

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

March 15, 2000

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT DNC DINNER

Harbor Court Hotel
Baltimore, Maryland

9:40 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Peter, Mrs. Angelos, thank you for this incredible evening. Thank you all for coming and for your support. Thank you, Governor, for the kind words you said and for the great work you're doing in Maryland to try to protect people from gun violence.

And I want to say, I agree with you, you do have the best Lt. Governor in the United States in Maryland. Thank you, Kathleen, thank you very much. And I'm something of an expert on that subject, having served as a governor for seven years, served with 150 different governors. And I think -- it's amazing to me how many times the team of Glendening and Kathleen Kennedy Townsend have put Maryland first in all kinds of reforms, from education to what's good for children to community service, and now in your attempts to do everything you can to protect your children from violence. And you should be very proud of this. This state is very, very well-governed, and I'm grateful to you.

I want to thank the other leaders who have come here -- your State Treasurer; your Secretary of State; Speaker of the House, who invited me to come back to address the delegates one last time before I leave. That's good. When people come up to me and start thanking me for what I've done, I feel like it's a eulogy, and I have to pinch myself to make sure I'm still alive. I'm always kind of surprised anybody wants me to show up anymore. So I thank you very much for that.

President Dixon, Commissioner Daniels, I thank all of you for being here. I want to say a special word of appreciation to the Congress members who are here -- Ben Cardin and Elijah Cummings, who have been great friends and allies of ours throughout this last seven years. I thank you. And, Peter Franchot, thank you for your support.

And Pete Rawlings, before he was the head of your fortunes with his legislative position, we used to work together on the education commission of the state. And whenever I needed somebody to stand up and say I was right when I was challenging people to change, 15 years ago he was there. And I thank you for that.

Mayor Delasandro (phonetic) came up to me tonight and he said -- you may know that his sister is Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, and one of the ablest people in the Congress -- he came up to me tonight and said, well, I want you to know there's life after politics. For which I thanked him. And I hope I'll be around to see the evidence.

And I want to thank Dr. Richardson, the President of Morgan State. I want to acknowledge him. Morgan State gave me an honorary degree a couple years ago and I got to speak there. It's the only commencement I've ever attended where there were five different musical selections, and every one was better than the one before. You've got a lot to be proud of, having that fine institution here.

Mr. Mayor, I want to thank you and Katie for coming out to meet me at Fort McHenry, and standing in the wind. And I'm glad the Irish saved Baltimore. I wish the same could be said of Washington. Which the British did burn. And every night when I go home to the White House -- there's a big block we've left unpainted that still has the burn marks from where the British assaulted it in 1814 -- and I always -- periodically, at least, I remind the people who work with me just to be humble because you never can tell what's coming up the river there. And generally in life, that's a good lesson to remember.

I'm thrilled by your election. I enjoyed working with your predecessor, Kurt Schmoke. I was jealous when you got over 90 percent of the vote -- I couldn't get over 90 percent of the vote if my name were the only one on the ballot. And I am, particularly in this week, profoundly grateful for what you said about Ireland. My people are from Fermanagh, in County Armagh, which is right on the border of Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. And I have a little watercolor in the residence of the White House of the oldest known residents of my mother's people, the Cassidys. It's an early 18th century farmhouse, which still is in existence. I've never been able to trace my roots, beyond speculation, back before that.

And it has been a great honor. And we're having a little trouble in Ireland now, but we're working through it and I think it's going to be all right. And if it hadn't been for the Irish American community, the United States never would have been able to do that. And so it means a lot to me that you said that tonight, and I thank you for that.

I want to finally, by way of introduction, beyond thanking Ed Rendell, for agreeing when he left the mayoralty of Philadelphia -- which has been fabulous to me and given me massive margins -- I said, I've got a little part-time job I'd like for you to do; would you become Chairman of the Democratic Party. And he had earned a rest and he didn't take it, because he knows how important these elections are to our future -- for the same reason Peter Angelos said. So I want to thank him.

Now, I'd like to say some things tonight in a fairly straightforward way -- you can do that when you're not running for anything. Most days I'm okay with that.

First of all, I feel profoundly indebted to Baltimore and to the state of Maryland for how good you've been to Hillary and me and Al and Tipper Gore. You've given us your electoral votes; you've always been there to support us. And through this administration of the Governor,

you've been an ardent partner for us in so many of the things that I've tried to do for America. I don't know how many times in the last seven years I've come to Maryland to give the country evidence that this or that or the other thing could be done -- whether it was in law enforcement or education or the economy or the environment. And so I thank you for that. I am very, very grateful.

Tomorrow, somebody might ask you why you came here tonight, and so I want to ask you to think about what answer you would give. I hope you will say, as has been said, well, you know, when President Clinton and Vice President Gore were elected in 1992, they said they wanted to change America for the better, to give the government back to the American people. Not just to restore the economy, but to bring our society together; to build a more united community and to enhance responsibility on the part of all citizens. And the economy is the best it's ever been. And the crime rate is down, the welfare rolls are down; adoptions are up; 90 percent of our kids are immunized for the first time; 150,000 of our kids have served in AmeriCorps serving their communities in Maryland and every other state and earning money for college. America has been a force for peace and prosperity around the world. We've got cleaner air, cleaner water. We've cleaned up three times as many toxic waste dumps as the previous administrations did in 12 years. We've had the first back-to-back balanced budgets in 42 years.

So the first answer is, you know, they did what they said they'd do. They did what they said they would do. And one of the most personally rewarding things that has happened to me since I've been President occurred actually fairly early in my first term, when a professor I had never met, who was a scholar of the presidency, wrote me and said I had already kept a higher percentage of my promises to the American people than the previous five Presidents had. And that was in the first term.

I believe in laying out a program and sticking to it. I think it's a great mistake to ask for a job if you don't know why you want it. So that's the first thing I hope you'll say.

The second thing I hope you will say is, there's an answer to Governor Bush's question about what Al Gore has been doing in Washington for the last seven years. And again, I can say this. I haven't been Vice President, but I have made quite an extensive study in my life, intensified in the last seven years, of every one of my predecessors, and the office of Vice President.

Much as I love and revere Franklin Roosevelt, he did not pick Harry Truman expecting he would be President or with some great thought for why he would be, and when he tragically died, then Vice President Truman did not know about the existence of the atomic bomb. He did not even know that. And thank the good Lord we were lucky Harry Truman turned out to be a great man and a great President, who made the tough decisions that were necessary to build the next 50 years.

President Eisenhower gave some more thought, and President Kennedy did, and Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon both had more influence as Vice President than anyone before them. Then President Carter inaugurated a whole different way of dealing with Vice Presidents with Walter Mondale -- who met with him every week, would come to every meeting. And to be fair

Gore

-- I don't want to be like our friends in the Republican Party -- one of the things that Ronald Reagan did was to give then Vice President Bush more responsibility, because the Carter-Mondale model had worked so well, and because any President in his right mind knows that anything can happen in life and you might not be here tomorrow.

I had a different idea. I thought, why would you want to be Vice President unless it was a real job, all day, every day. Who wants to hang around waiting for something bad to happen to the President? And I believed that the role that had been given to Vice President Mondale, and then Vice President Bush, was a good thing, but only the beginning.

So, in 1992, when I asked Al Gore to run with me, I defied all political convention. Some people thought I was too young; I picked a guy who was a year younger than me. Some people thought I was too southern; I picked a guy from a border state. Some people thought I was too much of a New Democrat; I picked a guy who basically agreed with me on the issues. But I also picked someone who knew about things that I did not know about -- who had experience in the Congress, who knew a lot about science and technology, who understood a lot about the environment, who knew an enormous amount about arms control and foreign policy. And I picked someone who I thought had strengths that I didn't have, because I thought we could work together in harmony.

And I can tell you that if you look at the whole history of the United States, and you ask any objective historian who has really studied it, Vice President Gore has been, by far -not even close, by far -- the most influential, productive Vice President in the history of our republic, without regard to party. No one has ever been close.

He broke the tie that passed the economic plan in 1993, without which we wouldn't be here celebrating tonight, because it drove the interest rates down and got this economy going again. He recently, as you just heard, broke the tie on the gun safety legislation. In between, he headed our empowerment program designed to bring economic opportunity to designated poor cities and rural areas in this country. He headed our partnership with Detroit to develop new generation vehicles, some of which are now at the Detroit Auto Show, that we developed over a six-year period, working with the auto companies and the auto workers, getting 70, 80 miles to the gallon. They'll be in the showroom in the next couple of years.

He headed a special commission with Russia and helped to continue to reduce the number of nuclear weapons; and a special commission with South Africa to try to make sure that once they got real freedom and democracy after 300 years, it has a good chance to work.

And every tough decision I've had to take, whether it was a decision to try to restore democracy to Haiti, or stop the slaughter in Bosnia, or stop the slaughter in Kosovo, or give financial aid to Mexico on a day when a poll came out saying the people were 81-15 against it -- every single tough decision he backed it to the hilt. When we took on the tobacco interest and the NRA in a way that no previous administration of either party had ever done, he backed it to the hilt.

So if somebody asked you the Governor Bush question, what's Al Gore been doing for the last seven years, give them an earful, will you, because it's a good story. It's a good story.

The third thing I hope you will say is you agree with the fights we're waging now. You can thank me later, when I'm a former President, if you're still so inclined, but I'm interested in what we're doing today. We're trying to pass the patients' bill of rights. We're trying to pass a bill to build 6,000 schools and modernize 5,000 a year for the next five years -- very important issue. We're trying to double the number of children in after-school and summer school programs, and pass a budget in Congress which would give every child in every disadvantaged school in the entire United States the chance to be in an after-school mentoring program.

We're trying -- we have opened the doors of the first two years of college to all Americans through the HOPE Scholarship. We've got 5 million people in college now getting the tax credits that were in the '97 Balanced Budget Act for college. I want to give people a tax deduction of up to \$10,000 for college tuition so we'll open the door for four years of college to all Americans. This is what we're trying to do now. These are important things.

We're working on the peace processes, from Northern Ireland to the Middle East, and I'm going to the Indian subcontinent at the end of the week. We're moving; the country is on the move. We're fighting attempts by the other party to pass tax cuts so big that we wouldn't be able to save Social Security and Medicare and pay the debt down, and do the things that need to be done for our country.

So you ought to say the last seven years have been good, they did what they said they'd do. Governor Bush wants to know what Vice President Gore has been doing the last seven years? I think he's been doing good, real good.

And, third, I agree with the fights that they're waging. The most important thing that we're doing right now, of course, is we're embroiled in this fight over gun safety. And I always - I suppose I should be glad because they're kind of unmasked, but it's always kind of sad to me when one of these fights turns real mean and personal. I have a pretty thick hide after all these years and it's not really very effective when they say things like they've been saying the last few days, the gun lobby. But it obscures the reality.

Sometimes people just don't like you and you don't know why. Have you ever had that happen to you? One of my favorite stories is this story about this guy that's walking along the edge of the Grand Canyon and he slips off and he's careening to his certain demise. And all of a sudden he sees this little twig sticking out of the canyon and he grabs onto it, and it breaks his fall. And then all of the sudden the roots start coming out of the twig. And he looks up in the sky and he says, "God, why me? I'm a good man. I've taken good care of my family, I've worked hard and I've paid my taxes all my life. Why me?" And this thunderous voice comes out of the sky and says, "Son, there's just something about you I don't like."

Now, everybody has been in that situation. I know why the NRA, however, doesn't like me. They don't like me because I was shooting cans off the fence post in the country with a .22 when I was 12 years old. They don't like me because I governed for 12 years in the state where half the people had a hunting license. And, therefore, I know how to talk to people they try to scare up against us, those of us that want to have a safer world.

But the real issue is not the spokesman for the NRA saying that I want more deaths in America, or that somehow we're responsible for the death of that wonderful former basketball coach from Northwestern, and all these absurd claims, which they will doubtless use to raise money on. The real issue is, we have the lowest crime rate in 25 years and the lowest gun death rate in 30 years -- but no one in their right mind believes America is as safe as it ought to be or could be. And no one believes we should stop until we make America the safest big country in the world. Now, that's what I believe.

You know, when people start batting around responsibility for people's lives -- one of the jobs that I was not prepared for as President, I never dreamed about and, I confess, I never thought about it, was the responsibility to comfort the grieving when their loved ones had died. I never thought when I was running for President I'd be meeting a plane carrying the body of my friend and brother, Ron Brown, and all those people who died in Croatia, trying to give those people a better life. I never thought I'd have to go down to one room after another at a military base and great 19 families of 19 airmen that were killed by terrorists because they were serving us in Saudi Arabia. I never thought I'd have to go to a place like Oklahoma City, where nearly 170 people were killed by a man consumed by his hatred for our government.

I never thought I'd have to have parents like the grieving mother and stepfather of young Kayla Rolland sit in the Oval Office. And what can you tell them, that you've got a little girl and their little girl is gone? So I don't really think we should be talking about this debate in these terms.

When they fought me on the Brady Bill, because they said it would be so burdensome to hunters and sportspeople, and I said it wouldn't, and we won -- we had evidence now: 500,000 people have been kept from getting handguns because they were felons, fugitives and stalkers. Unfortunately, the man who killed Ricky Birdsong in Chicago, and a young Korean Christian walking out of his church and several other people, was able to get a gun illegally in another way.

Well, one of the ways people get guns, as the NRA said way back in '93, when they were against the Brady Bill -- they said, oh, well, people don't buy these guns at gun stores, they get them at these gun shows and these urban flea markets. So I said, well, let's just do a background check there. That's what this is about: child safety locks, money for smart gun technology, banning the importation of large ammunition clips -- assault weapons are illegal in this country; then we let people import the ammunition clips that can convert legal weapons into assault weapons -- and closing the gun show loophole.

And, oh, there's been the awfulest outcry about how terrible this is and how burdensome this will be. And one of the reasons they don't like me is I've actually been to these country gun

shows. You're the governor of Arkansas, you've got to get out there and hustle around and go where the people are. And I've got a lot of friends that have bought hunting rifles at these country gun shows. And it's true, if you're out in the country and somebody has to go someplace else, it's a little bit of an inconvenience if you have to wait a day to get your gun. But every one of these places has a nearby police office or a sheriff's office where those guns could be deposited while a background check is done.

Most people I know of good conscience, that love to go into the deer woods, would do anything to keep another child alive. This is not what this is about. And 95 percent of these people could be checked in a day, and the other 5 percent that I want to wait three days to make sure have been checked -- their denial rate because of their background problems is 20 times the denial rate for the 95 percent to clear in a day.

We're going to hold up the whole United States Congress, go eight months after the Columbine slaughter? I didn't even talk about that -- going to Columbine High School; going out to Springfield, Oregon; calling those people in Jonesboro, Arkansas, where I knew the people in the school. You know, I'm sorry, but I think it's worth a little inconvenience to save a lot of lives, and I think you do, too.

Ben Cardin was with me today when they won a great legislative victory over a tiny thing -- because the NRA was trying to beat a resolution by Representative Zoe Lofgren, from California, that simply said, look, the Senate passed a good gun safety bill eight months ago and the House passed one that wasn't so good, but at least they passed a bill -- and what Congress does when the Senate and House pass different bills, they get together, just like you do in Maryland, and you have a conference committee and you work out a compromise and you send it to the chief executive and he signs or vetoes it.

They haven't met in eight months. And the reason is they know that our friends in the media back there cannot run a headline story every day for eight months saying they haven't met. I mean, they can't. They've got a lot of work to do, tomorrow there will be something else on the news. So they thought this thing will just go away if we just don't meet; but if we meet and we have to say what our position is, we'll get hurt, or something might happen. So they just never met.

So Zoe Lofgren introduced a resolution in the House today that simply said one thing: Meet. You draw a paycheck every two weeks, earn it: Meet. Do something on this bill. Even if it's wrong, do something. That's all it said. Well, the NRA acted like we were going to go confiscate guns. And they were up there pressuring people, handing out these awful pamphlets, running all these ads and everything.

So a bunch of them came down to the White House today, a bunch of the members of the House, including about three Republicans, including Connie Morella from Maryland, who spoke. And Carolyn McCarthy spoke, whose husband was killed and whose son was nearly killed by the man who was using an automatic weapon on the Long Island subway seven years ago. She was a lifelong, Irish Catholic Republican. She switched parties, ran for Congress, became one of our members. And I can tell you, we're really proud of her. She got up and talked about how callous

it was for people who disagree with us on the issue to act like we don't care whether people die, or not.

And the point I made was that -- I was trying to get a little levity in the situation because it's so profoundly sad, but I also wanted people to think. I said -- but these people at the NRA, what their position is, is that guns are different from every other single safety threat. Every other threat, we do as much prevention as possible. And then if somebody does something wrong and we catch them, we punish them. But we try to prevent.

I mean, every one of us was raised with that old "ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," right? But they say, no, no, no, no prevention; just throw the book at them if they do something wrong.

And I asked the crowd, I'll ask you, how would you feel if I called a press conference tomorrow morning and I said the following: My fellow Americans, I have been really concerned about how difficult it is in crowded airports, with airplanes already delayed, for people to have to go through these metal detectors. And you've got a money clip in your pocket or a belt buckle that's too big, and you have to go through two or three times, and it's just a pain. Now, most people who fly on airplanes are completely honest. And 99.999 percent of them are being terribly burdened by these metal detectors. So I'm just going to take them out. And the next time somebody blows up a plane, if I catch them I'm going to throw the book at them.

You guys would think I had completely lost it, wouldn't you? What if somebody said to you: You know, most people who drive cars are really good people -- they're responsible drivers, they're never drunk when they drive, they're just as good as they can be. And I'm just tired of them being burdened with having to get a license and having to observe the speed limit. And, by the way, we're going to rip all the seatbelts out of all the cars, because most people do the right thing anyway. It's absurd, right? You know it's absurd. That is the argument: no prevention, only punishment.

So this is a huge deal, much bigger than just the issue at hand. Look, I know what the Constitution says and, quite apart from the Constitution, the American people believe they ought to have the right to hunt, they ought to have the right to sports shooting. But the death rate from accidental gun shootings is 15 times higher in this country than it is in the next 25 biggest countries combined for kids.

I had a fellow call me yesterday when he saw all the press about this, an old friend of mine, just to remind me that once in his garage many years ago his little boy and his little boy's best friend were playing with a gun that they got somewhere else. The gun went off and killed his little boy's best friend. I've known this guy forever. He said, I just want to remind you of that, don't forget that. He said, it took my son years to get over that. He had no wounds, no burdens himself, but he had to live with seeing his friend die in front of him as a kid, in a game they were playing together with something they had no business in their hands.

So I say to all of you, these are not issues to be taken lightly. And there are huge differences here between the parties and their leadership and between our nominees for President, and that's going on this year.

Now, the last thing I would like to say to you is, we've got -- what I hope this election will be -- I hope and pray that there will be no votes on this gun issue in November. But the only way there can be no votes in it is if Congress does the right thing and starts saving kids lives and putting the lives of our children first.

But I want you to think about this. I want you to think -- I want you to lift your sights now. I want you to say, so I came here because they did good; I came here because Al Gore was the best Vice President in history; I came here because I agree with them on the fights they're waging now. The fourth thing I hope you'll say is, the big issue: this is the best time this country has ever known in many ways and we have to make the most of it.

That's what I tried to say at the State of the Union address. You know, when I became President, everybody was just worried about keeping the ship afloat and turning it around. Well, we've got it turned around now. What are we going to do with it?

How many times in your life have you made a mistake -- if you're over 30, you have, whether you admit it or not -- how many times in your life have you made a mistake, not because times were bad, but because times were good in your life? Because you thought everything was - in a business or in a family situation or just in your personal situation, you thought things were rocking along so well there was absolutely no questions to be asked and no consequences to breaking your concentration, or indulging yourself a little when you should have been thinking down the road?

That's what I want you to think about. We have a chance to save Social Security and Medicare for when the baby boomers retire, so we don't bankrupt our children and their ability to raise our grandchildren. We've got a chance to get this country out of debt for the first time since 1835, so we keep interest rates low for a generation and the economy hot. We have a chance to give an excellent education to every child in this country by working with the schools and the states. We have a chance to meet the enormous environmental challenge of global warming and our local environmental challenges, and to do it in a way that actually increases the rate of growth of the economy, not undermine it.

We have a chance to help people balance work and family by doing more for child care, by broadening family leave, by raising the minimum wage, by providing more health insurance coverage to lower income working people who can't afford it. We have a chance to do these things. We have a chance to be the world's leading force for peace and freedom and justice, to help people solve their racial, their tribal, their religious conflicts. And we have a chance to truly build one America at home, and to stop the prejudice against people just because of their race or their religion, or just because they're gay, or just because of their politics.

You know, the difference between us and our friends in the Republican Party is, I don't have any problem with people on the so-called religious right practicing their religion and taking

their religion into politics. That's their business. I've never tried to demonize them. But if they were in power, they would demonize us, just like they did before. They don't think we should have the same rights that we're willing to give to them. They want us to live according to their rules. We're perfectly willing to let them live according to their rules; they want us to live according to theirs. And that's the difference.

diff b/w
parties

And I just want you to think about that, because this is such a hopeful time for our country, but it will only work if we are very serious about this election. Now, you heard Peter talking about the money involved. The only reason the money is important is it costs money to communicate with people. The American people nearly always get it right if they have enough information and enough time. They've got a great internal compass and they nearly always get it right. That's why we're still around here after over 200 years.

And it doesn't matter if they have more money than we do. They had \$100 million more than we did in 1998, and we still picked up seats in the House of Representatives, in the sixth year of a President's term for the first time since 1822. But we have to have enough.

So I want you to think about -- this is the most important thing you can say. When you talk to people when you go home, more important than "they kept their promises," more important than "Al Gore was the greatest Vice President," more important than "I agree with them on the fight," more important than the specific issues going toward the future, the most important thing is this -- we have got to be one united country, committed to making the most of this moment.

Sunday, a week ago, I went to Selma, Alabama, for the 35th anniversary of the Voting Rights March on Bloody Sunday across the Edmund Pettus Bridge. And for me as a white Southerner, it was a moment of a lifetime. Unless you were part of all that back then, you can't imagine what it meant to me, the honor I felt just to be there -- to be with John Lewis, who I've admired and loved ; and Coretta Scott King, and Hosea Williams getting up out of his wheelchair to walk across the bridge; and Dick Gregory and Reverend Jackson, and all these other people.

Kids find it hard to believe that 35 years ago, you could get killed -- white or black -- you could get killed for fighting for the right to vote. And what's that got to do with this? Here's what it's got to do with this. We're now in the longest economic expansion in American history -- 20 year low in poverty; record lows in African American and Hispanic unemployment. The longest one we've ever had. Do you know when we broke the record, do you know what record we broke? The economic expansion of 1961 through 1969.

I finished high school in 1964. President Kennedy had just been killed. President Johnson was in office. The country had rallied behind him. Unemployment was low, growth was high, inflation was low. And I'll tell you something, we thought it would go on forever. And not just the economy. We thought we'd win the Cold War without incident, and we thought our President and our Congress would solve the civil rights problems of America through legislation in the Congress. And we thought we were going to rock on forever.

In 1965 we had Bloody Sunday. In 1966 we had riots in our streets. By 1968 -- I graduated from college on June 8th -- it was two days after Senator Kennedy was killed, two months after Martin Luther King was killed, nine weeks after Lyndon Johnson said he couldn't run for President anymore. Our country was split right down the middle. Richard Nixon was elected President, saying he represented the Silent Majority -- which meant those of us who weren't for him were in the loud minority.

It was just a version of what you see today. It was, this old country is divided between "us" and "them." And we've had these "us" and "them" elections. I've done my best to end it. But that's what you see -- "us" and them," "us" and "them." And a few months after that, the longest economic expansion in American history was gone.

I've been waiting for 35 years -- not as President, ever since I was a young man -- I have waited for 35 years for my country to be in a position to build a future of our dreams for our children. Now, that is fundamentally what this election is about. And when you hear the gun debate, the education debate, the tax versus pay down the debt and save Social Security and Medicare debate, you need to be asking yourself every single time: Which decision is more likely to allow us to come together as one America and to build the future of our dreams for our children?

Because when I was a kid, we thought all this was going on automatic. And then one day it came off, the wheels came off and it was gone. And for 35 years I have waited. I have worked as hard as I can for seven years to give you this chance. And it is in your hands. Don't let anybody you know vote in this election without asking themselves that question: How do we build the future of our dreams for our children?

Thank you. God bless you.

END 10:17 P.M. EST

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Chicago, Illinois)

For Immediate Release

March 13, 2000

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE DINNER

Private Residence
Lincolnwood, Illinois

9:45 P.M. CST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Mike, I loved that introduction, but it sounds suspiciously like a eulogy, you know?

I was in Cleveland today, before I came here, and I reminded the crowd there that the last time I had come to Cleveland was to say goodbye to former Representative Lou Stokes, who was retiring from the Congress. And we went to an elementary school in his district, where there were a lot of young AmeriCorps volunteers, like the ones who met me in Chicago tonight when I got off the plane. And they were serving in their communities, helping kids. They were teaching all these kids at this school to learn to read and kind of navigate their way in the world.

And I got down -- I started with the oldest kids and I got down to the six-year-olds, and I'm shaking hands with all these six-year-old kids. And this little kid looked way up at me and he said, are you really the President? And I said, yes, I am. He said, but you're not dead yet. And I realized that for him, Presidents were George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, and a part of the job description was you had to be deceased. And when people talk about me the way Mike did, I have to pinch myself and say, I'm still here. But I loved it.

I want to thank Mike and Pat for having us in their beautiful home. And I want to thank them; and, Jim, thank you for the work you did on this event tonight. And so many of you have been so good to me and to the Democratic Party. My friend Ed Rendell -- I asked him to take this little part-time job when he retired as Mayor of Philadelphia, and he's wearing himself out at it. And thank you, Senator Durbin, for being here. Yes, he's doing a great job. Give him a hand.

I want to thank Lou Weisbach and Joe Cari for the work they're doing to help our party. And thank you all for coming.

I know we're going to have a little time for questions when I finish, so I'll try to be brief. But I want to say a few things. First of all, I am profoundly grateful to the people of Chicago and the people of Illinois for the support they have given to me and Hillary and Al and Tipper Gore, starting in December of '91, when I began my campaign here in earnest; through the

Democratic primary in '92; through two great elections and all of Illinois's electoral votes. And I am very grateful.

Secondly, I want to thank you, those of you, a large number of you in this room, who have already helped my wife in her quest to join Dick Durbin in the U.S. Senate. I thank you for that.

Thirdly, I want to thank Mike Cherry for all those ties. That would be -- that's a good reason -- if I could run for a third term, I would, just to get four more years of ties from Mike Cherry. I was -- one wag that works in the White House asked me the other day, he said, what are you going to do when you're not President anymore and you'll have to start buying your own ties? You'll be bankrupt in no time, you know. He's spoiled me.

The second thing I want to say to you is that what Mike said about the progress that our country has made over the last seven years is very important to me. But it really only matters insofar as it's evidence of what we can and should do in the future. After all, that's what you hired me to do. And I ran for President because I thought Washington was off on the wrong track and they were just up there fighting with each other and divided among themselves, and the way people even talked about issues and politics and real life in Washington bore no relationship to what I had tried to do for many years as governor of my own state.

So I thank you for that. But the important thing is the future. Some of you heard me tell this story, but I used to go out to the state fair in Arkansas every year on a day I'd have Governor's Day and I'd just sit there and meet with whoever showed up. In 1990 -- 1989, late '89 -- I was trying to decide whether to run for a fifth term as governor in 1990. And this old boy in overalls showed up, about 70 years old, and he said, well, Bill, are you going to run again? And I said, "Well, I don't know. If I do, will you vote for me?" He said, "I guess so, I always have." And I said, "Well, aren't you sick of me after all these years?" And he said, "No, I'm not, but everybody else I know is. I said, "But don't you think I've done a good job?" He said, "Well, sure you have, but that's what we pay you to do." He said, "You collect a paycheck every two weeks."

It was a healthy little reminder that elections are always about tomorrow. And America is in the permanent business of tomorrow. That's why we're still around here after over 200 years.

And I have tried to give this country a relentless focus on the future and a way of getting there together. I believe everybody matters, everyone should have a chance. I believe everyone has a responsible role to play. I believe we all do better when

we help each other. Simple ideas, and the country is better off than it was seven years ago. And for that I'm grateful.

But we've got a lot of work to do this year. We've got a profoundly important vote on whether to approve China's entry to the World Trade Organization and acquire massive access to their markets, which we don't have now. We're trying to raise the minimum wage for workers

that are still working 40 hours a week and living on the edge of poverty. We're trying to get tax deductibility -- to middle class parents for the cost of college tuition.

We're trying to get seniors on Medicare the option of buying prescription drug coverage. When we know three out of five seniors in this country in spite of all our work, still can't afford the medicine they need. We're trying to get a tax break for people who take care of their elderly or disabled relatives at home, because it's such an expensive but lonely choice, and I think they need our help.

We're trying to modernize our schools by repairing and building thousands of them and making sure they're all hooked up to the Internet and giving all the troubled kids in this country access to after-school programs. We've got a big agenda. And it's very important that we continue to build on the work of the last seven years in this year, to keep moving, relentlessly forward.

And the last thing I'd like to say about all this is it's also very important that we make the right decisions in this election year. Several of you mentioned today the almost incredible attack that the leader of the NRA leveled on me, saying that I actually wanted a bunch of these kids to die so we'd have a reason to inconvenience gun owners. And, you know, I don't want to get into a big personal shouting match about a comment that is clearly ridiculous. What I want you to understand is, there will be a lot of shouting and name-calling and elbowing in this election; there always is. But what I want you to understand is that underneath all that shouting and name-calling, notwithstanding what Mayor Rendell said, I don't think it's necessary to believe that Governor Bush is a bad human being to believe he shouldn't be President. I don't believe it's necessary to believe that the Republicans in the House and Senate are bad people to believe that they shouldn't be in the majority.

And I have to tell you, my experience in politics -- I'm not running for everything, I'm just telling you, I've been in this business a long time. Most of the people that I have known in both parties worked harder than they got credit for, and were more honest than people believed they were, and did the best they could day in, day out.

This election is about people who honestly have different views about the way to the future. And what I hope you'll tell people is, it's not like we don't have a test here. We tested their way, and we tested our way. And now you've got a choice, because in the election of 2000, the Vice President says we ought to keep paying down the debt; save enough money to save Social Security and Medicare, so when the baby boomers retire they don't bankrupt their kids and their ability to raise their grandkids; and give the rest of it, after we invest in education and health care, to the taxpayers in a tax cut we can afford.

And Governor Bush says we ought to have one even bigger than the one I vetoed last year, which means we can't guarantee the security of Social Security and Medicare or invest in education or, if we try to, we're going to go back to running big deficits.

Now, we tried it there way and we tried it our way. And you have to decide whether you think it was better in '91 and '92, or it was better in '99 and 2000. But you don't have to think they're bad people. This is an honest difference of opinion.

We believe that it is not unbearable to ask legitimate hunters and sports people in this country to agree that all handguns ought to have child trigger locks; that the Brady background checks we do at gun shows ought to be done -- I mean, at gun stores ought to be done at gun shows and urban flea markets; that since we banned assault weapons we shouldn't let people get around it by

importing these big ammunition clips. And they disagree. It's an honest disagreement. I think we're right and they're wrong.

We've got a 25-year low in crime rate, 30-year low in the gun death rate, half a million felons, fugitives and stalkers haven't gotten handguns because we started doing these background checks. And we have to choose.

You know, I believe we ought to provide more health insurance for lower-income working people and their kids. I think it would be good for the hospitals, too, that are strapped for money. And we have a proposal on that. I believe we can grow the economy and improve the environment. And so does our Vice President. I think experience matters, and there's no question, even the people that don't agree with anything I've done and don't agree with anything he's done will admit that Al Gore has been the most influential Vice President in the history, that's had the biggest impact over the largest number of issues, in the history of the Republic. Now, that's a fact.

That's not something to debate. And I guess it's self-serving for me to say because the President has to okay that. But I never could figure out why Presidents would want Vice Presidents if they didn't want to put them to work. Never made any sense to me. And I could never figure out why anybody would want to be Vice President if they didn't want to get up and go to work every day. And fortunately, I found a fellow work-aholic who did a fabulous job.

You know, Dick Durbin -- I believe he did the right thing to try to protect our children from the dangers of tobacco. I think he did the right thing, and --

Now, I believe -- and I could go on and on and on. So what I want to say to you is, I hope that even though -- I think I've done a pretty good job of bringing this country together; not such a good job of bringing Washington together. That may be something beyond human powers.

But I hope that we Democrats this year will go out there and run an aggressive campaign -- not shy from debates, don't mind a fight -- but make it about the American people. You know, voters are not stupid. They know, when politicians are throwing off on each other, they're trying to help themselves; they're not interested in them. But when they're fighting about issues, they can relate to that, because that has to do with how the rest of us live.

And when people ask you why you came tonight, say, look, I came because the country's better off than it was seven years ago; they had some good ideas and they turned out to be right. I came because I support what we're trying to do this year. And I came because this is a big, big election.

And let me just close with this thought. I have spent a lot of time trying to build what I call one America, to bring people together across racial and ethnic and religious lines, fight against hate crimes and fight for the employment non-discrimination act, and to be a force for reconciling conflicts around the world.

And if God came to me tonight and said, well, I'm sorry, you can't finish your term. You've got to finish tomorrow, you're history. And I'm no genie, I'm not going to give you three wishes, but I'll give you one -- I would wish for America to be one nation. One united country, where people celebrated our differences, but revered our common humanity even more, because I don't think we'll be able to do good around the world unless we are good at home.

And that goes to our political differences as well. I had more fun in the State of the Union watching the Republicans and the Democrats when I told them that according to all the research, we were all genetically 99.9 percent the same. And I could tell they both were grievously discomfited by that statistic. But it's true.

I've now got this -- last year one of the great experiences I had was Neil Armstrong came to see me with two of his astronaut partners to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the moon landing. And he brought me this vacuum-packed moon rock, which I now have on the table right in front of the chairs in the Oval Office. You know when you all see the pictures of the Oval Office on television? There's two chairs and two couches, this big table.

Well, you notice the next time you see it on television, there's this vacuum-packed moon rock. And when people come in and they talk and they get real angry -- like, we had this conference on gun safety the other day, and they got all agitated because I was pushing them to do this bill -- and they get angry and mad, I stop everybody and I say, chill out. Look at that rock. You see that rock? That rock is 3.6 billion years old. We are all just passing through, and we need to do the best we can right now. I want this campaign to be vigorous and hard-fought; but it ought to be a happy time. But you ought to be dead serious about it.

The only other point I want to make is -- one that's kind of heavy on me now because a week ago yesterday I got to go to Selma and march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge for the 35th anniversary of Bloody Sunday, when John Lewis and Hosea Williams and others were beaten badly trying to march to Montgomery to campaign for voting rights.

As a southerner, it was one of the great moments of my life, with John Lewis, who's one of my true heroes. Thank you. But here's what I want to say to you about it. I've been thinking a lot about the '60s lately, because in February we had the longest economic expansion in history. Now, before we broke the record, the record was held by the decade of the '60s, 1961 through 1969. And I see a lot of young people here tonight. I was a high school senior in 1964, in the

middle of this vast expansion. And we thought the economy would have high growth, low unemployment, low inflation forever.

And when I graduated from high school, the country was getting over the grief of President Kennedy and honor that President Johnson was trying to pass all the civil rights legislation through Congress. And we thought all of our racial problems would be fixed by laws passed through Congress. And we thought we would win the Cold War against communism without having the country divided. That's what we thought was going to happen.

And we were all very -- not just the kids, like me, the grownups -- we just took it for granted, this is what was going to happen. A year later, Selma occurred. And whites and blacks died in the '60s, just 35 years ago, for the right to vote. A year later, '66, we had riots in the streets.

Then in 1968, when I was a senior in college, Robert Kennedy was killed two days before I graduated. Martin Luther King was killed two months before I graduated. Nine weeks before I graduated, Lyndon Johnson said he couldn't run for President again. The country was split right down the middle over the Vietnam War.

A few weeks later, Mr. Nixon was elected President on a divisive campaign, that he represented the silent majority, which meant the rest of us were in the loud minority. And it was a campaign of "us" against "them" -- were you an "us" or "them"? And we've been "us-ing" and "them-ing" ever since. And then a few weeks after that, this vaunted economic expansion came to an end, and it was over.

And what I want all of you to say -- a lot of you brought your children here tonight. Forget about me being President. As an American citizen, I have waited 35 years for my country to be in a position to build the future of our dreams for our children together -- 35 years. And I thought about it walking over that bridge and having John Lewis tell me what it was like when he finally realized he was going to get his brains beat out. And I thought about how easily things can change and how easily we can be lulled into a sense of complacency.

I've worked as hard as I could for seven years to turn this country around. I'm proud of what's happened. But, believe me, nothing has happened that can hold a candle to what we could do together now that we have good, basic conditions. What has happened is nothing compared to what we can do.

And that's what I want you to think about. America is always about tomorrow. And those of you who have been blessed enough in this life and this economy to be able to afford to come to this dinner tonight -- I'm glad, I like that. But you wouldn't be here, you'd be at somebody else's dinner if you didn't also think that the people that served your food ought to make a decent living, and ought to be able to have health care and their kids ought to be able to go to good schools, and that we're all going to do better if we go forward together. If you didn't believe that, you'd be at somebody else's dinner tonight.

So I'm telling you, I'm glad you're here. I thank you for helping our party. I thank you, those of you who have helped Hillary, those of you who have helped the Vice President. I thank you for all that. But the fight is still ahead of us. And don't forget this. America is always about tomorrow. And I watched it once before in my lifetime, it can get away from you before you know it. This is a solemn responsibility we have and an enormous chance. Let's make the most of it.

Thank you and God bless you.

END

10:05 P.M. CST

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Cleveland, Ohio)

For Immediate Release

March 13, 2000

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT DCCC LUNCHEON

Playhouse Square Center
Cleveland, Ohio

1:39 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you so much. I want to say first, how honored I am to be here with our leader, Dick Gephardt, and how much I look forward to his becoming the Speaker of the House. He is a truly remarkable human being and a really wonderful leader.

I want to thank Stephanie Tubbs Jones, for welcoming me here and for doing such a good job for you. I'm delighted to be here with Marcy Kaptur and Dennis Kucinich. And I'm glad to see Sherrod Brown up and around. I told him he looked like a Roman soldier in one of those 1960s extravaganza with that brace on.

I want to thank Congressman Jim Barcia for coming to Cleveland to be with us today; and Congressman Patrick Kennedy, who had to leave. And, Mayor White, thank you for making us feel so welcome. Mary Ellen O'Shaughnessy, thank you for running for Congress. I certainly do hope you win and I'm going to do what I can to help you. I'm glad to see you out here.

And I want to thank our Senate candidate, Ted Celeste, also for running in this race and for being here today; and my good friend, Lou Stokes. I told some people a story when I was coming out -- when I was here with Lou Stokes -- I wanted to come to Cleveland with Lou before he left the Congress. I was here in his district many times when he was in Congress, but the last time we visited an elementary school in this district where there was an AmeriCorps project and the kids were tutoring these grade school kids -- our young AmeriCorps people were.

And so we went to this assembly and I gave a little talk. And then I was shaking hands with all these six and seven-year-old kids. And I got to the very end of the line and this six-year-old looked at me and he said, are you really the President? So help me, this happened. I said, yes, I am. He said, but you're not dead yet. And it was clear to me that he had learned in school his Presidents were George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, and a part of the job description was that you had to be deceased.

There's been a day or two in Washington in the last seven years when I thought the kid might have been right. But I will always remember that.

I also am glad to be here today just to say a profound word of thanks to the people of Cleveland and the state of Ohio for being so good to me and to the Vice President, for giving us your electoral votes in 1992, and by a much wider margin in 1996. And I hope the trend continues in 2000.

I'm here primarily, as all of you know, to support these members of the House and the candidates, and the drive to restore a Democratic majority in the House. And I'm here for three reasons, basically. One, they deserve it because they took the tough decisions that turned this country around, and paid the price for it.

We had no votes from the other side when we passed the economic plan in 1993, which drove interest rates down, investment up, and got this economy going again. And they deserve it. They also put their lives on the line to vote for the Brady Bill and the assault weapons ban and the efforts to put 100,000 police on the streets, which has given us a 25-year low in crime and a 30-year low in the gun death rate in America. Half a million felons, fugitives and stalkers were denied weapons because of the Brady bill. So they have earned it.

They provided large margins for the Balanced Budget Act in 1997, and for every other piece of progressive legislation that has passed, from the family and medical leave law to increasing the earned income tax credit to tax relief for working families. And I could just go right on down the line. Achieving 90 percent of our children with basic childhood immunizations for the first time; cleaner air, cleaner water and a growing economy. So they've earned it.

Two, there are huge differences between the parties still on a lot of very fundamental issues. And Dick mentioned a few of them, but I just want to tick off three or four. Number one, if you want this economy to keep growing, we have to remember to dance with what brought us. We've got to keep paying down the debt; we've got to save Social Security and Medicare in a way that doesn't cause the baby boomers retirement to bankrupt our children; and we've got to save enough money to invest in education and health care.

We can still have a modest tax cut that will do an awful lot of good for a lot of people -- to help people pay for health care costs; to help people pay for child care costs; to help defer the cost of tuition for sending your kid to college; for doing a lot of other things. But we have got to first keep the economy strong. We've got a chance to get this country out of debt over the next 12 or 13 years for the first time since 1835. And if we do it, we'll have low interest rates for a generation and the highest economic growth we've ever had. We'll continue this expansion. The Democrats will support that. Our friends in the other party will support a tax cut so large that we'd either have to cut education, not save Social Security or Medicare, cut defense, or go back to running deficits. So it's a clear choice.

Second is education. Our agenda is clear. We want smaller classes, more teachers, better-trained teachers. We want to modernize and repair schools, which is profoundly important. We want to hook every classroom up to the Internet. We want high standards which support the kids -- more after-school and summer school programs. And we want more efforts to give people the excellence that they need.

And every single year we have to wait until the very end of the legislative session and have a huge fight to get our education agenda through. And we normally get about 70 percent of it, but only because all of us stay together. This will become more and more and more important.

Third, it is important to continue to give more people the chance to be a part of this economic prosperity who haven't done it yet. That's what our New Markets Initiative is all about, give you who can afford it the same incentives to invest in poor neighborhoods in Cleveland, in Indian reservations, in the Mississippi Delta, in South Texas and places like that that we now give you to invest in Latin America, Asia and Africa.

If we can't give the poor areas in America today the opportunity to have free enterprise, when will we ever get around to it? And I think that's very important.

The fourth thing I want to mention is health care. It's very important. We believe that people between the ages of 55 and 65 that lose their health insurance ought to be able to buy into Medicare and ought to be given a little health to do it. We believe that people who are taking care of aged parents or disabled family members ought to get a \$3,000 tax credit to help them do it. We believe that the Children's Health Insurance Program, which we passed in 1997, should also include the parents of those children. And if we did those things, 25 percent of the uninsured population in America would have health insurance, and the health care providers in this country, many of whom have difficulties, would have a lot more cash flowing to them to keep a healthy health care system.

These are just some of the issues. There are big differences. And Dick mentioned the final one I want to mention. I have been involved for way over 20 years now in law enforcement. The first elected job I ever had was as attorney general of my state. I have always believed that we could drive crime down and diminish racial and other tensions between the police and the community. I have always believed that we had to have both smart punishment and smart prevention. I have always believed that. And for seven years we have worked to put more police on the streets, to give our children something to say yes to as well as something to say no to, and to keep guns away from criminals and kids without undermining the legitimate interests of hunters and sports people.

Now, what I've tried to do -- since the Columbine tragedy in particular, and in the aftermath of the terrible deaths in the last couple of days -- is to say, okay, let's do some more things that make sense. Let's require child trigger locks on all new handguns that are sold. Let's require background checks at these gun shows and urban flea markets, as well as at gun stores. Let's hold parents who are flagrantly irresponsible -- or other adults, custodial adults -- and let 6-year-olds get guns, let's hold them responsible for what they do. And let's ban the importation of these large ammunition clips. We banned assault weapons in America, and then people get around it by importing them.

This is all very sensible. It doesn't affect anybody's hunting, doesn't affect any sports shooting. It's no big problem. And all the practical problems can be worked out.

Well, we had a lot of energy after Columbine for doing that. The Senate passed a strong bill, because Al Gore broke a tie vote. The House passed a much weaker bill. But then they were supposed to get together, pass a compromise, agree on provisions, and send it to me. Eight months later, they still haven't met, the committees haven't met. So I ask them to meet.

Now, in the aftermath of the terrible losses in Michigan and Tennessee -- little Kayla Rolland -- I thought we could have some more energy for doing this. And what happened? The NRA started running all these ads attacking me, personally -- which I didn't take personally. I, frankly, was honored by it. But they were -- and so I agreed to go on ABC, Sam Donaldson's program Sunday, and answer questions about this. And all I did was to say why I was for closing the assault weapons; why I was for banning these large-capacity ammunition clips, the import of them; why I was for closing the gun show loophole; why I was for child trigger locks; and why I thought adults who were knowing or reckless in letting little kids get a hold of guns ought to be held responsible.

And then the head of the NRA came on after me, and he said -- I want to read you what he said, just so you'll know that there is a difference here between the two parties, and America has to choose. He says that I am willing to accept a certain level of killings to further my political agenda, and Vice President Gore's.

"I believe -- I have come to believe that Clinton needs a certain level of violence in this country; he's willing to accept a certain level of killings to further his political agenda and his Vice President's, too."

Now, it's quite one thing to say that when you're on national television. It's another thing to look into the eyes of a parent who's lost a six-year-old and say that; to visit, as I did, the parents of the Columbine kids, or in Springfield, Oregon, or Jonesboro, Arkansas, and say that.

I want you to know that because I'm not trying to put you in a depressed mood. I'm trying to fire your energy for the coming combat. Maybe he really believes this. But if he does, we've got even more trouble than just a horrible political mistake. We've got to make up our mind as a country.

I'm glad the crime rate is at a 25-year low. I'm glad the gun death rate is at a 30-year low. I don't know a single living American that believes this country is safe enough. The NRA says we ought to prosecute gun crimes more. I agree with that, and we have. They're for holding adults accountable when they recklessly give kids access to guns -- good for them. But they're not for anything that is a preventive measure, that might require the slightest effort on the part of the people they propose to represent -- even if making that effort lets everybody else live in a safer America. They were against banning cop-killer bullets -- and there weren't any deer in the deer words wearing Kevlar vests.

So I regret this. And I'm not going to get in a shouting match about it, but I want you to know that there are big stakes here. So I want to help these people because they've earned it and

they've given you a good country to live in and a stronger America; because they're right on the issues.

And the third reason that I want to be for them is the point Dick made about wanting to run the House in a bipartisan manner and to set a good example. One of the reasons I ran for President is that I was completely turned off as a governor of what my predecessor called a small southern state; at the way that Washington was so much in the grip of name-calling and an attempt to systematically undermine other people personally. I thought it was wrong. And now that I've had some passing experience with it, I feel more strongly about it.

I'm not running for anything, but I'm telling you, this is a great country and you deserve a better climate than you have been getting in Washington, D.C. And you've got to have people who will stand up and say that. I've worked as hard as I could to build one America out here in the grass roots; to get people to come together across racial lines and religious lines and the other lines that divide us, and to be a force for that kind of harmony around the world.

But it is difficult for America to do that if what they see in the national political leadership is this sort of slash-and-burn -- well, the kind of stuff I just read you. And I think we can do better than that. And I know he'll be better than that. And these members will be better than that.

Look, we've got a lot of honest differences of opinion. And maybe they're right some times, and we're not always right. But I know one thing -- we are right to believe that elections ought to be fought about what's good for you and what's good for your life, and not whether we can decimate our adversaries. And that's the kind of Speaker Dick Gephardt will be.

So when people ask you why you came here today, say, well, they've done a good job, and they deserve our support. They've got better ideas for the future, and that's what matters. And not only that; I like the way they will run our nation's government. I will feel better when they're having arguments up there over policy instead of personalities, and when they're trying to put people first and actually get something done.

Those are three good reasons for you to be here today. And I hope you will share those with all your friends and neighbors in this area. If you do, you'll dramatically increase the chances of their success in November.

Thank you very much.

END 1:58 P.M. EST

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

March 9, 2000

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT DCCC NATIVE AMERICAN FUND LUNCH

Phoenix Park Hotel
Washington, D.C.

1:23 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all very much. Please be seated. I am delighted to be here today. It's wonderful to see many of you again, and some of you for the first time.

I want to thank Congressman Kennedy and Congressman Kildee for the work they have done to build the bridges of cooperation and mutual effort with the tribes of our country. I want to thank Dick Gephardt for being a truly outstanding leader of our party in the House of Representatives.

You know, I'm not on the ballot this year. Most days I'm okay with it. But when I vote, it will be, along with a lot of other Americans, whom I believe will make him the next Speaker of the House of Representatives. And it will be a good thing for America when he is, because he's an outstanding man.

I want to thank all the other members who have come here today to be with you to express their support: George Miller from California, a long time champion of tribal causes; Maxine Waters; Jim Maloney and Carolyn Maloney.

And I want to thank Nancy Keenan from Montana for running. I knew Nancy Keenan before she ever thought she'd be running for Congress, and way before anybody, including my mother, thought I'd ever be President. So I am delighted to see her here as a candidate. I can tell you, she is, I think, one of the most outstanding candidates we have anywhere in the United States. And she will profoundly enrich the United States Congress if she is elected, as I firmly expect her to be. And she's over there, wearing her "Jeanette Rankin for Congress" button to remind the people of her fellow state, her fellow Montanans, that it's been too long since a woman represented Montana to Congress.

I thank Bobby Whitefeather for the invocation; it was very moving.

Some of you have visited me in the Oval Office have seen that in front of -- there are basically three windows behind the President's desk. And the one directly behind my desk, I

have a table on which I keep military coins. And the one just to the right of that is filled with a drum, an Indian drum made by a tribe in the Southwest when we were debating the NAFTA treaty. And on the face of this drum, there is a Native American, a Native Canadian and a Native Mexican. And then I have in the drums the eagle feathers I've received from various tribal leaders around the country, and other gifts.

I now have a beautiful eagle feather headdress I received just a couple of weeks ago, and a pouch of tobacco which has great symbolic significance, as all of you know. I have a number of other things that I've collected from native peoples in other parts of the world to remind me that these challenges are present everywhere -- a necklace made for me by a Native Hawaiian; a baobab nut carved for me by an Australian Aboriginal.

But I have kept the Native American present in the Oval Office from the beginning of my presidency for over seven years now to remind me of my solemn obligation to respect the nation-to-nation relationship that I have done everything I could to nurture, to build up and to honor.

In my private office in the White House -- and every President's got a private office on the second floor of the White House, a different room -- I have things that mean a lot to me, personally. I have an old, old painting of Benjamin Franklin, to remind me of the importance of enterprise and effort and ingenuity -- in private, as well as public life. I have a picture of my friend, Yitzak Rabin, 10 days before he was killed. I have a picture of Robert Kennedy in Appalachia, to remind me of the obligations of the President to people who aren't so fortunate. And I have one of Edward Curtiss's magnificent pictures; this one of a piece named Long Fox. And I look at it every night to remind me of my continuing obligation to keep working until we get this relationship right, and until people who live in all of our Native American areas have a chance to live up to the fullest of their God-given abilities, as well.

So it's a great honor for me to be here today. In 1994, I invited all the tribal leaders to come to the White House to meet me and I learned it was the first time that has been done since James Monroe was President in 1822. And I was struck by the great good fortune that some tribes have found, and by how wisely some of the tribes were investing the earnings that they were making from gaming enterprises. And I was struck that other leaders, literally, people in their tribes took a collection to make sure they could afford the plane ticket. And it reminded me again how very much we still have to do.

Now, we have, I think, a lot of hope in America today, but we also have a lot of work to do. That's the message I tried to get out at the State of the Union address. One of the things that I've always loved about most of the wisest things I've read coming out of Native American tribes in every part of America is, there's this understanding of the fleeting nature of life and the intergenerational responsibilities we all have. And sometimes -- about the only time Americans ever really get in trouble with our politics in this great democracy is when we're too focused on just this minute.

Sometimes if we happen to be mad, as you know, when people are really angry and they have to make a decision, they're about -- they're more than 50 percent likely to do something wrong. So if you're too obsessed with just this minute and you're really, really mad, you might

make a mistake. And if you just look at this little slice of time, and you're really, really complacent, you will also certainly make a mistake, because change is constant in human existence and human affairs and the life and times of a nation. So that's why I have tried to argue to the Congress and to our country that now is the time to meet the big challenges that America still faces.

And now is the time to meet the big challenges that Native Americans still face. For all the economic prosperity of some tribes, on some reservations the unemployment rate is still 70 percent. A third of American Indians and Alaskan natives still live in poverty and without decent health care. Indians are the victims of twice as many violent crimes. More than 80 percent of the people in Indian country aren't yet connected to the Internet, something which can make a big difference, which is why I ordered some Christmas presents from the -- people at Pine Ridge over the Internet last Christmas, to try to emphasize this as an important thing. There are many people who have found ways to make a living because of the Internet, even though they're physically distant from the markets they must serve.

The dropout rate from high school of Native American children is still about one-third, and we've got it down; we got the graduation rate of the general population now up almost to 90 percent.

So we have to do something about this. That's why I wanted to highlight Indian country in my first New Markets tour. I want to give Americans who have made money in this economy the same incentives to invest in the underdeveloped areas in America that we give them to invest in the under-developed areas of Latin America or Africa or Asia -- not to encourage Americans to stay away from those places overseas, but to look first to the people here at home, who need work, who need education, who need technology, who need opportunity. And I think it's important.

I also asked in the State of the Union address for the largest budget increase, nearly \$1.2 billion, for new and existing programs to assist tribal nations, and many of you mentioned that. I think that's important. And I think it's important that we do have bipartisan support for this, for which I am very grateful. To increase economic opportunity, health care, education, law enforcement; to more than double last year's funding to replace and repair schools on reservations, and to address the growing digital divide; to improve roads and bridges, public safety and health care; increase funding for law enforcement officers; and a substantial increase to the Indian health services. All this is very, very important.

I want to make three points -- this is going to be a brief speech. Number one, I want you to help me pass the budget; it matters. And we do have some Republican support for it, which is good, and without it we can't pass it because we're still in the minority.

Number two, I want you to help me pass this New Markets Initiative. Ever since I've been President we have worked to try to empower the tribes of this country. As nearly as I can tell -- I've spent a lot of time, since I was a little boy, when I used to go to the Garland County Library in Arkansas, and I'd sit there for hours on end reading history of the Native American tribe, I tried to figure out what happened, and what went right and what went wrong. And

basically, I remember once I read this great biography of Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce. That was in grade school, I still remember. And he made that incredible statement, "From this day I will fight no more forever." It was a noble, powerful thing. I still remember it. I was eight or nine years old when I read it.

But you made that pledge and you got a bad deal. You gave up your land and your mineral rights and all this, and the government said that they would do certain things through the DIA to take care of you. And it's not good for people outside your own family and community to act like they're taking care of you. And besides that, usually people don't keep their word, because there's always something else they would rather spend the money on.

And so, I say to you, I want this budget to pass. And it's important. But our real goal ought to be the fundamental empowerment of the Native American tribes in this country as envisioned by the Constitution, required by the Supreme Court. That is what I have worked for since the day I got here. And I want you to help me get as much done in the days I have left remaining to get this nation-to-nation relationship right in a way that will allow you all to be lifted up. It is about money, but more than money.

The third thing I want to say is, because that's why we're here, this is a political event. The reason we don't fight in America, if you -- in a way, we all, all of us citizens promised that we will fight no more forever -- is that we have other ways of resolving our differences and pursuing our interests and manifesting our power.

But we have to show up at the ballot box to do it. And the truth is that while we will get some very good Republican support on this budget, and I'm grateful for that, and while there are some members of the other party in the Congress who have represented large numbers of you who have learned about this, and I'm grateful for them, our party has had a consistent, determined leadership position that goes from top to bottom throughout the entire United States Congress that we support the direction that you advocate. That's why you're here today. This is unprecedented. I am grateful for you being here.

But this is about far more than financial contributions and money. This is about whether people will be organized and energized to go out and vote, to recognize that when you lay down your weapons, you have to pick up your ballot; that this is not about anybody being taken care of, this is about the right kind of relationship. And it has to be one that focuses on empowerment.

I have been profoundly honored, more than any of you can ever imagine, to have had the opportunity to work with you, to learn what I have learned, to see what I have seen. And I hope I have made a difference. And I am determined to do everything I can, in every day I have left, especially with this New Markets Initiative, which does have good bipartisan support. But in the end, think about this: Only way we'll ever get this right is if all of you are determined to be heard, determined to vote, determined to speak, determined to educate, determined to be heard, determined to make real what was supposed to happen so long ago and didn't. That's why I think it is so important that you're here today. Your presence here today and your statement increases, dramatically the chances that, at last, we will get it right.

When I was down in Selma last weekend celebrating the 35th anniversary of the Civil Rights March, I was researching the things that various people had said trying to get ready for it. And I noticed something Martin Luther King said about the end of the whole legacy of slavery. He said, you know -- when, finally, African Americans are freed, the white people will be free too. And as a white southerner, I identified with that. And it's literally true for me. If that hadn't happened in the South, Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton never would have been elected President of the United States.

But America still labors under the burden of the terms that we struck with the Native American tribes so long ago, and the fact that the deal never worked out in a way that was fair to both sides, and honorable.

And in some ways, it was maybe doomed from the beginning to have problems. But now, we're trying to get it right, and we've made all this progress in the last few years. That's the importance of your being here today. I want you to feel good about this. And I want you to understand that the rest of us are getting a lot out of it.

This is the part of our historical legacy we want to be proud of, and it will never be right until we get it right. You just remember, every time you come to Washington, every time you lobby for something, every time you try to do something to empower your own people and to help them. You're doing something for the rest of us, too. Because this is a country that's supposed to be founded on equal opportunity, equal justice, mutual respect, everybody having a chance. The belief that we all do better when we help each other. That's what this is all about.

So I hope you think I have done something for you. But, believe me, I still remember the little boy I was in the library over 40 years ago. You've done a lot more for me, and I thank you. God bless you.

END 1:38 P.M. EST

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

March 9, 2000

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT CARNAHAN DINNER

Private Residence
Washington, D.C.

8:15 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Well, thank you very much. Let me begin by thanking Smith and Elizabeth for having us into this magnificent, beautiful place, for the Democrats again and specifically for Mel Carnahan; and for being such good friends and for being willing to be called Smith Barney and Bailey Smith and other names. I'm sure there's a reward for you in heaven for enduring those slings and arrows.

I want to thank the other senators who have come here to express their support for you. I see Senator Boxer back there, Senator Murray and Senator Cleland. I think Senator Harkin is here -- there he is. And Senator Wellstone and Senator Daschle were here, I don't know if they're still here or not. But this is quite an outstanding turnout of your prospective colleagues.

I also want all of you to know that I have a different take on this than everybody -- this race -- than everybody here who is not from Missouri; because Mel and Jean Carnahan have been friends of mine for a long time, Robin has worked with me and their children I've had a chance to know. I want you to know that you did a good thing tonight, contributing to his campaign -- because he was a great governor and because he's a good man and a good friend, and because he'll be a good senator.

I'm for him in part because when only my mother thought I could be elected President in 1991 -- and my wife, and she never lets me forget -- (laughter) -- Mel Carnahan was a lieutenant governor involved in a very difficult primary for governor. He had all he could say grace over, and he still endorsed me for President in the Missouri primary. It was a brave and good thing to do and I'll never forget it.

And I was the governor of Arkansas, Missouri is my neighbor, I was raised idolizing Harry Truman. When I was a young man here in the Senate I worked for Senator Fulbright and got to watch Stuart Simington up close. And I may be the only person here who's actually known Senator Ashcroft for more than 20 years, besides Mel. We served together as Attorney General and as governor and we always had a very cordial, personal relationship.

But I can tell you that he actually believes all those things that the Republicans said. And I say that not to make you laugh, but to say, you know, one of the things I don't like in a lot of

these campaigns is we get into all this name-calling and demonization; we act like, you know, what's really bad about our opponents is they're doing these bad things and they don't really believe them. That's not true about him.

We can laugh about this, but that's what they think about us; they think we're always playing to some crowd or another. And I think it's important to point out that most of us on both sides actually believe in what we're doing. And that's what makes the political system work, it's what gives the political system integrity. The main reason that I want to see campaign finance reform -- since I'm not a candidate for anything anymore -- and the main reason I really respect Smith, because, you know, if we have campaign finance reform it'll cost him a little less money, but then he'll have to open his home and have evenings where we actually debate the issues, instead of hustle you for money.

But the major reason we need to reform the campaign finance system, in my judgment, is that it's almost all the money goes to voter communication and it's wrong to have unequal levels of voter communication. The people need to hear a full debate on both sides and have a full ability to evaluate the personalities of candidates on all sides in order to make good decisions.

And the second main reason we need it is that the people in office and the people who want to get in office have to spend too much time raising money and they're exhausted all the time; and they don't have enough time to read and think and talk to other people.

I would say the third reason you need it is the reason all the press says, which is, you know, the corrupting influence of big money. The truth is that over 90 percent of the time -- way over 90 percent of the time -- the people in both parties in the Senate, and in the House, vote their convictions. And way over 90 percent of the time the people that give you money never ask you for anything, except to keep in touch with them and discuss the issues and talk about things and listen to them if they've got something on their minds.

Anyway, to get back to the point I was making, I know both these men. And I don't have to demonize John Ashcroft. When we were young men together we worked as Attorney General together, we worked as governor. I had a very cordial relationship with him. But he believes in how he's voted in the Senate, and I don't. And we should stop pretending that it doesn't make any difference who wins, or that it's all some game dominated by who gives money and all that. That's not true.

There are two great philosophical differences of opinion today, battling their way through Washington. They won in the elections of '94. We won when we beat the Contract on America. The people ratified our decision in '96. We got together briefly in the welfare reform bill and in the Balanced Budget Act of '97. Then our approach was ratified in the '98 election. And then we won again when I vetoed their huge tax bill in '99, which would have undermined our ability to save Social Security and Medicare, pay off the debt and keep investing in our future.

But we have now had -- we've got an ongoing debate here about what kind of country we're going to be, what our responsibilities to each other are and where we're going. Now, I know this man very well, Carnahan. I know him very well. We worked together for years. I

went to Missouri more than any other state when we were promoting welfare reform because he did the best job of any governor in America in requiring people who were able-bodied to get training and to go into the work place and getting big businesses to help him; but, also, caring about the welfare of poor people, to make sure that the children had health care and the people had a decent place to live; and the child care was there and the transportation was there. He did it right. And if he's in the Senate, he will do it right. This is a very important thing.

I can also tell you that for Democrats, because we believe in activist government, it's very important that we keep a certain number of innovative governors coming into the U.S. Senate all the time, because they understand how this stuff works. And it's important that you have people from our part of the country elected to the Senate, so that we can defend it when we have to take tough votes on sensible gun safety measures, for example.

It's not a hard vote for people who have no significant rural voters, no significant percentage for getting the NRA mailings all the time. It'll be a hard vote for him. And he'll take it and he'll do the right thing; but then he'll know how to defend it, which is very, very important.

So all these Senate races are very important this year. All these House races are important. But I want those of you who don't know Mel Carnahan to know you have an extraordinary opportunity here. I know this guy. He is a good man. He is a great friend. He was there with me when I was practically all alone and running fifth in the polls in New Hampshire. You want somebody that will stay hitched in the tough times and take a decision when it's not self-evidently the right thing to do.

He has been a fabulous governor, and you heard him reel off the issues. I just want you to know this is a huge deal. These judicial votes today were just one example. Senator Ashcroft voted to kill the African American State Supreme Court judge in Missouri, Ronnie White. And I believe did not fairly represent his position as a judge on criminal justice issues.

But there is an honest division here. You don't have to hate anybody to take the other one's part. But of all the races we've got going, where we're trying to elect a new person to the Senate, this guy has a unique ability to make a contribution to the Senate, to the policies and the politics of the Senate that no one else does.

You did a good thing in coming here. I hope you'll ask other people to give to his campaign. I think he's going to win, and all of us need to do whatever we can to help him.

Thank you very much.

END 8:25 P.M. EST

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Los Angeles, California)

For Immediate Release

March 4, 2000

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT DNC DINNER

Cafe des Artist

Los Angeles, California

10:50 P.M. PST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. I don't know about you, but I've been to one or two of these events in my life -- (laughter) -- and I had a wonderful time tonight. This is a marvelous restaurant. I've never been here before in all my years of traipsing around L.A. And I think we ought to give them a hand for making us feel so welcome.

I want to thank Mayor Rendell and our National Finance Chair Joel Hyatt, for coming out here with me. I especially want to thank Chuck and Elizabeth, and the Simons (phonetic), the Nathansons (phonetic), all the others who have worked so hard. I want to thank all the people from the entertainment community who came. Kenneth and Tracy, thank you for being here. I want to thank especially Gregory and Veronique Peck for being here. And all the rest of you.

Mac Davis, thank you. I'm sure you remember this, but your show was on in Washington about the time I became President the first time. And in the last year of her life, my beloved mother got to go, and she thought you were the best thing since sliced bread. And I will always be grateful to you for the joy you gave to my mother when she was very ill, and I thank you for that.

And, Olivia, I did my best not to sing along with you tonight. But when you started singing, I looked at Mark Nathanson -- I said, how many of her albums do you have? I mean, the old albums. I said, I've still got that one where she comes up out of the water. And I still look at it every now and then.

So I want to thank you not only for your work as an artist, but especially because of my family's experience, I thank you for your continued fight against cancer, for children, and for being a role model for women all over this country by going on. Thank you very much.

And I don't know what to say about Governor Gray Davis, except I think we ought to maybe change his first name to "Red Hot" after tonight. You know, it's okay for you to get a little funny, but if you get any better, your shtick won't work anymore. That was a pretty good

rap. But you're also -- I might add -- Hillary and I were talking about the California governor's race when it started, and we knew his primary opponents and liked them. But I had known Gray for years and years.

And I said, Hillary, what do you think is going to happen in that race? She said, oh, I think Gray Davis will win. And I said, why? She said, well, because he really wants to do the job and he has a really good idea of what he would do if he got there, and that will communicate itself over the course of the campaign and build a lot of confidence among the voters. And I think that pretty much says it, and I think the confidence of the voters has been well placed.

I'll try to make this fairly brief tonight, but I want you to think about why you came and what you'll say tomorrow if somebody asks you why you came. And I want to begin by telling you what I'm going to do tomorrow. About 4:00 a.m. tomorrow morning I'm going to get out of bed here in L.A., and at 5:00 a.m., I'm going to leave and I'm going to fly to Selma. And I'm going to walk across the Edmund Pettus Bridge at Selma on the 35th anniversary of the great march that led to the passing of the Voting Rights Act in America -- with Congressman John Lewis, my friend and brother who was there 35 years ago.

And for me, as a Southerner, it will be the experience of a lifetime to be able to go there as the President of my country, having lived through it as a young boy. I don't even have the words to say to you what it means to me. But I would like to remind you that people actually died to get the right to vote in my lifetime. It's a big deal.

And so we're going to have this millennial election this year, at a great time of prosperity and progress. And if I have had any role in all of that, I am profoundly grateful for the chance I've had to serve. This will be the first election just about in over 25 years that I haven't been on the ballot somewhere. Most days I'm okay about it. But I care a great deal about how it comes out.

And I have learned something about this mystical process of democracy. This is basically America's greatest job interview -- you're going to hire a President, you're going to hire senators, you're going to hire members of Congress, a few governors will get hired. And what I have learned is that the difference in this job interview and a lot of things is that in every election, the bosses -- the employers, you, the people -- you've got to define what the job is. And the decision in terms of what the election is about will determine who wins, assuming all the candidates what I always thought of as the basic threshold.

And the four that are left, they cross that threshold. That is, if you look at them for a couple of minutes, can you imagine them being President? And if the answer to that is no, you can spend \$500 million and campaign for 30 years and you'll still never get there.

But half of them have to say bad things about me because that's what their party requires of them, but the truth is, they all pass that threshold. They are people that have lived good lives; they've accomplished things; they have things they can say they've done as public servants that they're proud of; and they have honest differences. So how this comes out depends on what you think the election is about.

And so I want to begin by saying, tomorrow morning, I want you to think about this tomorrow and I want you to watch for it on the news. And I want you to see us all walking across that bridge and remember 35 years ago when people did it, they were risking their lives just to be able to vote. So you ought to do it, and you ought to take it seriously, and it matters what you think it's about.

Now, what I think it's about is, what are we going to do with this magic moment. I worked as hard as I could -- you remember what it was like here in California in '91 when I showed up here. How in the world did I carry this state? I would have never had a chance to carry this -- I was just the governor, as President Bush used to affectionately refer to me, as the governor of a small southern state. And I rather enjoyed being the governor of a small southern state, and I learned a few things about human nature and basic economics that have stood me in pretty good stead. But I worked hard to help you turn this country around.

And so what do you think we ought to do? That's the most important thing. What I believe with all my heart is that we have this opportunity that is also a big responsibility. People -- listen to the speeches these people are making in this election. They could have never even talked about this stuff eight years ago. Why? Because we can now make the future of our dreams for our children. We can be a systematic, consistent force for good and decent things around the world, for freedom, for democracy, for liberating millions of people from disease in Africa and Asia and throughout the world. We can do things.

You know, what I think it's about is keeping the economy going. Gray talked about how I changed the way people thought about Democrats. I'm passionately committed to social justice, but the best social program is still a decent job and being able to support your family, and letting poor people work their way into the middle class. And it matters.

So how can we keep the economy going? Should we pay the country out of debt for the first time since 1835? I think we should because it keeps interest rates low, investment high, more businesses being started and more people being hired, more wealth being spread more widely. I think we should.

Should we take this moment and for the first time maybe ever bring economic opportunity and enterprise to people in places that have been left behind? On the Indian reservations, the unemployment's as high as 70 percent. There are urban neighborhoods and rural areas in this country in the Mississippi Delta where I come from, or in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas where the unemployment rate is still two, three, four times the national average.

I want to give people like you the same incentives to invest there you have to invest in poor areas around the world, because if we can't bring those people economic opportunity now, we will never get around to it.

And I'm telling you, I grew up in a place like that. Intelligence is equally spread. There are people down there just as smart as anybody anywhere who can do anything anybody,

anywhere, can do, and who are dying to have a chance to do it and we need to bring economic opportunity to the places that have been left behind. That's what I think this election ought to be about.

For over 20 years now I have had a serious interest in education. And I can tell you that I now know something I didn't know over 20 years ago when I started. And when Hillary and I started going around to all the schools in our state, trying to figure out how to improve them, we didn't really know how to do it. We do now. I could take you to schools in the poorest, most dangerous neighborhoods in this country that are performing at a world-class level. We know how to do it.

But we have never figured out a way to systematically replicate educational excellence. One of the things that I promoted were these charter schools that California has been a leading proponent of. There was one when I became President; there are 2,000 today, and there are going to be 3,000 -- I hope -- before I leave office, because that was my goal for the country.

The main thing I want to say to you is, it's one thing to talk about it, and another to do it. But you don't have to be skeptical anymore. We can turn around failing schools and all kids can learn. You have to have high standards, you have to have accountability. I believe we should stop social promotion, but not until we can give every kid who needs it after-school programs, summer school programs and mentoring programs to make sure they can succeed.

Chicago stopped it, but they didn't make the kids failures. Instead they created a summer school that is now -- listen to this -- the 6th biggest school district in the United States of America -- the summer school of Chicago. Needless to say, as a peripheral benefit, the juvenile crime rate dropped like a rock because people were doing positive things.

I think everybody that wants to go to college ought to be able to go and stay four years. We gave a tax credit called the HOPE Scholarship that allows basically two years of community college to be made available universally in America. Now I want to allow tuition to be tax deductible. And if I don't pass it, the next President ought to, because we ought to make it possible for people to go four years. You've got to decide whether you think that's what this election is about.

We have a remarkable opportunity to help families balance their responsibilities to their children and at work: equal pay for women, increase in the minimum wage, more child care, doing something to lift all of our children out of poverty. I think that's what this election is all about.

I think we can grow the economy and improve the environment for the first time in history. The digital economy means you can get rich without burning up the air. And we now have cleaner air, cleaner water, we've set aside more land than any administration in history, except those of the two Roosevelts, in the continental United States. And the economy keeps getting better. And, yet, some people in Washington think my crusade against climate change is some dark conspiracy to wreck the American economy. You have to decide.

I think you ought to vote for somebody who is a committed environmentalist who also believes you can grow the economy. I think it's a big issue. You have to decide that.

These are just some of the issues that I think are important. But you have to decide what you think. I think it's a good thing that America has been a force for peace from the Middle East to Northern Ireland to Kosovo to Bosnia to the tribal wars in Africa. So I disagree, respectfully, with one of the Republican candidates who said we had a feckless foreign policy. I think when we sent a million people home who were run out of their homes just because they were Muslims in Kosovo, without losing a single American soldier in combat. That was not feckless, that was a moral, good, decent thing to do. But you have to decide whether you agree with it. You've got to decide.

And, you know, I do think a lot of my Vice President. And I didn't come here to make a campaign speech and the nominating process is not over, but you have to decide whether you believe this is a job. One of the reasons I wanted to go to Washington is that I thought Washington had become turned in on itself. I thought it was dominated by talk show mentality instead of a show up for work mentality.

I did an event for Senator Feinstein last night and I said, you know, even when Dianne gets mad at me I like her because she has this idea, this crazy idea that being in the Senate is a job. And that she's supposed to show up for work and say, here's what I intend to do, and then she goes out and does it. So as a first term senator, she passes the California Desert Protection Act, the assault weapons ban, and then we saved the redwoods. Why?

I'll tell you why, because she was more worried about passing those bills than her 15 seconds on the evening news or who was up or who was down or who was in or who was out. You realize that you can actually go crazy on your own initiative now. You can watch talk shows 24 hours a day, and you won't ever learn anything because to get on one you've got to take one position, and you can't ever say you might be wrong and you can't ever change your mind. And you've got to be talking real loud by the time the other person's making a good point so no one can hear it.

Now, this is true. Now, you watch these things. Now, if you ran your business that way, if you made movies that way, if you made records that way, if you ran your home that way, everybody would be bankrupt, the divorce rate would be 100 percent, and every kid would be a school dropout. I mean, I wanted to change that.

So you've got to decide whether -- you know, Gray makes fun about this charisma quotient business -- I think it's pretty charismatic when children learn more. Children are going to learn more because of what he did in the California legislature. That gets my blood going.

You know -- but you have to decide this. I just want to leave you with this thought, because people are going to ask you, why did you come here. And I'm thinking about it because of tomorrow. But in February, we celebrated the longest economic expansion in the history of the country, and the only one of anything like this duration with no war. And I was profoundly proud of that. But I was feeling sort of reflective, so I did a little research into the last longest

economic expansion, the one whose record we broke. And some of you in this audience, you're old enough to remember it. It was 1961 to 1969. Now, I want to tell you something about that expansion, how it came to end, and what happened. And I want you to think about it in terms of your responsibility in this election.

I graduated from high school in 1964. My President, John Kennedy, had been murdered. But our country rallied around President Johnson. He was overwhelmingly reelected, we passed a civil rights law, the next year we passed the Voting Rights Act. And when I finished high school, we were all happy as clams. We thought the following things were true. We thought this economy would go on forever; low unemployment, low inflation and high growth. We thought we would win the Cold War just in the ordinary course of things. And we thought we would solve our civil rights problems in the Congress and the courts, and we would become a just and decent society in the course of things.

So I finished high school. It wasn't too long that we had riots in Watts. It wasn't too long after that we had demonstrations in every city in America against the Vietnam War. By the time I graduated from college on June the 8th, 1968, it was -- everybody thought things were just going to be on automatic.

In 1968, I graduated from college; two days after, Robert Kennedy was killed; two months after, Martin Luther King was killed. Nine weeks after Lyndon Johnson, who won with the biggest majority in modern history, couldn't run for reelection. The country was split right down the middle over the Vietnam War, and we had an election for president that was determined on a slogan called "the silent majority." Do you remember that? And if you weren't in the silent majority, you were in the loud minority. That was me. And there was something wrong with the loud minority. It was like "us" and "them." And we've been having those us and them elections ever since. We've been "us" and "them"-ing ourselves to death.

And I tried to end that. But I haven't entirely succeeded. Not when these Jewish kids get shot going to their school in Los Angeles just because they're Jewish; or Matthew Shepard gets stretched out on a rack and killed just because he's gay. Or James Byrd gets dragged to death in Texas because he's black. Or a white supremacist in the middle of the country kills a Korean Christian coming out of a church, and the black former basketball coach at Northwestern, and he says he belongs to a church that doesn't believe in God but does believe in white supremacy. We haven't gotten rid of all that.

What I want to tell you is, I say this as a person, not a president. I have waited for 35 long years for my country to be in a place to build the future of our dreams again. And it's easier for us now, because we don't have the civil rights crisis at home. It's easier for us now because the Cold War is behind us. It's easier for us now because we're a nation of many, many nations growing more diverse every day, with California leading the way.

But the stakes are still very high. And we should be humbled, as well as happy, by this good fortune. And we should feel responsible, not entitled, as a result of this prosperity. I'm telling you, I lived through it before. It can go away in the flash of a moment. We should cherish this. And you should understand -- and I want you to think about it tomorrow when they

walk in Selma. People died for the right to vote. You've got to go vote, you've got to go get your friends to participate. But you've got to make the right decisions about what is this about.

And I'm telling you, we've got a second chance as a country in my lifetime. Most of us have gotten second chances as people. Most of us are darn grateful for it. That's the way we ought to feel as citizens. And if we do, everything will turn out just fine.

Thank you and God bless you.

END

12:18 A.M. PST

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Los Angeles, California)

For Immediate Release

March 4, 2000

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT DNC RECEPTION

Private Residence

Los Angeles, California

8:46 P.M. PST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Thank you, Neil. I want to begin by just telling you that from the moment I got out of the car, I realized that I was going to have a wonderful time this evening. I thank the Nazarians, the Farahniks, and the Kadishas, and all of you for being here.

Ray Davis was talking about this being the Governor's Mansion -- when I walked in here and looked up at the spiral staircase, I said, you know, I really do live in public housing, after all.

Seriously, let me say to all of you that I am profoundly honored to be here with you tonight because what our host said in his opening remarks about coming here from Iran with nothing, and how well he has done, and all of you have done, is a testament to the power of faith and family and work. Thank you for having the Rabbi here tonight. He even gave me a book to read tonight. I promised to read it as quickly as I can.

I ran for President because I felt that this country had the best system in the world if people were given the conditions and the tools in which their faith, their family, their work could flourish. And it has been a joy and an honor to serve. For whatever role I have played in our prosperity and our improving social progress, and our role in peace around the world, I am very grateful. But I want you to think tonight about also the role you can play.

There is no such thing as a time to completely rest -- maybe a day a week, but not a long time. And a country becomes great by always trying to do better. Sometimes in small steps, sometimes in large steps.

I believe some very basic, simple things. You said that the President is not royalty yet -- most of the people in the national political press certainly agree with that statement. But I came from the heartland of America. I was the first person in my family ever to graduate from college.

But I was taught to believe something as a child I still believe. And I look around here and I see the living embodiment.

I believe every person counts, that everyone should have a chance, that everyone has a responsible role to play in life and that we all do better when we help each other. I believe that freedom is the best system of government to allow the values that any of us have to flourish. And the fact that you can come here, preserve your community and be a part of the larger American community is stunning evidence that that is right.

I regret that so many of you had to leave your native land -- one of the most wonderful places in all of human history, one of the most important places culturally in all of human history. And I hope and pray that what we have seen in three elections now there means that there is a movement toward openness and freedom there, too, and that some day all of you will be able to go home to visit and have two homes, complete and open and free.

I have done my best to support that process in the limited way any American President can. I have also done my best to stand against the forces of religious and racial and ethnic and tribal hatred throughout the world, as you pointed out, from Northern Ireland to the Middle East to Africa, to the Balkans. I have tried to protect the right of every person in this country and to advance the right of every person in every country to practice their faith as they see fit. I have found more than ever that usually, when you do the right thing, it turns out to be the practically beneficial thing.

And so, as I think about this moment, here we are on the eve of another set of elections, it seems like only yesterday I first took the oath of office. And this is the first election in almost 30 years that I have not been involved in as a candidate. And on most days, I'm all right. But tonight, I speak to you not only as your President, but as a citizen. I believe that our obligation in this election is to show that we are grateful for our prosperity and we intend to do something with it. I believe our obligation in this election is to show that we are not arrogant about our progress, because we realize we'd have to find challenges here and around the world that we can still have an impact on, and we should shoulder those challenges and embrace them eagerly.

I believe that this election will be determined by what the people of this country decide the election is about. If they decide it's about who can offer the most immediate, short-term gratification, we'll be in trouble. If they decide that this has been a pretty good seven years because we've continued to take the long view, and we asked people to save a little so that we could get the country out of deficits, and now we're trying to get the country out of debt and, lo and behold, it turned out to be good social policy, because when interest rates dropped, more jobs were created and more people worked themselves into the middle class, and the welfare rolls were cut in half, and we were still able to double our investment in education -- so that's what I am concerned about, as your President and as a citizen.

You came here, some of you came here directly from Iran after a terrible upheaval. You know, therefore, that you can never take life's blessings for granted. I don't want the American

people to take life's blessings for granted. I want them to take this as an enormous opportunity to build a future of our dreams for all of the children of this country. If we do that, we'll be just fine.

Tomorrow, I'm going, at 5:00 a.m. in the morning, to Selma, Alabama, where, 35 years ago tomorrow, 600 brave Americans walked across a bridge for the right to vote. Some of them were killed for it. Many of them were brutalized for it. But because they walked across that bridge, this country is a better place.

What I want to say to you is, at the time that happened, most of you were not in this country then; most of you in this room weren't even born then. But I was just a young boy. I believed that my President was doing a great thing to give every American the right to vote, something they had been too long denied. I believed that my Congress was doing a great thing to guarantee the civil rights of all Americans. And I believed that we were in an economic period of opportunity that would go on forever.

You may know that last month we celebrated the longest economic expansion in the history of America. I'm proud of that. The last longest economic expansion in the history of America was the decade of the 1960s, and because we were not careful it got away from us. And instead of passing civil rights laws in Congress, we had riots in the streets. Instead of winning the Cold War by the power of our example and our values and our strong defenses, the country was torn apart over the war in Vietnam. Instead of electing people that we admired, we saw Senator Kennedy and Martin Luther King killed just before I graduated from college.

I say that not to depress anyone, but just to remind you of what you who are immigrants and who had to flee your country know: opportunities in life are not to be taken for granted; good fortune is not to be taken for granted. We are never to believe that we deserve everything we have. Instead, we are to ask ourselves what is our responsibility. And the greater our good fortune, the greater our responsibility. It is not only true for families and communities, it is true for a country.

This country has never had the chance it now has to literally build the future of our dreams and to be a force for peace and freedom throughout the world. For all of you who have helped to serve, I am very grateful. I worked as hard as I could to turn it around and to get things going in the right direction. And I'm not done yet. I get a little queasy when people start thanking me for doing a good job. I feel as if I'm hearing a eulogy and I pinch myself -- (laughter) -- and I feel perfectly alive and still very much in harness. But you do have to think to the future. You are having elections. You are planning for the future.

The reason I like this Governor and the reason my wife -- who wishes she could be here tonight -- told me, when most people thought he had no chance to win, she said, he'll win, because he's serious about the job and he has thought more about what he would do if he got it. And Vice President Gore and I, we've worked hard to be serious about the job, to do things that would advance the values that we share.

And so I say to you, I thank you for your help. We'll do our best to invest your contributions wisely. But I hope you will continue to talk to your friends and neighbors. If somebody asks you tomorrow or the next day, or the next day, why were you here tonight -- don't say, Father made me come. Tell them you came because you understand that this good fortune has to be nourished. You understand that it carries with it responsibilities; because you want every American to have the same chances that you have had; and because we all do better when we work together.

Thank you very much.

END

8:52 P.M. PST

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Palo Alto, California)

For Immediate Release

March 3, 2000

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT RECEPTION FOR THE DNC

Private Residence
San Francisco, California

10:29 P.M. PST

THE PRESIDENT: I got up this morning -- Thank you. Thank you. I want to -- you're looking here at a medical miracle. I got up this morning at 3:00 a.m. your time and I'm still going. I'm glad to be back with Susie and Mark, and I'm glad to be here with all of you.

The major thing I would like to do tonight is have a chance to visit with you, so I think I'll forego the speech and come around and just visit and we'll all talk about whatever you'd like to talk about.

And Mayor Rendell, thank you for being here. Let me say, I've had a great night tonight. I made two appearances for Senator Feinstein and the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee, and we had very good crowds, and we talked a lot about what's going on in America today. So maybe we can have some visits about it, and I look forward to it. Thank you very much for coming.

And give us some more music. I love that. Thank you.

END 10:30 P.M. PST

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Palo Alto, California)

For Immediate Release

March 3, 2000

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT DINNER FOR THE
DEMOCRATIC SENATORIAL CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE

Private Residence
San Francisco, California

9:40 P.M. PST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Well, first of all, I want to thank Sandy and Jean for having me back in this wonderful old home, which I love so much. And I thank the Staglins for cohosting this event, and for the wine -- which I could not resist tasting, even though I've been up since 3:00 a.m. your time. And I was glad Diane sort of gave you a little profile of my day, so that if I collapse while speaking, you will be generous enough to make a few exceptions for me.

And thank you, Eric, for the great time we had earlier in the day with the Aspen Institute over at Novell.

Tonight, I am here, and at the next stop I have to make, I'm trying to help the people who, unlike me, will be running for office in 2000. And I normally get a laugh when I tell people that sometimes I wonder why I'm doing this, I'm not running for anything anymore and, most days, it's okay with me.

But I'm here tonight because I want to see the work we've done for the last seven years and a couple of months continue. I'm here because I remember what California was like in 1991, when I came here. And I see what it's like today. But I also see underneath that the continuing challenges that Diane mentioned, and others -- but let's just take the two she talked about.

The challenge of the children in the schools and how it manifests itself, ultimately, in your needing 280,000 high-tech workers you can't get. And the challenge of the safety of our streets and our neighborhoods, our homes and our schools.

Let me say, I'd like to make a couple of points very briefly. With regard to education, I've been working on this stuff for over 20 years now, proudly. I was first elected governor -- in 1979 I became a governor. And I just had the governors to the White House -- it was my 20th governors' conference as both a governor and a President. I never got tired of being governor, either; I loved it.

But when we started out, I think it's fair to say that we didn't really know what it would take to turn these schools around. We don't have that as an excuse anymore. Diane talked to you about Chicago. In the Robert Taylor Homes Project, which is the poorest part of Chicago, there is an elementary school that has had all the things you talked about, where the district -- you heard her say the district has increased its scores by 12 and 14 percent. The poorest schools in two years have doubled their reading scores and tripled their math scores. And they were at a very low base, but the point is, that's quite astonishing.

And it is true that in Los Angeles -- it's not practical to just ban social promotion anywhere unless you can find the resources to give every child who needs it an after-school program and every child who needs it a summer school program. In Chicago, if they tell you -- if you fall within the social promotion standard and you can't be promoted, you do have the option of going to summer school. And you, in all probability, based on their experience, won't be held back if you go to summer school. The summer school in Chicago is now the sixth biggest school district in the United States of America -- the summer school.

Now, the point I want to make is that, simply -- or let's take -- Diane mentioned the charter schools -- when I became President, there was one charter school in all America in Minnesota. And we began to promote them, and we began to provide funds for states to start them. And now, there are about 2,000. And my goal was to have 3,000 in America by the end of this year; I think we're going to make it.

But we also know we're going to have 2 million teachers retire. What she said about paying the teachers more is absolutely right. There is a national board of professional teaching standards that certifies master teachers. My goal is to get one in every school building in America. If we could do that, we could change the culture of teaching; but they should be paid much more.

When I started the Net Day, the effort to hook all the schools up to the Internet, the Vice President and I were out here in '94, only 3 percent of our classrooms were hooked up to the Internet; today, 63 percent are. Eleven percent of our schools then, today 90 percent of our schools. But there are schools so old and decrepit they can't even be wired. And there are other schools -- I visited an elementary school in Florida that had, count them, 12 house trailers out behind it -- 12, not one or two, 12 -- full of kids.

That's why it's so important that you pass this Proposition 26. We need to do more at the national level, but you do, as well.

Now, what's all that got to do with this election season? Because we could talk about all this stuff until the cows come home. The important thing about every election is that it is a job interview. But the difference is that the people have to redefine the job at every election. So that, in a way, the person they select for the job depends upon how they define the job.

Whenever anyone comes to me and says, Mr. President, should I run for this, that or the other job, I say, why do you want it and what would you do? It's a job interview, that's what an election is. And when you get it, it's a job. I told the group that we were with earlier that one of

the reasons I'm a huge fan of Senator Feinstein is that she really thinks she has a job to do. You heard her up here talking. She is what they derisively refer to as a policy wonk in Washington -- as opposed to a talk show maven. And that's what I love about her. That's why the first -- you know, she's been in the Senate just a couple of years and she succeeded in passing that California desert protection legislation and saving the redwoods and passing the assault weapons ban -- because she works.

So the first thing I would like to suggest to you, the most important thing you can do as citizens this year is to figure out what you want to do with all this prosperity we have. What do you think the big challenges of America are? What do you think the big opportunities are? If somebody asked you tomorrow why you came here, are you going to say that, the sponsors made me; or, I owed it to them; or, I wanted to see this house; or, I want to see Clinton one more time before he rides off in the sunset? I mean, what reasons will you give? Think about this, this is very important.

Because the movement of democracy through time depends upon people taking these moments at election time to be heard. And the choice of the American people for President, for senator, for representative, for the governors, it depends upon what you think it's about. And the whole reason I ran for President in '91 and '92 is I thought that Washington had become clueless; it had become sort of turned in on itself, obsessed with who was up, who was down, who was in, who was out; you had to have a liberal position or a conservative position or a Republican position or a Democratic position -- never the twain will meet -- for goodness' sake, don't confuse me with new ideas and just give me my 15 seconds on the news at night.

And it might have been very satisfying for the people who played the political game inside the Beltway, but it wasn't working very well in California or Arkansas or any place else I could see. So we did some really dramatic things. We put arithmetic back into the budget. Somebody asked me what was the main economic contribution I made to America in this high-tech age. I said, I restored arithmetic to Washington.

But I think it's very important that you think about this. And what I would like you to at least think about saying to people, if they ask you tomorrow why you came, is that you care about what happens in this election, and you believe in some ways this election is more important than the two that preceded it because of our prosperity, and because our prosperity has given us the opportunity and the responsibility to define and build the future.

I mean, in '92, let's face it, folks, we just had to stop the ship from sinking. It took two or three years to quit baling out of the ship. And then to turn it around, to turn the ship of state around. But no one seriously thinks our country will -- so just take the two issues Diane talked about until we can give all of these kids a world-class education, have some standards, have some accountability, have adequate support. We know what works. We don't have an excuse anymore. It's just a question of whether we're going to do it.

No one seriously thinks we'll be what we ought to be as a nation until we're much, much safer. And we have to face the fact that a big -- and I have worked hard to put 100,000 police on the streets, I'm trying to put 50,000 more out there today in the high crime areas. Diane and I

had an announcement out here in California several years ago on zero tolerance for guns in schools. We spent fortunes of your money helping schools establish school safety programs.

But it is not rational that we continue to be in the grip of an ideology and a political interest group that says that you can't even put child trigger locks on guns; that you can't extend the background check law that applies if you go to buy a handgun in a gun show, to gun shows that occur on the weekends at these urban flea markets; that we can't have automatic, large capacity ammunition clips made in America, but we can import all the ones we want and hook them up to our guns; that you have to get a license that proves you can drive a car, but you don't have to get a license that proves you've got a clean background and you know how to use a gun. I mean, these things don't make sense -- not if you really want a safe country.

But the larger generic question is, what do you propose to do with our prosperity. And I'm as interested in this election as a citizen as I am a President, because I'll be a citizen after the next election. And I feel very privileged to have served, to have played a role in this, to have had something to do with establishing the conditions within which so many of you have built a new economy. You're trying to give Americans the tools to succeed in that new economy, to balance work and family.

We've at least pointed the Congress in the direction of what it would take to get the country out of debt, to save Social Security and Medicare for the baby boom generation so we don't bankrupt our kids and our grandkids, to grow the economy and improve the environment and meet the challenge of global warming, to maximize the impact of science and technology, to deal with the challenges I talked out at Eric's place today, the Aspen Institute, about how do you preserve privacy and security of certain records and still lead to entrepreneurial genius, the Internet -- all these big questions.

But I hope you will say, look, I'm more interested in politics than ever, because I think we have a special obligation to make the most of this prosperity and a special opportunity to do this. I mean, aren't you proud that you've got a senator that could go all the way to Chicago, look in a poor school just to see whether what works there might work for kids in California? I mean, see, that's what senators are supposed to do. Not scream at people at nine decibels and -- it's like a version of space aliens, some of these talk shows here.

I mean, that's what public service is all about. So I hope you will say that. It's obvious, I think, to you what I -- I believe our approach is good. I think saying the role of government is to provide the conditions and give people the tools to make the most of the new economy, to keep us moving forward, to help balance work and family, to get rid of poverty among children, to make this the safest big country in the world, to prove we can improve the economy and improve the environment, and indeed, that we have to, that the two will become more and more interdependent. You think I was right in Kosovo? You think I was right in Bosnia? What do you want the next President to do about that? What are our obligations to stand against racial and religious and ethnic and tribal hatred and slaughter?

Think I did the right thing to send helicopters to help those people clinging to life on those trees in Mozambique? If you do, that's all part of your world view, what you want America

to be like in the 21st century. And Diane talked about what I said before -- I won't try to replicate the speech I gave, but what moved the audience, and I will say it in less eloquent terms here, because I want you to think about this.

The thing that bothers me about this election, I listen to the Republicans debate, you know, and I think all four of the candidates that are left in this race crossed the real threshold, the first threshold, which is could you look at these people and imagine them being President? The answer to that is yes. I mean, these are people with some achievement and some real seriousness, and they live lives that are worthy, nearly as I can tell, you know, even the ones that say bad things about me because they have to, to get votes on the other side.

Okay, so they cross the threshold. Then the whole issue is your employment decision here is based on what you think this election is about. So, in theory, you could hire any of them.

And I'm telling you -- the point I tried to make earlier tonight, I'll just leave you with this -- is that I think this should be a time of urgency. I think it should be a time where the American people say the only way we can keep doing well is if we keep trying to do better, if we keep trying to expand the circle of opportunity, to deepen the meaning of freedom, to strengthen the bonds of our community. That's the only way we can keep doing well because the times are dynamic and because everyone who has lived any length of time knows that life can get away from you in a hurry.

And what I said that got the crowd's attention was that when we were celebrating this last month in February, the fact that this is now the longest economic expansion in our nation's history, I said, well, I want to go study the last longest expansion -- you know, the one whose record we broke. And it was the 1960s, 1961 through 1969.

I graduated from high school in '64. President Kennedy had been killed, the country was heartbroken. We united behind President Johnson. There was enormous optimism. We were passing civil rights bills right and left in the Congress. The Vietnam war was not yet dividing our people, and everyone assumed that the economy would go on forever -- high growth, low unemployment, low inflation. Everybody assumed we'd solve civil rights in the Congress and, of course, everybody assumed we'd prevail in the Cold War without dividing the country.

A year later, Watts. Two years later, demonstrations in every major city in the country. Four years later, I said when I graduated from college, it was two days after Bobby Kennedy was killed, two months after Martin Luther King was killed, nine weeks after Lyndon Johnson couldn't run for reelection.

Every city in the country was divided right down the middle over the Vietnam war. Richard Nixon got elected, and a few months later, as the candidate of the silent majority, which meant those of us that weren't for him were in the loud minority, it was the first election between us and them, a tactic that people have perfected since then -- dividing the electorate between us and them. No more we in American politics -- you, us and them. That was the salience of this whole Bob Jones University thing in the primaries. For those of us that are southerners, anyway, that went through that.

And what's happened? We've been living with that legacy ever since. And one of the reasons that I ran for President is I didn't like us-and-them politics. I didn't mind disagreeing with the Republicans, but I don't think I should have to demonize them, and I don't think I should ever shut my door to them. And if they've got a good idea, I don't think I ought to run away from it. And I believe we ought to build this country with anybody's new ideas, as long as you believe everybody counts, everybody should have a chance, everybody's got a role to play, we all do better when we help each other. That's what I think.

And the point I was trying to make today, I'll just make it to you -- I want you to think about this tonight. I'm telling you in 1964 when I graduated from high school, we thought we were on automatic. We thought that sucker was going to fly. And it came apart. The wheels came off in no time. And every one of you, if you've lived long enough, can remember a personal incident in your life or your business life when the wheels came off because you thought everything was going so well, nothing bad could happen.

This is a time for vigilance, for devotion, for patriotism in the best sense. I've waited for 35 years for this, and I've worked hard for seven years to give you the chance to finish building this bridge to tomorrow, building the future by dreams for our children. But just as a citizen, I think America got a second chance in my lifetime. That's what this election is about. That's why you want people like her in office, people that know it's a job, it's about ideas, it's about work, it's about people, it's about giving everybody a chance.

And if you define the election in the right way, with a sense of urgency, you will predetermine the winner. This election cycle -- you mark my words, from President through all the congressional races down to every other one, the winner will be determined by how the employers -- that's you, now -- define the job. So let's don't blow it.

Thank you.

END 10:00 P.M. PST

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Palo Alto, California)

For Immediate Release

March 3, 2000

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT DNC DINNER

Mark Hopkins InterContinental
San Francisco, California

7:50 P.M. PST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. The first thing I would like to say to you, after thank you for the warm welcome, is that this is not the first time I have come here to campaign for Senator Feinstein's re-election. In fact, I'm an old hand at this. I came here in '94 to campaign for Senator Feinstein's re-election and she stayed in Washington, I had to do it all by myself. So it's nice to be here with the evidence of my argument. I thank you very much.

I also want to thank Senator Barbara Boxer and Stu for being here; and Representative Barbara Lee, who is also off to a very fast start. The women from California in the Senate and the House have defied all of the preconceptions about how long it takes to become effective in the Congress. It could have something to do with that practical instinct of worrying more about what you're doing than where you're sitting. And they have really, really done a good job.

I thank the McCarthy's for chairing this event. And as you said, I can't remember anybody who ever got more done in her first term in the Senate than Diane Feinstein. And I want you to know, I'm here for many reasons -- and I'm not running for anything -- (laughter) -- and on most days I'm okay with it. But I care a great deal about not whether we're going to change, but how we're going to change and where we're going from here.

And one of the things that I always admired about Diane Feinstein and her husband, Dick -- who's been giving me training in how to be a Senate spouse -- Stu Boxer and Dick and I decided that we would start right now planning for next year, we're looking for a fourth -- (laughter) -- for golf, for tea, for whatever, we're open. Life's funny, isn't it? I mean, really, it's great.

Let me say, one of the things that I really admire, maybe the thing I admire most about Diane Feinstein is, first of all, she cares about a lot of things. How many conversations have we had about China, about Tibet, about different parts of the world; about saving the California Redwoods, which meant a lot to me, too; about setting aside the desert, now we have two national parks -- it's meant a lot to me, too; about taking on this gun issue, which I started to try to do with the Brady Bill concept as governor more than 16 years ago, and I backed off, to my

everlasting regret. When I became president, I promised myself as long as I was standing I would do it. And she's been a great ally. And I thank her for that.

But one thing that Diane does that sometimes politicians in both parties, especially when you get in Washington, and you get all caught up in this atmosphere, you know, and you spend all your time watching talk shows -- Do you realize that if you've got a halfway good cable selection, you don't ever have to watch anything but talk shows anymore? And do you realize to get on one, all you have to do is take a firm position and never change your mind, and it's better if you don't know anything. Actually, if you have any evidence, any background, any real policy knowledge, it's a terrific encumbrance because you're supposed to be shouting to great effect on these programs. Now, we're all laughing, but you know it's pretty close to the truth.

And Diane, you know, she's like me. We're still under the illusion that when you elect us to these things, they're actually jobs and we're supposed to get up and go to work every day, and like your job, it yields to effort. I mean, it really makes a difference if you pass a few days in the headlines to figure out what actually ought to be in the bill. And then if you actually pass a law, it can really change people's lives.

Now, you're laughing, but I'm telling you, you have no idea how hard it is to concentrate on your job if you live in Washington today. Barbara is nodding her head. Representative Lee is nodding her head. We live in this sort of constant culture of critiquing and carping and talking and who's up and who's down and who's in and who's out. And I wanted to be here tonight -- I'm proud to show up for somebody who still believes being a United States Senator is one of the most important jobs in the world, and with effort you can get results which change people's lives for the better. And that is the measure of public service and she fulfills it and --

Now, the second reason I'm here is to tell you I want you to go vote on Tuesday. I can't vote in this primary, but I hope you'll vote. You've got a big ballot. You'll have an opportunity to vote for things that will affect your future and to send a signal where California is. I hope you'll vote, as Diane said, for Proposition 26. Why? Because it'll build people up. Because we're going to have 2 million teachers retire in the next few years as our student bodies get larger. Because we've got already untold numbers of kids in schools that are either overcrowded or tumbling down. And because California has shown a commitment to turn around failing schools, to adopt charter schools, to try things that will work. And you need to get all the roadblocks out of your way to building your children's future.

And for me, I hope you'll vote against Proposition 22. I want to say -- I'll say more about this in a minute. Because however you stand on the question of gay marriage -- and I realize that San Francisco is different from the rest of California, is different from the rest of America. But that's not what is at stake here. This initiative will have no practical effect whatever. This is a solution in search of a problem that isn't there.

So people are being asked to vote on this to get everybody in a white heat and to divide people at a time when -- you know, look around, folks, we just had this little six year old girl killed in Michigan by a six year old boy who got a gun that was stolen, that he shouldn't have been able to get his hands on. That's a problem we ought to be working on.

You had a guy flip out in Western Pennsylvania and start shooting people at random, apparently out of his imagined grievance that had some racial basis. You had a guy in Los Angeles shoot at Jewish kids -- kids -- who were going to school, just because they were Jewish. And then he killed a Filipino postal worker just because he was a Filipino and he worked for the federal government, he had double satisfaction.

You had Matthew Shepard stretched out on a rack in Wyoming, you had James Byrd dragged to death in Texas. You had this guy who said he belonged to a church that didn't believe in God, but did believe in white supremacy, kill a Korean Christian walking out of his church; and the former basketball coach of Northwestern, an African American, last year. And I could go on and on.

We've had all the turmoil in New York City over this Diallo case. And I don't want -- as I said before, I don't pretend for a moment to second-guess the jury, I didn't sit there and listen to the evidence. But I know most people in America of all races believe that if it had been a young white man in a young, all-white neighborhood, it probably wouldn't have happened. That doesn't mean they were guilty under criminal law. And the Justice Department is looking into that, and the civil rights division, and that's the way to handle that.

But what it does mean is, there's this huge gulf out there, still, in too many places where people wonder if they can be treated fairly. So what I'm trying to do -- the reason I ran for president was that the country was in trouble, California was in real trouble back in '92, and Washington was dominated by sort of a talk show mentality. And the Congress, too, and in the White House. Did you get your 10 seconds on the news tonight? And the only way you could get it is if you were bombing the other side. And there was the liberal position and there was the conservative position, there was the Democrat position and there was a Republican position, and we were supposed to get in here and basically fight. And it didn't matter if anything ever got done.

And I thought to myself: you know, I've been a governor for 10 years. I thought: if I ran my state that way, we'd be in the ditch, if you ran your business that way you would be broke, and if we ran our homes that way, the divorce rate would be 100 percent. I mean, this is -- it was crazy. And what I want you to think about tonight is this. I thank Diane and others who have been so generous. So many of you said to me tonight kind things about my service for which I am grateful. But I want you to think about that tonight.

Elections are about the future. America has stayed young by thinking about tomorrow. And the point I want to make to you, if you like the fact that America is doing well, the only way we can continue to do well is to keep striving to do better, because the world is changing very rapidly, and because there are still unsolved problems and un-seized opportunities in this country. And that's what this election is about.

Diane mentioned a few of them. How are we going to keep the economy going? How are we going to bring economic opportunity to people in places that have been left behind -- the Mississippi Delta, where I come from; the Rio Grande Valley, where I was last week; the Pine

Ridge Indian Reservation and other reservations where unemployment runs as high as 70 percent. The inner-city neighborhoods in California and elsewhere where there is still an unemployment rate two, three, four times the national average. What are we going to do to reach them? The rest of us need that. If you want to keep doing well, you've got to try to do better.

Why? Because if you invest there, you get inflation-free growth that benefits everyone else. We're living in a time where, economically, doing the morally right thing happens to be good for you, too. Equal pay for equal work for women is morally right. It's good for the economy. Raising the minimum wage is good for the economy. Closing the digital divide is good for the economy.

I was out in Northern California a couple of months ago, and I was with some eBay executives who informed me that 20,000 Americans now make a living on eBay -- not working for eBay, trading on eBay. And they've done a profile of these people and, lo and behold, they found that a lot of them used to be on welfare.

So what happened? That little computer, when the digital divide was bridged, I believe intelligence is equally distributed across racial and income lines. And I grew up in one of the poorest places in America, and some of the smartest people I ever met, I had known by the time I was 10 years old. I've always felt that luck had something to do with the fact that I was standing here, even though all politicians want you to believe they were born in log cabins they built themselves.

But, anyway, consider this. What does it mean that 20,000 people are making a living on eBay and some of them used to be on welfare? It means if you bridge the digital divide, you collapse the distance not only between people who are physically isolated from markets and opportunities, but may be isolated from bank loans, isolated from education, isolated from other things. So it's a big question.

How are you going to educate all these kids? I mentioned Proposition 26. California is doing better, with the most diverse student body in the country. But I can tell you, we've got a lot to do. But we know what to do. I was laughing with some of my old governor friends the other day. We didn't always know what to do. Now we know how to turn failing schools around, it's just a question of whether we're prepared to invest the money and the time and the effort and the discipline and the accountability and give the support to the kids in trouble with after-school and summer school and mentoring and other programs to do what needs to be done. But we know what to do now.

How are you going to help people to balance work and family? Are we going to do more about child care or not? I could go on and on. How are we going to make efforts to continue to grow the economy and improve the environment? It is now no longer necessary to degrade the environment to grow the economy. This is a digital economy, we don't have to do that anymore.

And for those of you that are younger than me, I'll make you a prediction: within 20 years it will become clear, and probably within a decade, that the only way to improve the economy is

to continue to improve the environment. There is a trillion dollar market out there for people who are committed to new technologies to combat global warming.

Now, how are we going to make the most of the scientific technical revolution? What does it mean that we're going to sequence the human genome? What will it be like when we can cure all kinds of cancers when there are just a few cells forming, so there's no possibility of metastasis? What will it mean when we can block the defective genes that cause Alzheimer's or diabetes or Parkinson's? What will it mean. If you live to be 65 in America, your average life expectancy is already 82. Diane told me tonight that there were three people that she knew of that were 90 years old in this audience. Can you imagine, just 10 years ago you'd never go to a group like this, at this hour of the night, and find three people who were 90 years old. True. Ten years from now -- 10 years from now you will come to a meeting like this and there will be 25 people that are 90 years old.

Now, what does all this mean to us? What does it mean to say we're in a global economy, in a global society? What are our responsibilities for those poor people that are clinging for life on those trees in Mozambique tonight? Was I right or wrong to send the NATO planes, the American planes in so that the people could go home in Kosovo? These are big questions.

What are our obligations to the peace process in the Middle East, in Northern Ireland, in the tribal wars in Africa? What is it that binds us together as a people? That's what this election is about. You've got to think about these big things. Don't get into this sort of old, broken record kind of cheap slug mentality in this election. This is a big election. And it's not about what will get you 15 seconds on the evening news or what makes for a hard punch on a talk show.

This country is doing well because we have been animated by good ideas, new ideas rooted in basic values: opportunities for all, responsibility from all, a community of all Americans. It's working because we have -- our crowd does, in Washington -- some basic ideas. We think everybody is important, everyone matters. We think everybody ought to get a chance. We think everybody's got a role to play. We think we all do better when we help each other. That's what we believe.

Now, the results are pretty encouraging. But I am imploring you: do not be lulled into a false sense of confidence or think for a moment it does not matter whether you keep looking to tomorrow or whether you exert particular efforts to vote in the elections this year.

I want to close with a little story, which will betray my age. Over Thanksgiving I had the kids of friends of ours over -- Hillary and I had a couple friends and their kids come stay with us. And this one beautiful little girl looked up at me -- she was six years old -- and she said, how old are you, anyway? And I said, well, Mary, I'm 53. And she said, that's a lot.

And to those of you who are younger I will say -- and to those of you who are older, you know what I'm saying -- it is a lot, but it doesn't take long to live a life, no matter how long it is.

When we passed this milestone this month and we had the longest economic expansion in history, I went back and studied the last economic expansion in history. Do you know when the

record was that we broke? Nineteen sixty-one to 1969. Now, let me tell you a little something from my 53 years of life.

In 1964, I finished high school. Our country had been heartbroken by President Kennedy's assassination; but then we had rallied behind President Johnson and he was wildly popular. Because we had an economy we thought would go on forever, high growth, low inflation, low unemployment. We were passing civil rights bills right and left in the United States Congress. And most people believed we would actually solve the problems of race through the laws, through Congress and the courts.

The Vietnam war had not yet manifested itself in the way it later did. And most people believed that we would prevail in the Cold War, which we subsequently did, but most people thought we would do it without torment, turmoil and division.

So we were feeling pretty cool in the summer of 1964. We thought we'd have social justice, economic progress, and freedom and national security in the world -- and it would just happen. That's what we thought when I graduated from high school.

Not long after that, we had the Watts riots. Not long after that, the streets of every major city were filled with anti-war demonstrations. Within four years, when I graduated from college at Georgetown, it was two days after Robert Kennedy had been killed, two months after Martin Luther King had been killed, nine weeks after Lyndon Johnson said he wouldn't run for re-election.

Our country was split right down the middle over the Vietnam war, and in just a couple of months President Nixon would be elected President on the first of our campaigns of division. You may remember, he said he was representing the silent majority -- which meant the rest of us, I guess, were in the loud minority. But the message was clear: America is divided into two camps, us and them. And anybody who's not with us is them. And we've been us-ing and them-ing ever since in some way or another.

And ever since I ran in 1992, I have done my best to heal those breaches and to bring us together and to get us to let go of some of that stuff, that poison, that venom, that need we always seem to have to be divided one from another.

But I tell you this because when I was 18 in 1964, times were just about like they are now, and I thought it would all be fine. And in next to no time, all the wheels ran off, and by 1967 everything was divided. And within a few more months in 1968, within a few more months our expansion came to an end.

I say this to you not as your President, but as a citizen. I have waited for 35 years for my country to be in a position to build the future of our dreams for our children that all of us could be a part of, not just those of us that are wealthy enough to come here, but the people that were good enough to serve us tonight -- (applause) -- not just those of us that are doing great and have lived most of our lives, but those of us that are just beginning.

But I remember. Don't you be overconfident. Don't you be overcasual. You know, in life we're always lucky when we get a second chance, and most of us are lucky to have had more than one. But a country is indeed graced by God to get a second chance. I'm glad I helped to build America's second chance these last seven years. We've got it now. I've waited 35 years to see it.

That's why I'm for Diane Feinstein. That's why I'm traipsing all over the country trying to get people to think about this. And when this political debate goes on, don't you get caught in all this little stuff. You lift this country up, lift the people in your community up. Tell the people why they ought to vote, remind them of how we lost our last expansion. Think about all the possibilities for the future. Be big. Be big and remember: we all do better when we help each other, and the only way to keep doing well is to be committed to doing better.

Thank you, and God bless you.

END 8:15 P.M. (PST)

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35 Weekly Comp. Pres. Doc. 2643

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Public Papers of the Presidents

December 17, 1999**CITE:** 35 Weekly Comp. Pres. Doc. 2643**LENGTH:** 1949 words**HEADLINE:** Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Dinner**BODY:**

Thank you very much. Let me, first of all, say how profoundly grateful I am to be ending 7 years in the Presidency with the support of people like you, in the home of my great friends Terry and Dorothy, with allies like Patrick Kennedy and Dick Gephardt. This is a holiday season, and it's most important for us to express our gratitude. And I am grateful, and I want to say thank you.

I also will give you a gift -- a brief speech. [Laughter] All of you heard it before, anyway. [Laughter] That reminds me of a great moment in my political education. In the mideighties, Tina Turner came to Little Rock to give a concert; she was making her comeback. And she had just put out that "Private Dancer" album. And she had a saxophone player who was a weight lifter -- I don't know if you remember that -- the guy could bench press me on a cold day. [Laughter]

So I went to this concert, and I took a bunch of friends of mine. And I was sitting on the front row because the guy that ran the place knew I liked her. So she sings all her new songs, and she does real well, and the crowd goes crazy. And in the end, the band starts playing her very first hit, "Proud Mary." And she comes up to the microphone, and the crowd goes crazy, and she said, "You know, I've been singing this song for 25 years, but it gets better every time I do it." [Laughter] So maybe you'll put up with this speech one more time. [Laughter]

I wanted to say very briefly why I'm here. I'm not running for anything; I'm here because none of the things that our administration has been able to do for America would have been possible if it hadn't been for the support of the Democrats in the Congress. Whether in the majority, when we passed the economic plan of '93 without a single vote from the Republicans, when we passed the crime bill in '94 with just a few votes; or when we were in the minority in the Congress, but because they stuck with me -- if the Republicans didn't want me fixing them Christmas dinner, they had to make a deal with us and continue to move this country forward. None of it would have been possible without them.

I'm here because of what Dick Gephardt said. I'll say it in blunter terms. I think I owe him. We would never have lost the House of Representatives if they hadn't had to vote alone on an economic plan that revitalized this country. We'd never have the balanced budget; we'd never have the surplus; we'd never have the low interest rates and the high investment and the economic growth if we hadn't announced, and then they hadn't ratified by voting for, that economic plan in 1993. And they did not deserve to lose the House because of the deliberate misrepresentations about what was in the plan and what it would do to America that the people on the other side made before -- to be fair to the voters -- they could know one way or the other whether it was going to work; they weren't feeling it.

I'm here because they had the guts -- including a lot of Congressmen from rural areas -- to say to the NRA, "There's nothing wrong with the Brady bill. We ought to do background checks before we give people handguns; there's nothing wrong with a waiting period. We ought to get rid of these assault weapons; kids don't need them on urban streets so that country kids can take a .22 or a 12 gauge and go hunting. This is crazy."

But when they voted for it in '94 they had to go right into the teeth of an election with people telling them they'd voted to take their guns away, and before the voters could possibly know. You have no idea. I'm here because they were brave enough to take on with me the problem of trying to extend health insurance to all Americans, and then they had to put up with having our efforts mischaracterized. One member of the Democratic caucus told me the other day, he said, "You know, they said if I voted for the President's health care plan, it would lead to a big increase in uninsured Americans; and I voted for his plan, and sure enough, we had a big increase in uninsured Americans." [Laughter] So I think they got a raw deal after doing a great job for America.

But the third thing and by far the most important reason I'm here is, after January 20, 2001, I won't be President anymore, but I'll still be an American. And almost more than anybody else, because of the life I've lived, I have an informed opinion about what is necessary to make the most of the new century for these children here. And by far the most important reason to give the Democrats a majority; to give Jane Harman from California, who's here, her old seat back; and to restore them to the majority -- you'd be amazed how many Senate seats we can win. This Senate thing is shaping up pretty well. Because we're going to make some decisions in the next 5 years that will have a big impact on the next 50 years. And I want the members of my party, who have brought the country to where it is today from where it was 7 years ago, to be the leaders in making those decisions.

Now, little Mary was sitting here a minute ago. I've told this story a lot, but I've never fingered her before, so I'm going to finger her tonight. [Laughter] Terry and Dorothy and their kids came up and spent some time with us in the weekend after Thanksgiving. And we were all playing and having a big time. And little Mary looked up at me, and she said, "How old are you anyway?" [Laughter] And I said, "Well, I'm 53." And she said, "That's a lot." [Laughter] And I had to admit that it's a lot. [Laughter]

And I just want to echo something Dick Gephardt said. Never in my lifetime -- never, not once, ever -- has our country had the combination of economic prosperity, social progress, national self-confidence with the absence of an internal crisis or an external threat. We have, in other words, the best chance we have ever had -- maybe in our history, but certainly in my "that's-a-lot" 53 years -- to shape the future of our dreams for our kids.

Are we going to give all of them a world-class education, or not? Are we going to take the burden of the baby boomers' retirement off their shoulders by fixing Social Security and Medicare, or not? Are we going to help all these working people who aren't as fortunate as those of us who can be here tonight balance work and family so they can succeed at home raising their kids and succeed at work, or not? Are we going to prove that we can grow the economy and preserve the environment, or not? Are we going to prove that we can continue to integrate the world's economies and expand trade but put a more human face on it so that everybody is benefited, or not? Is America going to continue to lead the world for peace and freedom, or not?

I'll just give you one example, and I hope you agree with me. I'm really grateful that in 1999 the United States led our NATO Alliance and all of our European Allies in stopping cold the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo and letting over 800,000 people go home. I'm grateful for that.

The other day I heard one of the candidates, prominent candidates for President on the other side said, "Well, boy, if he got elected, they surely wouldn't be using American military resources to fool around in trivial, insignificant places." I think standing against ethnic cleansing, racial cleansing, religious cleansing, standing up for human rights is not trivial. I also think, to my Republican friends, well, it's good economics in the long run. It's morally right, but it happens to be good economics; because if you put the fire out when it starts to burn, before the house has burned down, you're way

ahead.

But these are big questions. And what I want you to do for the next year is not just to come to these parties where we're all preaching to the saved, but every one of you has a span of influence, a circle of friends, people that you meet in nonpolitical context. And you ought to tell them, first of all, that 7 years ago -- people actually don't remember; it's been so good so long people don't remember -- you've got to remind them that in 1992 we were facing economic distress, social decline, political division, and government was discredited. And now we've got the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years and the lowest welfare rolls in 32 years, the lowest poverty rates in 20 years and the lowest crime rate in 25 years, the lowest minority unemployment rate ever recorded, the lowest female unemployment rate in 40 years, the lowest single-parent household poverty rate in 46 years. And the air is cleaner; the water is cleaner; the food is safer, and we've put aside more land than any administrations in the history of America, except those of Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt. We've got 150,000 young people who have served our country in AmeriCorps, and 90 percent of our kids are immunized for the first time against serious illness, and over 2 million children now have gotten health insurance under our Children's Health Insurance Program. And that's just half the story -- and that we are asking the right questions, and we're the people to answer them for the future. They need to remember what it was like, what we've done, but, more important, what we think this election is about and why we're all running.

I'll tell you, I knew Dick Gephardt before I became President. He was my neighbor. He'd been to the Governor's Mansion to see me in 1988, when he was running for President. We were both less health conscious then -- remember, we sat and ate french fries from McDonald's. [Laughter] Dick spoke at this Democratic event where he was competing with an in-State basketball rivalry on television that night and he still did a good job. And he didn't eat, and so we sat in my big kitchen at the Governor's Mansion, and we stayed up half the night talking. He is a profoundly good human being.

The thing that I am so impressed about is that he continues to grow every year as a leader. You know, once you reach a certain age and you realize that physically you're not going to get any stronger and you've got to keep working just to keep up, it's easy to stop growing personally. It's easy to stop growing in your interpersonal skills, in your leadership skills, in what you know and what you think about. This guy just keeps on going and keeps on growing. He has been indefatigable. And I trust him with the future of this country.

So I want you all to think about this. And I want you to be able to go out, every one of you, and say, "Remember what it was like? Here is what they've done. Here is what they're going to do." Elections are determined by three things: the quality of the candidates; whether you've got enough money to be heard -- it's okay if the other guys have more, you just have to have enough; and, third, and most important, once those two baseline things are satisfied is what do the voters think the election is about, what is the subject of the election?

If the subject of the election is whether America is going to use this once-in-a-life-time chance to meet the big challenges of the future, we will win because you've given us the resources to be heard and he's found the candidates to run. And believe me, you owe it to these little kids in this room and people like them all across this country.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:35 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Terence and Dorothy McAuliffe and their daughter Mary; and former Representative Jane Harman. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

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Public Papers of the Presidents

December 13, 1999

CITE: 35 Weekly Comp. Pres. Doc. 2615

LENGTH: 233 words

HEADLINE: Telephone Remarks to a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Dinner in Houston, Texas

BODY:

Well, I'm glad I got to hear the last of B.A.'s speech, and let me say to all of you, I'm jealous of you. I wish I were there tonight. I had looked forward to being there very much, but I got quite sick with the winter flu, and I've got the Israelis and the Syrians coming in this week, and I have to be well for them. So the doctor said I couldn't get on the airplane.

So I wanted to call and just, first of all, thank all of you for honoring Lloyd and B.A. and for raising so much money for the Democrats in Texas. I think we're going to win the House back in the next election. And I'm doing everything I can to do my part.

But I also want to thank you because of the career and the public service of Lloyd Bentsen, that you honor tonight, because there is a reason we're trying to win the House back -- because of the direction we want the country to take in the new century. And everything he has done in his entire career embodies that.

So Lloyd, I miss you, and I love you. And I love you, B.A. I'm sorry I couldn't be there. I'm sick I missed Ann Richards' jokes. [Laughter] And you all owe me a raincheck, just like I owe you one.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:17 p.m. in the Residence at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Senator Lloyd Bentsen and his wife, B.A.; and former Gov. Ann Richards of Texas.

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Public Papers of the Presidents

December 11, 1999**CITE:** 35 Weekly Comp. Pres. Doc. 2598**LENGTH:** 2737 words**HEADLINE:** Remarks at a Reception for Representative Alcee Hastings in Fort Lauderdale, Florida**BODY:**

The President. Thank you very much. Whoa! You will have to forgive me, you can hear that I have a cold, and so I can't talk very loud. So if you talk, I can't talk. If you like my speech very much, I can't talk, because I can't get over all the cheers. But let me say to all of you, first of all, I want to thank the Keiser family and the leadership of this college for welcoming us here. I want to thank the president of the student body, Dean Samuels, who met me and gave me a gift from the students.

I believe in the audience we have, in addition to Representative Hastings, another candidate for Congress on our ticket in an adjacent district, State Representative Elaine Bloom. I think she's here, and there she is. I want you guys to help her.

Let me say to all of you, I have had a wonderful day in Florida. I don't think I ever had a bad day in Florida. This is the first time I've ever been in Florida in my life that I've been sick, and I had a good day in spite of it, because, this morning, I went up to Orlando to the Democratic State Convention. Now, I attended the Democratic State Convention in Florida in 1981 and in 1983 and in 1987, when I was just a Governor and a friend of your Governor's, and they were good enough to invite me. And I always had a big time, and Hillary had two brothers living down here then, and I was always looking for a reason to come and always learning about what was going on in Florida, and thinking, this is the beginning of what will happen in America.

So, anyway, 8 years ago this week -- 8 years ago -- in December of 1991 Hillary and I came down to the Florida Democratic Convention, which was holding the first election of the primary season, a straw poll. I was running fifth -- fifth -- in the country in the primaries at the time, but I got over 50 percent in the Florida Democratic straw poll. And it's been all uphill ever since, thanks to all of you, and I'm very grateful.

Now, I'm glad to be here tonight with Alcee Hastings, and I'll tell you why and ask you to help Elaine Bloom. Because I know the President sometimes gets the blame when things go wrong, but the President also gets the credit when things go right. And you heard Alcee talking about all those good things. I want to run over them again in a minute for you, but the good things that have happened here to the American people would not have happened had I not had the support of the Democrats in Congress, particularly those that were really strong-willed and outspoken, that had influenced the others, and Alcee Hastings is such a leader in the United States Congress.

And I want you to know that his influence extends beyond the Florida delegation, beyond the

Congressional Black Caucus, because he is an intelligent man; because he cares about the rest of the world; because he believes that you can care about the education of our children and saving Medicare and Social Security for our seniors and protecting the Florida environment, and still care about decency and humanity all around the world and the end of not only racism at home but racial and ethnic and religious hatred all around the world. He is one of the most exceptional people in the House of Representatives, and I want you to help him.

Now, I'm going to give a short speech so I don't lose my voice, but you're more likely to remember it. I've got 14 months left, and then you're going to have an election to chart America's course in a new millennium. Here's what I want to say to you about it.

We just passed the first budget of the 21st century. We got 100,000 teachers for smaller classes in the early grades. We got 50,000 more police to keep the crime rate coming down. We got 60,000 more housing vouchers to help poor people move from welfare to work. We've doubled the number of after-school programs to help kids stay in school and learning and out of trouble. We gave States for the first time help to help turn around or shut down schools that are failing our children, because all our schools can do better. We moved forward on the environment. We paid our dues to the U.N. We gave debt relief to the very poorest countries in the world. We are moving forward.

Then, there's a lot of stuff we didn't do that I want to next year -- the Patients' Bill of Rights, the minimum wage increase, the hate crimes legislation.

We had a great year in foreign policy. You know, I'm Irish -- we saw the completion of the Irish peace process this year, and I'm very happy about that. And just last week, I announced that -- earlier this week, a couple of days ago -- that next week Israel and Syria will resume their peace negotiations in Washington, DC, in a couple of days.

So we're going to keep working to the last hour of the last day. But I want you to step back a minute, because what happens in these congressional elections, whether Bill Nelson gets elected United States Senator from Florida, whether Elaine Bloom gets elected United States Representative from Florida, whether we hold the White House -- and I believe we will -- but it all depends on -- I wish I could be more whoop-de-do. I'm doing the best I can. It all depends on what the voters think the election is about.

Now, I want you to remember this. We put in our economic program in 1993, and the Vice President broke the tie in the Congress, and the Republicans said it would be a disaster. Now, we have 20 million jobs, the longest peacetime expansion in history, the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 32 years, the lowest poverty rates in 20 years, the lowest African-American and Hispanic unemployment rates ever recorded, the lowest female unemployment rate in 40 years. Now, that's the first thing.

The second thing I want to say is, we have the lowest crime rate in 25 years; 90 percent of our kids immunized against serious childhood diseases for the first time in history; over 2 million more kids covered under the Children's Health Insurance Program. We've cleaned up 3 times as many toxic waste dumps as the predecessor administrations, both of them. And we now have the lowest output of waste that is terribly damaging to the environment that we've had in 20 years. Twenty years ago we had 50 million fewer people.

We've had 150,000 young people serve this country in AmeriCorps, 7 million young people take advantage of the HOPE scholarship to go on to community college and to other college education. We've had 10 million people get the benefit of the minimum wage, and over 20 million get the benefit of the family and medical leave law. This is a better, stronger, more together country than it was 7 years ago.

But what I want to say -- I'll stay the course. I want you to stay the course. And then what I want you to do -- wait, wait -- what I want you to do is go out here and find your fellow Floridians who may not be Democrats, who may not be voters, and not only do I want you to stay the course; I want you to teach the course.

You know, we had an idea that we ought to have a country with opportunity for all, responsibility from all, and a community of all Americans. And almost everything that we fought for we were opposed by the leaders of the other party. And I've been willing to work with them. And when we've worked with them, I've always given them credit for what they've done. But I think we have proved that we're a stronger country when we go forward together across racial lines.

So what are they trying to give you in Florida? Mr. Connerly wants to come here and try to abolish affirmative action when we've proved that going forward with affirmative action in the right way strengthens the economy and the society and makes us all better off. So I want you to think about that.

So the first thing I want you to tell folks is it's not like we don't have evidence here. It's not like there's no evidence about which approach works. I'll never forget how the NRA went after Congressmen in States like Florida after we passed the Brady bill and I signed it, because my predecessor vetoed it. And they told the awfulest stories about how people are going to lose their guns. Well, 470,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers did lose their handguns, but not a single Florida hunter missed a day of hunting season because of it. They did not tell the truth about that. This is a safer country because of it.

Okay, so here's the issue. What's the election about? What's the election about? In my lifetime -- in my lifetime -- there has never been this much economic prosperity, social progress, national self-confidence, with the absence of a domestic crisis or a foreign threat. It has never happened. So what's the election about? It's about what we're going to do with that.

What do we propose to do with our prosperity? The Republicans gave us their answer in the last session of Congress when they passed a tax cut so large it would have prohibited us from saving Social Security and Medicare and prohibited us from ever paying down the national debt.

But when I vetoed it, the American people supported me, and Alcee supported me, and the Democrats in Congress supported me -- because they said, "No, no, no, that's not what we're going to do with our prosperity. What we're going to do with our prosperity is ask ourselves an honest question: What do we want America to look like in 10, 20, and 30 years? How are we going to build the America of our dreams for our children? What are the big challenges out there?" And let me just tell you what I think they are.

Number one, you've got to deal with the aging of America. You've got to save Social Security and Medicare for the baby boom generation, add a prescription drug benefit, let people over 55 buy into Medicare if they don't have health insurance. We've got to do this. We have got to do this. I'm telling you, every baby boomer I know is plagued by the thought that our retirement will burden our children and their ability to raise our grandchildren. Now, we've got the money now, folks, to take the Social Security Trust Fund out beyond the life of the baby boom generation, and we ought to do it.

Look at these young people. Look at the young people that are here, 18 to 23 or 24, the young people in that age group. Do you really think when they get old enough to have their children and they start raising families that they should be burdened in what they can do for their children because they're having to take care of us, their parents, when there is no earthly excuse for it?

All we have to do is take the savings that we get from paying down the debt with the Social Security surplus and put those interest savings into the Trust Fund, and it will take it out beyond the life of the baby boom generation -- no controversy, no heat, no nothing. We ought to do it, and we ought to do it next year.

The second thing we ought to do is to deal with the children of America. Ironically, we're growing at both ends, in our elderly and in our children. We've got the largest number of school children in our schools in our history. They are the most racially, ethnically, and religiously diverse school children in our history, and every one of them deserves a world-class education, and we ought to give it to them.

The third thing we ought to do is take a different approach to crime. Now, you all clapped when I said we had the lowest crime rate in 25 years; we've got the lowest murder rate in 31 years. Does anyone here think the crime rate is low enough?

Audience members. No!

The President. No. Now, when I became President, nobody thought we could get the crime rate down. They thought the crime rate went in one direction only -- up. Okay, now we know it goes down. I propose that in the year 2000 we have a decent goal. We say we're going to keep working till America is the safest big country in the world.

I believe there are lots of other things I could say -- and I'm trying to save the Everglades, you know -- and I just want to say this one thing about the environment. The young people here, if they're going to have the kind of America they deserve, are going to have to accept the fact that you can improve the environment and grow the economy at the same time. And as soon as we -- look, since I became President, the air's cleaner; the water's cleaner. We've set aside more land than any administration except those of Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt. We've cleaned up all these dumps. Let me tell you something. We better start thinking that we should be improving the environment as we grow the economy, not destroying the environment as we grow the economy.

But the last thing I want to say is this. I'll just give you one other. You ought to go home tonight and ask yourself what you think the big challenges are. Go home and make your own list. But I'll tell you, if somebody said to me tonight, "Well, Mr. President, you don't have 14 more months; you've got to leave tomorrow. But I'm the genie, and I'll give you one wish. You can do anything for America you want, but only one." What I would choose is for us to be one America, across all the lines that divide us, for two reasons. First of all, we'll never be what we ought to be as long as we still have hate crimes -- where some guy in the Midwest that belongs to a church he says doesn't believe in God but believes in white supremacy, goes out and kills in rapid succession an African-American former college basketball coach, and then kills a Korean Christian walking out of his church. An angry guy out in Los Angeles shoots a bunch of Jewish kids going to a church school, a synagogue school, and then goes out and murders a Filipino postman -- and the guy thought he had a two-fer. He had an Asian and somebody who worked for the Federal Government. James Byrd gets dragged to death in Texas. Matthew Shepard gets put on a rack.

Yesterday, all over America, there were gripping pictures of these two young soldiers, one 21, one 18. The 21-year-old, a gay soldier who the 18-year-old beat to death with a baseball bat. And I thought to myself, looking at these two young boys -- keep in mind, I look at them in a certain way not only because they're young enough to be my own sons, but because I have a lot of your sons under my command. Those young men, when they put on that uniform -- both of them -- when they put on that uniform, they basically took an oath that says, "If Bill Clinton tells me to, I will go halfway around the world to fight and die." That's what it means. Let's not kid. That's what it means.

So here are these two kids, they make the same pledge, they've got their whole lives before them -- one of them is dead and the other one's life is ruined. And frankly, I ached for both of them. And the young boy that murdered the other one because he was gay, he wasn't born feeling that way; somebody taught him to do that. So that's the last thing I want to tell you.

You guys are smart. That's why I always say what government ought to do is create the conditions -- get rid of the debt; give people the same incentives to invest in poor areas we give them to invest in poor areas in Latin America and Asia and Africa; give people empowerment, and they will do the job. But, first and foremost, we must be one America.

That is also the way we can have the biggest influence in resolving the crisis in the Middle East, in Kosovo, in Bosnia, the tribal warfare in Africa, you name it. This old world is still burdened down with people that can't get along without hating somebody who is different from them. And we all know better. We all know better.

So I tell you, if you go out there and you make the subject of the election the record of the last 7 years and what are we going to do with our prosperity -- and the answer is, we're going to deal with the aging of America, the children of America, make America the safest big country in the world, put America out of debt for the first time since 1835, bring genuine economic opportunity to the poorest people in the country, and be one America -- we will come home next time, too.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:50 p.m. in the auditorium at Keiser College. In his remarks, he referred to Ward Connerly, chairman, California Civil Rights Initiative.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

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Public Papers of the Presidents

December 9, 1999**CITE:** 35 Weekly Comp. Pres. Doc. 2559**LENGTH:** 3733 words**HEADLINE:** Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner**BODY:**

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. It's been a long, but a wonderful, night. I am delighted to see you all. The most important thing I can say is, thank you. I thank Joe Andrew for his increasingly energetic leadership. [Laughter]

I thank Ed Rendell. For those of you who don't know him, you will get to know him. Philadelphia had lost jobs for 30 years before Ed Rendell became mayor, and now they're gaining jobs rapidly. They had lost population; they had had a crime rate going up -- everything. Do you remember how the Vice President used to say in the '92 campaign, everything that should be up is down, everything that should be down is up? That was Philadelphia times five. Now everything that should be up is up, thanks to Ed Rendell, and he's going to keep our party up, as well.

I want to thank Lorretta Bowen and John Cooke and John Merrigan and Carol Pensky for this dinner tonight. It was wonderful. And I want to thank my friend Walter Shorenstein. You have already honored him, and you heard the Vice President talk about the big achievements in his life. I think it is remarkable: He reflects, first, a characteristic I've seen in so many of you. You've been so phenomenally generous. Many of you in this room tonight could be making more money in a short run under the other party's policies. You know it as well as I do. And you came here because you believe that we all ought to go forward together and that we ought to keep our eye on the long run, social justice and the long-term strength of America. And Walter has stood for that all of his life.

He is also an uncommonly decent person. I'll just tell you two things. First of all, not very long ago I was out in Northern California, and I had a day to kill, and I hadn't seen my little girl in a long time. And it's inconvenient for the President to go any place quietly. Walter had a place south of San Francisco; he let me go there and spend the day with my daughter. That meant more to me than anything he could do for me. I'll never forget it as long as I live.

And I'll tell you something else. You heard the Vice President say he helped to save the Giants. I was talking to Walter one night and I said, "You know, Walter, I think the greatest baseball player that ever lived was Willie Mays." Next time I go to dinner at Walter's house, Willie Mays is there. [Laughter] And I might add, number 8 on ESPN's list of the 50 Greatest Athletes of the 20th century. Almost high enough.

So this guy has never lost his sense of personal things, which I think matter most to us all when it's all said and done. And I thank you for honoring him. I hope that all of you feel honored, to some

extent, through him. Sometimes I think we take and take and take, and we don't take enough time to give and to say thank you. And I'm honored that we could do this for Walter and, through him, for all of you who stick with us through thick and thin.

I also want to say a word about the Vice President and Mrs. Gore. I have spent a lot of time studying the history of our country and the institutions that have made it work. When I became a candidate for President, Hillary and I talked about a lot of things. I said, "I'll tell you one thing I'm going to do. If I win this nomination, I'm going to appoint somebody to be my running mate that I would feel good if I dropped dead, if something, God forbid, happened to me, that I am convinced would be a great President. And in the meanwhile, I'm going to make it a real job."

You know that when Harry Truman became President, he did not even know about the atomic bomb? A lot of people don't know that. Franklin Roosevelt had a lot of great qualities, but we had lost a lot of Presidents up to then, and they were still just picking Vice Presidents for the most sort of shallow political reasons. Thank God, Harry Truman turned out to be a great man and a great President.

And then it got a little better. When John Kennedy picked Lyndon Johnson, he was ready for the job. When Dwight Eisenhower picked Richard Nixon, he had broader responsibilities. And then when Jimmy Carter picked Walter Mondale, he qualitatively increased the role of the Vice President. And to his credit, President Reagan followed his lead in giving more responsibility to then Vice President Bush. But I want every person in this room to know that Al Gore has had, 2, 3, 4, 5, times as much responsibilities as any person who has ever held this office and he has done a superb job discharging every single one of them.

You know, we've had a lot of fun together over the years, and we kid each other mercilessly. When Arkansas plays Tennessee, he usually wins; sometimes I do. And he always says, "You know, the difference between you and me," he said to me, "is you don't have a vote in Congress, and I do." -- [Laughter] -- "At least, every now and then I do. And whenever I vote, we win." [Laughter]

Well, we're all celebrating this economy, but he cast the tie-breaking vote in the Senate to make it a reality. And when we were fighting to pass commonsense gun legislation in the Senate after Columbine, and all we wanted to do was to apply the Brady background checks to the gun shows and the urban flea markets, require child trigger locks on the guns, he cast the tie-breaking vote in the Senate to pass it.

One day we were sitting around in one of our weekly lunches -- which I miss now, as I confessed in my press conference -- he said, "You know, we've got to do something about getting more computers into the schools, and not just a computer for their educational programs. We've got to hook them up to the Internet, and it will revolutionize educational opportunities. But if we don't do anything about it, only wealthier schools will get it."

So he came up with this idea that the FCC, now that we're revolutionizing telecommunications -- something else he was the lead on our administration when we rewrote the telecommunications law for the first time in 60 years, or he created 300,000 new high-wage jobs in America -- he said, "We've got to give a discount to the poor schools, to the hospitals, to the libraries, so they can afford to hook on the Internet. And we need to try to get the business community in. We've got this whole private sector group to come help us get the connections done."

Now, when we started this in 1994 -- it was his idea -- 3 percent of the classrooms and 14 percent of the schools were connected; most schools just had one connection in the library or something -- 1994, 3 percent of the classrooms, 14 percent of the schools. Today, thanks to him, over 50 percent of the classrooms in over 80 percent of the schools in America have an Internet connection. And I could go through what he's done in helping us to reduce the nuclear threat and dealing with a whole wide range of foreign challenges and the environment. We set aside 40 million roadless acres in our national forests not very long ago. This administration has now protected more land than any administration in the history of the United States, except those of Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt, thanks to his leadership on the environment.

So what I want you to know is, he has been a good and faithful servant of the people of this country. And he knows more than any person who has ever held that job. And he's had more experience than anybody who's run in my lifetime that is relevant to this work.

The other thing I would like to say is, his wife has given us, Hillary and me, personally, but our administration and this country, many gifts. I want to thank them for the family conference that they run every year in Tennessee, that many of you have been a part of. What they taught us about family leave and child care, health care for children, many other issues. And I want to thank her for forcing me to recognize the woefully inadequate response that the people of the United States have to the needs of mental health in this country, and taking a lead and making us do better. Thank you.

I say this because this is a political dinner, but most of us are here -- and we're Democrats instead of Republicans because we're motivated by these kinds of issues and because we think America should go up or down together. And one way or the other, if we're going up, we've got to go up together. And I honor them, and I thank them for that.

I will be very brief in what I want to say to you. There's no point in my reciting what you already know about the progress of the last 7 years. Except I will say that there is something special about the fact that it was done by our party, because we believe you can advance the economy and social justice at the same time.

So it's not just 20 million jobs and the longest peacetime expansion in history; in February it will be the longest one in history. Look underneath that: the lowest female unemployment in 40 years; the lowest single-parent household poverty in 42 years; the lowest African-American unemployment and poverty ever recorded; the lowest Hispanic unemployment ever recorded, the lowest Hispanic poverty in a generation; the last 3 years, finally people in the bottom of the income groups, with their income rising as fast or faster than those in the top. This is a democratic recovery, and we're going forward together.

I want to say this about the next 14 months of my term and the decision the American people will make about the leadership of this country, the Presidency and in the Congress for the next 4 years. Over Thanksgiving I had my whole extended family with me, and then we had a few friends come up to Camp David and a lot of kids around, and I just love that.

And this beautiful little 6 year old girl looked at me, and she said, "Now, how old are you, really" -- 6 year old girl. [Laughter] And I said, "I'm 53." And she said, "That's a lot." [Laughter] And lamentably, she's right about that. And I want to say this, and I want every one of you to think about it. In my lifetime, in my 53 years, our country has never had the blessings and the opportunities and, therefore, the responsibilities it has at this moment. We have never had at the same time a strong economy, an improving social climate, strong self-confidence among the American people, with the absence of crisis at home or threat abroad.

We had an economy that was very strong in the early sixties that came a cropper because of the competing demands of civil rights and poverty at home and the war in Vietnam abroad. You can go back all through the 20th century, and you will not find a time when we've had prosperity, social progress, national self-confidence, the absence of internal crisis or external threat.

And what I want to say to you is, that imposes on our party not bragging rights for the last 7 years but an enormous responsibility to keep the American people focused on the future. Anybody can take a deep breath and summon themselves to great efforts in tough times. The great British essayist Samuel Johnson said, "Nothing so concentrates the mind as the prospect of one's own destruction."

Every one of us can remember when times were tough and we got right at it. But also, most people can remember a time in your personal life, your family life, your business life, when things were going so well, you just lost your concentration or became indulgent or got distracted. This country faces a great choice here.

The Vice President talked about the tax cut that Congress passed that I vetoed. I was so proud of the

American people because times are good and people have been through tough times. And a lot of people still have difficulties in their own lives, and they could have said, "Hey, give us a break here. Don't tell me about paying off the debt for the first time since 1835 or this other rigamarole. Just show me the money."

But they didn't do it. They said just what he said, that we like what we have and we want to go on. We want to leave a stronger America for our children. We want to get out of debt. We want to deal with the aging of America. We want to be able to invest in our children's education. What I want to tell you -- I think that's what is at stake here: whether we will assume the responsibility of our success or indulge ourselves and squander it.

Yes, you know, you can say whatever you want to about how I say whatever I say about the Vice President. Everything I said was true, and I believe it. But I'm a lot more interested than the whole country in our children and grandchildren even than I am him. I'm sitting here talking to you about whether we're going to make the most of this prosperity. And I've been here for 53 years. And like the kid said, that's a lot. And we've never had this kind of chance before.

Are we going to deal with the aging of America or not? We're going to double the number of people over 65 in 30 years. I hope to be one of them. We could take Social Security out beyond the life of the baby boomers by doing one simple thing: Just take the interest we're saving on the debt from not spending the Social Security surplus and put it into Social Security. And we ought to do that. We can lengthen the life of Medicare; we can provide prescription drug benefits to the 75 percent of our seniors who can't afford the medicine that they need.

We can radically improve our schools. We can deal with the challenge of global warming and all the other environmental challenges and do it with new technology and smart investments that will grow this economy faster, not weaken it. We can extend economic opportunity to the people and places that have been left behind. In spite of all the happy talk, unemployment tonight is 73 percent on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. I'm going home to the Arkansas Delta tomorrow, right across the river from Memphis, where the Vice President spent countless days. And he can tell you that, except for the Native American reservations, the poorest parts of America are still in the Delta between Memphis and New Orleans. Or in Appalachia or in any number of our inner cities. Or upstate New York, which would be 49th in job growth if that were a separate State. Or the rural areas of New England and any number of other places. So I think we ought to give people big incentives to invest there, the same incentives we give them to invest in poor areas in Latin America and Asia and Africa, to try to grow the American economy now in the places that have been left behind.

No, it's not fashionable to talk about, because when I talk about trade, I make everybody mad. And he's doing a pretty good job of it, too. [Laughter] But let me just say, I think I'm right about saying that labor standards and the environment ought to be a part of the global economy. And you know I'm pro-trade. I don't think you can make a serious case that the world is not better off. And globalization is not a bad thing if you do it right.

You look at the places he mentioned. Do you really believe that we would have had to go to war in Kosovo and use our military power in Bosnia to stop slaughter there if the Balkans were the richest place in Europe, instead of the poorest? Do you believe we would have had 800,000 people slaughtered in 90 days in Rwanda in a tribal war if their incomes were 10 times higher than they are?

And I have to say -- you mentioned Ireland -- I'm very proud of the role we played in the Irish peace process. And I'm very proud of Senator George Mitchell. [Applause] But I want to tell you something -- you can clap for him. But make no mistake about it, the fact that some American banks were sending their data processing to be done in Northern Ireland by poor people who didn't have any other jobs, the fact that the Irish Republic had the fastest growing economy in Europe, and all those young people saw what was going on in the rest of Europe, and they said, "This is nuts. Let's let it go." That had a lot to do with that.

So we have to find a way to put that human face on the global economy. And we've got to decide

who we trust to do it and how to get there.

Finally, there are lots of other things we could talk about. We've got to be willing to take on some difficult questions in the future. You know, all that nice talk Al said to me about all these tough decisions that I had to make. When we first got together after the election he said, "You know, I've spent a lot more time in Washington, and I'm going to tell you, you can't imagine how hard these decisions are going to be. And it's just like developing muscles; it's going to be agonizing for you at the beginning, and you've just got to grit your teeth and make them, and it will get easier and easier and easier."

And like so many things he told me, it turned out to be right. But it was a lot easier because he was there with me, helping me. He was right when we took on guns. He was right when we took on big tobacco. He was right when we took on the health care industry on the Patients' Bill of Rights and on so many other issues. So we have a lot of things to do.

Now, I just want to make one last point. I'm going to keep working for the next 14 months, and I think the best thing I can do for all of our candidates, from top to bottom, is to try to be the best President I can be. And I'll do my best to do that. And I am profoundly committed to renting back the House and Senate because a lot of those people lost their seats -- a lot of those people lost their seats because they voted for the economic plan and they voted for the Brady bill and they voted for the assault weapons ban and they took the tough decisions. And unfortunately, they had to stand for reelection in 1994, before the American people knew we were right. And we owe it to them. And besides that, I've got a minor interest in what happens in New York. [Laughter]

But let me say to all of you, if I had this proverbial encounter tonight, and somebody said, "Well, you can't stay 14 months. You've got to go." And the genie showed up and said I could have not three wishes but one. It wouldn't be anything I've said on this list. I would wish for an America that is truly one America, that can bridge the lines of race and gender and religion and sexual orientation, all these things that divide us.

If you look around the world today -- that's why we're going to try to pass the hate crimes bill. That's why we're going to try to pass the employment and nondiscrimination act. Because if you look at the world we're living in at the end of the cold war, when people are not artificially bound into blocks where they feel threatened by their very existence, it was inevitable that we'd have an upsurge of nationalism and some of the things that have happened.

But it is unconscionable that on the verge of a new millennium, when there are 20,000 people making a living on eBay trading, when we're about to decode the whole mystery of the human genome, when some people think we'll find out what's in the black holes in space in a few years, it is unconscionable that the biggest problem society faces is the oldest problem of society, which is that we're afraid of, prone to hate, prone to dehumanize, and prone to brutalize people who are different from us. [Applause] Thank you.

There is so much hope around the world. I announced yesterday the resumption of talks next week between the Israelis and the Syrians. I know they're working hard to make peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians. We even have the Greeks and the Turks talking about Cyprus. We've got all kinds of things going.

And for all of the hate crimes and terrible things that have happened in America, we're not bedeviled like that, but it's still there under the surface. One of our major newspapers today had two breathtaking pictures, side-by-side, on the front page of the young soldier that was beaten to death and the other young soldier that was convicted of killing him. He was beaten to death because he was gay.

And you know, I'm not running for anything; I'm just telling you I felt as a human being. I looked at that and my heart ached for that young man whose life was extinguished. Then my heart ached for the young man whose life was ruined, because somewhere along the way people taught him -- you're not born feeling this way -- people taught him that it was okay to dehumanize that other young

person, who wore the uniform of his country. Both of them have committed to die for this country if I send them some place, God forbid, which might cost them their lives. And yet, that happened.

So I say to you, not to bring you down but to lift you up, the reason I am working as hard as I can to be a good President, the reason I'm here with you, besides to thank you, the reason I feel as strongly as I do about the Vice President and all of our campaigns for the Senate and the House is that we may never have this chance again. And we have to make the most of it. And we owe it to the American people to get out there and get our message out, stand up, fight, show up for them every day. Never forget that the people we're really fighting for are the people that served our food here tonight and their children. And countless other people who will never have a chance to come to an event like this.

And I'm telling you, if you do what you know to do next year and you tell people what the record is and what we stand for, then we'll have a great 14 months, and we'll have a great celebration in November of 2000.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:30 p.m. in the Grand Ballroom at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Joseph J. Andrew, national chair, and Mayor Edward G. Rendell of Philadelphia, general chair, Democratic National Committee; dinner cochair Loretta Bowen, director of political affairs, Communications Workers of America, John F. Cooke, president, the Disney Channel, Carol Pensky, former treasurer, Democratic National Committee, and John Merrigan, cochair, Democratic Business Council; Walter Shorenstein, president, Shorenstein Company LP; and former Senator George J. Mitchell, who chaired the multiparty talks in Northern Ireland.

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Public Papers of the Presidents

November 30, 1999**CITE:** 35 Weekly Comp. Pres. Doc. 2469**LENGTH:** 2305 words**HEADLINE:** Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Luncheon in San Francisco**BODY:**

Thank you very much. Thank you, Bill; thank you, Sally; thank you, Leader Gephardt; and thank you, Nancy Pelosi, for always being so wonderful to take all of your various charges from the D-triple-C to the DNC to your President into San Francisco and find your friends and help us.

It's good to be back here. I was here, as Bill said, a couple years ago. And we had a beautiful dinner here, and I love this place. But it's even more beautiful in the daylight. And I want to thank all the Members for coming. Chairman Torres, thank you for being here. And I want to thank the mayor for coming.

I am so indebted to California, and particularly to San Francisco, for being so good to me and Hillary and the Vice President and Mrs. Gore. And I've also learned so much. Every time I come to northern California I learn something new, so I'm less technologically challenged. *[Laughter]*

And I've learned a lot from Willie Brown. I've learned how to dress better. *[Laughter]* I never thought I would live long enough to see him in a race where somebody was running to the left of him; this is a great, great day. *[Laughter]* I don't know how there is any oxygen left over there. *[Laughter]* I'm still learning from you, and I thank you, Mr. Mayor.

Let me say also, this is the first opportunity I've had in public to thank Dick Gephardt and all the others who are here in our caucus, and Senator Boxer, for their stalwart strength in fighting for our budget priorities. I just signed yesterday the first budget of the 21st century. And I think it's worth mentioning that because, and only because, they stayed with me, we got our continuing commitment to 100,000 teachers; we doubled, more than doubled, the funds allocated to after-school and summer school programs for children, something that Senator Boxer has fought for a long time; we've, for the first time ever, got funds to States that will agree to target failing schools and give them money to either shut them down or turn them around.

This was a remarkable thing. We got 50,000 more police for our neighborhoods with the highest crime rates. We passed the remarkable bill called the Kennedy-Jeffords bill, which will enable disabled people to go into the workplace and keep their Medicaid health insurance so that they can work and become taxpaying citizens. They would be totally uninsurable otherwise. We even got some money to pay for people who are not disabled yet but who are uninsurable -- people with HIV, people with Parkinson's who can't be legally declared disabled -- because they stuck with me. And we got for

the first time a big chunk of money for the so-called lands legacy initiative that the Vice President fought so hard for, to set-aside funds. And a lot of other things.

We also left a lot of things undone. We didn't pass the Patients' Bill of Rights yet; we didn't pass the minimum wage increase yet; we didn't pass the hate crimes legislation yet or the "Employment and Non-Discrimination Act" yet; and we haven't yet taken the strong action I would like to see to extend Social Security beyond the life of the baby boom generation and to reform and modernize Medicare and add a prescription drug benefit.

We beat a huge and irresponsible tax cut, which enables us to continue to pay down the deficit, and we are now on the track to make America debt-free for the first time since 1835, which means that all these entrepreneurs in northern California will be able to get money at lower interest rates for another generation and to get us a whole generation of prosperity.

But what I want you to understand is it happened only because they were willing to stick with me. Otherwise, there would have been no 100,000 teachers, no 50,000 police, no disability employment bill. It would not have happened. We wouldn't have gotten the lands legacy money. All the environmental riders would have been attached to the legislation that we beat back. All of that would have happened. They stayed.

Now I want to put that in the larger perspective of where we've been, very briefly, for the last 7 years and where we're going, because, you know, people sometimes look at me and say, "What are you doing here? You're not running for anything." And I am, too -- I'm running for what Mr. Gephardt said; I want to be a good citizen. And I'm here because I believe in Dick Gephardt's leadership, Nancy Pelosi's leadership, and the potential of our party.

One of you when you went through the line said to me, "Do you have any regrets?" And I said, "Just a few;" and I'm here trying to rectify one of them. I regret that we lost the congressional majority in 1994. And it happened because, frankly, because I pushed the country and the Congress to deal with some major challenges simultaneously: to deal with this awful budget deficit, without giving up on our commitment to invest more in the health care, in the education, in the environment of our country; to take on the issue of guns, which no administration, no Congress had taken on since Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King were assassinated; and to deal with the health care crisis.

One of Dick's colleagues said to me the other day -- he slapped me on the back and said, "You know, they told me if I voted for your health care program, health care would become more bureaucratic and fewer people would be insured at work. And I voted for it and, sure enough, that's what happened" -- *[laughter]* -- "health care has become more bureaucratic and fewer people are insured at work, because it didn't pass." *[Laughter]*

So I say to you, look at the record that these people have helped us to establish. In 1992 -- just remember what California was like and the country was like: economic distress, social division, political drift, Government discredited. Don't let anybody forget that as we come into this session. Just ask them to remember what it was like in '91 and '92: economic distress, social division, political drift, Government discredited.

And you gave Al Gore and I a chance to work with them. And we said we want a country where there is opportunity for all, responsibility from all, and a community of all Americans, where everybody can be a part. And we had all these ideas. But you just bought an argument. Well, 7 years later, there is not an argument. There is evidence. And I think that it's worth repeating, because -- I know I'm preaching to the choir here, but you need to go out and share this -- in February we'll have the longest, not peace-time, the longest expansion of any kind in our history; we have 19.8 million new jobs, the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 30 years, the lowest poverty rates in 20 years, the highest home-ownership in history.

In addition to that, the society is healing. We have the lowest crime rates in 25 years, the lowest teen pregnancy rates in 30 years. We have the lowest female unemployment rates in 40 years and the lowest poverty rate among single-parent households in 40 years. And we've set aside more land

than any administration except those of Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt, including 40 million roadless acres in the national forests. The land is safer; the water is cleaner; the air is cleaner. We've cleaned up three times as many toxic waste dumps as the previous two administrations. We have 90 percent of our kids immunized for the first time in history; 20 million people have taken advantage of the family and medical leave law, which was vetoed by the previous administration. Four hundred thousand people who shouldn't get guns have not been able to buy handguns because of the Brady bill, which was vetoed by the previous administration.

So I say to you this is not an argument anymore. There is evidence, and I want you to remember those numbers. And when you talk to the skeptics and you talk to the doubters, you need to go out and tell people what the evidence is. And if you look ahead, the real issue is -- and Dick talked about this -- you know I want them to be in the majority because of the issue of education, because there is still a lot more to be done. I want them to be in the majority because I do believe they will help to conduct their business in a way that will promote the one America that I believe is so important.

I am very proud of the fact that the United States has played a major role in trying to reconcile warring and hating factions from Northern Ireland to the Middle East to the Balkans to Africa. But I want us to do that at home, too, which is why I want this hate crimes legislation to pass. You only have to look at what happened at the Jewish school in Los Angeles or to the Filipino postman who was murdered there or what happened in the rampage in the Middle West, where everybody from the former African-American basketball coach at Northwestern to a Korean Christian walking out of his church -- these people were killed -- James Byrd dragged to death, Matthew Shepard stretched out on a rack. There is still a lot of that in us.

And what I would like to just ask you to think about and what I think about all the time is, okay, we've had all these good things happen to us, and our country now, thanks to a lot of you and technology -- I should have mentioned when I became -- when we started NetDay here in 1994, 15 percent of our schools were connected to the Internet; 89 percent are now, thanks to a lot of you and the E-rate. I could just go on and on. You need to remember these things and talk to people about them.

But the big question is, what are we going to do now? What will we do with a moment of prosperity that is, in my lifetime unprecedented. Never in my life have we had this much economic strength, this much social progress, this kind of opportunity free of external threat or internal crisis to shape the future for our children. What are we going to do about it?

And there will be all kinds of siren songs in the election season to kind of distract people from that or to get us to lower our sights or be more selfish or be more shortsighted. And the truth is, I bet you every one of you can cite some point in your personal life, your family life, or your business life when you got in trouble because things were going well and you broke your concentration. You relaxed; you got diverted; you got divided; you got indulgent.

Well, the country is no different. We have to realize this is a truly precious moment. In my lifetime, it has never happened. And the reason I want Dick Gephardt to be the Speaker is I think that we ought to -- yes, we made a lot of advances in education, but we don't have a world-class education for all our children, and we shouldn't stop until we do. Yes, we continue to pay down the debt at record rates, and we've got the first back-to-back balanced budgets in 42 years. But we haven't extended Social Security beyond the life of the baby boom generation; we haven't extended Medicare and added that prescription drug benefit when 75 percent of the seniors in this country can't afford the medicine they're supposed to take. So we haven't dealt with the challenge of the aging of America as much as we should.

We haven't done everything we should do to make this the safest big country in the world. We ought to close the gun show loop-hole in the Brady bill. We ought to pass the child trigger lock legislation. It's not just crimes that are the problem. We have the biggest accidental death rate by guns in the world. And to give you an idea of how bad it is, the American death rate, accidental death rate from guns, is 9 times the rate of the next 25 biggest industrial economies combined. So I think it's worth a little extra to have those child trigger locks.

We've still got serious challenges in health care. We ought to pass the Patients' Bill of Rights. We ought to let people over 55 who don't have health insurance anymore buy into Medicare. We ought to continue our work to help children, enroll children in our health insurance program and cover other people who don't have it.

We've got a chance to do something serious about poverty for the first time in a generation. One of the things that I'm most encouraged about on our side in the Presidential debate is there is an almost complete consensus that part of our bounty ought to be used to drastically cut child poverty in this country. And that's good. We also have an opportunity that we have not had in my lifetime to bring free enterprise and investment into the most distressed areas of the country. And I have been going around the country trying to highlight these things.

I consider this a big opportunity. And as all of you who live on the Internet know, technology gives us a chance to bring economic opportunity to people and places that were hitherto too isolated to take advantage of it.

Now these are just some of the big challenges that are out there. And I promise you, I fought through this last budget. I've been through this thing now from can 'til can't for 6 years. I'm here because I do not believe my country will realize its full potential unless they are in the majority and unless he is the Speaker. And I think if he is, they will.

So I ask you, tell people what was in the budget and why. Tell people what's happened in the last 7 years and why. And most important, tell people what we can do in the future if we have the right people representing you, and help them win. It is profoundly important.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:45 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Bill and Sally Hembrecht; Art Torres, chair, State Democratic Party; and Mayor Willie L. Brown, Jr., of San Francisco.

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Public Papers of the Presidents

November 9, 1999**CITE:** 35 Weekly Comp. Pres. Doc. 2310**LENGTH:** 1479 words**HEADLINE:** Remarks to the Democratic National Committee Women's Leadership Forum Reception**BODY:**

Thank you. Well, Janice, thank you, and thanks for giving this group such a build-up when you said there were 300 here for Tipper and 250 for me. [Laughter] This is the first concrete manifestation I have had of the fact that I'm the only one in this crowd not running for anything anymore. [Laughter]

Let me first of all say, I'm delighted to be here. I got a good report from Hillary on her visit with you, and thank you for the good reception you gave her. I brought -- I see Ann Lewis is here. I brought Minyon Moore, my political director, with me, and the new head of our women's outreach office, who used to operate this wonderful organization, WLF, Lauren Supina, is here. So thank you very much for coming.

As all of you know, since Al and Tipper and Hillary and I moved to the White House, we have tried very hard to involve women to an unprecedented degree and to show a great sensitivity to interests of particular concern to women. And I'm sure that you've had that repeated over and over again.

But one of the things that I am proudest of is that we have really enabled women to share in the benefits of the work of this administration. You know, we have now the lowest unemployment in 30 years, but we have the lowest women's unemployment in 46 years. That's amazing. And when you consider how many fewer women were looking for work 46 years ago, those numbers are even more meaningful.

We've also tripled the number of SBA loans to women. We've worked very hard on issues -- the family and medical leave, I don't have the newest numbers, but as of last year, 15 million people had taken advantage of it.

And as we look ahead, as I have said repeatedly, if you compare where we are now with where we were in 1992, we've gone from a period of economic distress, social division, political drift, and a complete discrediting of Government to the strongest economy in our history, welfare and crime rates at a 30-year low; we learned last week teen pregnancy is at a 30-year low; a country beginning to come to grips with its social problems and come together. We have a clear direction for the future, and no one's out there running against the Government anymore. We heard for 12 years that Government was the problem, and things got worse, including the deficit and the debt.

But that's the good news. The question that we have to face now is what's at stake ahead of us?

What is still to be done?

And I just want to make two points very briefly. One is, we have the first chance in my lifetime -- and I'm 53 years old -- the first chance in my lifetime to really deal with the big challenges and opportunities out there facing our country, without the paralysis or the threat of an external crisis or an internal crisis. And I believe that imposes upon us a very heavy responsibility. And we ought to look at our country as a family would its children and its grandchildren. We have to deal with these big issues.

And I think that the women of America can make sure that's what the subject of the election is about, and the WLF can make sure that we involve lots of people who've never been involved before, who care deeply about this.

But if you look at -- and I'll just mention two or three -- if you look at the aging of America, that will affect more women than men, because you have a longer life expectancy. And as we talk about saving Social Security for the 21st century, one of the things we ought to be doing is making special provisions for women who could not pay into Social Security at the same amount men could and who therefore are much more likely to be living in poverty.

If you look at reforming Medicare and extending the life of it and providing affordable prescription drug coverage, that affects women disproportionately to men. But it's profoundly important.

If you look at the challenges we face with our children, the challenges we face in eradicating poverty and bringing prosperity to the people and places we haven't touched yet, of guaranteeing long-term economic health for our country by paying down the debt and getting out of debt for the first time, literally, in 165 years, these are things that I believe we ought to be taking to the American people.

We've proved you can grow the economy and improve the environment. In this period of economic growth, we have cleaner air, cleaner water, safer food. We set aside more land for protection than any administration, except those of Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt, in the history of the country. That will continue to be a major concern.

If you look at our responsibilities around the world, there's a big struggle I've been having here in Congress to adequately fund out foreign affairs budget. You know, one of the things that we do with that money, as I'm sure Hillary talked about today, is try to make sure that in developing countries around the world women have a chance to make a living by getting credit and girls have a chance to make a future by going to school and being free for oppressive social practices. That's going to be a big issue in the future. Will we continue to do that? Will that continue to be part of America's role in the world?

And of course, in the next election one of the things that will clearly be up for grabs is somewhere between two and four seats on the United States Supreme Court and the question of whether we will revisit a whole raft of issues, the most obvious of which is the right to choose, but believe me, that's not the only one that is hanging in the balance of this election.

So I hope that you're all pumped up about what you've done. I'm particularly pleased, when Janice was giving the report, that you had so many people here today who had not previously been active. One of the things that I think is important for the Democrats to do is to recognize that there are literally thousands, even tens of thousands of people out there who have been directly benefited by the policies of his administration and the direction of the country, who have never participated in politics, that don't imagine that they have a contribution to make, because they have never been asked, and they've never been asked to do anything specific and given an opportunity to participate:

People now believe in the possibilities of our country and the possibilities of our political system again. And so if they don't participate but they could, it's our fault, not theirs, and we have to look at it that way.

And that's the last thing I would leave you with. You know, I'm fighting now for strengthening the

equal pay law. I'm fighting now for adequate efforts at child care. We passed the family and medical leave law; 15 million people have taken advantage of it. I'd like to add 10 million more people to the coverage.

But you should know, for example, that today, under present Federal law, of those who are eligible to receive assistance from the Federal Government to help to provide for quality affordable child care, we have funding for only 10 percent -- only 10 percent. And in spite of all that, we have the lowest unemployment rate in 46 years, but I promise you a lot of those women are going to work every day worried sick about their kids.

And that is not good for our country, because one of the big challenges we have to face that I didn't mention, and I want to mention in closing, is -- I'm proud that the first bill I signed was the family and medical leave law, but we have come nowhere near where we need to be in terms of enabling people to succeed both in the workplace and at home. And I think that ought to be one of the major issues that we take into the 2000 elections, even as I continue to redouble my efforts to pass the child care initiative we have before the Congress, to pass the strengthening of equal pay initiative we have before the Congress, and to do many other things.

So I'm very grateful that I've had a chance to serve these last 7 years. I'm grateful for what we have done and what we still can do. But the decision we should be making as Democrats is that we are not going to let our children and our grandchildren down. We're going to use the -- literally, it's the only opportunity we've had in my lifetime to have this level of prosperity, in the absence of domestic or foreign crisis, to shape the future of our dreams.

The only chance we have to do that is with the massive involvement and leadership of the women of this country. And you will be one of the most important engines of the victories that we have in the year 2000.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:39 p.m. in the Potomac Room at the St. Regis Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Janice Griffin, national chair, Women's Leadership Forum; and Lauren Supina, Director, White House Office for Women's Initiative and Outreach.

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