

Remarks at a Democratic Business Council Luncheon in Westport,
Connecticut
March 10, 1998

Thank you very much. Bob and Yvette and all the others, all of you who are here, I can't thank you enough for coming and for your support. Mayor Farrell, I'm glad to be in Westport. Mayor Ganim, I enjoyed our visit in Bridgeport. Governor Romer and Len Barrack and Fran Katz, thank you for all the work you do for the Democratic Party. And Barbara Kennelly, thank you for having the courage to run for Governor. I want you to win. I'll do what I can to help you, and certainly you deserve it.

I'd also like to say to all of you, I remember that night in 1991 when I came to Westport the first time. My name recognition was less than 50 percent among the people in the room to meet me that night. *[Laughter]* You know how those things start—I mean, more than half the people showed up because somebody they knew asked them to, and they couldn't think of a convenient excuse to get out of it. *[Laughter]* So I do remember.

When I announced for President I was running fifth in New Hampshire. My mother was the only person I knew who thought I was going to win. *[Laughter]* So it has been a long road since I first came here as a candidate to Westport. I can't imagine why only George Washington and Franklin Roosevelt have been here, however. The others must not have known what they were missing.

I feel a great deal of debt to the people of Connecticut. Connecticut voted for Al Gore and me twice, and by a much bigger margin in '96 even than in '92. The people of Connecticut have supported the efforts of the last 5 years, and I believe now support the agenda for the 21st century that I outlined in the State of the Union speech.

I know you've all heard a lot of political speeches, but we're here at a Democratic Party event, so I will give you a very brief one. If you had to go home today when you left here and someone asked you, "Why did you go to that lunch," you don't have the excuse that you might have had in December of '91. You knew exactly what you were doing when you showed up. Why did you come here? Why do you belong to our party? Why do you support it?

I have spent a lot of time thinking about my mission as President. I think about it every day. What do I want? I want our country to go into the 21st century with the American dream alive for every person who will work for it, with our leadership in the world for peace and freedom and prosperity unquestioned, and with our country coming together as one great community across all the lines that divide us. That's what I want. That's what I've wanted every day since I first took the oath of office, and that is what I have worked for.

What is being a member of my political party got to do with that? Even though I have often enjoyed, both as Governor and as President, working with Republicans, sometimes more, apparently, than they wanted to enjoy working with me—*[laughter]*—and I believe that our country's greatest causes go beyond party and that we ought to be able to find common ground. It is a good thing, too, that we have generally had over the last 220 years two different political groups. They gave us stability and honest, helpful debate and the ability to come together in principled compromise.

So why are you here, and why are you a Democrat? And does it really have anything to do with Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson? And if George Washington were alive today, what would he be? The Federalists are long gone; the Whigs are long gone. You know, we had virtually a one-party system—Thomas Jefferson was such a good politician that after he became President, in order for John Quincy Adams to get elected President, after following Madison and Monroe, Quincy Adams virtually had to become a member of Jefferson's party even though Jefferson had beat his daddy for reelection—just to get elected.

Does any of that have anything to do with where we are today? I spent a lot of time in 1997 reading the history of America from, let's say, Andrew Jackson to Abraham Lincoln—I'm reading a great biography of Daniel Webster right now; I recommend it to you—and then reading the history of America from after Abraham Lincoln to Theodore Roosevelt, because most people don't know much about it. And

what I basically concluded is this: At every important time, from the founding of the country through the Civil War through the growth of the industrial revolution through the Depression and World War II and the cold war, at every time there have always been three great questions—always—that defined America.

Start with the Declaration of Independence: We pledge our lives, our fortunes, our sacred honor to the proposition that all people are created equal and entitled to liberty, entitled to the pursuit of happiness—not the guarantee but the pursuit—and to form a more perfect Union. That's the whole story of America, every time: What can we do to widen the circle of opportunity, deepen the meaning of freedom, strengthen the bonds of our Union?

I'm ashamed to tell you that more or less from the time of Martin Van Buren until way after Abraham Lincoln became President, our party did not carry those elements most strongly; the Republicans did. But from the time Theodore Roosevelt handed the progressive mantle in this country over to Woodrow Wilson, or—throughout the 20th century, and then going back to our roots in the beginning, I think you can honestly say that the Democratic Party may not have always been right on every issue, but we were always on the right side of history. We were for widening the circle of opportunity, deepening the meaning of our freedom, strengthening the bonds of our Union.

That's what we need to be thinking about today. Why? Well, look ahead to the 21st century. We have a strong economy; some people want to give away the surplus now. I say, no, let's fix Social Security because when the baby boomers retire, we don't want to bankrupt the country or bankrupt our kids to take care of us. That's what we represent.

We have a very successful economy, but there's still neighborhoods and people who haven't participated in it. That's why we have to be the party of economic empowerment in devastated areas and higher standards in education for all. We have an increasingly diverse society. That's why we have to be the party for genuine racial harmony and strength out of our diversity. We have new challenges abroad, and we have to be the party working for peace and security from the Middle East to Northern Ireland, against weapons of mass destruction. That's what we represent. But when you go back to the beginning, you'll see that's what we've always represented.

Go home today and see if you can write down in two sentences why you came here. And if you can, then you can come again, and you'll want to.

This country is going through a lot of great changes, but where we need to come out will require the leadership of people who honestly believe we have a permanent mission to widen the circle of opportunity, deepen the meaning of freedom, and strengthen the bonds of our human Union.

Thank you. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:55 p.m. in the dining room at the Inn at National Hall. In his remarks, he referred to luncheon hosts Bob and Yvette Rose; Westport First Selectman Diane Goss Farrell; Gov. Roy Romer of Colorado, general chair, Leonard Barrack, national finance chair, and Fran Katz, national finance director, Democratic National Committee; and Representative Barbara B. Kennelly, candidate for Governor of Connecticut.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report on Alaska's Mineral Resources

March 10, 1998

To the Congress of the United States:

I transmit herewith the 1996 Annual Report on Alaska's Mineral Resources, as required by section 1011 of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (Public Law 96-487;

16 U.S.C. 3151). This report contains pertinent public information relating to minerals in Alaska gathered by the U.S. Geological Survey, the U.S. Bureau of Mines, and other Federal agencies.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON