

Apr. 9 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1998

NOTE: This message was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 9.

## Remarks at a Reception Honoring Senator Barbara A. Mikulski *April 9, 1998*

This is exhibit A for everything I believe in in politics. You know, Senator Mikulski just reeled off my week to you, and we just got home from—Hillary and I did—from this incredible 12-day trip to Africa. And I have been in all those places she said, so I was tired when I got here. But if you stand this close to Barbara Mikulski for 5 minutes, I could get down and do 100 push-ups right now. *[Laughter]* I want to go out and run around the block. *[Laughter]*

Let me say, all of you know I do a number of these kinds of events, and some nights when I'm tired I say, "Gosh, I can't believe we've got to do one of these." I wanted to come tonight, and this is one that Hillary is jealous of me that I got to do that she didn't, because of our admiration for Barbara.

I want to read you something. I normally don't speak from notes at these things, but I just want to read you this. Barbara Mikulski: the first Democratic woman to hold a Senate seat in her own right; the first Democratic woman to serve in both Houses; the first woman to win a statewide election in Maryland; the first woman to have a leadership position in the Senate for our party. She's the first woman Senator to write two mysteries, which I love because I read scads of them every year. *[Laughter]*

What I want to say to you is that she got to be all that—first, first, first, first—not because she was a woman but because she has the heart of a lion and because she's done good things for the people of Maryland.

The State of Maryland has been extraordinarily good to me, and we've won two great victories there, because I didn't have to run against Barbara Mikulski. *[Laughter]* And there's so many things that I could say about her, but let me just say a couple of things.

First of all, in 1993, when we were being absolutely eviscerated with criticism from the Republicans in Congress, and when, to the person, they voted against my economic plan, and

they said it would cause a terrible recession, and they said it was going to raise taxes on ordinary people—they said all these things—we carried that by one vote in the Senate. And if Barbara Mikulski hadn't voted that way, we wouldn't have the economy we enjoy today. But more importantly, Barbara Mikulski gave other people the courage to vote right. When it comes to a tough fight, she is the tallest member of the United States Senate.

And I'm grateful to her for standing with me in the fight for safer streets, for 100,000 police, and to get the assault weapons off the streets. I'm grateful to her for helping to create the national service program, AmeriCorps, which has now given 100,000 young people, a lot of them in Maryland, a chance to earn money to go to college while serving in their communities. I'm grateful to her for leading the fight for safer food. The "Food Safety Act" that we adopted is profoundly important, and it will become more important in the years ahead as we have more and more food exported from the United States to other countries, more and more food imported into our country from others. I'm grateful to her for the work she's done on women's health in so many different areas. I'm grateful to her because she believes that we're here to do things. And I will say again, this is a year which is election year, and the country is in great shape, and I'm grateful for that. But Barbara Mikulski is helping me to challenge the Republican majority in Congress not to sit still and relax and enjoy the success of America but to take it as an opportunity and an obligation to deal with the long-term challenges of this country, to deal with the challenge of fixing Social Security; to deal with the challenge of making sure that we don't keep killing another 1,000 kids a day by not doing what we can to reduce teenage smoking, to deal with the further challenges of child care and education and the environment. We have a lot to do, and we need some more doers in the Congress. I

don't think a single soul here doubts that there is no bigger doer in the Congress than Barbara Mikulski.

Let me say, one of the big votes that Congress is going to face in the next few days—the Senate when they come back—is whether to vote to enlarge NATO, to take in Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Poland. I wish every constituent of Senator Mikulski could have been with me in Warsaw when we had tens of thousands of people in the square there, and I introduced Barbara Mikulski, a daughter of Poland, to the assembled crowd, along with the then-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, John Shalikashvili, also a Polish American.

What we want to do in expanding NATO is to give Poles the chance and the security in their own country to grow up and live their dreams, to have the kinds of careers and lives that Barbara Mikulski has had.

The last thing I want to say, which is, to me, more important than anything else: She is a person who lives her faith. She believes that we will all be judged by whether we have tried to provide opportunity to those without it, whether we have tried to take decent care of those who through no fault of their own are in genuine need. And she has helped us to prove that the Democratic philosophy that we have advanced, beyond any shadow of a doubt, demonstrates that the whole country does better when more people have opportunity.

For all those reasons, I predict an overwhelming victory in November. And I thank you for making sure it happens.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:50 p.m. at the Hay Adams Hotel.

## Remarks on the Northern Ireland Peace Process and an Exchange With Reporters

*April 10, 1998*

*The President.* Good afternoon. After a 30-year winter of sectarian violence, Northern Ireland today has the promise of a springtime of peace. The agreement that has emerged from the Northern Ireland peace talks opens the way for the people there to build a society based on enduring peace, justice, and equality. The vision and commitment of the participants in the talks has made real the prayers for peace on both sides of the Atlantic and both sides of the peace line.

All friends of Ireland and Northern Ireland know the task of making the peace endure will be difficult. The path of peace is never easy. But the parties have made brave decisions. They have chosen hope over hate, the promise of the future over the poison of the past. And in so doing, already they have written a new chapter in the rich history of their island, a chapter of resolute courage that inspires us all.

In the days to come, there may be those who will try to undermine this great achievement, not only with words but perhaps also with violence. All the parties and all the rest of us

must stand shoulder to shoulder to defy any such appeals.

On this Good Friday, we give thanks for the work of Prime Minister Ahern and Prime Minister Blair, two truly remarkable leaders who did an unbelievable job in these talks. We give thanks for the work of Senator George Mitchell, who was brilliant and unbelievably patient and long-suffering. We give thanks especially to the leaders of the parties, for they had to make the courageous decisions. We also thank Prime Minister Blair and Prime Minister Ahern's predecessors for starting and nurturing the process of peace.

Together, all these people have created the best chance for peace in a generation. In May, the people of Ireland and Northern Ireland will have the chance to seize the gift they have been given. At this Easter season, British and Irish leaders have followed the admonition of Luke, "to give light to them who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death and to guide their feet into the way of peace." For that, peaceloving people the world over can be very grateful.