

This, in some ways, is the most difficult of all problems for a democracy to confront, because except if you live in a place that has had a lot of extreme weather in the last 5 years, you probably don't have any tangible evidence that the climate is warming more rapidly than it has in 10,000 years. But by the time we could all get tangible evidence, it would be too late to do much about it—first problem. The second problem is, this is not like the balanced budget, which will be done in 4 or 5 years or 6 years from the time we started. This is something we'll have to work on for 20 or 30 years, but we have to begin today. Democracies are not very well organized for this sort of challenge. But it is imperative that we do it. And I would implore all of you to do whatever you can to help us build public support for having an aggressive approach to climate change.

One final issue I wanted to mention is this whole matter involving our dispute with Iraq. This is not about the United States and Iraq, *per se*, nor is it about an attempt to rehash the Gulf war. This is a question of whether we are going to establish in the world a regime that will limit the capacity of rogue nations and illegal groups to manufacture, store, disseminate, sell, or use dangerous biological and chemical weapons or small-scale nuclear weapons. I think it is imperative that we try.

Now, you saw from what happened in the Tokyo subway with the sarin gas that it's hard to envision a totally risk-free world. But believe me, there are substantial things that can be done to minimize the chance that innocent civilians who travel the world and walk the streets of cities all across the world will be subject to that sort of thing.

So when you see all this stuff playing out in the press, let me assure you that what I am thinking about is whether we can, as part of our responsibilities to the future, create a

regime in which we will actually be able to say that—not that there may never be an incident of chemical or biological use by a terrorist group or a drug trafficker or something else but that we have done everything that is humanly possible to know where the stockpiles are, to limit them, and to minimize the chances that they can ever be brought into play against innocent human beings.

This is a huge issue, and it will require enormous discipline by our country and enormous leadership by our country if we're going to prevail. And this is a case when—you know, I care a lot about economics, and I think that it's easy to demean it. The country is in better shape when everybody has a job who wants one. But this is one issue where economic interest in the short run cannot be allowed to override our solemn obligation to the future to try to minimize the chance that we'll have any of this in your future or our children's future.

Now, having said that, again I say the main point I want you to understand is, there is a direct connection between everything I just mentioned and hundreds of things I didn't and your decision to be here supporting our party. And this is a better country today than it was 5 years ago because of the ideas, the values, and the efforts that you helped to make possible.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:50 p.m. at the Renaissance Mayflower Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Roy Romer of Colorado, general chair, Democratic National Committee; and Jeffrey Soref and Andy Tobias, dinner cochair. He also referred to the proposed "Employment Non-Discrimination Act" (ENDA). The proclamation of December 1 on the observance of World AIDS Day is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Dinner Honoring Evan Bayh *December 1, 1997*

Thank you very much. Governor, Senator Bayh, Lieutenant Governor Kernan, Senator Kerrey, Senator Torricelli. Ladies and gentle-

men, first, thank you very much for being here for Evan Bayh tonight. You could probably tell that—you might have told a lot of things looking

at that. You could probably tell we were good friends. When you heard him speak, you might have been thinking, "There is Joe DiMaggio; why is he introducing Lou Gehrig?" [Laughter] And then he started talking about what was on Jefferson's gravestone; I thought, my God, it's not—bad enough that he's younger and better looking, now he's about to write my epitaph. [Laughter] But I was spared.

Evan and Susan Bayh have been very close friends of Hillary's and mine for a long time now. I do remember when he was elected the youngest Governor in America, a position that I once held. And I remember how well he served. I remember when Senator Kerrey and I used to sit in the Governors meetings and think about how crazy things were in Washington, and we couldn't imagine how people lived and worked here, what strange decisions were made. We don't have any excuse for being here, Senator Kerrey and I. [Laughter] Senator Torricelli was always in the Congress; he didn't know any better. [Laughter] We were actually out there in the real world with Evan Bayh. And here is he about to jump off the same cliff.

I want to tell you seriously that, you know, you meet a lot of people in this business and most of them are good people, honest people. They work hard; they try to do the right thing. Governor Bayh is one of the most extraordinarily talented and fundamentally decent people I have ever met in more than two decades in public life now.

He also gets things done. He ran a great State, had a good economy, advanced the cause of education, had the biggest drop in welfare rolls of any State in the United States with a compassionate and commonsense welfare reform. And he embodies what I believe our party, and indeed our country, ought to stand for on the edge of a new century.

I have spent a lot of time these last 5 years, with varying degrees of success—I'm grateful for that which we've had—trying to get our Nation to grasp the nettle before us, to do the things which need to be done in this dramatically new time to get us into a new century with the American dream alive for everybody who is responsible enough to work for it, and with our country coming together as one America when so many other people around the world are divided, and to maintain our leader-

ship in the world for peace and prosperity and freedom.

Evan Bayh embodies the kind of America I am trying to move us toward. I believe he will win next November. I believe he will render great service to our country. I believe you will always be proud that you were here on this night about a year before the election. And I hope that, together, those of us—we four in this room that either are now or I think soon will be serving in the Federal Government—will be able over the next 3 years to continue to move this country forward, based on what we believe in: building up, not tearing down; bringing together, not dividing; embracing the future, not the past.

I've spent a lot of time in the last year going back to read American history. I was glad to—I love to go around with Senator Torricelli; we make a pretty good dog-and-pony show, and I'm always learning something from what he has to say. But I love the reference to the American Revolution and the beginning of our country.

I really think that our country has been blessed by enormous political endurance. No other great democracy is as old as we are now, partly because we've had the good sense to maintain in various guises a two-party system that had consequences because the parties embraced different ideas with different consequences for the American people and partly because one of our parties always, against all the fears and reluctance of the moment, embodied the idea of the Nation and was willing to embrace the logical extension of the plain meaning of the American Constitution in each new time.

In the beginning, it was George Washington and John Marshall and their heirs. In the Civil War, a new party, the Republican Party, was required to stand up for the idea of the Union and the logical extension of the Constitution that slavery could not coexist in a country dedicated to the proposition that all of us were created equal. And that was the position the Republican Party occupied through the Presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, during which time they reflected great credit on America and did great things for America.

From the time of Woodrow Wilson to the present day, our party, the Democratic Party, has more clearly, more unambiguously, more consistently embodied the idea of the Nation

and extending the Constitution in its logical meaning to the challenges of the moment, from the end of the Progressive Era through the Depression, through World War II, through the beginning of the cold war under Harry Truman, through the New Frontier and the Great Society down to the present day.

I don't think anyone questions the fact that our country is stronger today than it was 5 years ago because we have worked hard, not always succeeding, but succeeding far more often than failing, to bring to the country a new direction consistent with the age-old meaning of our obligation to form a more perfect Union.

I am very proud of that. I am enormously grateful for the chance that I have had to serve. And I am very comforted that someone of Evan Bayh's quality would present himself to serve in the United States Senate, to join Bob Torricelli and Bob Kerrey and our other hardy band, who often stand alone against some honest philosophical differences and some downright political chicanery, from time to time, for what I believe is necessary to move us forward.

I wish we had more like him; then I could get Bill Lee confirmed as head of the Civil

Rights Division. I wish we had more like him; then you wouldn't see mainstream judges with impeccable credentials held up purely for political reasons. I wish we had more like him; then we could see the right kind of entitlement reform and the right sort of policies to enable our people to balance work and family and the right sort of policies to expand trade but help people who are left behind put their lives together and become a part of the American mainstream again.

But it's a good thing for our country that Evan Bayh is presenting himself for the Senate. I think he'll be elected. And I think he'll do just as good as that as Joe DiMaggio was at baseball. *[Laughter]*

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:16 p.m. at the Hotel Carlton. In his remarks, he referred to senatorial candidate Evan Bayh, former Indiana Governor, and his wife, Susan; former Senator Birch Bayh of Indiana; and Lt. Gov. Joe Kernan of Indiana.

Remarks Announcing the Appointment of Togo D. West, Jr., as Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs and an Exchange With Reporters

December 2, 1997

The President. Good morning, everyone. Togo and Gail West, and Hershel Gober and the distinguished representatives of our veterans organizations—we have people here from the American Legion, the VFW, Disabled American Veterans, Am-Vets, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Vietnam Veterans, Gold Star Mothers and Gold Star Wives, Retired Officers Association, and the G.I. Forum. I thank you all for coming.

Before I begin I think it is important that I say just a few words about the tragic killing of the three high school students in Paducah yesterday. Like all Americans, I was shocked and heartbroken by the terrible news, which I followed very closely when it broke. Of course, we still don't know all the facts surrounding the tragedy or why a 14-year-old boy would take a pistol and open fire on his classmates in a prayer group. We may never know, but

we must redouble our efforts to protect all our children from violence and to make sure our schools are free from violence and the means to wreak it.

I believe that I speak for every American in sending our thoughts and prayers to the parents of Kayce Steger, Jessica James, Nicole Hadley, and the wounded children and the entire community of West Paducah.

Today I have the pleasure of appointing Togo West to be Acting Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. When Congress reconvenes, I will nominate him to become Secretary. I know he will bring the same excellence and leadership to the Department we saw under the stewardship of Secretary Jesse Brown and Acting Secretary Hershel Gober. These men are truly dedicated to our Nation's veterans. They help