

the Florida Everglades; to protect the endangered Sterling Forest in the Northeast; to save Yellowstone from gold mining. We have an awful lot of work to do, I think, in perhaps our biggest challenge of all, in confronting the challenge of global climate change as we move into a new century.

President Theodore Roosevelt said, standing not far from here, “We are not building this country of ours for a day. It is to last through the ages.” Well, as we approach the 21st century and deal with these huge mega-challenges like climate change, you have given us a way to meet the challenge of the ages, by working together and understanding what our forebears knew centuries ago. We cannot divide our quest for prosperity from our obligation to hand nature, God’s great gift to us, on down to the generations. We can do that. You have shown

us the way. And we are determined to do our part.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:55 a.m. at the Hyatt Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to the following forum staff: Tom Tuchmann, Department of Agriculture Western Director and Special Assistant to the Secretary of Agriculture; Phil Bayles, Deputy Director of Public Affairs, Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region; Jeff Bailey; and Dave Van Note. He also referred to Kathleen A. McGinty, Chair, Council on Environmental Quality; James Lyons, Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, U.S. Department of Agriculture; Senator Harry Reid; and Governors Bob Miller of Nevada and Pete Wilson of California. The Executive order on Federal actions in the Lake Tahoe region is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

### **Closing Remarks at the Lake Tahoe Presidential Forum in Incline Village July 26, 1997**

Let me say, first of all, again I’d like to thank Senator Reid for getting my commitment to do this. When I was a boy, I grew up in a town that permitted me to grow up next to a national park, next to a national forest, in a community surrounded by three lakes, one of which was virtually destroyed. I feel like I have been through a lot of these things, and I feel very much at home here.

And the second thing I’d like to do once more is to thank the Vice President for all he’s done to sensitize me about these issues and to educate me. I made a joke about it earlier, but it’s not funny; it’s true.

The third thing I’d like to do is to say to all of you, I leave here basically with three different conclusions or commitments in my own mind. One is the one that Senator Feinstein and Mr. Upton and Governor Miller and others, Congressman Fazio pressed home, is we don’t have an unlimited amount of time; we have to keep intensifying our efforts. You have done more than anyone could ever have expected you to do, and we have to do our part. So I got the message, and we’ll stay after it.

The second point again I want to reiterate is that you have done something here which, if we can properly publicize it, will help your Nation very much, because you have proved that you can bring all these people together and demolish the false choice between the environment and the economy. And that’s very important, because there are lots of other places we have to do it and issues that affect local communities, the Nation as a whole, and in some cases, our entire globe.

The final thing I’d like to leave you with is that you have also proved that there is a way of doing things that makes community-based solutions work, to go back to the Congressman’s point. Community-based solutions only work when people come together, agree on a common goal, share values, and are willing to give up a little of their own turf in order to work together to a common goal.

But I ask you to compare—compare just for a moment—if you want to appreciate the significance of what you are achieving here, compare what you have done—look at this group just sitting around here today—with the fact that in Bosnia today we can’t even get the parties

to agree on what their currency will look like, but we just recently got reinstituted a cease-fire in Northern Ireland for people who are fighting over things that happened 600 years ago that the young college students would like to let go of and their elders won't let them.

Now, I mean, I don't want to—I'm not overdramatizing this. Mature societies, to preserve our life on this globe, when we're going to have a global economy, a global society, and a global environment, are going to have to be able to find community-based ways of bringing shared values and common cause together and overcoming false choices, like education and the environment—I mean the economy and the environment—and also overcoming past divisions.

And this is a mark of the kind of society it will take to preserve America's greatness for the next 100 years in a lot of ways. How, for example, can we have—we believed that we could reduce the budget deficit and increase our investment in education. Everybody said it couldn't be done; we did it. We believed that we could reduce the size of Government and, in the Vice President's terms, make it cost less and do more. There are 300,000 fewer people working for the Federal Government, but we're far more active—look here, today—in many important areas than we ever were before.

We have to be able to get these false dividing lines out of our minds and the idea that we have to fight with each other if we're different out of our minds. We've got to flush this out of our collective systems. This is a huge issue. If you look at the coming racial and ethnic and religious diversity in our country, we have to follow the model you have established here for reconciling our differences, celebrating them, and then coming together as one America. I say this because President Truman once said that most of his job was trying to convince people to do things that they ought to do without his having to ask them in the first place. [*Laughter*] Now, that was sort of a down-home way of saying what the President has to do is to always imagine where we're going and try to make sure people are thinking about it in the right way.

I didn't think, even myself, when I came to Washington, we'd ever be able to do what we did on this balanced budget agreement, to get huge majorities of both parties in both Houses to vote for it. I just don't accept the kind of old divisions and inevitable choices that basically rob us of the future we could create in a very dynamic time, when you get everybody together and, as Mr. Upton said earlier, whole new possibilities open up.

I want you to think about this, because you will have other challenges that don't relate to the environment and Lake Tahoe that can be dealt with in exactly this way. And our country and our world is going to have to mature to the point where we bring to bear on other challenges the way you have gone about dealing with this.

And I was sitting here, hanging on every word everybody said, and saying, what I would give to see this kind of thing happening in Sarajevo today, in Belfast today, in Gaza today, in Washington, DC, today. [*Laughter*] What I would give. And I think you need to think about that.

So I will end with a laugh, but I'm dead serious. You think about this. Think about the kind of world you want to make for your children and grandchildren. You cannot—this is a dynamic time. The best days of this country are still ahead, but we have to deal with our most profound challenges in this way.

Democracies only do things when a real majority of people really want to do them. And we have this enormous set of opportunities, and you have shown us here not only how to deal with the environmental challenges but how we ought to come together to make the most of our common future. And for that, I am very, very grateful. And you may be sure, I will be giving you a lot of free publicity around the country—[*laughter*—in the days and months ahead.

Thank you, and God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:47 p.m. at the Hyatt Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to John Upton, member, Eldorado County, CA, board of supervisors.