

Remarks on the Administration's Domestic Policy June 12, 1991

Thank you all very much. Thank you, but don't give up your daytime work. *[Laughter]*

Thank you all, and good evening. Members of our Cabinet here, Governor Campbell, and Governor Mike Castle. Honored guests: Dr. Benjamin Payton—and old friend—the president of Tuskegee University who brings a lifelong commitment to our historically black colleges and universities, welcome. Drew Batavia, winner of the 1988 Distinguished Disabled American Award, welcome to you, sir. To Robert Egger, founder of the D.C. Central Kitchen, and the 60 other Points of Light who are here tonight, your work inspires this nation. Mayor Hackett, of Memphis, is with us; Mayor Myric, of Charlotte; County Commissioner Klinger, good to see you all again. And I see Paul O'Neill over here, the chairman of Alcoa, a dedicated advocate for educational excellence. And to the rest of this extraordinary gathering—leaders of businesses and veterans groups, associations, volunteer organizations, education partnerships, those who are working for home ownership—all those who make America the land of opportunity, welcome to the White House.

I might add that also with us is Anthony Henderson—I don't see him—there he is right there, my man. Anthony Henderson is a youngster from Barcroft Elementary School across the river there in Arlington. You may remember that when I visited his class, Anthony's the one who asked me to prove that I was the President of the United States. And here he is—*[laughter]*—I had to show him my driver's license and my credit card. *[Laughter]* Anthony, do you believe me now? All okay, all right. And welcome. I'm just delighted you're here.

Over the past 30 months, this world has changed at a dramatic pace. America has been called upon to meet one challenge after another. And meet them we did—each and every one of them. From Eastern Europe to Panama to the Persian Gulf, our country stands as a strong champion of free-

dom.

Ninety-eight days ago, I asked the Congress to tackle the urgent problems on the homefront with that same energy that we dedicated to tackling the crisis on the battlefield. I spelled out my domestic priorities—setting out, I'll admit, an ambitious agenda founded upon enhancing economic growth, investing in our future, and increasing opportunity for all Americans. I sent to the Congress literally hundreds of recommendations for legislative change. Then I specifically asked that Congress pass just two laws in 100 days, a comprehensive anticrime bill and a transportation bill.

Now, you've heard a lot about that lately, but this kind of challenge is not new. Presidents as different as Johnson and Ford have a history of encouraging the Congress to meet a deadline. In fact, Lyndon Johnson, in his State of the Union Address in January of 1964, challenged the Congress to act on at least eight broad domestic issues, all within 5 months. And I thought 100 days was fairly reasonable. And I wasn't asking the Congress to deliver a hot pizza in less than 30 minutes. *[Laughter]* That would be revolutionary for a Congress. I only asked for two pieces of legislation in 100 days. It's now clear that neither will be on my desk by Friday.

And, look, I'm disappointed, but, frankly, I'm not surprised. Tonight I'd like to put this all in—try to put it in some perspective. I haven't asked you here to sit through a litany of programs and policies. We have a long list of legislative priorities already before the Congress, awaiting congressional action. I won't repeat that list here tonight. But rather, I'd like to do something different and describe to you how I personally see the shared strength and promise of America.

It is hard for the American people to understand, frankly, why a bill to fight crime cannot be acted on in 100 days; or why Congress can't pass a highway bill in 100 days. But, look, if it can't be done, if 100 days isn't enough, let me just ask this rhe-

torical question: How many days are?

These are important issues, and there are many, many others. And most Americans believe fear of crime and violence threatens our most basic freedoms and denies us opportunity. They also believe that we must invest in our future to provide an infrastructure for those who come along after us. So they don't understand—the American people don't understand the complications and the inaction and the bickering, particularly when so many do understand what it takes to solve problems in their own neighborhoods: commitment, compassion, and courage.

I cannot fully explain this inaction to the American people. As I said, I'm disappointed, but not surprised. But I can say this as partial consolation: America's problem-solving does not begin or end with the Congress, nor with the White House.

Yes, it would help if Congress would do what people are asking of them. And I'll keep working with the Congress; my hand remains extended. But we cannot let Congress discourage or deter us from meeting our responsibilities.

I believe that the people gathered here tonight, under the twilight shadow of our magnificent Washington's Monument, understand this better than most. You are extraordinary Americans, representing thousands of others. You bring to life the genius of the American spirit. And it is through you and with you that we can solve our most pressing problems. Together we can transform America and create whole and good communities everywhere. Tonight, all Americans can help lead the way.

A great nation has the courage to be honest about itself. And we are—let's never forget it—we are a great nation. I believe that absolutely, as do you. We are indisputably the world's most powerful force for freedom and economic growth. Still, no one can deny that we have these enormous challenges. Not all Americans are living the American dream by a long shot. Many can't even imagine it.

There are impoverished Americans, the poor and the homeless, the hungry and the hopeless, many unable to read and write. There are Americans gone astray, the kids dragged down by drugs, the shattered fami-

lies, the teenage mothers struggling to cope. Then there are Americans uneasy, troubled and bewildered by the dizzying pace of change.

For many years I've crisscrossed this country, as many here have. As President, part of my job—and it really is an exciting part—is going to the small towns and the big cities and the schools, the neighborhoods, and the factories. Those are the places where you discover what's good and right about our country—and what's going wrong, too.

The state of our nation is the state of our communities. As our communities flourish, our nation will flourish. So we must seek a nation of whole communities, a nation of good communities—an America whole and good.

What defines such a community? First, it is one that cares for the needs of its young people by building character—values and good habits for life. Second, it's a community that provides excellent schools, schools that spark a life-long interest in learning. Next, there is opportunity and hope, rooted in the dignity of work and reward for achievement. Fourth, it's where people care about their health and their environment and where a sense of well-being and belonging is nurtured. And finally, all of its neighborhoods are decent and safe.

Because millions of Americans have chosen to lead the way, these are not simply dreams. Thousands of whole and good communities already flourish in America, communities where ordinary people have achieved the American dream. We should never in our anguish lose sight of that. America is the most productive, prosperous, enlightened nation on Earth—a nation that can do anything. And we can do even better.

We should be confident as a country about what lies ahead. America has a track record of success—success shaped with our own hands. Sometimes in our impatience, yes, we've made mistakes—but when we do, we dust ourselves off and go at it again. Every American should take pride in this country's fundamental goodness—decency. Each of us must resolve in our own hearts that for all the good we've done, it's time to

do better—much, much better.

Conventional wisdom in our day once held that all solutions were in the hands of government—call in the best and the brightest, hand over the keys to the national treasury. Bigger government was better government: compassion was measured in dollars and cents, progress by price tag. We tried that course. As we ended the '70s, our economy strangling on inflation, soaring interest rates, and unemployment, America turned away from government as “the answer.”

So, conventional wisdom then turned to the genius of the free market. We began a decade of exceptional economic growth and created 20 million new jobs. And yet, let's face it, many of our streets are still not safe, our schools have lost their edge, and millions—millions still trudge the path of poverty. There is more to be done, and the marketplace alone can't solve all our problems.

Is the harsh lesson that there must always be those who are left behind? America must have but one answer, and that answer is no. There is a better way, one that combines our efforts—those of a government properly defined, the marketplace properly understood, and services to others properly engaged. This is the only way—all three of these—to an America whole and good.

It requires all three forces of our national life. First, it requires the power of the free market; second, a competent, compassionate government; and third, the ethic of serving others, including what I call the Points of Light. These three powerful forces create the conditions for communities to be whole and free, and it's time that we harnessed all three of them.

In our complex democracy, power is fragmented. And that can be frustrating. But on balance, it's for the good. And power tends to move toward those who serve the greater good: entrepreneurs like John Bryant, a young self-starter who has built a multimillion-dollar enterprise and now helps rebuild inner-city Los Angeles; caring individuals like Mack Stolarski, a retired carpenter who now helps his student apprentices repair homes for the poor and disabled.

And because of the power of the free

market, what so much of the world can only imagine, we take for granted: abundant food on the shelves of our supermarkets, quality products at our shopping centers. Nothing beats the free market at generating jobs and income and wealth and a better quality of life.

The good news in communities is that the free market is now applying its resources and know-how to our social problems. Many companies, recognizing that tomorrow's workers are today's students, are leaders of a revolution in American education—partners in the exciting America 2000 strategy. Others are crusaders for environmental protection, while still others are innovators from health care to child care.

Transforming America requires not only the power of the free market, but also a dynamic government. To be the enlightened instrument of the people—the government of Jefferson and Lincoln and Roosevelt, and the embodiment of their vision—it must truly be a force for good.

I believe in this kind of government—a government of compassion and competence. And I believe in backing it up with action. Here tonight, for example, is Mrs. Lauren Jackson-Floyd, one of the first Head Start graduates. Now she teaches preschoolers in that same marvelous program. Her success is why we expanded Head Start by almost three-quarters of a billion dollars. And last year I signed our child care bill to expand parents' choices in caring for their children.

And we fought for a Clean Air Act that puts the free market in the service of the environment—and we won that one. And the Americans with Disabilities Act, the most important civil rights bill in decades, has brought new dignity and opportunity to our nation's disabled. Disability leaders like Justin Dart and Sandy Parrino and Evan Kemp were right here, right on this platform, when I signed it. And they're with us tonight.

Jack Kemp and I stood with Ramona Younger across the river in Charles Houston Community Center, over there in Alexandria. And if the Congress enacts our HOPE Initiative—H-O-P-E—these public housing tenants can become America's newest home owners. Dewey Stokes here,

President of the Fraternal Order of Police, wants to help make our neighborhoods safer, and that's why he supports our crime bill. And if we get a civil rights bill—and I want one—like the one I sent to Congress, we will take an important step against discrimination in the workplace.

This is not big government; this is good government.

And finally, along with the forces of the free market and the Government, we must add this ethic of voluntary service. We call it Points of Light. This is not a phrase about charity. It's about the light that is within us all, in our hearts, a light that brightens the lives of others and makes whole the lives of those who shine it. I love Randy Travis' new song. It says, "a ray of hope in the darkest hour."

Points of Light is a call to every American to serve another in need. But no one of us can solve big problems like poverty or drug abuse all by ourselves. Only the combined light from every school, every business, place of worship, club, group, organization in every community can dissolve the darkness.

Whether a company holds an after-hours literacy program for its workers, a police station counsels tough kids, or third-graders phone lonely homebound citizens—these senior citizens assigned to their rooms—Points of Light show those in need that their lives truly matter.

Government and the market, joined with Points of Light, will overwhelm our social problems. And this is how we must guarantee the next American century. Every person, every business, every school board, our associations, our clubs, our places of worship—we all have the duty to lead.

And only then—only then can we truly think and act anew. And now Congress, too, must understand the successes and the failures of the past and help us forge a certain future in America.

You people gathered here tonight represent those who refuse to rest easy. I look out and I see so much reflected in your faces—the strength, the conviction, the commitment. You represent those millions of Americans who use power to achieve a greater good. And I know because you brought me into your homes and your neighborhoods and your schools and your

churches.

And last year, I walked through a reclaimed crack house in Kansas City with Al Brooks, the leader of an anticrime coalition. And I learned more about how we can fight crime in 2 hours than in 2 months of TV news.

Another day I visited General Hospital here in DC, and held a tiny boarder baby in my arms, the child of cocaine addicts. And the remarkable dedication—I wish every one of you could have been with me—the remarkable dedication of the women who rescued these babies was just as moving. America needs to hear that story, too.

Just a few months ago, I dropped in on a little West Virginia school in a town called Slanesville. The National Teacher of the Year teaches remedial reading there. And her name is Rae Ellen McKee, and she's here tonight. And visiting her gave me the opportunity to say to the Nation, "Thank God for our teachers".

And just yesterday, Lamar Alexander—the Secretary—and I flew over, and I spoke before the graduating class of the James H. Groves Adult High School in Sussex County. And we were the guests of the Governor, Mike Castle. And I invited the class to join us tonight. And I went there with the Governor and the Secretary to honor these men and women who had the courage to go back to school and get their diplomas. And they honored us by telling America to be a nation dedicated to lifelong learning.

These are the Americans who love this country for what it is and for what it can become. These are the Americans who make this a nation of boldness, filled with problem solvers, gifted with the American tradition of living up to our ideals. And these are the Americans who prove that no one in America is without a gift to give, a skill to share, a hand to offer.

This is the genius of America: ordinary Americans doing extraordinary things.

The Congress can refer our proposals to its committees and tie itself up with debate, and produce complicated and sometimes expensive and sometimes unworkable legislation. But in the end, we and them must carry forward the magic of America. We

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must carry forward what is good and reach out and embrace what is best, and we must do the hard work of freedom. You see, I know you have. And I know you will. Through you, our country can become an America whole and good.

For that, our country is grateful. And because of that, our country—the greatest and freest on the face of the Earth—will prevail.

Thank you all very, very much.

Note: The President spoke at 8:02 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Carroll Campbell of South Carolina; Gov. Michael N. Cas-

tle of Delaware; Richard C. Hackett, mayor of Memphis, TN; Sue Myrick, mayor of Charlotte, NC; Ann Klinger, county supervisor for Merced County, CA, and former president of the National Association of Counties; Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Jack Kemp; and Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander. The audience of invitees, composed of elected officials, service organization representatives, and Point of Light award recipients, sang a chorus of “Happy Birthday” to the President when he appeared on the South Lawn. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on Childhood Immunization

June 13, 1991

The President. Let me just say at the outset of these remarks how proud I am of our Secretary, who is taking the lead in matters like immunization, the subject at hand today, and so many others, going across this country, the message of hope, recognizing our shortcomings, but also outlining programs that are essential to the health of this nation.

I'm delighted to see Chairman Whitten here, long interested in the health of our children, and Congressman Norm Lent and three Senators whose passion is this kind of caring for others. And I'm talking about Senator Bumpers, Senator Hatch, and Senator Chafee, all with us here today.

And I also want to just second the motion as to what Lou said about Assistant Secretary Mason and Surgeon General Novello and, of course, our old associate here who now heads the Center for Disease Control, Bill Roper. Welcome back, Bill. Glad to have you here.

And let me also salute, because this is vital to success of a program like this, the State and local health officials. And I'd be remiss if I didn't signal out this dressy bunch of kids here in the front row. They look great, and there's a certain symbolism of having them with us today. And thank you—their teachers and their families—for

bringing them our way. To them I say, I'll try to be brief. [Laughter] As with immunization, this will only hurt a little. [Laughter]

When we announced our national education goals, the very first was that by the year 2000 all children in America will start school ready to learn. And that's one reason we put such emphasis on our Healthy Start initiative. Every child deserves a chance. And in the 1990's, no child in America should be at risk to deadly diseases like diphtheria and polio or the one that Lou was stressing here today, measles.

A decade ago, we hoped to eradicate these threats. And thanks to those of you here today and many others across our country, we have made remarkable progress. And on behalf of a grateful nation then, let me thank all of you and others like you for what you have done by being in the leadership role in these important questions.

I urge you to get on now with the job at hand because, despite our successes, 1990 brought the largest number of measles cases since 1977—1977—a 50-percent increase over '89. And that's why I again commend the Secretary of HHS Dr. Sullivan, and Dr. Mason, Surgeon General Novello, and Mr. Roper and others for performing their HHS SWAT team to visit six major cities—Lou