

Oct. 27 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1996

Employment of People With Disabilities; Noah Liff, chairman, Steiner Liff Iron and Metal Co.; and Ned Ray McWherter, former Governor of Tennessee.

Remarks in University City, Missouri *October 28, 1996*

The President. Thank you. Good morning, University City! Good morning, St. Louis! Good morning, Missouri! Thank you for being here. Thank you for your good spirits. Thank you for your support. Thank you very much, Mayor Joe Adams, for this wonderful day. I assume the mayor arranges the weather in University City every day. It's a beautiful day.

I want to thank Attorney General Jay Nixon and Treasurer Bob Holden and Secretary of State Bekki Cooke, Lieutenant Governor Roger Wilson for being here. And I want to thank St. Louis' own Bobby McFerrin for that great, great musical tribute. Thank you.

Thank you, Joan Kelly Horn, for running for the Congress and for standing up against the Republican Congress and what they tried to do to cut education and the environment, to weaken Medicare and Medicaid, to allow workers' pension funds to be raided. They say if they keep their majority, they're going to do it one more time. You have to decide, and Joan Kelly Horn is your alternative, folks. Thank you for being here, Joan, and thank you for running.

I want to say a special word of thanks, too, to Congressman Bill Clay and Congressman Dick Gephardt, who are not here today but who are working their hearts out for victory in November and who have stood by you and for your future. And I want to thank my good friend Governor Mel Carnahan for his leadership for Missouri, his support for me. He will be a great Governor for the next 4 years. Thank you, Mel Carnahan.

I'd also like to acknowledge two people in the audience: Senator Tom Eagleton, thank you for being here, and former Lieutenant Governor Harriet Woods. And the people of Project Vote, thank you for being here. Thank you very much.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm glad to be here in University City, a model of racial and religious diversity, a city with more than 24 churches and synagogues, a leader in equal opportunity and racial harmony since the 1960's, a stern

rebuke to those who would divide our country today by race or ethnicity or religion. Thank you for the example you have set.

Folks, I like the cheering in elections. I even like it when our opponents show up and cheer. I like it when Americans are enthusiastic. It's what America is all about. But I also hope every one of you will take a little time in these last 8 days not only to cheer but to think and to ponder. This is the last election for President in the 20th century and the first election for President in the 21st century. I'm glad so many young people are here today because this is about your future in a new world, a new era, a new time.

So as we close this election season, I also want to take some time every day to focus on the big issues before us. Yesterday we talked about welfare reform. Today I want to talk about how we can keep our economy strong by balancing the budget and still investing in the priorities that matter to Americans.

You have to decide who can best lead America into the 21st century. You have to decide whether you want to build a bridge to the future or a bridge to the past. You have to decide whether you want to build a bridge wide enough and strong enough for all of us to walk across together, or just say, "There's the future; I hope you make it." You have to decide whether we're better off being told we're on our own, or whether you believe it does take a village to raise our children and educate them and protect our country and build a good future.

Four years ago I ran for President with a simple vision, and I ask you to think about it tonight. When you go home, just take a little time and ask yourself, what do I want America to look like 4 years from now when we start that new century? What do I want America to look like when my children are my age? My answer is simple: I want an America where the American dream is alive and well for everybody who is responsible enough to work for it. I want

an America still the world's strongest force for peace and freedom and prosperity. And I want an America relishing, respecting its diversity and coming together across its differences in shared values, not being driven apart as so many places in the world are today.

To achieve that America, I have worked hard on a strategy to expand opportunity for all, demand responsibility from all, and build an American community where everybody has a role to play and a place at the table. Four years ago when I came to you and told you this, you in Missouri, even here in the Show Me State, had to take me on faith. But today you don't have to do it anymore. Today there is a record, and we can show you. And that's why they're trying to shout us down, because we can show you. We can show you. So today, Missouri, you don't have to listen to the shouting, you can look at the showing. You can look at the showing.

We have more evidence today that our economy is on the right track. When I ran for President 4 years ago, no challenge loomed larger or seemed more difficult to solve than the deficit. The deficit had soared to \$290 billion, a record high and growing. In the 12 years before I took office, our national debt had quadrupled over what it had accumulated for the 200 years before. We worked hard to change that. We passed a tough economic plan without a single, solitary vote on the other side. My opponent and others said we could never reduce the deficit. They said we would wreck the economy. They said these tough decisions would bring no good.

Well, we knew sooner or later there would be "show me" time. And we know now that for 4 years in a row, we have reduced the deficit. That's the first time a President has reduced the deficit in all 4 years of a term in the 20th century. We know now that our budget would be in surplus today if it weren't for the interest we pay on the debt run up in just the 12 years before I took office.

I pledged to you when I ran for President that we would restore fiscal discipline to our Government, cut the deficit in half in 4 years. I said it was wrong to leave our children a legacy of debt, and we would never get Missouri and America's economy growing again until we got the deficit down to get interest rates down, so that business loans, home mortgages, car payments, and student loan payments were going

down. We had to get those interest rates down. The deficit was a ball and chain holding back our economy.

Well, today we've got some new good news about exactly how far the deficit has dropped since I took office. So, since the young people have the biggest stake in it, I want to ask two of your young people, Daraa Seward and Matthew Laudano, to join me, and we are going to officially announce, along with Frank Raines, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, the 1996 deficit figure. You can listen to them and look at the figure, and you decide.

[At this point, Daraa Seward, Gateway Institute of Technology student, and Matthew Laudano, Hazelwood Central High School student, unveiled the figures.]

The President. The last time they were in office, the deficit was \$290 billion. The 1996 deficit has been cut to \$107 billion. That's a reduction of 63 percent. That's the lowest level since 1981. But when you adjust for inflation, it is the lowest deficit in 22 years. Today, the United States has a deficit in its budget that—as a percentage of our income—that is lower than that of any other major industrial nation on the face of the Earth. This has meant real benefits to the people in this audience. It means cheaper auto, home, credit card, business loan rates, more business expansion, more job creation, a growing economy, providing opportunity again.

My friends, America has heard a lot of calls in the last several days. I would say that these results prove that America is awake and moving in the right direction to the 21st century. We are moving toward a balanced budget. We are going to continue building prosperity and creating jobs.

What has been the result of all of these efforts? Look at where we are now compared to where we were 4 years ago: 10½ million new jobs in America; an unemployment rate of 3.9 percent in Missouri; median household income up \$1,600 after inflation in just the last 2 years; the largest drop in child poverty in 20 years; the lowest rate of poverty among senior citizens ever recorded; the highest rate of homeownership in 15 years; the welfare rolls down by 1.9 million fewer people on welfare today than the day I became President; child support collections up 50 percent, \$4 billion a year. And I might say in Missouri it's even bet-

ter. Child support collections in Missouri are up 59 percent under Governor Carnahan. Thank you.

The crime rate has dropped for 4 years and is now at a 10-year low. Thank you. Here's a guy with a sign that says "Cop for Clinton." Thank you, sir. God bless you. We raised the minimum wage for 10 million families on October 1st. Twelve million families have taken advantage of the family and medical leave law to take a little time off from work when a baby is born or a family member is sick, and our economy is stronger because of it.

Twenty-five million families may get protection because we passed a law that says you can't lose your health insurance anymore just because you change jobs or somebody in your family's been sick. We passed a law to say that new mothers and their newborn babies cannot be forced by insurance companies out of the hospital in only 24 hours anymore.

We lowered the cost of student loans, had the biggest increase in Pell grants in 20 years, and gave students the option to pay off their loans as a percentage of their income, so no one should be deterred from borrowing the money to go to college.

We are moving in the right direction: more opportunity, more responsibility, a greater sense of community. But there is more to do, and your vote in this election will make a great difference. Your vote will decide, for example, whether we're going to keep this economy growing by bringing that 107 number down to zero, balancing the budget while continuing to invest in education and the environment, protecting our obligations through Medicare and through Medicaid to poor children, to the elderly in nursing homes, to families with members with disabilities, whether we continue to invest in technology and grow this economy for the future; or whether we adopt a \$550 billion risky tax scheme that will actually raise taxes on 9 million working families, require bigger cuts in education, the environment, Medicare, and Medicaid than the ones I vetoed last year, and still blow up the deficit and weaken the economy and send that number going right up again. Your vote will decide. Are you going to help us build that bridge to the 21st century? [*Applause*]

We have begun to pass health care reform. Your vote will decide whether we adopt our balanced budget plan which will give families

help to keep their health insurance when they're between jobs, which will give free mammograms to women on Medicare, which will give help for respite care to the over 1½ million American families that are out there caring for a family member with Alzheimer's, and still balance the budget. Your vote will decide whether we do that or continue to cut Medicare in ways that will allow it to wither on the vine and divide us in the future. Your vote will decide. Will you help us build the bridge to the 21st century with health care for all? [*Applause*]

We have had 4 years of declining crime rates. We've funded nearly half of those 100,000 police in our crime bill. The Brady bill and the assault weapons ban didn't cost a single hunter a weapon, but 60,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers could not get handguns because of the Brady bill. And now the law says if you beat up your spouse or your child, you can't get a gun either. That's what the law says.

Now, your vote will decide whether we turn our back on that or whether we keep putting 100,000 police on the street; whether we take on the problem of violent teen gangs with the same vigilance we went after the mob; whether we give our kids something to say yes to by continuing to fund the safe and drug-free schools program and opportunities to keep children from getting in trouble in the first place; and whether we ban bullets whose only purpose is to pierce the bulletproof vests of police officers. Your vote will decide whether we do that.

On welfare reform, your vote will decide a very great deal. We have already moved 1.9 million people from welfare to work. We've passed the new welfare reform law, which says we will continue as a nation to guarantee to the poor medical care and food for the kids and more for child care than ever, if the parent goes to work, but now the State of Missouri and local communities will have 2 years to turn a welfare check into a paycheck.

It sounds great, but it's just a law. The question is, what are we going to do about it? Missouri has a program. Governor Carnahan has a plan—I have seen it working here—to bring in people in the private sector and offer them real incentives to bring people from welfare to work. I have a plan to add another million jobs from welfare to work. I have a plan to help cities like St. Louis make the extra steps that people with large welfare populations will have to do.

It is wrong to tell people they have to go to work and then not have a job there. I want to require people to work and have the jobs. And you will decide whether we are going to do that. Will you help me build that bridge to the 21st century? [Applause]

Folks, under great assault by the present majority in Congress, we have continued to fight for our environment. When they tried to even float a scheme to sell a lot of our national parks, we said no. When they tried to cut back on environmental enforcement, we said no. When they tried to end our ability to enact new protections for our land, our water, our food, we said no.

We have instead taken more dangerous chemicals out of the air, moved to improve the purity of our drinking water, moved to raise the standards for our food. We have closed more toxic waste dumps in 3½ years than the previous administrations did in 12.

But there is more to do. And I'll just give you one example. Ten million American children still live within 4 miles of a toxic waste site. If you'll give us 4 years, we'll clean up 500 more so our children will grow up next to parks, not poison. Will you help us build that bridge to the 21st century? [Applause]

Most important of all, especially here, will you help us give the American people a world-class system of education for every single young person in America? [Applause] We have worked hard to increase Head Start, to raise standards in our schools, to improve efforts at reform at the grassroots level. We have increased college scholarships and improved college loans and given 60,000 of our young people a chance to serve in AmeriCorps, the national service program, and earn their way through college.

But we must do more. And I just want to mention three things, very seriously, in this great center of learning. Number one, 40 percent of our 8-year-olds still cannot read on their own. Children cannot learn if they cannot read. Now, a lot of that is because we're a nation of immigrants again, the way we were 100 years ago, and English is not the first language. But that's not an excuse. That won't be much help to those young people when they're 15 and trying to learn algebra, trying to master the most sophisticated aspects of all the other science and math and other courses they have to take. I have a plan to mobilize 30,000 people, reading

specialists, to get a million volunteers together to go out and solve this problem.

We just increased the number of work-study slots for college students by about 200,000. I want 100,000 of those work-study positions to be young college students teaching children to read, so that by the year 2000 every 8-year-old in this country can pick up a book and say, "Now I can read this all by myself." Will you help us build that bridge to the 21st century? [Applause]

We want to hook up every classroom and library in the country to the information super-highway, to the Internet, to the World Wide Web. What that means for all of you who don't have computers at home is that for the first time in history, in the next 4 years, for the first time in American history we can finally make available to every child in the poorest inner-city school districts, in the most remote districts in the high plains—every child in every school district, poor, middle class, or rich—the same information at the same level of quality in the same time in the same way. It has never happened before. Will you help us do it in just 4 more years? Will you help us do that? [Applause]

And finally, will you help us open the doors of college education to every single American who wishes to go? [Applause] On the way out here this morning I passed the St. Louis Community College. We know now—we know that young people who want to get jobs with growing prospects in terms of income and security need at least 2 years of education after high school. I propose in 4 years to make 2 years of college as universal as a high school diploma is today, simply by saying to the American people, we will let you deduct from your tax bill, dollar for dollar, the typical cost of a community college tuition for 2 years. All you have to do is go and make your grades and work hard and be responsible, and you can do it.

I want to let more Americans save in an IRA and withdraw without tax penalty if the money is used for a college education, to buy a first home, or for medical expenses. And finally, I believe that families should be able to deduct up to \$10,000 a year for the cost of any college tuition. We need to open the doors to college education. Will you help me build that bridge to the 21st century? [Applause]

Do you understand what the choices are? Will you help us build a bridge wide enough and strong enough for all of us to go? *[Applause]*

We need you, Missouri. Thank you. God bless you. Bear down, 8 days. Thank you. Show them.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:20 a.m. at city hall. In his remarks, he referred to Joan Kelly Horn, candidate for Missouri's Second Congressional District.

Remarks in Minneapolis, Minnesota October 28, 1996

The President. Hello, Minnesota! Thank you. Thank you. Wow! Thank you. Let me say, first of all, with 8 days to go in this election, to come out here and see this shining sea of enthusiastic, exuberant faces, believing in our country and believing in our future, I'd rather hear your cheers than my words any day. You have made this the event it is. Thank you, thank you.

I want to thank the Members of Congress who are here, Congressmen Martin Sabo and Bruce Vento and Bill Luther. I thank Attorney General Skip Humphrey, who has been the chair of my campaign, for all he has done, but especially for being one of the first leaders to stand up and say it is time to stop the tobacco companies from advertising, marketing tobacco to our children. Thank you, Skip Humphrey.

I thank your State party chair, Mark Andrew, for his leadership. I want to thank the Sounds of Blackness. They were wonderful. Thank you.

I know that Minnesota is a great sports town, and we have two of your greatest athletes today here. I want to recognize them. Kevin Garnett from the Timberwolves, stand up. Thank you. Thank you, Kevin. And one of the greatest baseball players in modern history, who just got his 3,000th hit this season with the Minnesota Twins, Paul Molitor. Paul, stand up. Thank you. They're here because they want to make sure you vote on election day. Are you going to do it?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. I thank you, Mary Rieder, for being willing to run against what was done in the last Congress by Speaker Gingrich and Senator Dole, and for being willing to run for the people of Minnesota. Will you help Mary Rieder serve you in the Congress in Minnesota? *[Applause]* I want to say a little more about that in a minute.

And I want to thank Paul Wellstone. You know, over the last 22 years, since I first ran for public office as a very young man—I can remember when I was a young man—*[laughter]*—I have had the privilege to meet many people in public life, men and women of all backgrounds, races, all political philosophies. I have to say, even though it's not fashionable in the heat of a campaign, that most of the people I have met in both parties and from different philosophies loved our country, wanted to do the right thing, and were harder working and more honest than they ever got credit for. But if you were to ask me after 22 years, here on the verge of my last election, what is the most important characteristic a public official can have, day-in and day-out, year-in and year-out, I would say it's a good thing to be smart because there are complicated problems. It's a good thing if you're physically strong because it can be exhausting. And now more than ever you need a thick hide; that's a good thing. *[Laughter]* It's very important to have common sense, and it's important to be able to communicate what you feel to people so they can understand it. But the most important quality is the one that Paul Wellstone has in abundance, a great heart. It is most important to have a great heart.

You know, Hillary and I always love to come to Minnesota. I love being here. I thought about this State a lot over the years. Our daughter came here to summer camp to the Concordia Language Village for many years. So I had a chance to come here many times when I was completely anonymous, back when I still had a life. *[Laughter]* And I sort of conducted my own little sociological survey of this remarkable place. And I've noticed that Minnesotans are independent; they'll vote for Republicans, and they'll vote for Democrats. I've noticed that they