

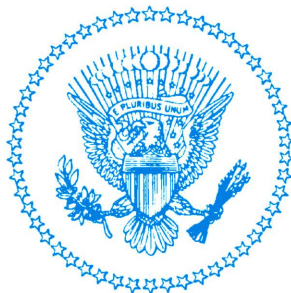
PUBLIC PAPERS OF THE PRESIDENTS  
OF THE UNITED STATES

# John F. Kennedy

*Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and  
Statements of the President*

JANUARY 20 TO DECEMBER 31, 1961

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169 Remarks Upon Signing the Minimum Wage Bill.

*May 5, 1961*

I WANT TO EXPRESS my great satisfaction in signing the bill to increase the minimum wage to a dollar twenty-five cents an hour, and to extend the coverage to three million, six hundred thousand people today who are not covered by this most important piece of national legislation.

This is the first time since the act came into existence under the administration of President Franklin Roosevelt in 1938 that we have been able to expand the coverage. I don't believe that there's any American who believes that any man or woman should have to work in interstate commerce, in companies of substantial size, for less than a dollar twenty-five cents an hour, or fifty dollars a week. That itself is a very minimum wage, and I therefore want to commend the Members of the Congress in the House and the Senate, the Chairmen of the Subcommittees who were particularly involved, under the leadership of the House and Senate, for their untiring efforts.

I also want to commend the leaders of

organized labor, the AFL-CIO, who are here today with Mr. Meany, for their long interest. Every member, pretty much, of their unions is paid more than a dollar and a quarter, but they have been concerned about unorganized workers who have been at the bottom of the economic ladder who have not benefited from our growing prosperity in this country as a nation over the long number of years and who need our help.

This doesn't finish this job, but it is a most important step forward, and as a former Member of the Senate who is particularly interested in it, I must say that I am delighted to sign it. I congratulate those who worked for it. They are one group of our citizens who deserve our assistance more, and I think that we can move from this improvement into greater gains in the months and years to come.

NOTE: The bill, entitled "Fair Labor Standards Amendments of 1961," is Public Law 87-30 (75 Stat. 65).

170 Statement by the President on the Flight of Astronaut Alan B. Shepard. *May 5, 1961*

ALL AMERICA rejoices in this successful flight of Astronaut Shepard. This is an historic milestone in our own exploration into space. But America still needs to work with the utmost speed and vigor in the further development of our space program. Today's flight should provide incentive to everyone in our nation concerned with this program to redouble their efforts in this vital field. Important scientific material has been

obtained during this flight and this will be made available to the world's scientific community.

We extend special congratulations to Astronaut Shepard and best wishes to his family who lived through this most difficult time with him. Our thanks also go to the other Astronauts who worked so hard as a team in this project.

no one should contribute—that while we are glad to have support, no one should contribute to any campaign fund under the expectation that it will do them the slightest bit of good, and they should not stay home from a campaign fund or dinner or campaign under the slightest expectation that it will do them a disservice.

I'm satisfied that that's Mr. Udall's view, from my knowledge of him. But I do think that every member of the Cabinet, every member of this administration, should bend over backwards to make sure that there are no misunderstandings of the kind that could have arisen from this incident.

Secretary Udall understands that. I hope everybody else does. But I think the best way to prevent an embarrassment to a Cabinet officer—and I think that Mr. Udall was embarrassed by this incident—and embarrassment to an administration, would be to try to work out some other way of raising funds for these presidential campaigns, because there isn't any doubt that people give—and I am talking now not about this incident, but about generally—under the expectation that they should, or it is expected of them. As long as we can't get broader citizen participation, I think it ought to be done through the National Government, and I would support that strongly if the Congress would move in that direction.

Q. Have you spoken to Mr. Udall about this, sir?

THE PRESIDENT. I have.

[12.] Q. Mr. President, has the administration made any determination with respect to an embargo on trade with Cuba?

THE PRESIDENT. We had a meeting of the National Security Council in which we discussed the problems of Cuba. As you know, the only kinds of supplies that are now being sent to Cuba involve food and medicine, so that we have to consider carefully all of the

implications of further action and that is being done.

Q. Is a decision imminent?

THE PRESIDENT. That will be considered carefully.

[13.] Q. Mr. President, in addition to the statement you issued earlier, will you here give your evaluation and reaction to today's successful launching of an American astronaut into space and back?

THE PRESIDENT. Well, I first would like to repeat what I said about Major Gagarin, which was that as a human accomplishment and as a demonstration of courage, I think everyone, whether they are citizens of this country or citizens of another country, take the greatest personal satisfaction in the accomplishment of another member of the human race.

As an American, I am, of course, proud of the effort that a great many scientists and engineers and technicians have made, of all of the astronauts, and, of course, particularly of Commander Shepard and his family.

We have a long way to go in the field of space. We are behind. But we are working hard and we are going to increase our effort. In addition, we are making available the scientific information which we have gathered to other scientists in the world community and people who share our view that the probe into space should be peaceful, and should be for the common good, and that will continue to motivate us.

[14.] Q. Mr. President, leaving aside the matter of the space trip today, I think many of us are concerned by the relentless knelling of the gong of gloom and doom by some of the administration officials who participate in foreign affairs. I was wondering, sir, if you could tell us if there are any bright spots on the international horizon?

THE PRESIDENT. Well, I think that we have grounds for encouragement. I am

177 Remarks at the Presentation of NASA's Distinguished Service Medal to Astronaut Alan B. Shepard. *May 8, 1961*

*Ladies and gentlemen:*

I want to express on behalf of all of us the great pleasure we have in welcoming Commander Shepard and Mrs. Shepard here today. I think they know as citizens of this great country how proud we are of him, what satisfaction we take in his accomplishment, what a service he has rendered our country. And we are also very proud of Mrs. Shepard.

I know that the other members of this team who are astronauts know that our pride in them is equal. They have been part of this effort from the beginning. Commander Shepard has pointed out from the time that this flight began and from the time this flight was a success, that this was a common effort in which a good many men were involved. I think it does credit to him that he is associated with such a distinguished group of Americans whom we are all glad to honor today, his companions in the flight into outer space, so I think we want to give them all a hand. They are the tanned and healthy ones—the others are Washington employees!

I also want to pay particular tribute to some of the people who worked on this flight: Robert Gilruth, Director of the Space Task Force at Langley Field; Walter Williams, the Operations Director of Project Mercury; the NASA Deputy Administrator, Dr. Hugh Dryden; Lt. Col. John H. Glenn, Jr.—and of course, James Webb, who is head of NASA.

Most of these names are unfamiliar, but if this flight had not been an overwhelming success, these names would be very familiar to everyone. So I think it is very appro-

priate that in this success that their work should be acknowledged.

And I also want to take cognizance of the fact that this flight was made out in the open with all the possibilities of failure, which would have been damaging to our country's prestige. Because great risks were taken in that regard, it seems to me that we have some right to claim that this open society of ours which risked much, gained much.

Now I want to give this award.

"The National Aeronautics and Space Administration awards to Alan B. Shepard, Jr., the NASA Distinguished Service Medal for outstanding contributions to space technology. His flight as the first United States astronaut was an outstanding contribution to the advancement of human knowledge of space technology, and a demonstration of man's capabilities in sub-orbital space flight. Signed and sealed in Washington this fifth day of May, 1961. James E. Webb, the Administrator of NASA, and Hugh L. Dryden, the Deputy Administrator of NASA."

This is a civilian award for a great civilian accomplishment, and therefore I want to again express my congratulations to Alan Shepard. We are very proud of him, and I speak on behalf of the Vice President, who is Chairman of our Space Council and who bears great responsibilities in this field, and the Members of the House and Senate Space Committee who are with us today.

NOTE: The President spoke in the Rose Garden at the White House.