Clinton on Thursday detailed a crowded blueprint for action including a quick reversal of the Bush administration abortion policy and the creation of more than a half-million jobs in his first year.

Clinton, in his first formal news conference since the election, also promised his transition and administration would have the strictest ethical guidelines in history.

Calling on congressional Republicans as well as Democrats to work with him on his busy agenda, he said, "The clear mandate of this election from the American people was the end of politics as usual and the end of gridlock in Washington and the end of finger pointing and blame."

Vice President-elect Al Gore stood nearby as Clinton fielded questions at the Old Arkansas Statehouse.

The Arkansas governor called the news conference to announce 48 additions to his transi-

Plan reverses some Bush policies

tion team, a mix of political and policy advisers charged with helping Clinton build the first Democratic administration in a dozen years.

"They reflect my commitment to assembling the most qualified and diverse group of people available, including men and women with broad experience, some of whom served in the campaign and others who are just joining us now as we move toward governing," Clinton said of his picks.

The president-elect then answered questions on an array of topics, from his general economic and foreign policy priorities to his specific plans to provide jobs and deal with nuclear proliferation, as well as his feelings on the heavy security and intense media attention that came with his election.

"I'm having a wonderful time," Clinton said. "It is an enormous responsibility, but I

asked for it, and it's an indulgence to feel overwhelmed by it. . . . I'm just going to give you my best effort every day."

He spoke quietly and seriously throughout most of the 40-minute, nationally televised question-and-answer session, but took a few occasions to joke and one to angrily denounce the Bush administration search of his State Department passport files during the campaign.

If he hears of people doing anything like that, he said, "I will fire them the next day."

Clinton shed little new light on his agenda, but did offer a portrait of his priorities in the economic and foreign policy arenas and a glimpse at some of the steps he is likely to take in his first days as president.

Clinton said he would lift the Bush administration ban on abortion counseling at federally

funded clinics and revise Bush's Haiti policy to allow refugees now summarily returned to their country to petition for political refugee status.

Clinton also said he would keep his promise to lift the ban on homosexuals in the military but first "I want to consult with a lot of people about what our options are, including people who may disagree with me about the ultimate merits."

On the economy, he said he remained committed to his campaign pledge to offer a middle-class tax cut; to provide an investment tax credit for new factories and equipment, which he predicted would create some 500,000 jobs in his first year, and to accelerate spending on road, bridge and other infrastructure work he said would create additional jobs.

As for other domestic priorities, Clinton listed universal health care, campaign and lobbying reforms, and his proposal calling for national service to pay off college loans.

New jobless claims decline to 2-year low

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans filing new claims for jobless benefits fell to a two-year low in late October and remained under 400,000 for the sixth-straight week, the government reported Thursday.

Economist Thomas F. Carpenter of ASB Capital Management in Washington said the report was the latest sign that "the employment situation has at last stabilized."

"The claims numbers suggest that the hiring phase of the economic growth cycle is on the verge of kicking in," Carpenter said. "It won't kick in a big way, but it will start kicking in."

The Labor Department reported first-time applications for unemployment insurance fell by 5,000 to 355,000 in the week ended Oct. 31, the lowest since claims totaled 354,000 in the week of Aug. 4, 1990. Many analysts had expected claims to rise.

Initial claims, which peaked at 530,000 on March 23, 1991, at the depths of the recession, have numbered less than 400,000 since Sept. 26.

Not included in the report, however, were 20,869 new claims filed under a special emergency unemployment program. That total was down from 23,497 for the week ended Oct. 24 and the lowest since 20,754 applications were filed in the week of Sept. 25.

The emergency program numbers, unlike the national figures, are not seasonally adjusted.

Many analysts believe the unemployment rate should improve if claims hold below 400,000. The rate fell for the fourth straight month in October, hitting a six-month low of 7.4 percent.

Still, the closely watched four-week average of new claims also dropped to a two-year low in the week ended Oct. 31. It fell from 371,500 to 364,500, the lowest since the average was 356,000 on July 14, 1990.

Many analysts prefer to track the four-week average because it smooths out the volatility of the weekly reports.

Gay sonar instructor returns to Navy duty

MOFFETT NAVAL AIR STATION, Calif. — Keith Meinhold, kicked out of the Navy after revealing he was gay, reclaimed his job as a sonar instructor Thursday under court order.

"This is the day I've looked forward to," Meinhold said as he walked onto the military base with his uniform in a paper bag. "I'll be proud and honored to wear the uniform of my country again."

The 30-year-old petty officer's reinstatement wasn't the first time the military has been forced to take back an openly gay soldier. However, after a judge renewed a reinstatement order this week for Meinhold, President-elect Clinton announced plans to end the military's half-century ban on homosexuals.

"Part of the reason this case is so important is because of the attention it has generated, and because of the political climate in which it has arisen," said Benjamin Schatz, a lawyer for the American Associa-

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— Meinhold U.S. Navy petty officer

tion of Physicians for Human Rights, a San Francisco-based gay-rights group.

Meinhold was honorably discharged in August after going on national television and saying he was gay. He said Thursday many of his former superiors and co-workers at Moffett knew for several years he was homosexual.

Dozens of reporters surrounded Meinhold as he entered Moffett, 40 miles south of San Francisco.

"I have had wonderful support from people from all walks of life — this has been very empowering," said Meinhold, from Palo Alto.

Moffett spokesman John Shackleton said Meinhold's duties with Patrol Squadron 31 will be the same as before he was discharged.

The military's rationale for excluding homosexuals is the same one used earlier by the military to exclude blacks, Schatz said.

President Truman heard similar reservations, and overrode much protest when he ordered racial integration in 1948.

From the rank-and-file to Pentagon brass, opponents say homosexuality isn't compatible with military life. An open policy would be divisive, a morale-buster, a likely

source of conflict and turmoil, they contend.

Homosexuals have always been in the military. But it's been a quiet reality, an orientation that could be hidden or overlooked — unlike a person's color or sex. If trouble cropped up, a soldier or sailor could be moved on or out.

Opposition to reversing the policy has come from deep within the military, retired soldiers and even Clinton advisers.

Two of the Pentagon's most senior officers — Gen. Colin Powell, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Gen. Gordon Sullivan, the chief of staff of the Army — have repeatedly declared their opposition to any change in the policy. Both are expected to continue in service under Clinton.

Admiral William Crowe, the retired chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who endorsed Clinton before the election and advises him on military matters, has said he warned Clinton to move slowly.

Number 1

Study calls United States most violent industrialized society

WASHINGTON — The United States leads industrialized nations in murders, sexual assaults and other attacks, and the fear of violence has permeated American life, the authors of a new study say.

The specter of violence has degraded American life, left people afraid to walk their neighborhoods at night, put children in danger in school and caused many to barricade themselves behind locked doors, according to a report released Thursday by the National Research Council.

"The nation's anxiety on the subject of violence is not unfounded. In 1990, more than 23,000 people were homicide victims," the report said, although it noted that murder rates were higher earlier in this century, and higher still in some locations last

century.

"Violent deaths and incidents that result in lesser injuries are sources of chronic fear and a high level of concern with the seeming inability of public authorities to prevent them," the report said.

The United States, the study found, is generally more violent than other societies.

"Homicide rates in the United States far exceed those in any other industrialized nation," the report said. "Among 16 industrialized countries surveyed in 1988, the United States had the highest prevalence rates for serious sexual assaults and for all other assaults including threats of physical harm."

Despite this, the study said U.S. violence is not the worst it has ever

been. The homicide rate peaked in the early 1930s and then dropped for the next 30 years, the study said. The rate rose again between 1979 and 1981, then declined, only to rise again in the late 1980s.

"Historical data suggests that certain cities may have experienced still higher homicide rates during the 19th century," the report said.

Both victims and perpetrators of violent crime are more likely to be male and come from ethnic or racial minorities, the study said. The most likely to commit violence are men in the age range of 25 to 29. In the majority of assaults, rapes and homicides, the perpetrator was an acquaintance of the victim.

Homicide rates are five times higher

among blacks than among whites, and the rate among Native Americans is almost double that of the rest of the population.

Victims most often are minorities, with blacks 41 percent and Hispanics 32 percent more likely to be victims than are whites.

The cost to society of violence is high, the report said. It estimated these average costs per violent incident: rape, \$54,000; robbery, \$19,200, and assault, \$16,000.

Instead, the study advocated certainty of punishment.

"A 50 percent increase in the probability of incarceration would prevent twice as much violent crime as a 50 percent increase in the average term of incarceration."

Safe sex a rarity, researchers say

WASHINGTON — Americans are not practicing "safe sex," leaving millions at risk of infection by the AIDS virus, according to authors of the largest national sexual survey in more than 40 years.

The survey results, to be published Friday in the journal Science, indicate that heterosexual Americans are not taking seriously the risk of AIDS and that the vast majority with multiple partners are engaging in sexual intercourse without condoms.

AIDS has been most prevalent in the United States among homosexuals and intravenous drug users. But Joseph Catania, a University of California, San Francisco researcher and

author of the study, said that with so many people not using condoms or other protection, "it is just a matter of time before it will spread widely into the heterosexual community."

For the survey, more than 10,000 Americans were questioned by telephone about their sexual practices. Respondents were selected by a random digit dialing system and represented people between the ages of 18 and 75, married and single, living in major cities and in rural areas.

"This is the first of a kind," Catania said, because it concentrated on behavior related to the risk of sexually transmitted diseases, such as AIDS. He said it was the first large-scale

survey on human sexuality in the U.S. since the Kinsey report in 1948.

"Kinsey asked a lot of questions we didn't ask, but the Kinsey study is not a representative sample and this one is," he said.

Among the findings:

• Seven percent of respondents said they had had multiple sex partners in the previous year. Ten percent of those with added AIDS risk factors said they had multiple partners.

• Among those with multiple sex partners, 17 percent used condoms all of the time. Among those with high-risk sexual partners, the condom use was only 13 percent.

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