

November 19, 1999



MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: BRUCE REED
TOM FREEDMAN

SUBJECT: Values, Rights, and Responsibilities – Accomplishments and Challenges

The basic pact that binds our society together is the idea that we have responsibilities as well as rights, that we have an obligation to expand opportunity for all and demand responsibility from all. Activist government can only succeed if it reinforces people's values and doesn't undermine them.

Here are a few illustrative examples of what you have done to expand opportunity and responsibility, and some of the fundamental challenges New Democratic leaders will face in the next decade.

A. New Democratic Accomplishments

- **Balancing the Budget While Increasing Investment:** Over the last 7 years we've turned a \$300 billion annual deficit into back-to-back surpluses, with the prospect of a trillion-dollar surplus over the next decade. Yet in that same period, we've doubled investment in education and nearly doubled investment in public safety.
- **Rewarding Work Over Welfare:** Our system used to make single mothers worse off for going to work, instead of rewarding them. We enacted a tax credit for working families that makes work a better deal than welfare. In 1998, the EITC lifted 4.3 million Americans, over half of them children, out of poverty – more than twice as many as in 1993. We also dramatically increased our investment in child care, so poor mothers could go to work and not have to worry that their children were safe. We reformed our welfare laws to require and reward work, and to demand more child support from absent fathers. We increased our minimum wage. All these steps, along with a growing economy, have given us the biggest five-year drop in poverty in 30 years.
- **Increasing Access to College While Asking Young People to Give**

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

Cutler
said this
is true
yes, it is
I showed
this to
Obama

Something Back: We have taken several steps to open the doors of college to any young person, with tax credits and scholarships. We have also given young people the chance to give something back to their community and country in return. We have done this by: (1) launching our Americorps program which has given 100,000 young Americans the chance to serve while earning funds for college; (2) allowing students to repay their loans as a percentage of their income over time; and (3) expanding work-study programs, which 1 million Americans will now take part in as a result of the budget that Congress passed this week.

B. Some Future Challenges

- **Balancing Work and Family:** As more families have come to depend on two incomes over the last 3 decades, American parents now have 22 fewer hours a week to spend with their children than 30 years ago. If we're going to succeed as societies, we need to find ways – through business and government – to give parents more time, more choices, and more ability to succeed at work and at home. For example, the first law I signed upon becoming President guarantees people the right to take unpaid leave to care for a sick child or family member. We're trying to expand that to give workers the right to take time off for other important family needs, such as parent-teacher conferences and doctors appointments. no
- **Giving Parents Tools:** The greater personal freedom a society allows, the greater personal responsibility it must demand. We need to give parents the tools to protect and raise their children in a complex time. Starting in January, we're equipping every new TV set with a V-Chip that allows parents an easy way to control what their children watch. We are expanding that concept to the Internet and other media. For instance, there is now a free website where parents can obtain blocking and filtering tools to protect their children on the Internet.
- **Making the Most of Our Diversity:** To succeed, we must make opportunity available to all, and take advantage of everyone's diverse talents. The New Markets tour is part of that commitment to broaden opportunity and strengthen our economy for global competition. Further, a commitment to an inclusive society means that everyone must feel protected by our laws. That's why we're seeking hate crimes legislation to guarantee that no group will be targeted for violence, intimidation, and exclusion.