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REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
FLORIDA STATE LEGISLATURE
MARCH 30, 1995

Governor Chiles, First Lady Rhea Chiles, Lieutenant Governor MacKay and Ann MacKay, Florida cabinet members, Chief Justice Grimes and honored members of the Florida Supreme Court, Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, honored members of the Florida Legislature, ladies and gentlemen:

Let me begin by thanking you for your kind and gracious welcome to the State of Florida and for the privilege to join you to celebrate the 150th anniversary of your statehood. This is my first address to a state legislature as a sitting President, and I am honored to be the first sitting President to address this great body.

I came here because I wanted to spend more time with real people, where they live, work, and raise their families. One of the things Washington has suffered most from, is a loss of touch with the people who sent us there. You don't suffer from that in your work as state legislators. When you confront problems, you have names, faces, and life stories to give real meaning to those problems. Some of those 14 million citizens are with us here today, and we will talk about them later.

As Governor Chiles remarked in his State of the State Address, there were only about 65,000 people in Florida when it became our 27th state in 1845. The Governor noted that many political leaders predicted that Florida would always remain something of a backwater: small, remote, and isolated. Of course, the same sentiment was expressed in the early 1780s about the young nation in North America that had lately established its independence from the British crown.

But America and Florida have long since silenced the skeptics. The American Dream has offered people this chance: If you work hard, if you seize the opportunities before you, you can build a prosperous future for yourself and your family.

As we stand at the dawn of a new century, a time of exciting promise and profound new challenges, the people of Florida, as in so many parts of America, are showing us how to keep the American Dream alive for yet another generation. You are among those special places giving us a blueprint for progress, for competing and winning in the new global economy. Millions come here to build their dreams. Millions more come from across the globe to sample the good life here. And I'm not just talking about your great golf courses.

Just since I became President, Florida's progress has been

immense. Unemployment here is down from 7.4 percent when I took office to 4.5 percent. Over four times as many new private sector jobs have been created than during the previous four years combined -- including 2,000 new manufacturing jobs. And Florida is seizing the benefits of the global economy and more open trade we have helped to build by passing NAFTA, GATT. We showed last December at the Summit of the Americas in Miami the great hope we all have that trade will lift the quality of life for all people of this region. The nation and the world look to Florida as a model for how to tap the prospects of tomorrow and to build strength through diversity.

Now, believe it or not, that was not always the greatest wish of all in Florida, certainly not when you first became a state. I am reminded of a story surrounding the inauguration of your first governor, William Dunn Moseley, on May 26, 1845.

The ceremonies took place on the east portico of the old Capitol. During the festivities, first the new 27-star U.S. flag was raised, followed by your new state flag. And emblazoned on that flag were the words, "Let Us Alone."

You have long since given up that motto for ones that better reflect you outward reach to the nation, the world and the future. But, let's be honest, when it comes to much of the federal government, I know that "Let Us Alone," may still be the motto for many here.

I understand your frustration. I too have worked for many, many years where you work, in state government and with our communities and people to build opportunity. And like you, I have known the burdens outmoded national government can put on our work.

But we must also be honest about other burdens that we face. A decade ago, when I was Governor of Arkansas, I chaired the Commission on the Future of the South of the Southern Growth Policy Board. We named our report after something I used to say about southern progress: "Halfway home and a long way to go." Then, as now, we faced economic forces that held out great promise but posed unprecedented problems. As the Industrial Age gives way to the Information Age, all of the world's economies are linked as never before. Trade barriers fall between actual neighbors, and advanced technologies make virtual neighbors of us all.

But these very forces for progress can also undermine our people's security. Too many people feel the fast rush of change with insecurity, not exhilaration. We see this most in the stagnation of middle class incomes and the erosion of mainstream values.

For the last twenty years, most people have worked the same or longer hours for the same or lower wage. A new class of permanently poor people, mostly young women and small children, is taking root and growing. The great American middle class is splitting apart -- and the fault line is based largely on having the education and training to compete in this global economy.

At the same time, crime and violence threaten virtually every neighborhood in America. Teen pregnancy continues to climb. Drug use among young people is rising, accompanied by a dangerous lack of understanding that drugs are not only illegal, they are deadly. The family is under attack as never before. If we do nothing else, we must make our families strong again. We must pass on to our children not just opportunity, but our most cherished values of work, responsibility, family and community.

The great responsibility of our generation is to keep the American Dream alive and well for all our people: For the middle class whose interests are too often forgotten, for the less fortunate struggling to lift themselves up, for all Americans who have taken the responsibility to live up to their God-given potential and make the most of their own lives.

Washington is in the midst of a great debate today about how to fight these problems. On one side is the old view that big, bureaucratic, one-size-fits-all government can provide big solutions to what ails America. On the other is the view that government is the source of all our problems; get rid of it completely, and every problem we have will go away too.

In the real world you all deal with every day, that is a false choice. I believe we must chart a course between the old way of big government and the new rage of no government. We must transform the bureaucracy of the past into a partner for the future -- a partner to expand opportunity while shrinking bureaucracy; to empower people through education and training; and to enhance our security, on our streets and around the world.

Partnership means we must equip you with the resources to tackle your own problems, and give you the responsibility to determine how to use them. We must send decisions back, not only to state and local governments, but to citizens themselves. We must work with you to promote opportunity and demand responsibility -- that's what the New Covenant is all about.

And as we continue to build this partnership, promoting opportunity and demanding responsibility, we should look to what you are doing here in Florida. By creating opportunity through aggressive attention to education and training, by demanding responsibility as you work to reform your welfare system, you are leading the way.

When I took office, Washington had spent twelve years mortgaging our future instead of investing in it, allowing the deficit to quadruple. There was less opportunity and less responsibility. Today, we've cut the deficit by \$600 billion and my new budget cuts another \$81 billion. We've created more than 6 million new jobs. We cut more than 300 domestic programs in our first two budgets; we want to eliminate or consolidate 400 more this year. 100,000 fewer people work for the federal bureaucracy today than on the day I became President. We are well on our way to making it the smallest since President Kennedy took office.

In the process we have shifted power away from Washington to states, counties, cities, and towns. Like Governor Chiles, with his bold initiative to reduce the mountain of rules and regulations that prevent you from acting in the best interest of your constituents, we too are cutting red tape and regulations to make it easier for local government and business to create opportunity. And like Governor Chiles, we're going to do more.

But, while we recognize that government cannot be a savior, it should not be a spectator sitting on the sidelines waiting for a replacement player who might never show up. There are still some things that only government can do, and we must not forget that.

Many of the citizens of Florida are reaping the benefits of our national economic recovery and the new partnership that we have been building in America. During the last two years of national growth, there have been some remarkable improvements in the economy of this state.

- Unemployment down from 7.4 percent to 4.5 percent;
- Phenomenal job growth: over 4 times as many new private sector jobs created than during the previous 4 years -- including 2,000 new manufacturing jobs;
- Lower taxes for more than 895,000 working families through an expanded Earned Income Tax Credit -- a tax cut for the working poor;
- Lower taxes for more than 71,000 small businesses through an expansion of the expensing allowance;
- SBA approved 1,203 loans in Florida last year worth \$257 million -- almost three times as many as the year before I took office.
- Just this past December, Vice President Gore and I convened

the first Summit of the Americas in Miami. This was a 3-day meeting of the 34 heads of state from Central and South America to discuss ways to open new markets, encourage greater trade, and improve the quality of life for all the people of this region.

This highly successful summit, made possible by our passage of NAFTA and GATT, confirmed something we all know: trade is Florida's future, and our early, proactive outreach to other potential trading partners in this region will payoff with jobs and a stronger economy in the coming years.

We have also been partners with you in making government work better for your people.

- We're administering the largest disaster relief package in history -- more than \$10 billion dollars -- in the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew. And we've transformed FEMA from a slow moving bureaucracy into a fast acting relief agency. Families from coast to coast are applauding the heroic work of FEMA employees after the Northridge earthquake in Los Angeles, and the series of tropical storms here last year.
- We're also very proud to be a partner with you in restoring and protecting the very important Everglades ecosystem. Our budget for 1996 includes a 10 percent increase in funding for the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Initiative.
- We've worked with you to dramatically improve services in the Port of Miami: clearing shipments through faster and more efficiently, while increasing anti-drug efforts at the same time.

I know that when I talk to you about streamlining government and cutting regulations, I'm sort of preaching to the choir. And Governor Chiles has been leading the way. You know, he didn't just try and put The Death of Common Sense on the best-seller list by handing out copies to all of you in Tallahassee, he sent me a copy up in Washington.

I believe government must invest in the education and training of our people. We must invest in empowering people to make the most of their own lives. And we must do all we can to enhance public safety.

We all know that the fight for education and training is the fight for the American dream. It is the fight for America's middle class. That's why I am so committed to education and training. And I applaud your own efforts to improve your public schools and demand greater accountability.

The one thing we know about the new global economy is that the countries that do the best job of developing the full capacities of every one of their citizens will be the most successful in the 21st century. So, we'd better strengthen -- not weaken -- our investments in education and training.

That's why, even though we've been cutting government spending, we did not cut education. In fact, we are pursuing a comprehensive agenda for lifelong learning. We expanded Head Start. We expanded our efforts to help our public schools achieve educational excellence. We set up a School-to-Work program to better prepare young people who don't go on to college, to get high paying jobs.

We made college loans more affordable for millions of middle class students, eliminating the middleman, lowering the cost, and offering better repayment terms. Ultimately, this program will save taxpayers \$12 billion, while helping millions of young people get the kind of education they will need to help America compete in the 21st century global economy. And we've also taken steps to require more responsibility: Stricter enforcement has cut the cost to taxpayers of delinquent loans from \$2.8 Billion a year when I took office, to \$1 Billion a year. This is a good program and it is working.

Just ask Michelle Bellamy of Orlando who is able to go to college because of our federal direct loan program. Michelle and some other young people who are benefiting from this program are with us today [ask them to stand]. Michelle is a college senior majoring in criminal justice who is very active in student government. She is one of the 502,000 Florida students and former students who can benefit from our student loan reforms.

When we talk about empowering people to make the most of their lives, we're talking about some basic American values: work, responsibility, and community.

One of main reasons I ran for President was to end welfare as we know it. That means giving people the support they need to move from welfare to work and then insisting that anyone who can work does work. It also means demanding that both parents take responsibility for raising their children, and changing the culture of the welfare office from one that concentrates on sending out welfare checks to one that prepares people to go out and earn paychecks.

Again, Florida is setting an example for the rest of the country. Your Family Transition Program mirrors the goals of our national approach to reform: it changes the concept of welfare to a transitional program leading to work and independence within two years, and it provides training, child care, and medical coverage to make it happen. At the same time, it demands

responsibility from both the mothers and fathers of children.

This program is giving new hope to people who are struggling to move from dependence to independence. People like Irene Marry, a single mother of six from Escambia County who entered into the Family Transition Program about a year ago. Since joining the program, she has received her GED and is enrolled in a job training program to become a heating and air conditioning technician. She is now looking forward to working in a job that has not traditionally been open to women -- a job that pays a good wage and will allow her to independently support herself and her children. [ask her to stand].

Irene's success was made possible by our decision in Washington to let you, and 24 other states, design welfare systems that are right for you. Since we granted the waiver in January of 1994, your Family Transition Program has begun to accelerate the pace of people moving from welfare to work in both Alachua [A-latch-ua] and Escambia counties -- and I understand you are planning to expand the program into five more counties this year.

Giving states the authority to experiment is crucial to our ability to truly reform welfare in America. We need your ideas, we need you to find new ways to move people from welfare to work, to create opportunity and demand responsibility. Florida and other states are also leading the fight to improve child support enforcement, which we must do if we are going to really fix this broken system. I want to congratulate Florida's sheriffs on this week's arrest of 842 deadbeat parents who ignored their responsibility to their children.

My goal for years has been to end welfare as we know it. Based on what you're doing here and what other states are doing across the country: We are ending welfare as we know it.

One sure way to take the steam out of people who are doing their level best to take advantage of new opportunities to better themselves and their families is to have them constantly in fear of crime.

Florida, like the rest of the country, has experienced far too much crime and violence in recent years. We must take action now to make our streets and schools safer. The single most effective crime fighting tool is more police officers on the street. That's why the keystone of our crime bill is our effort to put 100,000 police officers on the street across this country to help with community policing.

And community policing is already having a positive effect across America and here in Florida. We've helped the Escambia County Sheriff's office hire 20 new police officers. These new

officers are just hitting the streets to work directly with neighborhood residents to break up local drug markets and combat crime. Fourteen of these new officers are with us here today [ask them to stand].

Police officers like you who put your lives on the line for our protection every day deserve the gratitude and support of every citizen. And I want you to know you have my deepest appreciation and support.

My Administration has had a major impact on improving the lives of the people of Florida. But I would be like the guy who told me a drink from the fountain of youth down there in St. Augustine would stop my hair from turning gray if I told you we did it all by ourselves.

Obviously, Washington cannot solve these problems alone. It's going to take the involvement of every citizen working in partnership with government to develop solutions that are right for every community.

You are on the frontlines of this struggle. Because everyday, you come face to face with the hopes and fears of real people who are struggling to keep the American dream alive.

As I said earlier, when you think of these issues you know a name, you see a face, you have a life story that gives meaning to these problems. This trip has given me a chance to talk to some of them, to see first-hand how what we do -- or don't do -- in Washington affects their lives. People who are desperately searching for a way to gain the education and training they need to keep up and move ahead in this changing economy, or who are struggling to make the transition from welfare to work and the middle class, or people who just want to be able to sit on their front steps or take a midnight stroll down the block without fear of becoming the victims of random violence.

We have made it easier for you to do your jobs -- and it has improved the lives of the real people who hired us. But our work is not yet done. Partnership is the key to the future. We want to build on what we have started. We want to continue working with you and all Americans to reinvigorate the American dream. Because only by working together can we give real hope to our children and the next generation.

Thank you.