

Remarks to the Community in Taylor, Michigan March 4, 1996

Thank you very much. Thank you, John Dingell, for that wonderful introduction and for your great service to this district. Thank you, Senator Levin. Thank you, Mayor Priebe, for making me feel so welcome. To Congressmen Levin and Conyers and Congresswoman Rivers. I'd also like to say a special word of thanks to all the others who have come here with me, including my good friend, the Wayne County executive, Ed McNamara. But mostly, as a former musician, I want to thank the Taylor Central High Band, the Taylor Truman High Band, and the Kennedy High School Band for playing. Let's give them a big hand. *[Applause]*

You know, the mayor said when we were walking in, "You were supposed to be here last November, and we were going to dedicate the city hall. And then when you rescheduled, it was so cold we just built a new building for you to dedicate, so everybody could get in." And I'm glad to see all of you in this fine new building.

Let me say, too, that I'm sure all of you know when I had intended to come here last November, I had to postpone it because of the tragic assassination of my friend Prime Minister Rabin of Israel. And as I'm sure many of you know, today there has been yet another terrible terrorist attack in Tel Aviv, the second in just a couple of days. Our prayers and thoughts are with the victims there. Our hearts are with those who fight for peace. It is truly ironic that the same forces that brought down the Israeli Prime Minister from within his own country and those who have killed the Israelis in the last couple of days have one clear thing in common: They both want to end the peace process. They live for division and conflict.

And I ask all of you, my fellow Americans, to send a message to Israel: If you fight for peace, we will stand with you. That is the right, the noble, and the good thing to do.

Let me say that I'm glad to be here with Senator and Mrs. Levin, and John and Debbie Dingell. And I want to say a special word of thanks to John Dingell here in his district. I have now worked with him for 3 years. I've never met anybody who worked harder for the interests of ordinary Americans and working

families than John Dingell, anybody who stood up more and more consistently.

As you know, he has worked to clean up the Great Lakes. He played a key role in the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act. He has saved American taxpayers literally billions of dollars by investigating and exposing waste, fraud, and abuse. He hasn't just talked about it; he's done it. In large measure, John Dingell's work was the inspiration for the reinventing Government effort that I asked Vice President Gore to head, which has given us the smallest Federal Government we've had in 30 years, enabled us to get rid of thousands of pages of wasteful regulation, reformed the entire way in which we purchase goods and services with your tax money, but is giving you a leaner and still a stronger Federal Government able to stand up for the interests of ordinary Americans. And John Dingell inspired that effort, and we thank him for that.

And let me say, back in 1994, in one of the few efforts of this administration that did not succeed, John Dingell stood there with me and we got caught redhanded and we plead guilty to believing that we should try to make sure that every American working family should be able to afford health care and shouldn't lose it when they change jobs or something happens.

Mayor Priebe has certainly left his mark on this city. This great new public works building is just one example of the revitalization taking place here. Since the mayor took office, he's built new roads. He's given you one of the finest courthouses in Michigan. You have a modern police station, which I might say also has some new community police officers in it, thanks to the crime bill of 1994, which is lowering the crime rate in America.

Now, as you know, I was supposed to be here to dedicate the city hall, and as the mayor said, he just went on and built another new building so we could all meet inside in the wintertime. I have got a flag for the mayor that was flown over the Capitol. I hope he will accept it in the spirit in which it is given. And as far as I'm concerned, he can fly it over the city hall or any other building that he wants to fly it over here in Taylor.

I was surprised when Congressman Dingell told me that I was the first President ever to visit this fine community, because I believe what you do here and the way you do it is really an example of what America at its best is and what America must do if we are going to move into the 21st century and meet the challenges that all these young people in this audience face for their future.

When I became your President, I had a very clear vision for what I wanted America to be like in the 21st century. It's one I still hold today and one I think of every day when I go to work. I want our country to go into the next century as a Nation in which all Americans, every single one of us, all of us who are willing to work for it can have a shot at the American dream. I want our country to remain the world's strongest force for peace and freedom and prosperity and security. And above all, I want us to come together as a people, instead of being driven apart. I want us to unite around the basic values that made this country great: responsibility and opportunity, work and family and faith, and perhaps most important of all, the idea that we must go forward together. When we work together, America never loses.

As I said in my State of the Union Address, and as people in Michigan demonstrate every day, this new and very different world we are moving into is an age of great possibility. With all my heart I believe as I look out in this sea of younger faces that are here and I think about what their future will be like, I believe the young people of our country will have more chances to live out their dreams than any generation of Americans ever has. But you and I know that this period of change is so profound that it also presents us with great challenges. We know that even as we create jobs, millions of people feel less secure in the job they have. We know that even as more and more people get higher wage jobs, many, many Americans are working harder for the same or lower wages than they were making 10 years ago. This is a curious time. We know that we are making progress and bringing the crime rate down but that violence is still too high. And we know—we know that it has something to do with this incredible range of change through which we are going.

Let me say to you that we are moving into a period that, as you know, will be dominated by information and technology, out of a period

that was dominated by manufacturing. We are moving into a period where work will have more mind and less muscle, even in our great factories. We are moving into a period where more and more workplaces will be dominated by the computer; they'll be less bureaucratic; they will tend to be smaller and more flexible. We are moving into a period where the markets for products and services and money are global. And we are moving into a period where more information can pass more quickly across the globe than ever before.

The last time your country changed this much was 100 years ago, when most people moved from living in the country to the city and town, when most people moved from working on the farm to working in the factory. And many of the same things happened 100 years ago. There were people who made lots of money. There were people who found opportunities that they could not have dreamed of. And there were people who were severely dislocated and disturbed and whose pattern of life was unsettled.

What did we do then? We kept moving until we worked through these changes and all Americans had a shot at the American dream. And it won't take as long this time if we keep moving in the right direction. That is what I ask you to support today and tomorrow and in the years ahead.

We have great challenges, and we must meet them together. And if we are to meet them together, we know that our Government must play its role. For many years we had the wrong debate in America: Are we going to have big Government or no Government? The answer is neither. The era of big Government is over. We have the smallest Government in Washington we have had since 1965. By the end of this year, it will be the smallest it has been since John Kennedy was President of the United States. But that does not mean we should go back to the time when the American people were told, "You're on your own; fend for yourself." That is not the way we can move into the future.

We must have a partnership where everyone is challenged to do his or her part in the workplace, in the schools, in our houses of worship, in our unions, and yes, in our Government. The great lesson of democracy, let me say again—if you ask me, "Mr. President, what is the most important lesson you have learned in 3 years?" I would say, "When this country is divided, we

defeat ourselves. When we are united, we never lose. That is the lesson of America.”

Look what has happened just here in Michigan in the last 3 years: The unemployment rate has dropped to 5 percent; new businesses have increased by 10 percent; over 311,000 new private-sector jobs, 6½ times in the last 3 years as in each of the previous 4 years before this administration took office and we began to change the economic direction of America. Our auto industry is back. The world’s best workers are making the best cars. And once again, for the first time in 15 years, our auto industry is leading the world in sales and progress and profits.

In the last 3 years, the auto industry has gained 75,000 jobs. In the 4 years before that, it lost 49,000 jobs. Just last week a study by the University of Michigan predicted that there would be 130,000 new hirings by Chrysler, Ford, and GM in Michigan alone in the next 7 years. That is good news.

One of the reasons for that is we are finally beginning to crack open the markets of Japan, and I want to say a special word of thanks to Senator Levin for his work in supporting those efforts that we have made. This, too, is an important decision for America. When you hear the trade debate, normally you would think there are only two choices: We should just open our markets and let anybody sell here who wants to sell, giving us the benefit of the lowest prices and letting the consumers of America have their say; or we should say, “No, that’s not fair because so many markets are closed to us, that we will close our markets.” But that is not the only choice. I think we should have free trade; I think we should have fair trade. That means we should open other markets to America’s products, not close ours and deprive our people of the right to buy what they want.

In the last 3 years, our administration has concluded 20 separate agreements with Japan alone, part of a total of 200 separate trade agreements in the last 3 years. What has been the result? An 80 percent increase in the sales of American products covered by those 20 agreements in just 3 years. I think that’s a pretty good record, and that’s what this country ought to be doing.

Listen to this. Just in the last year, in one year, our auto exports to Japan increased by 37 percent. That’s good for Detroit, good for

Taylor, good for Michigan, and good for America. We need more of it.

All across the Nation, we see something that our friends in Europe and Japan have not enjoyed, jobs coming back into this economy. In the seven largest economies in the world, the European economies, Japan, and the United States and Canada, in the last 3 years, a total of 7.7 million jobs have been created. In the United States, 7.7 million jobs have been created. We are growing jobs again in this economy, and that is the right direction for our country.

Homeownership at a 15-year high; an all-time record for 3 years in a row in the number of new businesses started; in the last 3 years, almost 800,000 new construction jobs alone, after losing 700,000 construction jobs in the 4 previous years; and for the first time in 10 years, slowly and too slowly, but at least for the first time in 10 years real hourly wages are starting to rise in the United States. It is about time, and not a moment too soon.

Now, my fellow Americans, that is the good news, and it’s all true. But as I said earlier, it’s not the whole truth. The whole truth is we’re going through a period of change that is still leaving some Americans behind. You know it, and I know it. Too many of our people are still working harder and harder for the same or lower wages. They wonder if they and their children will be able to prosper in this new era. Even with new jobs, with a booming, booming export market, with a huge increase in the stock market, with an increase in the productivity of American manufacturing, many of our people have not gotten a real wage increase in terms of what it will buy in almost 20 years. And we have to do something about that as well.

We also know that even though small businesses are hiring people at record rate, many of our largest companies are laying off workers, some of them because they have to compete in the global economy. Some of them are doing it even when their profits are going up so that a lot of people are insecure even in an economy that is growing. And we have to do our best to do something about that.

We have some serious challenges here if we want to make all Americans winners in this new economic era. We know that there are also challenges that go beyond the economic. Let me just remind you of the seven challenges I set

forth in the State of the Union Address if we want to see the American dream alive and well for all Americans. We have got to do more to strengthen our families and improve childhood. We've got to do more to take back our streets from crime and gangs and drugs. We've got to do more to leave our environment safe and clean for the next generation. We've got to do more to maintain our world leadership so that the world grows in peace and security. We've got to continue to work to give our people a Government that costs less but works better and is stronger. We've got to give every single American citizen the education that all of us need to compete and win in the new century. And we have got to give every American who is willing to work for it a chance to have a decent amount of security at work and at home by growing this economy. We have to keep doing it until the American dream is there for all Americans. Many are winning today. Our job will be done when everybody who is willing to work for it has a chance to compete and win in this global economy. That must be our mission as Americans.

And let me say something that all of you know but we sometimes forget. Economic growth is about more than money. It is not just ensuring that people have a certain number of material possessions, that they can go out to a nice restaurant once a month or take a vacation every year. It is about the idea of America, the idea that this is a place where there is room for everyone to have a shot at the American dream. It is about the idea of fundamental fairness in this country, that we are not a people who object to others being successful, we do not resent people amassing their own wealth fairly won in a free enterprise system. The only thing we resent is when every American who is doing the right thing and working hard and playing by the rules doesn't have a chance to be treated fairly. That is what we want in this country.

So I say to you, we have done step one. We are creating jobs. But we must do more. We have to have an economic growth that reaches all Americans, and that must be our goal in the next 4 years. We have been stagnant now for nearly 20 years in our wages. Now we can do better. And I ask you to join with me in ensuring that we do just that.

Again I say to you, if we fail to grow together there will be more resentment, more frustration,

and more division among the American people. When he signed the Declaration of Independence over 200 years ago, Benjamin Franklin said, "We must all hang together, or we shall hang separately." Today we must grow together, or we will surely grow apart and grow weaker as a Nation.

Now let me ask you to think about what we have done and what we should do and what you must do if we're going to grow together. We have cut the deficit in half. We have expanded our exports by being for free and fair trade. We have invested in education and training and technology. We have shrunk the Federal Government and cut regulation. We have tried to expand opportunities for our people. But we must do more if we're going to create jobs and raise incomes and give these people who are being downsized a chance to go right on with their lives and raise their children and live with hope and dignity, instead of frustration and a sense of failure. That is what we have to do, and we have to do more to get there.

And let me say that there is a lot that we can do that does not require us to wait for the next election. As I remind all of my friends in Washington, Democrat and Republican alike, just because there is an election in November doesn't mean we should have a work stoppage in March. It is time to go back to work and get things done.

So I want to challenge the Congress to join with me and pass a growth agenda for the American people in the next 60 days that will keep creating jobs and raise incomes. First, we should grow the economy by passing the right kind of balanced budget. It is wrong to leave our children a legacy of debt. And if we pass a balanced budget plan, it will lower interest rates, lower mortgage rates, lower credit card payments, lower car payments, increase business investment, increase jobs, and grow the economy.

But we can do it and do it in the right way. We do not have to have unwarranted cuts in Medicare or Medicaid or education or environmental protection. We do not have to endanger—neither do we have to increase the tax burden on our hardest pressed working families. And we must not, just to make a little extra money, imperil the pensions of the American working people.

We should grow the economy by targeting a tax cut to the people who need it, the working

families of America. I favor giving people help who are raising children out there and working for a living. Our tax relief for families with children has not kept up with inflation over the last 40 years. But the most important tax cut we could give—look at all the young people in the audience and look at yourself if you're still in the work force. I say, the most important tax cut we could give is to give families a tax deduction for the cost of college tuition and any other education after high school.

We should grow the economy by passing an increase in the minimum wage. Let me say this to you: If you've got a good job, I want you to think about this. If you've got a good job and you're raising kids, I want you to think about this. If we don't raise the minimum wage this year, it will fall to a 40-year low in terms of purchasing power. There are millions of Americans out there, real heroes in my book, who get up every day and work full time for \$4.25 an hour and try to raise children on it. That is not an adequate rate to raise children. We can do this without hurting the economy, and we should raise the minimum wage.

We should grow the economy by passing the right kind of welfare reform. Yes, be very tough in requiring people who can work to work, be tough in requiring people to move from welfare to work, but do not hurt the children. Invest in the children and protect them in their future while you move people from welfare to work.

We should grow the economy by fully funding in this year all of our educational investments. We need the best schools, the best training, the best education we can. And one of the things we should fund is my proposal for a "GI bill" for America's workers. When a person loses a job they ought to get a voucher from the United States Government that says, "Here's \$2,600; take it where you want to take it, go there as quick as you can, get some new training, and go back to work." That's what we ought to do for the American people.

And we should grow the American economy by giving people a greater sense of security. There is a bill now before the Congress that has passed out of the Senate committees unanimously, supported by almost 50 Republicans and Democrats, and we cannot get it to a vote in the Senate because of the interest groups keeping it down, even though the National Association of Manufacturers and the AFL-CIO are for it.

It's a simple little bill. Here's what it says. It says, you cannot be denied your health insurance because someone in your family has been sick, and you cannot lose your health insurance just because you change jobs. Let's pass that bill and pass it right away and give the American people some security.

We should do this and do it now. Congress must do its part. It's a long way from now until the election, but every week between now and the election the American people will get up and go to work. They still have to pay their bills. They still have to educate their children. They still have to try to keep their dreams alive. We dare not have a work stoppage. Let's pass this growth agenda now for the American people.

Let me say that while Congress and the President, we must do our part, we know that economic growth comes largely from the private sector and that fairness and decency in the workplace must be generated largely in the private sector. Every company in America must meet these challenges. I urge, I urge our employers in America to look at the things that make families strong, that help people to succeed at work and at home.

I want to pass a bill that makes it easier for small-business people to take out pension plans for themselves and their employees, but then they have to make wider use of those 401(k) plans. We need increased day care. We need more flexible working hours. And we need people to really think about whether it's the fair and right thing to do when you see these downsizings. If they have to do it to keep the business afloat, every American can understand that. But no one should lose a job for short-term considerations that are not necessary for the long-term well-being of the profitable enterprise. We all need to do our part to keep America going and growing together.

And every one of you must remember, no one can require you to get further education or training, no one can make you become more productive. This is going to require an effort on the behalf—on the part of every American if we are going to have sustained growth. But we will try to do our part, with access to health care, with welfare reform, with rising wages, with better education and training, with a strategy that will open markets for American products. We can do all these things, again I say, if we do them together.

This is a time when it is fashionable to say the American people are cynical and skeptical. Well, I know there are plenty of things to be skeptical about. But let me tell you something, my fellow Americans, I get to do something none of you get to do. Whenever I leave this country, I become the United States in the eyes of other people. And I can tell you, wherever I have been, people think this is still a very great country.

I ask you to remember what President Kennedy said in the middle of the cold war when he went to Berlin. He said, "Freedom has many difficulties, and our democracy is far from perfect. But we never had to put up a wall to keep our people in." People want to come to the United States because this is a great country.

And when you hear your fellow citizens at work, at church, in the bowling alley on Thursday night, or anywhere else express cynicism about this country, you tell them that that is a poor excuse for inaction. Cynicism is just a

cover for laying down and giving up and not going on. We have got to go on and go forward together.

All my life I have been driven by the conviction that it is fundamentally wrong for any human being to be deprived of their God-given capacity to grow and to live out their dreams. That animates everything we try to do in Washington. But this country runs fundamentally on your pulse, on your heartbeat, on your conviction, and on your work. And I ask you, join me in this one simple resolve: We will not permit the American people to be divided in 1996. We are going forward together.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11 a.m. at the Department of Public Works. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Cameron G. Priebe of Taylor, MI. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks on the Terrorist Attack in Israel and an Exchange With Reporters in Taylor

March 4, 1996

The President. I want to express my deep anger at the news of this latest bombing in Israel and to reaffirm the determination of the United States to do all we can to work with our friends in the Middle East to stop the killing, to bring the killers to justice, and ensure that terrorism does not triumph over peace in the Middle East.

Once again the enemies of peace have murdered completely innocent Israeli citizens, including children, in their hysterical, determined, fanatic attempt to kill all hope of peace between Israel and Palestinians and others in the Middle East. We must again state our determination that these forces of terror shall not triumph.

Together with those who have worked so hard for lasting peace in the Middle East, the United States is committed to confronting this challenge and to prevailing over these forces of hate and violence. As we offer our prayers for the victims of the latest tragedy, we also reaffirm our commitment to the peace.

As I said earlier this morning and I would like to repeat again, it is ironic that I'm here in this community where I was slated to come last November but had to put it off to go to Israel for Prime Minister Rabin's funeral. The forces which led to his killing, as much as they claim to hate the forces that have been behind this latest round of bombing of innocent Israeli citizens, have one thing in common: They live for division. They live for the continuation of the violence and the hatred in the Middle East. They are even willing, as we see today, to kill themselves, members of their own groups, just to keep people living on hatred and division.

We must not give in to that. We must fight it. We must fight it with all the resources at our command. And the United States will do everything we can to support Israel and the other friends of peace in the Middle East.

Thank you.

Q. Mr. President, are you convinced that Yasser Arafat has done all that he can to control Hamas? Many Israelis believe that he has just