

Remarks in Lake Charles, Louisiana October 24, 1996

The President. Hello. Hello, Louisiana! Hello, Lake Charles! Thank you. Let's give a hand to the bands over here. [Applause] Thank you for the music. Thank you. Can you hear me way in the back, back there?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Thank you. Can you hear me over by the school buses? Somebody up here can hear real well. [Laughter]

Ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to be back in Lake Charles. I did not know until I came up on this platform that I'm the first sitting President in history to visit your community. All I can say is, if the others had seen what I see here today, they would have been here a long time ago. Thank you very much. Thank you.

I want to thank Senator Bennett Johnston for his career, for his service to Louisiana and to the country. I will miss him very much. But you know, he was having a good time up here. I think he's enjoying this retirement. Thank you, John Breaux, for being my friend and supporter and for a great leader for Louisiana. Thank you, Congressman Cleo Fields and Congressman Bill Jefferson, for being here. Thank you, Lieutenant Governor Kathleen Blanco, Treasurer Ken Duncan, Insurance Commissioner Jim Brown, Agriculture Commissioner Bob Odom. Thank you all. Thank you, Police Jury President Allen August.

I know that there was speaking here earlier for the congressional candidates, Hunter Lundy and Chris John. As a Democrat, I like this Louisiana system, finally, because we have two people in our party running for the congressional seat here. Congratulations to the voters here in this parish.

I want to say a special word of thanks to Mayor Willie Mount for her leadership of this community and for what she said about Lake Charles and your motto, "Moving forward together." I want to say a little more about that in a minute. But you made us feel very welcome here today, Mayor, and we thank you.

I want to thank my good friend Mary Landrieu for running for the Senate and thank her for embracing and sharing the ideals that we're trying to create for America in the 21st

century. And I hope every one of you will help her to help you in the United States Senate in January.

Let me thank Kent Kresea, the CEO of Northrup Grumman, and Jami Lowe. And also I'd like to thank Stanley Leger, the director of the SOWELA Tech College, for giving Jami the education, the opportunity and so many others the opportunity to learn the skills they need to get good jobs for the 21st century. Let's thank all three of them. [Applause]

Let me say—I want to ask you to do one other thing. I asked Jami Lowe—every place I go I ask a citizen to introduce me. And the reason we do that is because I want the American people, the young people here in this audience, those of you who are registered voters, to understand every day that there is a connection between what we do a long way away in Washington and how you live in Lake Charles, and the decisions we make together shape the future we have together. But that's the first speech Jami Lowe ever made, and she had to make it to over 20,000 people to introduce the President. Let's give her another hand. I think she did a remarkable job. [Applause]

I want to thank all of you here at Northrup Grumman who work on the J-STARS program. I did see it in action in Bosnia. Last month, our Department of Defense decided to acquire 19 more J-STARS for the United States Air Force, and we are trying to persuade our NATO allies to buy them for NATO. This morning the NATO Military Committee agreed that we needed an air surveillance system; now it's my job to tell them what air surveillance system we need, the J-STARS, and I'll do my best.

In 1992 I came here to Lake Charles and had a town meeting, and I told you if you would give me a chance to create more opportunity, create more responsibility among the American people, and bring us together more, we would be better off in 4 years. There were 100 people working at Northrup Grumman in 1992; there are 1,400 people working here today. And that story is repeated all across America as 10½ million more Americans are at work, more than half of them in higher wage jobs. America's on the right track to the 21st century. We've got

a 15-year high in homeownership, a 20-year low in child poverty. We've got drops in the crime rate and 2 million fewer people on welfare. This country is moving in the right direction.

I want to talk to you a little bit today about some of the things we need to do. And let's start with Jami Lowe. Most of the people in America who get on welfare do not want to stay on it forever. They want to get off and go to work. They want to succeed at home and at work, the same thing most families want in America. We have worked hard with States to reduce the welfare rolls. And I signed a new welfare reform bill which requires every State and every community to turn the welfare check of every able-bodied person in America into a paycheck within 2 years. That's exactly what we're going to do with more people like Jami Lowe.

One thing we've done is to make more absent parents pay their child support. We've increased by 50 percent the child support collections in only 4 years. Think of it; we've gone from 8 to \$12 billion a year in just 4 years, and we're going to do better in the next 4. We can move 800,000 people off welfare tomorrow if people would just pay the child support they owe and they're legally bound to pay, and we intend to see that it is done.

But we also know that we have to create jobs if we want people to take them. That means where there are jobs available, like those here at Northrop Grumman for people like Jami, there must be education and training. That's why the tech college here deserves a lot of support. We intend to continue to support people with more investments in the education of the American work force. I want to make it easier for people to go back to work and get the education and training they need. I have asked Congress to pass a new "GI bill" for America's workers, to create a skills grant worth over \$2,000 a year to every unemployed and grossly underemployed person in the country so everybody can go back and get the kind of training that Jami had. And I hope you will support me in that as we try to build our bridge to the 21st century. I have offered the American people a specific plan to move another million folks from welfare to work by giving special tax credits, bonuses to businesses to place people in work, by allowing local communities to actually give the welfare check to employers for

a while as a job supplement to train people on the job.

Folks, we do not have to have a welfare system where half the people are trapped in dependency forever. We can move all the people who are able-bodied from welfare to work and make them a part of America's mainstream society if we're committed to doing it together. We're going to make people go to work; we've got to create those jobs out there for people to have. I hope you'll help me to create those jobs and change welfare forever.

I'd like to say a special word of thanks here in Louisiana to the Goodwill Job Connection. They have worked very hard here and in Florida to move 1,500 people from welfare to work. In Louisiana, 80 percent of them are still off welfare after 2 years. I'm telling you, folks, don't believe we can't change the welfare system. We can change it forever and for good, and we'll have every American in the mainstream, working, raising their children, being part of one society, not having some isolated forever and trapped in poverty, if you will help us and we decide to do it together in every community of America. Will you do that? *[Applause]*

My fellow Americans, this is an important election, and you have to decide. The people you vote for and the decision you make whether to vote will determine what kind of future the children in this audience have. The kids here today, before you know it, they'll be doing jobs that haven't been invented yet. A lot of these young kids will be doing jobs that have not even been imagined yet. The world is changing rapidly.

You will decide whether we balance our budget and keep our economy going, whether we do it without gutting our commitment to the future through education and environmental protection, whether we do it without undermining the commitments of Medicare and Medicaid. You will decide whether we have targeted tax cuts to help families educate their children and raise them and buy a first home and deal with medical emergencies. You will decide. That's a big part of building a bridge to the 21st century. And I hope you will decide, yes, that's the way we have to build that bridge. Will you do that? *[Applause]*

You will decide whether we continue to support policies that help our families succeed at home and at work. Twelve million people have taken a little time off from work when a baby

was born or a family member was sick. And we still have record numbers of new businesses, record job growth. The family and medical leave law has made us a stronger, better country. I want to see it narrowly expanded so people can go to parent-teacher conferences with their kids and take their family members to doctor's appointments. That will make America a stronger country. You will decide. I hope you will decide to do it .

You will decide whether we continue to move forward on health care reform. Just before I left, Congress—we passed a law which I've been working for hard, which says now to people, you cannot be taken—your health insurance can't be taken away anymore just because you changed jobs or somebody in your family gets sick. That could protect 25 million Americans in their health insurance. And we also passed a law that says insurance companies can't force new mothers and newborn babies out of the hospital in 24 hours anymore. We're going to protect that.

Now, you will decide whether we adopt my balanced budget plan, which helps families that lose their jobs or between jobs keep health insurance for their children for 6 more months. That is your decision, and I hope you will decide to help us build that bridge to the 21st century. You will decide whether we keep putting 100,000 police on our streets. It's led to 4 years of decline in our crime rate. You will decide whether we continue to help keep our kids away from drugs and gangs and guns and violence. You will decide whether we continue to support the safe and drug-free schools program as we have or cut back on it as our opponents have proposed.

Most important of all for these young people here, you will decide whether we make a major new commitment to guarantee every child in America a world-class education. I want you to help me do three things.

Number one, 40 percent of the 8-year-olds in this country can still not read well enough on their own, and we know if our children can't read, they can't keep learning. I propose to take 30,000 AmeriCorps volunteers and reading specialists to go across this country and mobilize a million volunteers to go and help the parents and the schools of this country, so that by the time we start that new century, every single 8-year-old in America can pick up a book and

say, "I can read this all by myself." And I want you to help me do it.

The second thing I want you to help me do is to make sure that we hook up every single classroom and library in the United States to the information superhighway by the year 2000. Now, if you're older like me and you don't understand all that computer stuff, let me tell you in plain language what that means. If we make sure all of our classrooms have computers, educational materials, trained teachers, and they're hooked up to the Internet and the World Wide Web and all these other networks, here's what that means. It means for the first time in history, in the poorest school districts in Louisiana and Arkansas, in the most remote rural districts in the high plains of the United States, in the toughest inner-city school districts—for the first time ever in those school districts—in the middle class districts, in the rich districts, in the schools, public and private, for the first time ever, every child will have access to the same information in the same way at the same time. It will revolutionize education in America, and I want you to help me do it for our children and our future.

And the last thing I ask you to do is to help me open the doors of college education for all. I want to make sure every person in this country, of any age, who wants to go back to school can do it. I propose to give families in this country a tax credit, a dollar-for-dollar reduction on their taxes for the costs of the typical tuition at a community college or a technical school, for 2 years of education after high school. I want to let families save in an IRA for years but then be able to withdraw from it without any tax penalty if they use the money for education or buying a home or health care. And I want to give the families of Louisiana and America a tax deduction of up to \$10,000 a year for the cost of any college tuition. It should not be taxed, the education of our children and of their parents, as we move into the information age. Will you help me do that? *[Applause]*

Folks, when the mayor opened the program, she said that Lake Charles' motto was "moving forward together." And then I saw this editorial in the morning newspaper that says, "Mr. President, this area is a success." And the editorial said, "Oh, yes, we've had some help from the Federal Government, but most of it we did ourselves with citizen spirit." Well, I agree with that. I agree with that.

But you have to decide whether we're going to move forward together and whether the President, the Congress, and the National Government are going to be your partner to help people have the tools to make the most of their own lives, to build strong careers, strong families, and strong communities. I've tried to be that kind of partner. I'm proud that this country is better off than it was 4 years ago. I'm glad we're on the right track to the 21st century. And I have run a campaign of ideas, not insults, to give you the ideas of what I will do in the next 4 years, if my contract is renewed in less than 2 weeks from today. But you have to decide. You have to decide.

If you want Lake Charles to move forward together; if you believe that in order to have a successful work environment, you have to move forward together; if when you go to church on Sunday, you like to be sitting there with people who are committed to moving forward and learning together; if you believe your family has to work by people working together, shouldn't your country work that way too? Shouldn't your country work that way too? [Applause]

You know, there's been a lot of debate about it in this country. But I believe the First Lady

was right; I think it does take a village to raise a child, to build a community, to build a country, to build a future. And I want you to help us build that village.

I have said all across America, I am trying to build a bridge to the 21st century that is wide enough and strong enough for all of us to walk across. Louisiana needs that bridge. My native State to the north needs that bridge. America needs that bridge. We dare not walk away from the elderly, from the frail, from those who need our help. We dare not walk away from our children and their future. We do not need to sacrifice our environment to grow our economy.

All we need to do is to make a commitment to build that bridge and to move forward together. You've got the right slogan, Lake Charles. Let's live by it. Let's know that our responsibility begins by showing up on Tuesday, November 5th, to vote for it. And let's build that bridge together to the 21st century.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:08 p.m. at Northrup Grumman Corp. In his remarks, he referred to Northrup Grumman Corp. employee Jami Lowe.

Remarks in Marrero, Louisiana October 24, 1996

Thank you. Thanks. Thank you very much. I was listening to Yvonne McPherson talk, wondering if she was Reverend McPherson. [Laughter] And when she really got stirred up I thought, if this lady passes the plate we're all going to leave here broke. [Laughter] Thank you. Thank you for your wonderful, wonderful words and your wonderful example.

Thank you, Lieutenant Renee Washington, for your 18 years and for the work you're doing to make our children safer and for your great remarks. I want to thank all of you for making all of us who don't live here feel so welcome tonight. I understand the West Jefferson High School Band played. I thank them for that.

I want to thank Congressman Cleo Fields for coming with me tonight and for all the work he's doing on our behalf. Thank you. My good

friend Congressman Bill Jefferson, who plays both sides of the river here, and that's good politics. Sometimes it's not good in public life to straddle the fence, but I picked up pretty quick it's a good thing to straddle this river. [Laughter] If his in-laws hadn't been from here, I think he would have moved them over here just to make sure he was covered.

Thank you, my good friend Senator John Breaux, for all you do for Louisiana and all you've done for me. Thank you, and God bless you, sir. Thank you, Mary Landrieu, for running for the Senate and for standing up for what is right and supporting our crime programs. Thank you.

And Sheriff, thank you. I want to thank everybody in the sheriff's department who's worked on this program. I understand that Deputy