

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:45 a.m. in the gymnasium. In his remarks, he referred to Rev. David Jefferson, Sr., pastor, Metropolitan Baptist Church, and his wife, Linda; State Senator Jim McGreevey; Mayor Sharpe James of Newark; Au-

drey West, director, Newark Head Start program; Linda Lopez, a parent who introduced the President; and Rev. B.F. Johnson, former pastor of the church. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks at a Reception for Democratic Gubernatorial Candidate Jim McGreevey in West Orange, New Jersey October 8, 1997

Well, he looks like a Governor. [Laughter] He sounds like a Governor. He's got a good plan about what he would do if he were Governor. And he's got something else, just magical. We were a couple of hours ago in a wonderful Head Start program at a church near here, and when McGreevey walked in the room, the fire alarm went off. [Laughter] If you've got that kind of heat and electricity, you ought to be Governor.

I am delighted to be here with all of you. I thank the legislative leaders who are here: Senator Lynch, Assemblyman Doria, State Democratic Party Chair Tom Giblin—if I forget somebody, complain—[laughter]—Assemblywoman Buono, State Senator Bryant, Hudson County Executive Bob Janiszewski, Cherry Hill Mayor Susan Bass Levin, Sheriff Fontoura, Mayor-about-to-be Bob Bowser, Mayor Spina, and all other officials who are here.

I'd like to say a special word of thanks to a former colleague of mine, Brendan Byrne, who is in the audience. Governor Byrne, thank you. I'm glad to see you here. After he left the Governor's office, it was never the same at the national Governors meeting. [Laughter] He's been gone a long time, and we haven't produced a single Governor who had the one-liner gift that Brendan Byrne had. [Laughter] We only laugh about half as much. I'm glad to see you all.

This is perhaps the first opportunity I've had, in this sort of setting anyway, to say something I would like to say really to all the people of New Jersey, which is, I want to thank you for the enormous vote of confidence that was given to me and to Al Gore and to our team in the election of 1996. I was overwhelmed by it, and

I thank you for it. [Applause] Thank you very much.

I'd like to talk for a few minutes in maybe an almost conversational way to try to explain to you what I know, both as President and as someone who was a Governor for 12 years before I became President and served with 150 other Governors, about the importance of this election at this moment in time.

I'd like to thank the Lieutenant Governor of New York, who's also here. Betsy, stand up. Thank you for becoming a Democrat and coming across the river to be with us. Thank you.

I think it's important that you understand because you have to go out of here and talk to people about this election, and you want it to be fundamentally a positive election of choices about the future. I promise you, that's the way the voters will look at it. They'll be trying to figure out, "If I make this choice, what difference will it make to my life, my child's life, the future of our State?" And there are some things you need to really focus on about this particular moment in our country's history and what the role of a Governor, any Governor, would be at this moment in history and therefore what kind of things you should be looking for.

When I ran for President and I announced 6 years ago last week, I did it against all the odds, when no one but my mother really thought I could win. [Laughter] He said he knows the feeling. [Laughter] I'll tell you, there are a lot more who think you can win today, Senator, than when you started—a lot more today than when you started.

I had a very clear reason. I did not think my country was moving in the direction that would take it where I thought we ought to go in the century that was upon us. And I have

said all over America repeatedly, like a broken record, and the poor folks that have to follow me around get sick of me saying—I apologize to them—but I actually think about it every day: What is it that you want? And I said, what I want is an America where everybody who is responsible enough to work for it has a shot at the American dream. What I want is an America that—[applause]—thank you. What I want is an America that is no longer staving off the nuclear threat and the cold war and no longer controls 40 percent of the world's wealth like we did at the end of World War II but still, because of our values and our successes and our willingness to serve, still can lead the world toward peace and freedom and security and prosperity and is interested in all kinds of people all over the world and what they can do to help us build a better future for our children.

And finally, what I want is an America that embraces all the diversities you see if you look around this room and celebrates it and says, "We love all this diversity. It's our meal ticket to the future. But the most important thing is we are still bound together as one America across all the lines that divide us."

Every day I still say to myself, what do you want for America when you're gone, and what have you done to advance it today—every single day? And then it seemed to me obvious that we had to change course. So I made a few notes and I said, "Well, what kind of policies would you change?" I said, "I want policies that basically look to the future, not to the past; that embrace change, not the status quo; that promote unity, not division"—we've got enough of that, goodness knows, in our country—"that give everybody a chance, not just a few people; and that promote us as leaders, not followers."

And I advocated a whole lot of things, and we've done virtually everything that I said I wanted to do in '92 and the vast majority of things now that I advocated in the '96 election. And what are the consequences? The strongest economy in a generation, over 13 million new jobs, even a lot of our poorest areas finally beginning to revitalize, a declining crime rate, an improving environment. We learned that last month another 250,000 people moved from the welfare rolls to families that are living off of payrolls. And now we've had a drop of 3.6 million people moving from homes living on public assistance to homes living on payrolls since I

took office. I'm very proud of that. It's the biggest drop in the history of the country. I want that.

But in addition to all the policies, it also was clear to me we needed a different kind of Government, not a Government that would do everything or a Government that would do nothing but a Government that would focus on getting our country in good shape, creating good conditions, and then giving people the tools to make the most of their own lives.

So, for example, in the beginning of our term we adopted a budget in 1993 that helped us to cut thousands of governmental programs out that we've eliminated over the last nearly 5 years, 16,000 pages of Federal regulation. The Federal Government is 300,000 people smaller than it was the day I took office. But we're not doing everything we were doing before.

Neither are we doing nothing. That was my big fight with the Republican contract on America. I didn't want to see us walk away from our guarantee of health care to the poorest children, of our guarantee of a clean environment, of our commitment to giving everybody a chance at educational opportunity, and of our obligation to take on new challenges as a people through our Government when it was necessary.

So I think we made the right decision. You can't do everything; you can't do nothing. You've got to balance the budget, but you also have to invest in our future and our people. That's the path we took. The results have been quite good. But there is still an awful lot of work to do. We have a lot of work to do at the national level.

We were talking about the lack of affordable child care just before I came over here, and what a terrible problem it is since we know that the vast majority of children's mental wiring occurs in their first 4 years of life. We were talking a couple of days ago in Washington about the need to come to grips with the challenge of the climate changing in the globe, and how it could change our lives, but how we have to do it in a way that doesn't throw large numbers of people out of work or disrupt our economic progress. We are working this week on peace in the Middle East again, hoping that we're making some progress. And yesterday I had a meeting to try to further the peace process in Northern Ireland.

So there are a lot of things to do, but what I want to tell you is, this new approach to Government and this new way of doing business has made the Governor's office even more important today and looking to the 21st century than it has ever been before. And it's very important that everybody understands that.

We have given huge new responsibilities to the State. For example, all the States now have to move a lot more people from welfare to work. But I promise you, the easiest work has already been done. It's not that the people are still on welfare don't want to go to work, but the ones that are still there may have more difficulty going to work, may need more training, may need more work.

In this budget, we gave the private sector incentives—tax incentives to hire people. We've provided \$3 billion more to flow into States and local communities to help create jobs for people for whom the market did not produce jobs. But this is something you have to have a Governor to tend to. And you want people to succeed at home and at work, which means you don't want to take a poor person and say, "I'm going to feel better about you when you're drawing a payroll," and then said, "but I feel worse about your child because you can't afford child care," which means that, if New Jersey has reduced its welfare rolls and you've got a surplus in the welfare account, you ought to, first of all, make sure that those people that are going to work can take care of their children with affordable child care, they can get a good Head Start program or some other program.

That's a big deal. We said in Washington, we can't micromanage this; you've got to figure it out. But it makes the Governor more important. There are a lot of big environmental issues we're trying to face. Our budget now should allow us to clean up another 500 toxic waste dumps in the next 4 years. Remember, I came to New Jersey in 1996 and pledged to support just that. And we got it into the budget, and we're going to do it. But there are all kinds of other issues that have to be dealt with by you here.

The whole issue of fiscal responsibility is very important. When I became President the deficit was \$290 billion, projected to go higher. Now it's going to be under \$30 billion this year, and 85 percent of it was cut even before we passed the last balanced budget bill. We haven't balanced the budget since 1969, and don't—let me

just say, everybody who works for a living, who pays a home mortgage or a car payment or makes any kind of payment on credit, is better off because we've reduced this deficit because the interest rates are lower because of it. Every single person who makes any kind of payment any month on interest is better off. And the whole country is better off because the private sector has had more money to invest. And that's why we've got over 13 million more jobs.

Now, I've got people in Washington now, including our friends in the Republican Party who said they were fiscal conservatives, they're all talking about how they're going to spend the surplus. [Laughter] We still have a deficit—most people think \$30 billion is real money, or \$28 billion—[laughter]—where I come from that's still a nickel or two.

I'm just saying, Jim McGreevey has a record here. He's got a record of proving that he cares about people, he's concerned about people. But in every job he's ever held he's shown discipline and fiscal responsibility and the willingness to resist the sort of siren song of the easy moment, to look down the road to make sure that, first of all, the ship of state is being run in a responsible manner. Every person—liberal or conservative, black, white, brown or whatever, Republican or Democrat—every person has a vested interest in that in New Jersey. It's part of what enables us to be a community, knowing that our fundamental institutions are properly run with real discipline. It's a big issue. And sometimes when you're the guy making the decision, you have to make decisions that make people mad if you do it. But it's important.

There are lots of other examples I could give, but let me just give you one that to me dwarfs all the others. The insurance plan, by the way, I think is important because one of the problems that people—that we have with the legitimacy of public officials is that most people think that they don't count. They think in the end the big guys always win. And I've done everything I could to try to change that perception.

In 1993, we cut income taxes on the poorest working people, and now it's worth about \$30,000 a year to a family of four with an income of \$26,000–\$28,000 or less. And we raised the minimum wage, and we passed the family leave law, and we passed the TV rating system.

We've done these things, trying to make ordinary people think that they were being given more authority.

But this insurance thing, this auto insurance thing is a big issue because it relates not only to how much money is going out of people's pockets, it's their feeling that, something has gone wrong, and they don't have any power to do anything about it. And if you're going to bring people together, people have to believe that you're on their side and that when the chips are down something can be done to put things right and make things better. So this is about more than money.

The last thing I want to say to you that I think is terribly important is, I cannot tell you how important I believe it is that every single Governor have a passionate, uncompromising commitment to excellence in education for every single person in the State. Now, part of this is a money problem, but a lot of it is not.

We've worked hard to promote all kinds of reforms to sort of shake things up in stodgy bureaucracies and put more power down to parents and teachers and principals at the school level and at the same time to raise standards. We're supporting programs to put computers and to hook up computers to the Internet, every classroom and library in the entire United States by the year 2000.

We are—I think perhaps most importantly, this budget, I believe, that we just passed, this balanced budget, 30 years from now people will look back on it and say there were two things that were interesting about it and profoundly important. One is they balanced the budget for the first time in a generation. The second is America finally opened the doors of college to every person who will work for a college education. That is in this budget.

Through the tax credits, the Pell grants, the work-study provisions—all of these things are going to literally make it possible so that no one can say, "I can't go to college because of the money" anymore—no one of any age. Even when older people have to go back and get retraining, there are tax benefits available.

But in the end, we all know something that we ought to face. The United States has the best system of higher education in the world. No one believes we have the best system of kindergarten through 12th grade education in the world. We have been challenged—I want to just state some facts—we've been challenged.

We have far more diversity by income, by race, by culture than any other country trying to do what we're doing, number one. Number two, you need to know that on the whole American education is better than it was a decade ago. Our educators have made it better. Our parents have made it better. It's getting better, but it's nowhere near where it needs to be.

We are the only major country in the world that does not have national education standards and some way of measuring whether our children are meeting them, not to punish the children but so the parents and the taxpayers in every school district can know how the schools, how the district, and how the children are doing.

And I can't do this alone. This is not something I'm trying to impose on people. My proposal, which many Governors in the other party now oppose—although when I wrote it back in 1989 all the Governors but one were for it—my proposal is very simple: that the Federal Government should pay for but not develop—should pay for the development of national exams that reflect the standards that every child should meet in language in the fourth grade and math in the eighth grade. Start there. And then make it voluntarily available to every State and school district. And they then can give it to the children. But the tests cannot be used to punish the children, to hold them back, to put them down, to do anything. It is a measurement so we can finally know the truth.

Now, I believe all our kids can learn. I could take you into schools in every State in this country that, against all the odds, are proving that all children can learn. Therefore, it is unacceptable for us to continue to tolerate a system under the guise of local control or State responsibility or anything else that hides from the clear light of day to do better. We're not trying to punish anybody; we're trying to get better.

Every weekend, tens of millions of Americans are glued to the television set watching football games. Now, we're all glued to the TV set watching the pennant race. Suppose someone came on television and said, "I'm sorry, but due to the sensitivities of the players we're not going to keep score tonight." [Laughter] "We're going to play for 3 hours, and every now and then we'll change sides and let somebody else bat, and I hope you all enjoy it." [Laughter]

The only difference is, the game I'm trying to play in education, there doesn't have to be any losers. No one has to lose. The difference

is, in the exam we're trying to—we're trying to say, "This is the threshold. This is what everybody should know. But this is a fence over which everyone can jump." We're not trying to rank people first to last. We're trying to say 100 percent of the people need to be over this threshold so they can have the kind of future for themselves, their own families, and this country that we need.

That is a huge issue, and the Governors will determine whether it's done. And this man is for the proposition that all our children can learn and that every child is entitled to high national standards and an adequate measurement of them. And on that issue alone he has the right to claim your support for Governor of New Jersey.

The point is, when I became President I said, "We ought to give more power to State government, more power to local government. We ought to do more things with the private sector." We even privatized some Government operations I think had been in the Federal sector too long. But when we do these things, and if you like having a smaller, leaner, more focused National Government and you like the results we've achieved, you have to understand it makes everybody else more important. It makes all the mayors here more important. And it means when you elect a county official or a local official, and especially when you elect a Governor, you are voting—whether people know it or not, they are voting to give them a wider range of decisionmaking and a bigger impact over their lives than was the case 4 or 8 or 12 years ago. And it's very important.

And I want you to go out there and talk to the people in New Jersey about this. You don't have to be intensely partisan. You can just take these issues, one after the other, and ask people what they want for the future of their families and their State. And conduct your own little mini-townhall meeting. And tell people, first of all, they've got to vote, and here's why you are for Senator McGreevey and what you think the issues are. I believe you can have a huge impact.

But I'm just telling you, it is a big deal. Don't be under any illusion. This is not just about who gets this appointment or that appointment or who gets along with whom in the legislature. This is huge now, and we have been given very much more responsibility. And your future is on the line.

This is a magnificent State with unbelievable assets and challenges that are well within the ability of the people of New Jersey to confront them. But it matters who the leader is and what the direction is.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:15 p.m. in the Mayfair Room at Mayfair Farms. In his remarks, he referred to State Senator John A. Lynch; Assemblyman Joseph V. Doria, Jr.; Assemblywoman Barbara Buono; State Senator Wayne R. Bryant; Sheriff Armando B. Fontoura of Essex County; Robert Bowser, member, Newark Board of Education; Mayor Samuel A. Spina of West Orange; Brendan Byrne, former New Jersey Governor; and Lt. Gov. Betsy McCaughey Ross of New York.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Reception in Florham Park, New Jersey *October 8, 1997*

Thank you very much. Thank you, Jim, and thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for being here for him and for our party and for what we're fighting for.

I want to thank my longtime friend Alan Solomont for being here and for being the finance chair of our Democratic Party—[*applause*]*—yes, you can clap for him, that's nice—why don't you do that? He has a thankless job.*

[*Laughter*] When he calls people, you know—even when he calls me, I think he's going to call and hit me up for a contribution any day.
[*Laughter*]

But most of all I'd like to thank the Kushners, Charles and Seryl, and thank you, Rae Kushner, and thank you, Mrs. Felsen. And I thank the children who gave me the shofar, Joshua and Nicole; Dara and Miryam, thank you.