

FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REMARKS AT WLF NEW YORK EVENT
NEW YORK, NEW YORK
MARCH 3, 1999

Wow. Thank you very much. What an amazing room full of people. I am just delighted to be here. I want to thank everyone who made this the most successful WLF event since 1996. And I especially want to thank Pat Pepper. It was her vision and tireless commitment that filled this room today with so many members who are both activists and donors. All of us owe Pat a debt of gratitude -- for that, and so much more.

And, I want to thank Laura Ross -- not only for her leadership at WLF, but for all she did to send Chuck Schumer to the U.S. Senate. I don't have to tell any of you how much it has meant to be able to say those two words together: Senator Schumer.

And so I am very pleased to be here with my friend, Senator Schumer...as well as all the other elected officials. [fill in] I am also delighted that so many members of the DNC and WLF leadership are here [fill in].

And I want to thank everyone here for helping to reach our goal of actively enlisting 100,000 more women in the Democratic Party by they year 2000.

Now, why is this so important? Why should we come here? Why should we contribute? Each of us probably has a slightly different answer to those questions. But, at the end of the day, we all agree on this: getting women involved in the Democratic party is not a luxury. It's an absolute necessity.

It was women who elected Chuck Schumer to the Senate. It was women who made sure that the last President of the 20th century was a Democrat. And it will be women who will ensure that the first President of the 21st century will be a Democrat as well.

When we talk about enabling more women throughout our country to feel connected to politics, it's not something where we say, "Yeah, that would be nice if it happened." It is critical if we're going to have the kind of vibrant democracy that is truly responsive not just to some people -- but to all people's voices as we move into this new century.

Last July, I traveled up to Seneca Falls for the 150th anniversary of the first women's rights convention. Think about the courage it must have taken for the women to come there so many years ago to demand their social, economic and political rights. They came at a time when women had no hope of going to school or owning property, when the minute you married, your children and even the clothes on your back would belong to your husband. And they came at a time when advocating for even the most basic of rights caused them to be called "mannish women," "fanatics" and "old maids."

Certainly, because of when and where all of us were born, and because of good upbringings, good educations, good health, and plain old good luck, we have opportunities that the women in Seneca Falls could have never dreamed of. And we have a lot of blessings to be grateful for as a country as well...more security and prosperity than anyone would have dared predict just six years ago.

So when someone asks you why it matters, why they should get involved in democratic politics, remind them of the significant difference this Administration has made in the lives of people.

Because of the Earned Income Tax Credit and the minimum wage we've lifted families and children out of poverty. Because of the Crime bill, more people are living free from the fear that plagued our country just a few years ago. Because we tackled this issue from every angle, we are finally seeing both teen pregnancy rates -- and abortions finally going down. And it happened under a pro-choice President who refused to back down in his support of a woman's right to choose.

But it is precisely in good times like these that we face a fundamental choice. Do we just retreat into our own world? Say, "My family is O.K., my job is great, no need to worry about anything or anyone else?" Or do we say, "This is not the time to turn away from young people who need someone to believe in them. This is not the time to turn away from families that are still reaching for, but not quite touching the American Dream."

What drew me into politics and what I think brings many of you to this room today is that we believe it is possible to provide the tools of opportunity for every American if he or she is willing to work hard and take responsibility for their lives. We believe we can have a society where everyone has a stake...and a chance to be the best parents and the

best workers they can be

And we believe that whether we succeed in giving people these opportunities will determine what kind of nation we are...and what kind of nation we're going to be.

You know, I have always been amused when I hear or read commentators who have said, "That Bill Clinton and his wife, they're advocating all these women's issues." One even said it was all leading to 'The feminization of politics.' Now, I know he **meant** it as an insult...

I've never considered issues like health care, education, and child care women's issues. The fathers and husbands I've met care deeply about what happens to their children when they're in child care -- and what happens to their parents when they need medical care. Those are not women's issues. Those are people's issues. They're family issues. So, I prefer to think of it, not as the feminization of politics, but the humanization of politics. Because finally the issues that really matter to families are being addressed.

So, when someone asks why they should get involved with WLF...I hope you'll ask them to look at the President's recent budget,

look at the agenda that he's laid out...and see how it tackles the daily challenges that I've heard so many parents talk about over the years.

I remember a single mom I met who can't find child care she can afford. She makes \$30,000 a year. That means that she is not eligible for any subsidies. And it means that after she pays her rent and her utilities and all the other expenses, she doesn't have the money to pay the child care costs that are being asked of her.

And there's another mom who told me about how she too is working, has three small children -- and, like so many other parents, she worries everyday about whether her child is staying out of trouble. But thanks to increased funding for after-school programs, she now has at least a place for one of her children to play and learn safely after school.

I think of the woman whose daughter was in a very serious automobile accident last Spring. If it were not for the Family and Medical Leave Act she doesn't know what she would have done. She was able to take twelve weeks of unpaid leave and have a job waiting for her when she went back. And she was able to spend that time with her daughter in physical therapy, doing what any of us as parents would

want to do, being there to make sure our child recovered.

I also heard about a young man who had an incapacitating stroke in his early 30s -- not something you imagine happening to young people. His health problems left his wife and children to fend for themselves. But Social Security was there to provide disability insurance for the children -- enabling them to grow up healthy and cared for. We know that social Security is not just a program for the elderly. It is -- in a very real sense -- America's family protection system, especially for women who often live longer with less lifetime earnings. When you go to the supermarket, when you go to church or synagogue, when you're walking down the street, every other woman you see who is over 65 would be living in poverty if it weren't for social security.

And I remember a young woman I met whose mother is now in a very serious state of Alzheimers. And they can't afford to put her in any home and they don't want to. So instead she quit her job. Now all their household expenses fall on her husband's shoulders. He is working very hard at two jobs yet it's not enough to keep up the car payments -- and

they don't have any help. So they were heartened to hear about the President's proposal to help families afford long term care for their parents.

I wish everyone would listen to the voices of these hardworking Americans, who are trying to do right by their children and families. These are the people my husband's budget would help. Because if we want to really support families, then we will answer his call to dedicate 77 percent of the surplus to save Social Security and Medicare for future generations. We will invest in the child care and after-school care that will ensure that parents no longer have to choose between the job they need and the child they love.

And we will make it possible for every child to be a success. Just this morning, I visited a school in Queens and met children whose creativity had been ignited, and whose learning had been enriched, through arts education. Every child should have that chance. Let's not turn our backs on children who are having trouble. But, if they're not doing well, let's not promote them either. Let's help them to do better. Let's help them succeed.

I'm glad that Congress is taking up education issues right now. And as they do, I hope they will, in a bipartisan way, make lowering class size a top priority.

I hope that with this and every other issue, that we don't get caught up in the back and forth arguments about our differences -- and lose sight of what we have in common...and the real people's lives we all have a responsibility to protect.

And I hope that you always remember why what you're doing matters to people, why it makes a difference. People sometimes say to me, "Oh, I bet you'll be glad when the next two years are over." And I say on the contrary. Because every day I get to see first hand the results of this Administration and all of you who have supported it. When we look back six years ago, we are a better, safer, more prosperous country. We are a country where more Americans believe that people in the Administration care about people like them, that they understand their daily struggles to raise families and make a living. And we can be a country that continues to move in this direction.

But if that is going to happen, enough people must believe, once again, that as citizens of this democracy we have an obligation to be political. Not to see it as a bad word. There is nothing to be ashamed of, or apologize for, in being committed to the political process in a democracy. It's how we make decisions. How we work out our differences. And it's how we can communicate the values that are at the heart of the democratic party...and our agenda for the next century.

So, I hope all of you will stay involved -- whether it be by contributing, organizing, speaking out, or asking others to do the same. Tell anyone who will listen how it really does matter who you elect and what they stand for. Help stop our democratic process from being hijacked by people who, with enormous funds and slick ads, can twist public opinion.

And as we do, we should all remember the women and men at Seneca Falls, and all those who came after, who fought for, marched for, were jailed for and even died for the rights and opportunities we have today. They helped give us a voice. Now, it is up to us to use it. On the soap box and at the ballot box, it is up to us to work on behalf of the issues that we know will make a difference in people's lives.

It is up to us to give voice to the kinds of families I talked about earlier -- the parents who are worried their children will come home hurt and they'll have no health insurance to help pay for their care -- the parents who are too often feel voiceless and powerless. And it is up to all of us to continue to demand a government and a political process that cares about people and responds to them on the issues that keep them up at night -- like health and retirement security, crime, education, and child care.

That's what we've had for the past six years. That's what the Democratic party really stands for. And, with your support and leadership, those are the candidates and issues that will win in 2000.

Thank you all very much.

Women's Leadership Forum Speech on Women and Politics

**Remarks by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
New York, New York
March 3, 1999**

Thank you very much. Thank you all. Thank you. You know, I was asked a few months ago if I would come to New York for a WLF event with a few of my friends, and it is just an amazing sight to behold all of you. And there is an overflow room that I will visit, and I want to tell everybody who's there, which is nearly as big as this room. It gives me just a great boost to see all of you here and supporting causes and concerns that we share. There are many people to thank. Like Laura [Ross], I wish that I could single out many of you whom I know personally and have worked with and have become friends of mine. But I want to start by thanking Laura for her extraordinary leadership and commitment. She is legendary in her willingness to work hard on behalf of causes and candidates that she believes in, and I am very grateful to her.

I also want to thank Roy Romer -- the DNC General Chair, the former long serving governor of Colorado -- who is here. I am delighted that Chuck Schumer could have been with us, and I understand why he needs to hurry back to Washington to be there for whatever vote needs to take place. I am also told that the attorney general, Landslide [Elliott] Spitzer, is here with his wife, Silva. And I am delighted they could be with us. I think that Judith Hope, the New York State party chair, is here as well, and I am glad to greet Judith. And also, I believe that public advocate Mark Green is here and Mark, somewhere. The city council speaker, Peter Valone. I think Peter is with us as well. There are other members of the New York City Council, I don't have names but I want to thank you and maybe you could stand and we could recognize you and express our appreciation that you would come today.

The Manhattan Borough president, Virginia Fields, is here. Thank you, Virginia, for coming. And the Bronx Borough president, Freddie Ferrar, is here somewhere and I want to thank President Ferrar for being with us. The DNC vice-chair, Bill Lynch; DNC finance chair, Beth Dozoretz, I think the first woman to hold that position which makes me very pleased indeed. The WLF national chair, Cynthia Friedman. I want to thank Cynthia and their board members, including my friend Shahara Ahmad-Llewellyn, who is here in the crowd. And the WLF Connecticut Chapter chair, Ronni Ginott, is here as well.

As I said though, I could identify and point out so many of you in this room. There is one person I want especially to thank. Her tireless commitment and her vision about the kind of country we want to be as we move toward a new century has helped to fill this room with people who are both activists and donors. She is a remarkable woman and a real example, and I want to thank Pat Pepper for her leadership and her friendship over the years.

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You might ask, "Why is this an important event? Why are we all gathered here?" Well, I was told that there were some who thought that I might have an announcement to make.... But I don't. But I do have a lot on my mind that I'd like to share with each of you because your being here speaks volumes to me about the kind of politics and the sort of society that we all want to see.

It has been an interesting time in the last six years to see the progress that we have been able to make as a nation. And that is progress that is really the result of the hard work and dedication of countless millions of Americans. Every time a businessman or woman made a decision to reach down deep and take a risk and employ more people and try to expand, to go into new markets and really make a mark for him or herself, that was a decision that helped move us forward. Every time a teacher looked out at a diverse group of students and said, "You know, I'm going to do everything in my power to give these young boys and girls the chance they deserve," that was also a decision for the kind of future we want. Every time a doctor or a nurse said to themselves, "You know, I'm just going to do what I need to do for this patient and I'm going to fulfill my obligations and I'm going to try and make this health care system work for people and not just for accountants or bureaucrats." And that moved us forward as to the kind of country we want to be.

There are countless examples -- people whose names might be in a headline and people who would never be in the newspaper, but you and I know, people who are doing the very best they can every single day to make a contribution and to try to make a difference. Now I know that some people, when we talk about politics or public service, you know you can see that they are put off, they don't know quite how to think about what it is that makes our democracy vibrant.

And I am often asked, as I've told some of you before, "You know, what do you really think about politics?" Or in a slightly more biased tone, "How can you stand politics?" And whenever someone asks me that, I pause for a minute and I say, "Well, you know, have you ever been a member of a family or a church or a synagogue or a civic organization or anything else where you had to work with people to make decisions by consensus, by majority vote, by working out the likes and dislikes of all the people who you were working with?" Because really politics -- with a small "p" -- is how in a democracy we get along with one another. And we make decisions that we think are in our best interest as well as the larger society's or a family's or a group's. And when we think about it that way, more in the line of de Tocqueville and others, we can see how unique this great American experiment is, how lucky we are that we have for more than 200 plus years now understood that politics, in the good times and the bad times, is really the life blood of a democracy.

And so when I stand before all of you, I am really impressed that you are willing to make a contribution, not only of your financial resources, but of your time and your energy to

something political, something that really, we hope, stands for something greater than each of us could achieve on our own. And it is especially important, and the reason why the WLF was formed in 1993, it's especially important that women feel connected to the political process. Because there are so many decisions made at the local, state and national level that truly do affect how we live: how good the schools are that we send our children to, the kind of health care that's available to our parents.

I was especially reminded of that last summer when, with some of you, I took a bus trip that led me from Newburg, New York, to Seneca Falls. And I was able to see a lot of places and visit with people because we were attempting to, in the spirit of the Millennium, think about saving America's treasures. And you know, it's not just the big treasures that we know about -- the Star Spangled Banner -- it's the quieter places. It's the monument in a city center, it's a building that has stood the test of time, it's a document that might be in an attic somewhere. But as I traveled on that bus, stopping and talking and listening, I could see and feel that maybe we don't think often enough about all of the sacrifices that have gone before and all of the blessings we take for granted.

Now I couldn't help but be reminded of that by the time I got to Seneca Falls for the 150th anniversary of the first Women's Rights Convention. Think for a minute of the courage it took -- some of you were there, thousands of people were there -- to pay tribute to these women and some hardy men who thought differently about what was possible.

And I read some of the individual stories about some of the participants. And one young woman in particular made an impression on me. She was a glove maker. You know, I am always a little bit taken aback when people in today's world talk as though women have only worked for the last 10 or 15 years when we know that women have always worked both in the home and outside, sometimes for wages, sometimes and mostly not, but have always made a contribution through their hard work. And certainly in Seneca Falls and in the surrounding area with the industrialization that was building up in the early part of the nineteenth century, there were a lot of women who were working. And one young woman, just 19 years old, heard about this convention that was aimed at talking about the rights that women should have. Because then women couldn't own property in their name; they had no rights to their children if there were a divorce; there were many, many ways in which they were legally prevented from claiming their full citizenship.

And this young glove maker read about this convention and went from door to door in her community encouraging people to come with her, and they did. And they met like-minded women and men who understood what the convention was attempting to do, which was to claim the rights of women to be full human beings, to make the choices that were the ones they thought were best for them.

Now advocating for those rights at that time caused a lot of controversy, and the women who were there were called all kinds of names -- fanatics and old maids and everything else you

can imagine. But they understood something that we also have to understand, and that is that those who advocate for progress and change will often pay a price, but if we persevere, if we see that kind of commitment through the changes that can happen, will benefit maybe us but more likely our daughters and our granddaughters.

Now today when we think about what is happening in the world around us, we can see that women have begun to take their rightful places in the political landscape, not only as candidates who run for or hold office but as contributors, as people who actively participate in the political process as many of you do. And for all of us who are able to participate, who can be here in this glorious room just like those first women at Seneca Falls, we are standing in for countless other women who cannot be here, who couldn't afford the ticket, who wouldn't think they had anything to wear or anything to contribute, who wouldn't see themselves as a political person at all.

And one of our great challenges in the next years is to make sure that our society doesn't split apart along income lines, so that there are some who feel entitled and able to participate in politics and public service and others who feel that there is no place for them and, because of apathy, indifference, fear and insecurity, don't. One of the goals of the last six years has been to try to open up politics and make public service available to as many people as possible. That is part of the reason the WLF began. And for all of us who are asked the question I'm often asked - "Why would we be involved in politics?" -- let me give you a few answers from just the last six years.

What all women deserve

It makes a difference in the lives of men and women, but particularly women for whom the Earned Income Tax Credit and the minimum wage have helped to lift their families and children out of poverty. That didn't happen by accident. It happened because people like the President and the Vice President and others in the Administration and members of Congress understood that if we were a society built upon individual initiative, then we needed to reward work, not penalize it. And for all the people who are working at minimum wage, all the people who are striving to make ends meet, we wanted to send them a message that your work is not in vain. You can get a stake in this society if you are willing to pay the price, if you are willing to work hard.

Our streets are safer in city after city and in neighborhood after neighborhood throughout America. The Crime Bill of 1994 helped to put a strategy for dealing with crime in the forefront of our national consciousness. All during the 1980s people gave speeches against crime, didn't they? They pointed their fingers, they built more prisons and the crime rate kept going up. But when this Administration came into office there was a different attitude. We needed to do something about guns, we needed to put more police on the street, we needed to encourage ideas like community policing. And as a result, crime has decreased for five years in a row around our country.

Now that is the kind of difference, that is the kind of difference that politics can make.

That was a bitterly fought battle in Washington. One of the untold stories about the 1994 elections and all the Democratic losses is that many Democratic members of Congress who were persuaded to vote for the Crime Bill and the Brady Bill lost their seats because of the incredible lobbying of the gun lobby against them when they were up for election. But they did the right thing, and every time. We can breathe a little easier. We should thank people who had the courage to make that decision.

Another set of issues that have been a real problem for us in our country is the economic front. Think about where we were in 1992 when there were other countries lecturing the United States about our economic house not being in order. Now here we are after some tough decisions and some tough votes that cost a lot of good people their jobs, including a very brave congresswoman from outside of Philadelphia. I don't know if you remember this, but remember when the President's deficit reduction plan was being voted on? It won by one vote in the House and one vote in the Senate -- thankfully the Vice President's vote. But in the House, Marjorie Margolis Mezvinsky, who came from an affluent district and who knew that it would be a tough sell for her, because we all know that the taxes were raised as well as spending was cut and other things were done that had to be done. When Marjorie walked up that aisle and the Republicans on both sides were waving at her "goodbye, Marjorie," she knew she was putting her seat at risk and she did it anyway because it was the right thing to do. And now we can look back at that historic vote and we can thank her and the other brave members of Congress who stood with the President to do something about our economic situation in this country.

We've also seen some good news on some of the social indicators. We've seen both teen pregnancy rates and abortions finally going down. And that was under a pro-choice president who refused to back down on a woman's right to choose.

You know, it is one thing to deplore a problem and it is another thing to try to solve it. And sometimes it is a lot easier just to point fingers, isn't it? Not to take responsibility but to just keep saying, "Look at what those people are doing," or "Look at that problem." And what we've tried to do, and what I think you can fairly say has happened in the last six years, is that this Administration and many citizen allies like you out in the country have tried to deal with problems, not put them under a rug, not ignore them, but to try to come up with strategies to solve them.

And there are many more examples that I could point to, but the issue is not, as we stand here on the brink of a new century, what we have done but what we will do. What kinds of decisions are we willing to make now as we move forward? We are living in good times and we're proud that we are.

We see the United States as the indispensable nation. We see our economy continuing to grow. We see a lot of progress being made. And so we have to ask ourselves, "Is now the time that we retreat into our own worlds where we say, 'I'm fine, my family's fine, my business is fine, I don't have to worry about anybody else.'" Or do we take these good times that we have

carefully created and have the resources to continue and make good decisions about and try to continue confronting problems and making it possible for us to say that we are together creating progress in our country?

Well now, obviously I believe it's time for us to deal with remaining problems that we confront. I think what drew many of us into the WLF or into politics in general is that we do believe we have a social contract with one another; that we do believe that our country can continue to become better and better if, but only if, a critical majority of people are willing to do what needs to be done when the times arise.

families agenda

You know, I'm always amused when occasionally I hear that the President or I or someone in the Administration advocating issues that are women's issues or that are not really big, significant issues -- issues like child care, or issues like choice, or issues like education, or issues like health care. And you know, I've always been amused when I hear somebody say that all of this talk about these issues was leading to "the feminization of politics." Now, the commentator who said that, I think, *meant* it as maybe insulting. I don't want to make any conclusions about that, but I've never considered issues like health care, education, child care as women's issues.

I've met lots and lots of fathers and husbands and sons who were just as concerned. The point is that we are attempting to humanize politics. We are attempting to give people the belief that the political actually can work for them. And so when someone asks you to get involved with the WLF or the Democratic Party, think about what it means for all of the people who aren't here today that you would have made a contribution and staked yourself out on the side of issues that are humanizing American politics.

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You know, a few weeks ago I was in Brooklyn at a wonderful event at the YMCA there, and I met with a group of women who talked to me very personally about their lives. A single mom who makes \$30,000 a year, which is too much for any kind of subsidy. But after she pays everything she has to pay she doesn't know where to leave her son while she goes to work -- and we all want her to work, and \$30,000 is a good salary. But she can't figure out what to do about child care.

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I met another mom who's working with three small children and she doesn't know what to do with them after school. And for her that is not a trivial issue, it's a critical one about how she can have peace at work and try to make sure that her family has a good income, but knows that her children are well taken care of. And she needed after-school programs, and thanks to increased funding in the President's budget, she now has a place for at least one of her children to go after school.

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I met a woman whose daughter was in a very serious automobile accident last spring. And if it were not for the Family and Medical Leave Act, she doesn't know what she would have done. She was able to take 12 weeks of unpaid leave and have a job waiting when she went

back. Imagine how you would feel: you're a working mom, your child's in an accident, that child needs to be in a hospital then needs rehabilitation and physical therapy, and you have to make a choice between taking care of your child or losing your job. This mom understood clearly how important the Family and Medical Leave Act is, and I would like to see its provisions -- which, remember, are unpaid leave -- extended to even more employers so that more employees would have a right to do that.

✓ So just there in that one encounter, child care, after-school care, family and medical leave. Those were not abstract issues to the women I spoke with. They were the stuff of real life. And because of politics each of them had better options than they ever could have had before.

✓ And we are also confronting some very big issues when it ^{comes} comes to Social Security and Medicare. And again, these are not just concerns for a certain group of Americans but should be concerns for all of us. If we have older parents, as I am still fortunate to have my mother, we know that Social Security and Medicare are essential. But we sometimes forget that Social Security is also available to young people who suffer diseases or accidents and can't go on working.

✓ I remember hearing about one young man who had an incapacitating stroke in his early 30s -- something we don't imagine happening to young people. His health problems left his wife and his children to fend for themselves. But because of Social Security he was able to have disability insurance for the children and he knew that they at least would have some measure of financial security.

It truly is a family protection system for America's families. It's also the single reason why half of all American women over 65 are not living in poverty. That is a stunning statistic, and I've taken in my own mind -- as I travel around or go to church or go visit people or look out the window of a car as I drive by -- I'm thinking to myself that for every woman, every two women over 65 whom I see on the street, one of them would be impoverished were it not for Social Security. So this debate about Social Security that is going on in the Congress, and I hope throughout the country, is important for every American, but it is especially important for women and it has special meaning for those millions of Americans who depend upon SSI and other benefits that we often don't think of and we just say Social Security.

✓ It's also critical that we look at what to do to save Medicare. And this is also a problem not just for older Americans but for those of us who have older relatives or feel responsible for someone over 65. I don't know how many friends of yours have had to quit a job or cut back on hours or go to extraordinary lengths to take care of an older relative or friend or in some way make a contribution to the well-being of somebody over 65, but I've met countless Americans who are in that position.

A few weeks ago in the White House, we had a woman whose mother is in a very

advanced state of Alzheimers. They couldn't afford to put her in a home, and they really didn't want to. So she quit her job so she could become the full-time caretaker. That meant that her husband had to take on more work to try to maintain their standard of living. You know, one of the hopes that we have in this session of Congress is that the President's proposal to help families with long-term care will be successful. Because especially when families are trying to do the right thing -- keep somebody at home, make the sacrifices -- let's give them the support that they need so that they can continue doing what they know is right for themselves and their families.

There are many examples of where political decisions have made a difference in the lives of real Americans. And this decision that we are confronting about Social Security and Medicare will be one of the most important we face. I happen to think that the President's proposal to dedicate the surplus, 77 percent of it to Social Security and Medicare, is the responsible action to take.

I told a group earlier today that a friend of mine had a great line. She said, "You know, if Roosevelt's line was that 'This is a generation that has a rendezvous with destiny,' ours is a generation which has a rendezvous with responsibility." And that means that for all of these issues, if we don't confront them and try to deal with them now, they will only get worse. And as those of us in the so-called "baby boom generation" age, the choices we face will be incredibly draconian. And people like you and me, most of us in this room, we can probably figure out a way to take care of ourselves, but do we really want to live in a society where the vast majority of Americans are rendered insecure, where their health care is up to the choice of whatever insurance company gets their business? I think not.

I think part of what we have to face is how we in this time of dynamic change have enough security and confidence in the future that we are able to encourage every American to live up to his or her God-given potential. As we look at the future, one of the efforts we are trying to make in the White House to help frame our thinking is through the Millennium Council that we've set up. We've adopted a slogan -- "Honor the past and imagine the future." And if one thinks about it, that's a pretty good idea that we can bring not only to saving America's treasures or thinking about the great accomplishments of the past and what might happen in the future, but it's a pretty good definition for citizens of any democracy.

We honor the past when we recognize the sacrifices that went before us. We honor the past when we recognize that my mother was born before she could vote. We honor the past when we say to ourselves that this country, for all of its difficulties, has gone further in giving to every person who is a part of the American experience an opportunity to be whatever that person has the guts and the hard work and the willingness to make of himself or herself. So we can honor the past in lots of ways. But we do a disservice to ourselves, our children, and our future if we think we can live in the past.

There are many people who believe they can turn the clock back, shut our borders, tell people how to live, point fingers at one another, instead of extending a helping hand and saying,

“I will help you on your journey if you help me on mine.” And what we as Americans have to recognize is that we cannot drop out of the political process and leave the arena to those with very specific agendas. We cannot say, “I won’t be involved in politics because I don’t like the negativity, I don’t like all of the ads on television, I don’t feel comfortable thinking about or talking about politics and the way it has become.”

I can certainly understand why someone might feel that way, but it is not a feeling that you should act on. It is a feeling that should be tangent. You could say all you want about the flaws of our political system, but when it comes right down to it, somebody is going to make the decisions. Will we or will we not fund the \$100,000 to bring down class size? Will we or will we not build the schools and repair them that our children need? Will we or will we not pass a patient’s bill of rights? Will we or will we not be fiscally responsible with the surplus and begin to deal with Social Security, Medicare, and our savings deficit through USA accounts?

Those are not decisions that we should leave to someone else, some other organized group. Those are decisions each of us have a stake in. And so I begin to think about the future in political terms because I’ve always believed that we are at our best as a nation when everybody understands their obligations as a citizen. And that is what you are doing here today.

I’ve had a lot of wonderful experiences in the last six years. I’ve been able to travel around the world representing our country, both with my husband and on my own. I’ve looked into the faces of countless people here and abroad, I’ve listened to their stories, I’ve shared their hopes and their anguish -- from everything that might happen in their families here in the United States to the political dilemmas they face abroad. And every time I do go out, either to another country or to another part of our country, I am struck time and time again by how blessed we are at this point in our history.

The women at Seneca Falls could never even have imagined the freedoms and the rights we take for granted. The real challenge for us is to decide whether all the sacrifices that were made in the past should just be honored by rhetoric or honored by action. And whether we can be part of imagining a kind of future for our country that keeps faith with all the people who went before. This is a great, great time to be a woman in America. We are so blessed and we should be so grateful, no matter what our personal circumstances are, that we live at a time in a society where we do have the opportunities that we have before us today.

But among our obligations and among the debts we owe to those who came before are to be involved in the political process that makes the American democracy work. And I want to thank all of you for being part of making that happen. Thank you very much.

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
Post-State of the Union Tour
Buffalo, NY
January 20, 1999

(Applause)

Thank you all. Thank you very much. I think you probably could tell when the four of us walked out, how overwhelmed we were by your welcome. There isn't, I don't care what the weather forecasters say, any warmer place in the entire United States than this particular community right now. (Applause) I also know, I know that you've been here for a while, and you had some wonderful entertainment. And I want to thank the Niagara Falls All-City Marching Band, the Buffalo Academy for Visual and Performing Arts Chorus, Buffalo South Park High School Concert Band, Sounds of Glory of the Outreach Ministry, the African American Cultural Center Drum and Dance Performing Troop, the New Beginnings Choral Ensemble, the people of the Long House, and the Albion Marching Band. Thank you all very much.

I also wanted to thank all of the people who worked so hard to put this event together, but more than that I want to join your mayor in thanking you for what you do every day to make Buffalo and Erie County and Western New York truly a village. You know, the mayor was quoting from and referring to a book I wrote that "It Takes A Village To Raise A Child." And I believe that. And here in Buffalo and in Erie County, you are proving that with your strong families, your strong commitment to education, and the kind of future you are building together. It takes all kinds of people to do that.

You heard from the county executive about the kind of jobs that have been created and the work that the public and private sectors have done together. And you heard from the congressman, Congressman John Lafalls (phonetic), about the cooperation and partnership between the federal and the state and the local governments that is trying to create better opportunity. But ultimately, whether any community, any village, is successful depends on the quality of the people. And so many of you -- day in and day out, in your homes, in your workplaces, in your churches, in every place you are -- you are making the kind of effort that enables the rest of us to stand and say congratulations for the progress that we have seen take place here. And up on the stage are some representative citizens who have made contributions in ways that might make headlines, or may only quietly be celebrated by the few people who are touched. And I want to thank these local heroes -- some of whom were introduced here before, and some of whom are on the stage -- and I'd like to ask all of them to stand and be recognized for what you do and what you represent for this community. (Applause)

I want to thank my friend, Tipper Gore, for her introduction. I expected, after Connie introduced her, to see her come up to the podium on rollerblades, but she didn't bring them with her today. (Laughter) I want to thank her for the work she's done. But as she was up here speaking, I remembered the wonderful day back in the summer of 1992, in August, when we went to Chitaqua and then we came here to Buffalo. (Applause) And we were able to meet some of you

and talk to many others about what this President and this Vice President wanted to do for our country. Well, here we are. It's a little colder outside, but the enthusiasm is even greater, because it wasn't just a speech that was given on a hot August afternoon. We now have six years of solid results and accomplishments that have really kept faith with the people of America. (Applause)

On that bus trip, my husband talked about how we needed to raise wages for working Americans; how we needed more jobs so that people could make a decent living; how we needed to improve child care and strengthen our schools; and how we needed to do all we could to give parents the support they needed to do the most important job in the world -- raising our children; how we needed to provide health care; and the other challenges that we were facing in our nation. Well, I am very, very proud that over the past six years, my husband has never, ever taken his eyes off those fundamental goals that he talked to you about all those years ago. (Applause)

For the past six years, I've had the honor of traveling around our country -- sometimes with the President, sometimes with the Vice President and Tipper, sometimes on my own -- and what I've enjoyed more than anything is just sitting and listening, talking about what we all wanted for our futures, what we cared about for our children, what kind of America we wanted to contribute to. And I've learned more than I could ever tell you. I've learned about how it is that all of us are attempting to deal with the challenges of our everyday lives: parenting, schooling, working, making contributions to our community. And how there are ways -- very explicit ways -- that our government can either help us or hinder us. And there are so many examples we could call on. I just want to mention a few. I've learned, very importantly, how we have to give parents time off from work to do what they need to do to care for a child or to care for an older relative. (Applause) That's why the most important piece of legislation that the President could have signed first was the Family and Medical Leave Law. And last night he asked the Congress to expand the Family and Medical Leave Law to 10 million more working Americans. (Applause)

I've also learned from listening to people that sometimes parents are penalized at work for being parents, and we need to end any discrimination in the workplace against parents, just as the President called for in the speech last night. (Applause)

I've also learned what all of you know: that we need more affordable, quality child care. Too many low- and middle-income families can not afford the child care they need. And so the President is proposing, once again, that the Congress adopt his plan to provide more quality child care, but he's also proposing new tax relief to help over a million parents who stay at home with their young children, because they need our support as well. (Applause)

We also know that if we provide after-school care and summer school opportunities, more young children will be able to succeed at school. And as the President said last night, let's make it possible for every child to be a success. Let's not turn our backs on those children who aren't doing well. But let's not promote them if they're not doing well, let's help them to do better and to be successful in school. (Applause)

So for all of us who care about families, who care about supporting parents, who care about our

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children, last night was a wonderful occasion, because we heard a new agenda that builds on what's already been done. We can celebrate how far we have come since that August day in 1992, but we cannot be complacent. We have to continue to work, we have to do all we can to make sure that the promise of America is available for all of our children.

And it is now my honor and privilege to introduce someone who is committed to that promise, committed to America's families, a visionary leader, and a dear friend, Vice President Al Gore.
(Applause)



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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

March 4, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT AT THE HBO WOMEN IN SPORTS EVENT

The East Room

THE PRESIDENT: I hate to risk spoiling the moment. I'd like to ask you all to join me in thanking Jeff and HBO for this magnificent gift to our country. Thank you. (Applause.)

As I watched this film I had many thoughts. Hillary and I have been privileged to know some of the athletes that were featured. I missed Flo Jo again. I knew I would never have a golf swing like Babe Zaharias. I knew I would never dunk the ball like you. (Laughter.) I remembered how desperately I wanted Billie Jean to win that tennis match -- (laughter) -- for the sake of my mother, my then-girlfriend.

I remembered all the times as a private citizen -- when I'm upstairs at the White House now I can indulge my obsession with sports by watching women athletes as well as men, across a whole range of endeavors. All the joy, all the elation -- all because the pioneers in this room and on this film dared to compete. And we owe all of you who are here and all of those who are featured, all those living and all those gone, a profound debt of gratitude.

I also remembered again, looking at Senator Bayh, the importance of what we do here -- to give the American people the right to live out their dreams without regard to whatever particular conditions define them. Where would we be without Title IX? There were only 300,000 girls all over America in high school sports then; today, there are well over 2 million. The law makes a difference, too, and we will do our best here to be faithful to it.

But, finally, let me say, as the grandson and son of two women who

worked and did their best to make their way in life; as the husband of a remarkable woman who has made her way; as the father of a daughter I hope will always be free to make hers -- what Billie Jean said about that tennis match is true of this whole subject. This is about more than sports. This is about the fundamental right of every human being to dream and work and strive and the obligation never to quit, never to give in, never to be limited, never to be defined. And our obligation to see that all those who come behind us have that right to jump and soar in athletics, in music, in every endeavor -- even some day, someone of a different gender will be standing here giving a speech like this and I hope it won't be too long. (Applause.)

So we thank you for the gifts you have given us. We thank you for the gifts you have given our daughters. We hope our granddaughters will think this is a quaint remembrance, because all of them will have, without question, the right to live their dreams.

Thank you and God bless you. (Applause.)

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Draft #1

FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
TALKING IT OVER /CREATORS SYNDICATE
COLUMN FOR PUBLICATION MARCH 9, 1999

Almost every young girl in this country today can tell you who Tara Lipinski, Mia Hamm and Dominique Dawes are. And many of them know Billy Jean King, Wilma Rudolph and Donna de Varona. But how many have ever heard of Trudy Ederle, Mamie Peanut Johnson, or even Babe Didrikson?

Yet these are the women who helped pave the way not only for a new generation of superstars, but for the achievements of every girl in this country today.

I was lucky to grow up in a home where both of my parents loved sports, and I spent many hours in the back yard tossing a football around with my brothers. It wasn't until I was older that I understood the restrictions that kept girls off the fields and on the sidelines.

When I played basketball, it was half-court, with a two-dribble limit. We were told a girl's heart just couldn't take the exertion of playing full-court. Someone ought to tell that to Sheryl Swoopes, Lynette Woodard and the other stars of the Women's National Basketball Association. Girls, no less than boys, have always yearned to be active. For generations, though, they were told that playing sports was unladylike and would damage their reproductive organs. But thanks to early role models who defied the prevailing superstitions, women began to summon the courage to step onto playing fields alongside their brothers.

Every time a girl breaks a record in the pool, she can thank Trudy Ederle who, in 1926 became the first woman to swim the English Channel, shaving more than two hours off the existing men's record. Every time a woman joins the Ladies Professional Golf Association, she can thank Babe Didrikson, who is often called the greatest athlete of the century male or female.

Every woman on the gold medal-winning 1996 U.S. Olympic softball team can thank Jackie Mitchell, the first woman to sign a professional baseball contract, as well as Toni Stone, Mamie Peanut Johnson, and Connie Morgan who played for the Negro Leagues after the majors were integrated.

Every woman who ties on a pair of women's running shoes can thank Wilma Rudolph, who won 3 gold medals on the 1960 Rome Olympic games, and Bobbi Gibb, the first woman to run the venerable Boston Marathon.

Every girl who aspires to play sports in high school or win a college scholarship, can thank former Indiana Senator Birch Bayh, who sponsored the federal law that leveled the playing field for female athletes. Before Title IX was passed in 1972, colleges spent one percent of their athletic budgets on women's sports and approximately 300,000 high school girls played sports. Now funding must be distributed equitably, and more than two million girls play on their high school teams.

The year after Title IX became law, millions of Americans were riveted by one of the great events in women's sports. Dubbed The Battle of the Sexes, this matchup between tennis greats Bobby Riggs and Billie Jean King, represented much more than a tennis match. In Billie Jean's own words, It wasn't about tennis. It was about social change. When Billy Jean beat Riggs in straight sets, many women understood for the first time that it was acceptable to compete with men even to beat them.

Last week, Billie Jean, Nikki McCray and Dominique Dawes traveled with me to the Lab School in New York City, where the girls' basketball team is the pride of the campus. Nikki, one of the stars of the WNBA Mystics here in Washington, told the students that, when she was growing up, her male cousins didn't want her to play basketball with them because she was a girl. Her heroes were players like Michael Jordan. Now, little girls wear McCray jerseys, and believe that one day they can be just like her.

After our visit to the Lab School, three generations of female champions gathered at the White House to preview a new HBO film on the history of women in athletics, a film that I wish every American could see. Called

Dare to Compete, it celebrates the women who were told that playing sports wasn't ladylike, but didn't listen. It heralds the women who were discriminated against, but just kept standing up and speaking out, demanding nothing less than justice and equality.

Whenever one of these women from Trudy Ederle to Billie Jean, Dominique, or Nikki dares to compete, they open the door a little wider for all women. Every girl who watches this film will be able to say to herself, I can be an Olympic athlete. But they will also understand that they can be teachers or scientists, CEOs or Supreme Court justices even President of the United States.

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FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REMARKS AT LAB SCHOOL
NEW YORK, NEW YORK
MARCH 4, 1999

Thank you all. I am delighted to be here at the Lab School. I want to thank Sophia Totti [Toe-Tee], for all she said today...and for all she's done over the years to bring leadership, style and victory to the Lady Gators.

Now, I have to confess that earlier, a few people told me that you might appreciate it if I started my remarks with my own version of the song, "YMCA." What they didn't realize is that the only area where I have less talent than sports is in singing. But I do have a deep appreciation for other people's talent -- and so I am delighted to have brought along some great athletes and role models. Not just great female athletes. But, some of the greatest athletes of all time: Billie Jean King, Nikki McCray, and Dominique Dawes. Thank you so much for coming.

I am also very pleased that we are joined today by so many elected officials [the Manhattan Borough President Virginia Fields; State Senator Thomas Duane; Assemblymember Richard Gottfried; Councilmembers Kathryn Freed, Gifford Miller, Ronnie Eldridge, Bill Perkins, and Guillermo Linares.]

I want to thank our hosts -- Sheila Breslaw and Rob Menken -- who have brought excellence and teamwork to the classrooms and the playing fields of the Lab School.

And I want to thank Seth Abraham of HBO for showing us an excerpt from the extraordinary new documentary that we're premiering at the White House tonight. I hope all Americans will be educated and inspired by the women athletes in this film, women who dared to compete and competed to win. Because their story is not only the story of women's sports -- but also of women's rights. And I can't think of a better time to tell them than right now, during women's history month.

I'm sure this will date me, but back when I was in high school, there were very different rules for girls basketball. You could only let the ball bounce twice before you had to pass it. And you could only play half-court. Because they claimed our hearts were too weak to bear the strain of playing full-court basketball.

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Well, times have certainly changed. In this city last summer, Madison Square Garden was filled with people who came out to watch the big stars play. And their names weren't Ewing [U-ing] and Houston [Hue-ston], but Lobo [Low-bo] and Weatherspoon. [Weather-spoon] It's incredible. At WNBA games across the country, you see children of all races and sizes, boys and girls, wearing jerseys, often down to their ankles, adorned with the names of their favorite WNBA players. You see boys and girls lining up patiently after the game, hoping to get an autograph and praying that one day they'll be able to follow in their hero's footsteps. And now they can.

More than ever before, young girls and boys today can reach as far as their dreams and abilities will take them....And that's because a law called Title IX opened the floodgates of opportunity to college players who are tomorrow's professional champions. And it's because women playing today stand on the shoulders of countless pioneers, who sacrificed to break down barrier after barrier so that they could more easily follow. Just think about the three athletes who are with us today.

Every time a high school student finds out she's earned a tennis scholarship to college, she can thank Billie Jean King who took on not only Bobby Riggs, but the stereotypes and discrimination that had plagued women athletes for far too long.

Every time a girl wonders whether she has what it takes to make her high school basketball team, she can look to Nikki McCray. As a child, Nikki refused to give up when her male cousins said she couldn't play with them because she was a girl. And, whether she's playing at the Olympics or leading her team, the Mystics, in the WNBA, she has never given up since.

And every time a gymnast leaves her house at the crack of dawn to train, she can find inspiration in Dominique Dawes, who has shown boys and girls that they should go for the Gold in every aspect of their lives.

I'll never forget a town hall meeting at the White House that Dominique participated in with my husband, Peter Jennings, and a group of young people. The topic was drugs. And after the event, Dominique was surrounded for almost an hour by young people who see her as a role model, regardless of whether they're athletes or not.

What these role models and others like them have taught us is that you don't have to be an all-star athlete. You don't have to finish a marathon. Or even play on a team. But all of us can get active and stay active. And all of us should have that opportunity.

We know that girls who engage in sports and physical activity are more likely to be confident, to excel in school, and to stay healthy. And we know that every woman who makes it in sports, opens up the door a little wider for girls to be anything they want -- teachers and scientists, CEOs and Supreme Court Justices...and yes, the President of the United States.

So, I hope all of us will continue to work for the day when sayings like "You throw like a girl" or "You run like a girl" are meant as compliments, not insults. I hope there will be a day when strong and feminine are always considered one and the same. And when our ability to compete is determined not by our gender, but by our spirit, skill and strength. And I hope we'll finally reach the day when every child, boy and girl, doesn't have to look any further than the mirror to spot a champion.

No one has done more to bring us to that day than our next speaker. Billie Jean King's tennis achievements are legendary -- including 20 Wimbledon Titles...and five #1 rankings. But, what is perhaps most special about her, is that she is a true champion both on and off the court.

It was Billie Jean who first came up with this idea for a documentary about the history of women in sports. Which is only fitting. For she shaped that history by continuously standing up and speaking out for women's rights...and clearing the path for every woman and girl in this country.

It is my great honor to introduce Billie Jean King.