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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Clarksville, Tennessee)

For Immediate Release

September 29, 1992

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT CLARKSVILLE COMMUNITY WELCOME

Austin Peay State University
Clarksville, Tennessee

4:04 P.M. CDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Naomi. And may I welcome just a few people -- first, our Secretary of Education, a great Tennessean, Lamar Alexander. What a job he's doing for education. (Applause.) And Senator Howard Baker -- great American leader. (Applause.) Congressman Sundquist, your great Congressman, is here with us today. (Applause.) And Congressman Duncan.

And may I salute the president, President Oscar Page, and thank him for this hospitality; and Coach Ray Gregory. (Applause.) Coach Gregory, congratulations on being named Tennessee Football Coach of the Year. A great honor. (Applause.)

And may I also salute my introducer, Naomi. I'm very, very proud that she's been with us today. (Applause.) And thank Ricky -- Ricky Skaggs, who you heard from, who's a wonderful entertainer and a good friend to Barbara and me. And my special appreciation to a great friend and a great entertainer, the legendary, one and only Crystal Gayle. Crystal, thank you so much. (Applause.)

Four years ago -- and Crystal's sister, Peggy Sue, is here -- and four years ago we went on a bus trip across Illinois. And we won the state. So this is a good omen -- we are going to win Tennessee. (Applause.)

Before I make a few campaign remarks I have a few things to say about a topic that's been on a lot of minds recently. And I hope you'll bear with me because I want to talk to you and to the rest of the nation from this wonderful campus about presidential debates. (Applause.)

Two weeks ago, I proposed to Governor Clinton that we debate. And I proposed that we do so on the same terms and conditions that have been used in prior presidential debates, and that the vice presidential candidates do so as well. And Governor Clinton has failed to respond to this proposal. But, in fact, it is reported that he is afraid for his campaign to sit down with out campaign to negotiate arrangements for the debate.

And I have debated in all of my prior campaigns for President. And I continue to think that it's important that debates be held. You see, I believe strongly that it is not up to any self-appointed body to determine the basis on which debates will be held, but rather up to the candidates themselves. And this basic principle was expressly recognized by both national political parties when the resolution establishing the Commission on Debates was first adopted.

And because of the importance of this election, the strength of my convictions about what is right for this country, and my belief that a Clinton presidency would be wrong for America -- (applause) -- I think it is important that voters have

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an opportunity to see and hear from the candidates themselves in publicly-televised debates. And I also believe that the candidates should not be afraid to accept and respond to questions from the press during the course of presidential debates. (Applause.)

Americans will go to the polls five weeks from today. And I regret that Governor Clinton has not accepted the traditional approach to presidential debates, the approach that's been in effect for many, many years. But nevertheless, in order to move this process forward, I hereby challenge my opponent to a debate on every Sunday evening between October 11th and November 1st. (Applause.)

And this would mean that there would be four televised presidential debates, more than ever held in any presidential election. And if Ross Perot decides to enter the race, I'd be pleased to see him included in these debates. (Applause.)

Now, furthermore, to allow these arrangements to move forward quickly, I would be willing to see two of the debates proceed under the format which has been used in all these previous presidential elections, and two proceed under this single moderator format. In addition, I think that during the five-week period, there should be at least two vice presidential debates with one based on each format.

And I feel quite confident that Governor Clinton will accept this proposal, since his campaign chairman has indicated in the past that Governor Clinton would debate -- and now I quote -- "with moderators, without moderators, in a studio, out of a studio, three questioners, one questioner." So I have no doubt that there will be organizations willing to sponsor these debates. And if Governor Clinton is serious about debating he will accept this challenge and he will instruct his campaign officials to meet promptly with my campaign officials to work out the details directly between the parties. Let's get it on. (Applause.)

And what are we going to be talking about in these debates? What are we going to be talking about in them? Well, this campaign, like every campaign, is about a simple question: What kind of America do we want for the graduates of this great school, for all the young people here today? And my opponent will tell you that America is in decline. And I would remind him of what anyone would tell you on the streets of Europe or Asia -- America is still the most respected, the most admired, the most dynamic -- (applause) -- the most dynamic nation in the entire world. And I'm tired of hearing Clinton drag down the United States of America. (Applause.)

And I'm proud, I am proud of our leadership; proud that we led the way in reducing nuclear weapons so that our kids can sleep free from the nightmares of nuclear war. (Applause.) And it's a fitting place to say this, right near Fort Campbell -- and I am proud of how we stood up to Saddam Hussein, kicking him -- (applause) -- proud of the Screaming Eagles from Fort Campbell's 101st Airborne. (Applause.)

And in the sands of Saudi Arabia, they showed that no other nation can match the courage of the men and women of America. And now our challenge is to put our talents to work to win the new global economic competition, to create a high-tech, high-growth economy with good jobs for you and all your classmates. And I have laid out my agenda, detailed Agenda for American Renewal -- a specific, comprehensive, integrated agenda to create in American the world's very first \$10-trillion economy. (Applause.)

And I want to use this international experience, international leadership, to open up new markets for American

products, because that is how we will create good jobs for American workers.

Small business will create two-thirds of the new jobs in the new economy. And Governor Clinton promises small business higher taxes and more red tape. And I promise relief from taxation, regulation, and litigation. Get the regulations off the back of the small businesspeople in this country. (Applause.)

And with Lamar's -- Lamar Alexander's leadership and assistance, we're proud that today half the students in four-year colleges across Tennessee receive federal grants or loans. And no one told you what college you had to go to. You had the freedom to choose your school. (Applause.) And now we are fighting to reinvent America's elementary and high schools by giving every parent the right to choose their children's schools -- public, private or religious. (Applause.)

And we have a good plan to give government vouchers to soldiers and others caught in the transition of the economy so that they may learn new skills and find the dignity work.

And here's something else I want: to limit the terms of members of the United States Congress. (Applause.) Governor Clinton says he's the candidate of change, but he opposed this, the most profound change offered this year. Presidents serve limited terms. The same rule ought to apply to the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue. (Applause.) So let's approve term limits and give Congress back to the American people. (Applause.)

And I might add this -- that if we had more congressmen like Don Sundquist up there, everybody wouldn't be yelling at me "clean House." (Applause.) But while we're at it, let's have that little chant: "Clean House." We've got to get rid of that old 38-year-old governance that has controlled Congress for 38 years. Let's change it. You want to make real change in America? Help me change the Congress and move this country forward. (Applause.)

These are just some of my ideas and some of what I'm fighting for. And I'm proud of my record, and I'll stand by it in November. But if candidate Clinton wants to talk about the past, I say okay, let's look at what's going on in Arkansas. (Applause.)

The people there -- and I know them; I've been there many, many times; lived next door -- they are decent and hard-working people. But the more you know about their Governor, the more you know that he's wrong for America. (Applause.) Governor Clinton says he's for civil rights. But Arkansas doesn't even have a basic civil rights law. He says he's for high-tech, but under Bill Clinton, Arkansas has been falling behind in high school. Three out of every four Arkansas graduates spend their first year in college relearning what they were supposed to learn in high school. And that is not fair to the people of Arkansas. (Applause.)

Bill Clinton says he wants to get tough on crime. But his crime rate rises faster than the nation's. And I support the law enforcement officers all across the country. (Applause.) And I am very proud that the police in Little Rock, Arkansas, endorse me for President of the United States of America. (Applause.) America deserves better than that sorry Arkansas record of Governor Clinton. (Applause.)

Look at the economy, the major issue in this campaign. I know America's endured some tough economic times. Families are hurting. But understand, we are being affected -- and all students know this -- by a global economic slowdown. Our competitors in Europe would trade places with us in a minute.

And yet Governor Clinton offers America the European social welfare state policies -- more government, more special interest spending, and more taxes on the middle class. And that is not good for America.

AUDIENCE: Boo --

THE PRESIDENT: As Governor -- I know I hate to ruin a beautiful afternoon like this, but listen to this one -- as Governor, Bill Clinton raised and extended the sales tax, including a tax on baby formula, vegetables and other groceries. He raised the gas tax. He taxed mobile homes and cable TV. And, oh, yes, he slapped a tax on beer.

AUDIENCE: Boo --

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. I had a feeling that would not very popular here. (Applause.) And now the Governor says he's seen the light. In this campaign he's proposing at least \$150 billion in new taxes, plus at least \$220 billion in new spending. But don't worry, he says, "I'll get it all from the rich" -- people who make it over \$200,000, the top two percent.

But here's the truth and problem: To get the money he needs for his plan, the \$150 billion he's promised in new taxes, Governor Clinton would have to get his money from every individual with taxable income over \$36,600. And that's just the start of his tax campaign against the middle class. Governor Clinton will need hundreds of billions of dollars more to pay for all the programs that he's promised.

And the newspaper in his own backyard, the Pine Bluff Commercial, says that if Congress follows Bill Clinton's example, it would pass a tax program that would hit the middle class the hardest. These are not people, Governor Clinton, on "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous." These are your parents -- your parents, my friends. (Applause.) These are the people that work hard and pay the bills and sweat it out at tax time. And they deserve a break, not a new tax. (Applause.)

And let me give you one example. Let's say after you graduate, you get your first job with about, say, \$22,000 in taxable income. Governor Clinton could have you fork over another 430 bucks a year to the tax man. And I say you ought to be able to use that money to pay the rent or spend a week at the lake on vacation or send it -- not have to send it back to the IRS in Washington, D.C. (Applause.)

And so, at this time in the great history of the United States, I don't think we can take the risk on a tax-and-spend candidate with no experience. And, you see, I've been in the Oval Office, and I have faced some very tough decisions. And, of course, I've made mistakes. And when I make a mistake I admit it. But I believe I've been a good leader, willing to make the tough calls -- (applause) -- and I'm a leader whose ideas are right for America.

And I stand before you today, asking for your support so that we can get to work with a new Congress to fix the problems that stand in the way of this country; so that we can reform our health care system; that we can literally reinvent our schools; so that we can retrain workers from one generation and create jobs for the next; so that we can cut government spending and taxes and get this economy moving again. (Applause.)

This is the agenda that I have to offer. And if you are looking for a leader of experience, a leader of ideas, a leader who shares your values, and a leader who understands that America's real strength is not in government, but in places like Clarksville -- then I know I can count on your support on November 3rd. (Applause.)

I have only one regret today -- and that is that the greatest First Lady this country -- well, I'd better be careful, but our great First Lady is not with me. I'm very proud of Barbara Bush. And I see a sign over here that's talking about the family. I think that my wife has done an awful lot when she holds an AIDS baby in her arms, or when she sits and reads with kids in the lobby there at the Diplomatic Entrance to the White House, to show what we mean as a family when we say, let's strengthen the American family. Read to the kids. Teach them discipline. Help them. (Applause.)

I've been privileged to be your President. We did it through some very, very tough times. And one of the things that shaped my life is that I served my country in uniform. And I'm very, very proud of that. (Applause.) And I salute those here from Fort Campbell and elsewhere who are also serving their great country. (Applause.)

And don't listen, don't listen to the other side that is tearing down this country. We are the greatest, strongest, fairest, freest country on the face of the Earth. Let's keep it that way.

May God bless you all. And may God bless the United States of America. Thank you very, very much. (Applause.) What a great rally -- thank you all. (Applause.)

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4:25 P.M. CDT