

## Remarks at a Luncheon for Gubernatorial Candidate Buddy MacKay in Miami

December 11, 1997

*The President.* Thank you very much. You all calm down now; we don't want to be too rowdy. [Laughter] You've got to save some of this for the spring and the summer and the fall, so that on election day you have maximum enthusiasm and energy for Buddy MacKay for Governor. I want you to do that.

Let me say, I am very honored to be here today. I want to thank so many people, but let me first say that Representative Kendrick Meek made such a good speech I thought the rest of us were going to be superfluous. Repetition is important, and he did it in a beautiful and eloquent way. And I thank him for his—for representing Florida's future so well.

I thank Attorney General Bob Butterworth for being my friend and for being with me for a long time and for his strong support of Lieutenant Governor MacKay. I thank Lawton Chiles for his great leadership of the State of Florida. He has done a wonderful, wonderful job. And he has helped me to be a better President, as well as to do a better job for the people of Florida. I will never forget it. And he showed us all 4 years ago how to win a tough election, and I haven't forgotten, Buddy MacKay hasn't forgotten, and all of you haven't forgotten. Let's bring our lessons to the table and push this thing forward next November. We can do it.

Thank you, Jim Pugh, and all the others who worked so hard to make this a success. And thank all of you for giving your contributions to Buddy MacKay. It is not easy to run a campaign, and they are not inexpensive. And normally our side is running against people who have more money than we do. But the important thing is not whether they have more, it's just whether we have enough. If our side has enough to get our message out, we'll be all right. And you've taken a major step in that direction today, and we are profoundly grateful to you.

Let me just take a couple of minutes of your time to tell you what I think this election is about and why I am here almost a year before. First of all, Florida is important to America. It's not only one of the biggest States in America, it represents every good thing that is going

on as we hurtle into the 21st century and presents almost all the challenges our country faces as we move into the 21st century. Just think about it. You have a booming economy, and you have a gorgeous environment, and you have the conflict between the two. How are you going to preserve your natural resources? Can we restore the Everglades? Will there be enough water here 5, 10, 15, 20, 50 years from now?

Then you have a wonderfully diverse culture with people coming from every country in our hemisphere and increasingly from all over the world, and you have some of the conflicts that that occasions. We have people living together and working together; we also have the challenges of crime and welfare.

We have a place that people come to because they feel better and they feel healthier. And I can tell you, even though I didn't get here until after 2 o'clock last night, it still felt good when I got off the airplane after having stood in the snow in New York yesterday. So people come here because they feel good and they feel healthy, but you've got a whole lot of kids that don't have health insurance.

So you have the challenges and the joys and the opportunities of 21st century America writ large. It matters to America what happens in Florida. It matters to America whether Florida can meet its challenges and move forward together. That's the first thing.

The second thing I want to say is that what the previous speakers said about the leadership Florida has enjoyed under the Chiles-MacKay team was not just political luncheon rhetoric. This State is in better shape than it was 8 years ago. It has been very, very well led. And you should be very proud of that, and it matters who has these jobs.

It's also true that Lawton, as he said, and Buddy have had a remarkable partnership. And I did study up on the details a little when Al Gore and I took office, and the thing I liked the best was what Lawton said about—he got

to do the good stuff and the Lieutenant Governor got to do the bad stuff. I've tried to implement that at every turn in Washington—[*laughter*—with mixed levels of success, I might add. But I've done my very best.

I do think, you know, that it's clear that the Vice President has had more influence and a wider range of activity by far than any Vice President in history, in no small measure because I believe that's the way we ought to work. We ought to make maximum use of the talents of all of the people who can serve. And I saw when I looked at Lawton Chiles and Buddy MacKay that it could work, and so I am indebted in that way as well.

Finally, let me say, just on a personal note, I'm here because in 1991, when I started to run for President and only my mother thought I had a chance to win—[*laughter*—Buddy MacKay stood up and stood by me in the straw poll in Florida and stayed with me in the darkest hours of my campaign. And when all the experts said that Bill Clinton is dead, he will be a minor footnote in history, we have to get somebody—in every election—he's the one we got out this time—Buddy MacKay said, "I don't think so. I think I'll stay right there." And so I'm staying right here. I feel very good being here with my friend.

There's something to be said for that. You ask, what do you want in a Governor? You want charisma, you want eloquence, you want somebody that's worked a lifetime and produced something for you. One thing you want is somebody who will stick right there, just pure old-fashioned personal strength of conviction. And all I know is I have no doubt that if any one of you or your beloved State were in trouble, he'd be the last guy to abandon ship. And that's important. I know it because I have seen it, and it matters in a leader of a State or a nation. Now, anybody can rock along with you when the times are good or when the circumstances are comfortable or when there's just another nice little media event to do. It's quite another thing to stand there when the times are tough but the stakes are high. And you should be very proud of that.

Now, let me ask you this: What do you want in a Governor? What do you want? What do you want for your State? If I were to make the argument, I would say first of all, what we do works. And at some point, no matter how good our friends in the Republican Party are

with their rhetoric, with their attacks, with their characterization, sometimes, sooner or later, results should be rewarded.

You know, when I ran for President, remember what this country was going—we had high unemployment, stagnation, drift, division. And they had been telling us for 12 years that the Government was the problem and they were going to get it out of our lives. Meanwhile, they had quadrupled the national debt, and the deficit was \$290 billion a year. Crime was up; they didn't like it. Welfare was up; they didn't like it. They just didn't do anything about it.

And we said, consistent with, as the previous speakers have said, what we've tried to do with the Democratic Leadership Council, look, we don't think Government is the solution, but we don't think it's the problem either. We think it should be a partner. We don't believe Government can do everything, but neither do we want Government to go AWOL and sit on the sidelines. We believe the job of Government is to create the condition and give people the tools to solve their own problems, fulfill their own dreams, and make their communities in this country what it ought to be. That's what we stood for. And we said, look, we're going to have to do some things differently. If we want to restore the economy, rebuild the middle class, reclaim the future for our children, we have to do some things differently. We have to have different policies, policies that favor the future over the past, policies that help not just a few, and policies that unite us instead of policies that divide us for short-term political gain.

And so we have worked at that. And we have worked in partnership with your leaders here. And you heard Bob Butterworth say what the results were. We had a \$290 billion deficit the day I took office; it was \$22 billion this year. Ninety-two percent of the work was done by a Democratic economic plan before the last balanced budget passed. The lowest unemployment and the lowest crime rates in 24 years, and all we did on crime—does the Federal Government have anything to do with the crime rate? It depends on whether it's a good partner.

I'd heard all this talk all these years, but I was living out there in America like you. So I said, we're going to pass a crime bill that is, in effect, written by local prosecutors and police officers and community workers trying to save our kids. And that's why we said, let's put 100,000 police on the street; let's take the

assault weapons off the street; let's stop selling handguns to people with criminal records; and let's give our kids something to say yes to when they get out of school in the afternoon. And it's worked. It's worked.

In this last balanced budget bill, we got the biggest increase in investment for child health since 1965; it will help to insure 5 million people. But it will be done at the State level. Which Governor do you trust more to insure the largest number of people over the next 5, 6 years?

In this balanced budget bill, we've got the largest new investment in education since 1965 and a commitment to set higher standards and a commitment to accountability. And we opened the doors of college wider than we had in 50 years, since the GI bill passed. But the work of implementing these things has to be done at the State level. Who do you trust to stand up for opportunity and excellence and accountability in education and giving Florida the kind of schools you need for the 21st century? Buddy.

There are high stakes here. We have a good record; we have gotten results; we have done it by working together. Our theory of Government was right, and theirs was wrong. And you can see it in the evidence. But the most important thing is, look at Florida's future. You have to reconcile education opportunity as well as excellence in standards. You have to figure out how to continue to grow this economy, but you have got to stick up for the integrity of the Florida environment. Why have all these people moved here in the first place? Who do you trust to protect the environment of Florida for the 21st century?

*Audience members.* Buddy!

*The President.* So there are three issues: the environment, the economy, education and health care for children. And I can give you lots more. It is the nature of what we are trying to do in Washington to have a lot of this work actually done at the State and local level. If there is a partnership—and I'm trying to do what you want me to do, to set the direction for the country but not to try to direct the country, to set the direction, and then let people in their local communities solve their own problems—then the Governors of this country become more important than ever before.

So Florida is in better shape than it was. The ideas that we've espoused have been proved right. And he is the person you can best trust to deal with the challenges of the future. That sounds like a pretty good case to me, and if you go out there and make it for a year, I don't care what other arguments are made, I don't care how much money is brought into play against him, I don't care what other national political currents are supposed to be bearing down on Florida and who is trying to get this electoral bloc or that one—just ask the people of Florida to vote for their children and their future and forget about the politics, and Buddy MacKay will be the next Governor of Florida.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:27 p.m. at the Radisson Mart Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to State Representative Kendrick Meek; Gov. Lawton Chiles of Florida; and Jim Pugh, general chairman, MacKay Campaign for Governor.

## Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in Miami December 11, 1997

Thank you very much. Well, thank you very much. Mr. Mayor, Mrs. Penelas, Lieutenant Governor MacKay, and to Chris and Gene and Mitch Berger—I thank all three of them for all the work they did to make this night a sterling success. I thank Governor Romer and Dan Dutko and Alan Solomont for the work that the DNC has done. And about the only thing harder than being President on a regular basis

is trying to do a standup comedy routine at a fundraiser. And I thought they were both great, so let's give them another hand. I thought they were great. [*Applause*]

You know, I have a lot of friends in this crowd tonight. Many of you have been with me for a long time. And today I had two immensely satisfying experiences. First, I went out on a Coast Guard cutter and met with a number