

Remarks to the Community in St. Louis, Missouri September 10, 1996

The President. Thank you.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, it is wonderful to be here. Thank you for this vast sea of people. Thank you for all these wonderful signs: "Students for Clinton," "Teachers for Clinton," "Cardinals and Clinton," "Seniors for Clinton." There's one that says, "I'm from Haynes, Arkansas." "I'm from Hope, Arkansas." Good for you. My favorite one is that one back there that said, "I'd vote for anyone smart enough to marry Hillary." Thank you very much.

Ladies and gentlemen, first of all, I want to thank all these people who are here with me. I want to thank my friend Al Green for singing the national anthem. Wasn't he great? I want to thank those who preceded us on the program: your comptroller, Darlene Green; your president of the board of aldermen, Francis Slay; Representative Skelton, our Democratic chair; the county prosecutor, Bob McCulloch; Dr. Hammonds, the superintendent; all the principals who are here; the people from the school board; the State treasurer, Bob Holden; the secretary of state, Becky Cook; Joe Carmichael, our State Democratic chair. Senator Banks, thank you for being here.

Thank you, Gateway Elementary and Middle Schools, for welcoming us here. I love this place. I also want to introduce just one person I brought with me, my deputy campaign manager, the former Congressman from Missouri and former nominee to the United States Senate, Alan Wheat is here with me today—a great American. I thank him.

I want to thank your mayor for his aggressive leadership in education and housing and fighting crime, in proving that this city can be given back to its people and that, just as the motto of this school says, if you empower people and give them a chance to make the most of their own lives, they will do it. That's his philosophy, and that's what we're doing together.

I want to thank Governor Mel Carnahan for being one of the most enlightened and progressive Governors in the entire United States, for a person who believes that welfare reform

means putting people to work, not putting them on the street, and giving our children and our families a better chance at a better future.

I want to say a thank you to Joan Kelly Horn for being willing to put herself on the line and run for the Congress again against the well-financed members of the other party, knowing that they are wrong and she is right. And you need to prove her right on election day.

I want to thank Congressman Dick Gephardt for being a great majority leader, a courageous minority leader, a man who is the best prepared person in the country to be the next Speaker of the House of Representatives, and I hope you will help him to do that.

And when I heard your own Congressman, Bill Clay, up here talking—what I want you to know is that when he's in a room alone with me in Washington he sounds just like he does when he's up here talking to you over a microphone. *[Laughter]* He's the same person every place and every time, and he loves, he loves the children of this district and of this country. He believes in education. And if you make Dick Gephardt the Speaker, you will make him the chairman of the House Education Committee, and that will be a good thing for America.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm honored to be back in St. Louis. We had one of the most memorable rallies ever here in 1992. I know we're a little late today, and I want to tell you the main reason we are, and I hope you'll understand and be glad. I had to take a little time in Kansas City to make a statement about a very momentous event that occurred today in New York City.

The United Nations has begun to meet again, and today, by an overwhelming vote, with only three nations in the entire world dissenting, the nations of the world voted to end nuclear testing once and for all in the entire world.

I came into office determined to lift the cloud of nuclear threats from our children and our future. We got the countries of the world to agree not to sell or develop nuclear weapons and give them to other people. We ended a nuclear program in North Korea. We finally succeeded in removing most of the nuclear weap-

ons from any place within the old Soviet Union. There are no nuclear missiles pointed at the children of the United States tonight for the first time since the dawn of the nuclear age.

And now, if we can see this all the way through, with the vote of these nations today it means that we will be able to take another giant step toward ensuring the safety of our planet and our children and the children of the world if we can ban forever nuclear testing, a dream first born by President Eisenhower and President Kennedy so long ago. It's a great day for America and a great day for the world.

Just a few days ago, after the Democratic Convention in Chicago, we started a trip on the bus, Hillary and I and Al and Tipper Gore, in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. We had a huge crowd there on a hot day, once again demonstrating that our country is on the right track to the 21st century. Do you believe that? [*Applause*] We are.

Compared to 4 years ago, we've got the lowest unemployment rate in 7½ years, 10½ million new jobs, wages going up again for the first time in a decade, 4 years of record—record starts of new small businesses, record numbers of women and minorities owning businesses in this country. We have a 15-year high in homeownership. I am proud of these things. We're moving in the right direction.

Fifteen million hard-working American families got a tax cut so they would always want to stay off welfare and keep working; 12 million families got to take a little time off from work without losing their jobs for the birth of a baby or the illness of a parent; 40 million Americans got their pensions protected; 10 million Americans on October 1st are going to get an increase in their minimum wage. Every small-business person in the country will be eligible for a tax cut if they put more money into their business to improve their productivity so they can hire more people or give their employees a raise. This country is moving in the right direction. I'm telling you, we are moving in the right direction, and we don't need to turn back now.

Here in St. Louis I was talking to the mayor about something called the brownfields initiative. That doesn't mean anything to most of you, but it will before long. A brownfield is a place where there used to be jobs in a city where there's now nothing but pollution. And what we aim to do is to clean up those brownfields so we can get rid of the pollution

and bring back the jobs. And we're going to do it all over America, and we're going to do it right here in St. Louis.

We cleaned up more toxic waste sites in the last 3 years than were cleaned up in the previous 12 years. We brought the deficit down in each of the 4 years I've been President for the first time since before the Civil War, to take the debt off our children and keep the interest rates down on their parents. There are 1.8 million fewer people on welfare, and child support collections are up 40 percent. This country is moving in the right direction.

I came into this job that you gave me—and Missouri sure played a big role in giving me this job for 4 years, and I thank you—with a simple vision for these little children here. I wanted us to go into the next century with the American dream alive and well and real for every person who is willing to work for it.

I wanted us to be one strong community coming together, not drifting apart; made stronger by our differences, not made weaker by them. I wanted us to continue to lead the world for peace and freedom and prosperity, and we are on the right track.

And let me say that I have tried to practice the politics of what to do instead of who's to blame. I don't care much about who's to blame, but in elections you do have to make choices, and it's important to know what decisions are being made. And when you think about Bill Clay and Dick Gephardt or Joan Kelly Horn, when you think about the races for Congress and the race for President, there are some things that are important to know.

In 1993 and 1994, we said yes to reducing the deficit in a way that was fair to all Americans and continued to increase our investment in education, in protecting the environment, in protecting Medicare and Medicaid. And the folks on the other side, they said no. We said yes to a crime bill that put 100,000 police on the street and banned assault weapons; and they said no. We said yes to a less expensive student loan program that gave young people the option to repay it as a percentage of their income. And all of them said no. We said yes to the AmeriCorps program that gives people a chance to solve problems in their communities and earn money for college, and the leaders of their party said no. We said yes to the family leave law, and the leaders of their party said no. We said yes to a tax cut for the 15 million Americans

with children in their homes that are working the hardest for the most modest wages, and they all said no. We said yes to the minimum wage increase, and most of them said no. We said yes to more funds for Head Start, for smaller classes, for safe and drug-free schools, and they said no.

And then, when they had their turn, they said we'll balance the budget by giving people like the President, who didn't need it, a tax cut and cutting Medicare, destroying Medicaid's guarantee of 30 years to poor children and pregnant women and middle class families with members with disabilities and the elderly in nursing homes, by cutting back on education when we need to be investing more, by weakening our environmental protection when we need to be doing more. That's what they said yes to. And then we had our chance, and we said no. We said no.

And that's really what this election is all about. It's a clear, unambiguous choice about building a bridge to the future or going back to a past that didn't work the first time. That is the choice. It's a choice between building a bridge that's wide and strong enough for all of us to walk across arm in arm or trying to recover a past that is not recoverable.

My fellow Americans, that's what this election is about. I want to build a bridge to the future that keeps our economy growing strong so that every single person who is willing to work has a chance to work and to be a part of the American dream. Will you help me build that bridge? [Applause]

Now, that means we do have to balance the budget. Every time I say this in Washington all the experts say, "Now, Mr. President, don't go into a city where most of the voters are Democrats anyway and talk about balancing the budget because it bores people. People don't care about it unless the economy's in bad shape, and then they think it will fix it."

Let me tell you why you ought to care about it. Our Republican friends said something last year I agree with. They said if we had no plan to balance the budget, interest rates would be 2 percent higher, so the Government would be borrowing money, the same money you're trying to borrow. You know what that means? You figure it out when you go home tonight. What would 2 percent mean on your home mortgage, your car payment, your credit card payments? It's a lot of money. What would 2 percent mean

to all these business people? You want to borrow money in St. Louis and start new businesses or extend their businesses so they can hire more people. That's a lot of money. It would be bad for the economy.

So we say, yes, let's balance the budget, but let's do it without gutting Medicare, Medicaid, education, and the environment. Yes, let's have a tax cut, but let's have a tax cut to people who need it, to help them raise their children and educate their children and save for a home and save for a college education and save for health care. And let's pay for that tax cut.

Let's don't go back. Let's don't go back and adopt an unwise tax program that sounds so great. "Oh, I'll give you more money," they say. What they don't say is, "I'll give you more money and then we'll have to cut Medicare, Medicaid, education, the environment even more than we tried to cut it before, and the deficit will go up so you'll have higher interest rates." I say let's build that bridge to the future. We don't want to go back to that past. We tried it the first time and we didn't like it. Let's keep going. Will you help me build that bridge to the future? [Applause]

Ten million American children, 10 million of them are still living within 4 miles of a toxic waste dump. If you will stick with us, we'll clean up two-thirds of those, the worst ones in the next 4 years, so that all of our children will be growing up next to parks, not poison. Will you help me build that bridge to the future? [Applause]

We want to finish the job of putting 100,000 police on the street. We've got the law on the books, but they've tried twice to stop it. I don't know why. The crime rate is down dramatically. The murder rate in St. Louis has dropped dramatically. It is not complicated. We've got police on the street working with the friends and neighbors of people who care about their neighborhoods and their children. We can bring the crime rate down. We've got it down for 4 years in a row. If we bring it down for 4 more years in a row, we may finally get to where we like living in this country and we feel secure in all of our neighborhoods, in all of our cities. Will you help me build that kind of bridge to America's future? [Applause]

My opponent said just the other day that he still thought Mr. Clay and Mr. Gephardt and I were wrong in passing the family and medical leave law, said it was antibusiness. All the bill

says is, if you work in a business with 50 or more employees and your spouse is about to have a baby or you are or your mama or your daddy's real sick or your baby's real sick, you can take just a little time off from work without losing their job. Now, you tell me, is that antibusiness?

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. If it's antibusiness, how did this economy produce 10½ million new jobs? That's more jobs, more job growth, faster rate than any Republican administration in 70 years. It's not antibusiness. It's good for America when people can raise their families and be good to their kids and succeed at work. Will you help me build that kind of bridge to the 21st century? [Applause]

Most important of all, I look at this beautiful, beautiful educational complex, and I look at the even more beautiful children out here. I know and you know that the only way, in the world we're living in and certainly in the world we're moving to, that we can protect all of our children and give them a chance to live up to their God-given abilities is to have education that is world-class quality for every child in America. Will you help me build that bridge to the 21st century? [Applause]

I was told that this is the first new school construction in St. Louis in 25 years. We've got the largest number of young people in school today in American history. I was in a school the other day in Tampa, Florida, a beautiful old school, where there were five or six trailers outside, prefab buildings that had to be brought in just to house the students.

One of the things I want to do is to have the National Government help those cities and those school districts that are willing to make an extra effort at school construction to rehabilitate old buildings or build new ones so that we can help them bring the interest rates down and lower the cost of school construction if they will make the extra effort. Will you help me do that? [Applause]

Let me tell you something else I think we ought to do. Forty percent of the 8-year-olds in this country—40 percent of the 8-year-olds in this country—are still not able to read a book on their own.

Audience member. Not in Gateway!

The President. But we know—we know—you said not in Gateway—that's the idea. What I want them to say is, "Not anywhere. Not in

Gateway, not anywhere." We know if our young people can't read, they can't learn other more complex subjects. They won't be able to write, use the language, learn another language, master computers. We know this is important.

I want to mobilize an army of reading tutors, starting with the AmeriCorps volunteers, the young people on work study, specially trained teachers and volunteers so that we can go into the schools of this country and help the teachers and help the parents and say by the year 2000 every 8-year-old boy and girl in America will be able to pick up a book and look at it and say, "I can read it by myself." Will you help me build that bridge to the 21st century? [Applause]

Let me say one other thing. We've got the chance now for the first time in the history of our country to give every child, no matter where that child lives, no matter how poor their neighborhoods, the same access to the same information in the same way at the same time as the children of the wealthiest school districts in America, because of technology. It requires computers in every classroom. It requires trained teachers on those computers. And it requires us in the next 4 years to hook up every one of those classrooms in every school in America to the information superhighway, to the Internet, the World Wide Web. Once we do it, education will truly be democratic and open to all Americans. Will you help us build that bridge to the 21st century? [Applause]

And finally, let me say, we have got to put a college education within reach of every single American who wants to go and is willing to work. The scholarships, the AmeriCorps program, the improved student loan program, all this has helped. But we want to do more. I want us in the next 4 years to make at least 2 years of community college education as universal for every American of any age who wants to do it as a high school education is today. Will you help us do that? [Applause]

I want to do it in the following way. I want us to say to everybody, we will give you a tax credit, a refundable tax credit for up to \$1,500 a year. That will cover the typical community college tuition in any State at any community college. Nearly every American lives within driving distance of a community college, and every American needs at least that much education. That's the right kind of tax cut for America, to send the American people to school. I want

to give the American families a tax deduction for the cost of any tuition after high school, undergraduate, postgraduate, you name it, at any age, up to \$10,000 a year. Will you help me do that? [Applause]

That's the kind of bridge I want to build to the 21st century. I believe that we owe it to the children and to their parents to build a country in which people can succeed at home, raising their kids, and at work; where everyone who wants to get another education or more education has the chance to do it; where we say, you do not have to wreck the fabric of America's community to balance the budget. If you do it in the right way, it will make America a stronger community. That is the kind of America I want to build.

And let me tell you, folks—this election, you just heard, is 56 days from today, 8 weeks from today. In the next 8 weeks you think about how many people you're going to speak with. Think about all your friends and family members, everybody you might talk to on the telephone living inside or beyond the borders of the State of Missouri. And I want to just ask you to remember this—this is a wonderful rally; you've made me very happy today—but I want you to remember what I said. These are big choices, and the choices you make in the races for Congress and the choice you make in the

Presidential race is a choice that has more to do with you than us. It has more to do with these children. They have all their tomorrows in front of them. And we owe it to them to make sure that our best days are still ahead. We owe it to them to make sure that the future is brighter than any of our glorious past.

And we can do it. We have it within our means if we have the vision and the will and if we make up our mind, each and every one of us, to be good citizens.

Yes, we have done a lot in the last 4 years, but the last 4 years is just an indication of what we can do in the next 4 and the years beyond if we will build that bridge together. Would you help me do that? [Applause]

Thank you. God bless you. Let's go get it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:25 p.m. at Samuel Shephard Gateway Educational Park. In his remarks, he referred to singer Al Green; Darlene Green, St. Louis city comptroller; Francis G. Slay, president, St. Louis board of aldermen; Robert P. McCulloch, St. Louis County prosecutor; Cleveland Hammonds, superintendent, St. Louis public schools; Joseph Carmichael, Missouri State Democratic chair; State Senator B.J. (Jet) Banks; Mayor Freeman R. Bosley, Jr., of St. Louis; and Joan Kelly Horn, candidate for Missouri's Second Congressional District.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in St. Louis September 10, 1996

Thank you so very much. Thank you, Jeff, for that wonderful statement and for the way that you have handled this terribly difficult and painful situation and for the way that you have led your very great company.

Thank you, Mr. Mayor, for giving me a great time in St. Louis, for getting those 18,000 people there today at that absolutely wonderful educational complex that I think would be the envy of any community in the entire Nation. St. Louis can be very, very proud of that. It was extremely beautiful and, obviously, extremely effective. [Applause] Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Gephardt. I want to say a little more about him later. Thank you, Governor, for your friendship. We were sitting at

the table tonight reminiscing about how Mel Carnahan, when he was trying to become Governor of Missouri in 1992 and should have been paying attention to his own business and the primary, endorsed me for President at a time when only my mother thought I could win. [Laughter] I was worried about his political health. But he seems to have weathered that burden quite nicely, and I thank him for it.

Mel and Jean and their children have been a real credit to the people of Missouri. And we were over in Kansas City earlier today with Mayor Cleaver and with Alan Wheat, who used to represent them in Congress but is now my deputy campaign manager, and Congresswoman McCarthy, and we had a wonderful meeting