

Remarks in Springfield, Virginia October 27, 1996

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you. Well, ladies and gentlemen, Senator Robb called me about a week ago, and he said, "You know, my father-in-law was the last Democrat to carry the State of Virginia. But I think if you'll come across the river and see us, you might be the next." And here I am.

I want to thank Chuck Robb and his wonderful wife, Lynda, for being such great friends to Hillary and to me for, well, a long, long time now. I want to thank him for his courage, his character, and his integrity in serving the people of Virginia and setting a model for people all across America. I want to thank Congressman Jim Moran and Congressman Bobby Scott for the work they've done for you and for America, and I'm glad you're sending them back to the Congress to serve for 2 more years.

Thank you, Lieutenant Governor Don Beyer, for your leadership and for your future leadership for Virginia. Thank you, Senator Yvonne Miller. Thank you, Kate Hanley. Thank you, Sue Wrenn, and thank you, Ellen Malcolm. Thank you, Bruce Hornsby, for playing the national anthem and for always being there for us.

And I want to thank the Lee High School Band over here. Let's give them a hand, the high school band. *[Applause]* Thank you for being here. I'd also like to tell you today, since our campaign is about the 21st century, I brought with me the President's adviser on science and technology—a key to the 21st century—a seventh generation Virginian, Dr. Jack Gibbons. Thank you for coming with me, Jack.

Folks, on any day this would be a great crowd in Virginia. But on this beautiful fall day, when the Redskins are playing and on a streak and the Marine Corps Marathon is going on, this is an unbelievable crowd. Thank you for being here.

Of course, you know, ever since I saw that ad with Chuck Robb's body and Mark Warner's head, I thought maybe you showed up to see if some medical miracle had been developed. *[Laughter]* I didn't know there was anything wrong with Mark Warner's body or Chuck Robb's head until I saw that. I'm still trying to figure out what it's all about. I'll tell you

one thing, I don't think it was about you and your interests and your future.

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. But Mark Warner is committed to you and your interests and your future. Mark Warner supports the Family and Medical Leave Act that's allowed 12 million families to take some time off when their babies were born or their family members were sick. He supports our efforts to put 100,000 police on the street and our violence against women program in the Department of Justice. He supports our targeted tax cuts to help people pay for a college education. He does not support the other party's agenda of abolishing the Department of Education. So I say to you, this election is about the future. It is not about the Democratic or Republican Party; it's about which vision is right for our future.

Thomas Jefferson was elected President as the first President of the 19th century. Three distinguished Virginians, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe, not only helped to found our country, they led us into a new century. Thomas Jefferson made the most important decision of my political life, a long time before I showed up; he bought the Louisiana territory. If he hadn't done it, I wouldn't be an American and I couldn't be here running today.

I say that to make this point. Believe me, when he bought the Louisiana territory for \$15 million and more than doubled the land size of the United States—and by the way, that was the entire annual budget of the Government at the time. Can you imagine what you'd do to me if I tried to spend the annual budget of the Government on anything? *[Laughter]* And a lot of people thought he had lost his famous reason. He could not have foreseen the full implications of everything that would flow out of that decision. He could not have known that there would be all the things that happened in the 19th century, a great Civil War, two great World Wars and a depression in the 20th century, and that somewhere in a small town in that vast expanse of land that he bought, 150 years later some other young American would be born who would have a chance to grow up

and be President. He did it because he had this vision of the future. And that's what I want to talk to you about today.

Just before I came over here, I met with a lot of cancer advocates, people who have worked on research and treatment and prevention, people who have worked especially on breast cancer. I announced \$30 million in extra funding for breast cancer genetic research because we just discovered two of the genes that cause breast cancer. It may enable us to prevent it forever.

Now, let me just talk about some of the other things that have happened in the last 4 years. Because of research and faster approval of drugs, we have more than doubled the life expectancy of people with HIV and AIDS. It's on its way to becoming a chronic illness. We developed the first treatment for stroke ever. We have seen, for the first time ever, in laboratory animals whose spines were totally severed, movement in the lower limbs by the transfer of nerves from other parts of their bodies to the spine. This has enormous implications for military veterans, accident victims, and others who have been confined in their movements because of damage to their spines. We just signed a contract with IBM not very long ago to develop a supercomputer in the next couple of years that will do as many calculations in a second as you can do on a hand-held computer in 30,000 years.

Now, that is the world we're going into. I appreciate what Senator Robb said. We are better off than we were 4 years ago. We are moving in the right direction. But the issue is, where are we going? What is our philosophy?

Again, I say, this is a period not all that unlike 200 years ago. It's not about party; it's about vision. Mark Warner, Chuck Robb, Bobby Scott, Jim Moran, Don Beyer, we share a vision about the things we must do together as a nation, in our States, in our communities to help each other make the most of our own lives, to seize those opportunities for the 21st century, and to move this country forward. That's the issue. Are we going to build a bridge to the future big enough and strong enough for us all to walk across? Are you willing to help? [Applause] Do we really believe we would be better off if their vision had prevailed for the last 4 years?

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. Would we be better off if there were no family and medical leave law?

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. Would we be better off if we cut student loans instead of increasing them?

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. Would we be better off if we cut Head Start instead of increasing it?

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. Would we be better off if we hadn't made those 300,000 loans to women business owners?

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. Of course not. Would we be better off if we hadn't cleaned up those toxic waste dumps—more in 3 years than they did in 12?

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. This is not about party; it's about you, how we're going to live together and whether we should work together to give each other the tools to make the most of our future. Do you believe we'd be better off, as they say, if you were left on your own? Or do we believe it takes a village to raise our children and build a country and build a future? [Applause]

In Virginia, the State with the longest and proudest and richest history of all in leading America in the right direction, the State which gave us the people who led us into a new century 2 years ago, your votes will decide whether we balance the budget and move away from the dangerous and reckless fiscal policies that quadrupled our debt in the 12 years before I came to Washington and whether we balance that budget in a way that keeps interest rates coming down and the economy growing but still protects the fundamentals of educational investment, research investment, protection of the environment, Medicaid's guarantee of health care to people with disabilities, to poor children, to seniors in nursing homes, and the integrity of the Medicare program, which has given us the longest living—the highest life expectancy for senior citizens of any country in the entire world. You have to decide.

You have to decide, now that we have passed the family and medical leave law, whether you agree with me that we ought to extend it a little bit so that parents can go to see their children's teachers twice a year without losing their jobs or take their family members to the doctor, whether people who work for overtime should have the decision in their hands about whether to take their overtime in cash or time

with their families if their families need them at home.

You will decide about where we go in health care. We've now said you can't lose your health insurance just because you change jobs or someone in your family has been sick. We have said you cannot have an insurance company force a mother and a newborn baby out of a hospital in just 24 hours. We've said we're finally going to give some equal treatment to families with mental health problems. They deserve treatment, too. And after long, long years of advocacy by veterans like Chuck Robb, we have finally said to our veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange in Vietnam and whose children got spina bifida as a result, finally you're going to get the health care support—and the disability—you have deserved for so long.

Now you must decide. Their dangerous tax scheme would blow a hole in the deficit; require bigger cuts in medical programs, education, the environment, and research; and weaken our economy.

Our balanced budget goes further in health care. We want to give people help in keeping their health insurance for their families when they're between jobs. We want to make mammograms free for women over 65 on Medicare. And we want to say to the over 1½ million families who are courageously caring for family members with Alzheimer's, you ought to have some respite care; you're saving the health care system money; you're keeping your families together; we know how tough it is, and we're going to help you. That's all in our balanced budget plan. You have to decide.

We have worked to reduce the welfare rolls by 1.9 million, while our friends on the other side were just talking about it, acting as if all you have to do is pass a law. Before there ever was a new welfare reform, we took the rolls down 1.9 million, moving people from welfare to work, working with 43 States. Now there is a new law. Here's what it says: The National Government will continue to guarantee to poor families health care and food for the children and more for child care than ever when someone moves from welfare to work. But every State and local communities now will have 2 years in which to turn, for an able-bodied person, a welfare check into a paycheck.

But that's just a law. Are we going to walk away now, or are we going to say, if we're going to require poor people with little children to

go to work, we've got to make sure the work is out there? I have a plan to create those jobs; we have to decide whether we want them or not.

Compared to 4 years ago, we have taken unbelievable amounts of dangerous chemicals out of our air. We've lifted the quality of our drinking water. We've improved the safety of our food. We've cleaned up more toxic waste dumps in 3 years than they did in 12. We have worked to protect our precious national heritage and beat back their ill-advised plan to actually sell off some of our national parks. Now we have to decide whether we're going to go forward, continuing to clean up waterways that need to do it, continuing to uphold high environmental standards, and cleaning up 500 more of those toxic waste dumps so our children will be growing up next to parks, not poison. Let's don't turn back on environmental protection. Let's go forward and prove we can grow the economy and protect our environment.

Most of important of all, here in Virginia, where Thomas Jefferson first envisioned the need for free public school for all people, before others even thought most people should go to school, we are now on the threshold of an era in which what we earn depends on what we can learn, in which whether we can solve the medical problems of our time depends on what we can learn, in which our ability to preserve world peace and promote harmony depends in part on how much we can learn.

I want to give this country the finest educational system in the world when I leave office in the 21st century. I want us to have high standards, high accountability, and more freedom for principals, teachers, and parents to create those conditions in every school in America where those standards can be met. I want us to see a time when—different from now—today, 40 percent of our 8-year-olds still cannot read a book on their own. Part of it is because we're blessed by having so many 8-year-olds whose parents come from other places and whose first language is not English. But I have a plan to mobilize AmeriCorps volunteers and reading tutors, 30,000 of them, to go out and generate a million volunteers to help our parents and our schools teach every 8-year-old so that by the year 2000 every single third grader in America can pick up a book and say, "I can read this all by myself." You have to decide.

We have to create a world where for the first time all our children have access to the same quality education. And we can do it. If we can hook up every classroom and every library and every school in America to the Internet by the year 2000—for those of you who aren't great computer experts, what it means is that for the first time in the history of the country, kids in the smallest rural community in southwest Virginia, kids in the poorest inner-city school districts will have access for the first time ever to the same quantity and quality of information in the same time in the same way as children in the richest districts in America do. It has never been done before. It is high time we did, and we're going to do it if you'll help us to stay with it.

And finally, you have to decide whether we are going to open the doors of college education to all. In the last 4 years, we've given 60,000 young people a chance to serve their communities in AmeriCorps and earn their way to college. Our friends on the other side opposed it. We have given 10 million young people the opportunity to get lower cost college loans and to pay those loans back now as a percentage of their income, so that no one can ever be bankrupted by borrowing the money to go to college. Our friends on the other side opposed it.

Now is the time to finish the job. And I want to do three simple things to help you, whatever your age—whatever your age—go on and get a college education.

Number one, I propose to let families save more for IRA's and withdraw from the money without penalty if they're using it to pay for education or buying a first home or dealing with medical costs.

Number two, I want 2 years of education after high school to become as universal in 4 years as a high school diploma is today. And we can do that—no bureaucracy, no program—simply say to people, we will let you deduct dollar for dollar from your tax bill the cost of a typical community college tuition. If you will go, work hard, make your grades, and be a good citizen you can go to community college—everybody, without regard to income.

And finally, in this State which has such a fabulous tradition of higher education, it is long since time that we gave our families a tax deduction of up to \$10,000 a year for the cost of any tuition at any institution of higher education,

graduate or undergraduate. That is what I propose to do.

Now, that is what we are working for. What is their education vision? Abolish the Department of Education.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. No word about standards, no word about accountability, no word about empowerment of teachers and principals and parents, no word about teaching our children to read or hooking them up to the Internet or opening the doors to college for all. This is not about party. This is about people; this is about the future of America.

And I leave you with this thought. Thomas Jefferson said—and if you go to the Jefferson Memorial you see it inscribed there—"I tremble for my Nation, to think that God is just when I consider slavery." We spent an enormous amount of our blood and time and effort getting over the racial discrimination that was at the core of our creation. We fought a Civil War to keep the country together. We went through a civil rights revolution to live up to the meaning of the Constitution. We had to amend the Constitution to do it. And we're still struggling with it.

But for the last 100 years—starting about 100 years ago, we have become increasingly a nation of greater racial and ethnic and religious diversity, so that now, in northern Virginia alone, there are more people from more countries, with more native languages and more different religions, than any of our Founders ever could have imagined. That means, however, that we have both the greatest challenge the modern world is facing today in our borders and the most fabulous opportunity.

Consider how much of your time I spend as President dealing with other people around the world who simply cannot get along because of their religious, their racial, their ethnic, or their tribal differences. Consider how many people there are in the Middle East, in Northern Ireland, in Burundi and Rwanda, in Bosnia, the bloodiest battleground of Europe since World War II, and countless other places who draw all their strength in life by saying, "Well, whatever's wrong with me, thank God I'm not them," who get up every day and think, "My life has meaning because there's somebody who's different from me I can hate."

And what has it led to in Bosnia? People killing other people's children. What has it led

to in the Middle East, the home of the three great monotheistic religions in the world? On this Sunday, I called the leaders of the talks now going on in the Middle East and pleaded with them again to resolve their differences, to preserve what is a holy land for so many of us so that their children can grow up in peace and dignity and honor.

America's soldiers went to Rwanda and to Somalia to save hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people who should have been able to get along. America's soldiers are today in Bosnia, saving the lives of people who should have been able to get along.

On the other hand, if you look at how small the world is getting, and if you look at our base, our economic base, our resources, our capacity to produce, our educational system, our connections with the rest of the world, our diversity is a miracle of opportunity as we stand on the threshold of the 21st century.

And so I say again, as important as all those specific policies are, it's also important that we make up our mind that we're going to build that bridge to the 21st century together, we're going to walk across it together, we're going to say to each other, "If you believe in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, if you're willing to show up

tomorrow and do your job or go to school and do what you're supposed to do, we don't need to know anything else about you. You're part of our America. We're going forward with you. We're going forward with you."

So I ask you to decide. This election is not very far away. Most people in Virginia have been voting against members of my party for President for over three decades now. And I know how hard it is to break a habit. [Laughter] But one of the things we all teach our kids is that some habits have to be broken.

I want you to go out from this place and spend the next 9 days and tell your fellow Virginians they did a great thing for America when they and their native sons led us into the 19th century 200 years ago. And Virginia can help lead America into the 21st century 9 days from now.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:50 p.m. at Lee High School Park. In his remarks, he referred to Virginia State Senator Yvonne Miller; Katherine K. Hanley, chair, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors; Sue Wrenn, chair, Virginia Democratic Party; Ellen Malcolm, president, EMILY's List; musician Bruce Hornsby; and Virginia senatorial candidate Mark Warner.

Remarks at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee October 27, 1996

Thank you very much. Thank you. I am delighted to be here at the reunion of the Vice President's family, friends, and medical support team. [Laughter] I would like to keep this crowd with us for the next several days. [Laughter]

I'm delighted to be back at Vanderbilt. Chancellor Wyatt, Vice Chancellor Robinson, thank you very much for making us feel so welcome here. Congressman Clement, thank you for coming with us. I'd also like to acknowledge our good friend Justin Dart, who leads our national effort to mobilize people with disabilities. Thank you, Justin. Thank you for being here.

Noah Liff, thank you for your example and for your fine words and for your support of welfare reform. And I thank the other business leaders who are here as well.

Governor McWherter, thank you for being my friend and my colleague over all these years. You know, you Tennesseans can say that he was the best Governor Tennessee ever had. I don't know that because I never lived here. But I can tell you this: He's the best politician I ever met. The first time I ever met him, he put that "aw, shucks" deal on me that he does, you know. I wanted to reach in my pocket and make sure the billfold was still there. [Laughter] And if he'd wanted it, I would have given it to him. [Laughter]

I think it's fair to say that those of us who served as Governors with Ned McWherter thought at the time there was no State that was better run, no State more oriented toward the proper balance of continuous change and