

Ned McWherter appointed him to work with the then-Governor of Arkansas to try to find ways to redevelop the Mississippi River region. He was my partner and my friend, and I developed just as much respect and love for him as all of you have. And Mr. Ed, it's great to see you today, sir. Thank you.

I also want to make one other introductory remark. I shook hands with Mrs. Jim Bob Robertson. She said, "I'm 101 years old. I've never missed an election, and you're the first President I've ever met." [Laughter] And I said, "Well, it's high time." [Laughter] And then she leaned over and kissed me. And I can tell you, she may be 101, but she still kisses real good. I appreciate that. I thank her.

Ladies and gentlemen, before I make my remarks I want to report to you on a development in another country that you may not have heard about. Early this morning, the military forces of Iraq overran the city of Irbil, which is in the portion of northern Iraq controlled and populated by the Kurds. The situation there remains unclear. There are reports of heavy fighting and firing in populated areas. There are indications that some Kurdish elements may be involved in the operation with Iraq. These developments, however, cause me grave concern. I have placed our forces in the region on high alert, and they are now being reinforced.

It is premature at this time, and I want to emphasize that, entirely premature to speculate on any response we might have. But we are prepared to deal with these developments. We will be working hard with others in the international community who share our concern.

And let me just say in closing, I hope all of you are as proud as I am that we have the quality and strength of the men and women in uniform we have serving us all around the world. And I hope you'll say an extra prayer for them tonight. Thank you.

We're glad to be here. We didn't expect that this many of you would be here, and we're awfully glad to see you.

On Thursday night, I had the opportunity to speak from Chicago in our Democratic Convention to the American people about what Al Gore and I would like to do if you give us 4 more years. The fundamental question is whether we're going to build a bridge to the future or a bridge to the past. Will you help us build a bridge to the 21st century?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. A bridge with world-class jobs, world-class education, a clean environment, with a growing economy; a bridge where families can be strong in raising their children, succeeding at work and home; a bridge where communities know that the crime rate is going to come down every year because there are more police officers on the street and because we're all taking more responsibilities to keep our kids out of trouble in the first place—will you help us build that kind of bridge? [Applause] Will you help us for the next 68 days in this election? [Applause] And then for 4 more years after that? [Applause]

Let me tell you, folks—I said this at the convention, I want to say it again—politicians are always known for overstating. It is no overstating when I tell you that Albert Gore from Tennessee is the finest, most effective Vice President in the history of the United States of America. And if you'll give us a chance to build that bridge and you'll build it with us, we'll all walk over it in the year 2000.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:05 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Ned Ray McWherter, former Tennessee Governor, and Houston Gordon, Tennessee senatorial candidate.

Remarks in Dyersburg, Tennessee August 31, 1996

The President. Thank you. Wow! Well, I asked you not to leave, and you didn't. Thanks for staying. We got here as quick as we could.

I want to thank the mayor and everyone who worked hard to make this event possible today. I thank the two bands for bringing us the music. Thank you very much.

I think you can see that Tipper and Hillary and Al and I have a good time when we're out together, when we're on the road, and when we're with the people who put us in the White House that we've been working for and fighting for for 4 years. And we thank you for being here today. It's wonderful to just to look out here and see you.

I want to thank Congressman Tanner and Governor McWherter, Houston Gordon, Bill Purcell, Lois DeBerry, all the other people in Tennessee that are going across Tennessee with us. It is great to be back here in western Tennessee. I want to thank my friends from Arkansas who came across the border. There's a sign over there that says, "Rector, Arkansas, is still Clinton country." And that's good. I'll be home for a barbecue Labor Day 2001, I hope. [*Applause*] Thank you.

Ladies and gentlemen, Thursday night I had the enormous honor of addressing the American people from Chicago when I accepted the nomination of my party for a second term as President. I want to say to you again, briefly, what I said then. The choice in this election is whether we're going to build a bridge to the 21st century or try to build a bridge to the past, whether we think we have to go forward together as one people, helping each other to make the most of our own lives, or whether we're going to say, well, you're on your own and we hope you make it.

I think the choice is clear. Look where we were 4 years ago. Four years ago when Al Gore and I came and asked the people of Tennessee to give us a chance to lead this country, unemployment was higher, wages were stagnant, crime was rising, our problems were being unaddressed, we had a rising wave of cynicism in this country, and we were literally in danger of losing the middle class dreams that made America great.

Four years later, we have 10 million more jobs, 4½ million new homeowners, 12 million people have taken advantage of the family leave law to have babies or take care of their folks without losing their jobs. October 1st, 10 million Americans are going to get an increase in their minimum wage. Twenty-five million Americans, because of the health reform bill I signed last week, are going to be able to change jobs or even to lose a job without having their health insurance taken away from them even if somebody in their family's been sick or is still sick.

We've upgraded the standards for food, for limiting pesticides that are dangerous on food. We've got 50 million more Americans breathing cleaner air than we had 4 years ago. I'm telling you, folks, this country is on the right track to the 21st century. We don't need to change tracks now. We need to keep on going down that track.

But we all know there is more to do. We all know there's more to do. The first thing we've got to do to build the right bridge to the 21st century is to make sure every single American has the chance to live up to his or her God-given potential. And that means we have to increase educational opportunity and performance in the United States.

Thursday night I proposed a program to put 30,000 tutors together with our AmeriCorps volunteers to mobilize a million people to make sure that every single American child can read on his or her own by the time they're in the third grade. It will revolutionize their performance later on.

I propose that by the year 2000 every classroom and library in every school in America will not only have the computers and trained teachers to use the computers we need but will also be hooked up to the information superhighway so that kids in every classroom in Dyersburg, Tennessee, for the first time in the history of the country can get the same information in the same time in the same way that children in the wealthiest school districts in the United States do. It has never happened before.

I propose by the year 2000 to make at least 2 years of education after high school as universal as a high school education is today, a tax credit for the cost of community college in every State in America. We can do that and make community college education universal.

I propose to give a \$10,000 tax credit for the cost of college tuition, and I believe that would be the best money we ever spent. If you're old or young or middle-aged and you need to go back to school to get more education and training, we ought to give you the chance to do it to help your families and build a strong America.

The second thing we've got to do to build a bridge is to keep this economy growing and keep it stronger. That means we have to balance the budget but do it in the right way, without gutting Medicare, Medicaid, education, the environment, or weakening the potential protection

of our people as they tried to do when I vetoed their budget last year, even after they shut the Government down. Will you stay with me in building that kind of bridge?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. And I do believe you can have tax cuts—look, the weather is a lot better than if it was so hot people were falling out. When I was on the train trip, we took 30 people out of one rally, it was so hot. They were all fine; they just needed a little water. So we're going to get a little water in advance. Crop prices are up; this won't hurt them any. This is good.

We can have a tax cut, folks, but it needs to be targeted to the people who need it for the purposes we need it, to childrearing, to education, to buying that first-time home. I'm for an IRA that you can withdraw from without penalty to buy a home, to educate a child, to deal with a health problem. I think you ought to be able to sell your home and never pay any taxes on the gain. I think you ought to be able to send yourselves to college or your children to college and never have to pay taxes on that money. That's our plan. But we pay for it all and balance the budget.

Our friends say, "We're going to give you more money. We'll give you a lot more money." They're going to throw money at you; that's what they say. But what they don't say is, in order to pay for their tax cut, they have to have much bigger cuts in Medicare, Medicaid, education, and the environment than I vetoed the last time. They still won't pay for it. That means a bigger deficit.

What does that mean in Dyersburg, Tennessee, a bigger deficit? Well, look around here. It means a higher home mortgage payment because interest rates will go up. It means a higher car payment. It means higher credit card payments. And look at all these little businesses here. It means every time they want to borrow money they will have to pay 2 percent more on their money. It means fewer investments in small business and fewer jobs. We have to have a healthy small-business economy if we're going to grow America, especially in the small towns. We want to keep interest rates low, not up.

I want to build a bridge to the 21st century that will enable all Americans to take care of their families. That's why we worked on health care reform and why, in our budget plan, we're going to be able to help families who lose their jobs to keep their health insurance for at least 6 months. That's why we're helping small businesses to make it simpler to take out pension plans for themselves and their employees and to keep them when you move from job to job. That's why we want to change the family leave law to say you ought to be able to take a little time off from work to go to your kid's parent-teacher conference or take your child to a regular doctor's appointment. That's the kind of thing we need to do to build this country. Will you help us build that bridge to the 21st century?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Folks, I love seeing all of you here. I want to get out here and shake a few hands. But I want to ask you one more time. We want a bridge that's big enough, strong enough, and wide enough for everybody to walk across together. Will you help us build it?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Will you help us build it for 68 more days in this campaign?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Will you help us build it for 4 years after that?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Do you believe our best days are still ahead?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. God bless you. Let's go bring them home to America. Thank you. Bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:10 p.m. at the Courthouse Square. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Bill Revell of Dyersburg; Ned Ray McWherter, former Tennessee Governor; Houston Gordon, Tennessee senatorial candidate; and Bill Purcell, majority leader, and Lois DeBerry, speaker pro tempore, Tennessee House of Representatives.