

July 31 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1998

training bill streamlines the vast array of existing job programs and empowers individuals to learn new skills with a simple grant. It makes sure

that job training helps Americans meet the demand of a rapidly changing economy, and I look forward to signing it into law.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Bill Richardson To Be Secretary of Energy

July 31, 1998

I am very pleased that the Senate today voted unanimously to confirm Ambassador Bill Richardson as Secretary of Energy.

Ambassador Richardson brings extraordinary experience and expertise to this vital post. As a Member of the U.S. Congress representing New Mexico, an energy-rich State that is home to two Department of Energy national laboratories, he has extensive firsthand experience on issues ranging from oil and gas deregulation to

alternative energy to ensuring strong environmental standards in energy development. As U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, he has been a vigorous and articulate proponent of U.S. engagement and has successfully tackled tough negotiating challenges around the world.

I am confident that Ambassador Richardson's tremendous energy, creativity, and leadership will help secure our Nation's energy future so that America continues to prosper.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in East Hampton, New York

July 31, 1998

First of all, I thank Bruce and Claude for their wonderful hospitality in this magnificent home and the terrific dinner. Our compliments to all the—the chef and the people in the kitchen. I thank Alan and Susan for dreaming up this weekend and all of you who have come to be a part of it.

We've had a great time tonight. Since Bruce asked me if I would go in there, when we're having coffee in the other room, and answer questions, I will spare you any extended remarks. I want to ask you to think about something. I am—we're here for the Democratic Committee, and I'm very grateful to Steve Grossman and to Len Barrack and to Fran Katz and all the other people. But I was born a Democrat because I was a Depression era—my parents were and my grandparents. My grandfather, who raised me until I was 4, thought he was going to Franklin Roosevelt when he died.

But I was determined in 1991 and 1992 to be faithful to the traditional values of our country and our party, but to modernize our party

and to bring a new set of ideas to the debate in Washington, which I thought, frankly, was stale and divisive and dominated by the people in the other party who thought they had an entitlement to the White House. Some days, I think they still do. *[Laughter]* And I thought the White House belonged to all the rest of you and everybody else in the country and was the instrument of ideas consistent with our democracy to keep our country moving forward.

Now, Hillary is leading this Millennium Project, which was referred to earlier. And you probably saw that they started—Hillary and Ralph Lauren started by saving the Star-Spangled Banner the other day. And then she went to Fort McHenry, and then to Thomas Edison's home, and then to Harriet Tubman's home, and then to George Washington's Revolutionary War headquarters in New York.

But the theme of the Millennium Project is honoring the past and imagining the future. So I think about that all the time. Tom said that McKinley was the last President to come here, for example; it must be true. *[Laughter]* Now,

McKinley was an interesting fellow, but I'll tell you the interesting—McKinley was elected President in 1896 and reelected in 1900. Now, between 1868, Ulysses Grant, Rutherford Hayes, Benjamin Harrison, and William McKinley were elected President. You know what they had in common? They were all generals in the Union Army from Ohio.

If you got to be a general in the Union Army, and you were from Ohio, you had about a 50 percent chance of being President in that period of time. *[Laughter]* That's a rather interesting bit of our history. *[Laughter]* So tell that tomorrow when they tell you McKinley was the last President. I care a lot about this country's history. I've spent a lot of time reading it, studying it, trying to feel it in the White House, in every room, in the life of every predecessor I have had and their families. And I think it's very important when you imagine the future that we do it in a way that is consistent with the history of this country.

So I will say that I think the most important things about American history can be found in the ideas of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, which—and manifest in every changing time, this country has always been about at least three things: widening the circle of opportunity for responsible citizens, deepening the meaning of freedom in each succeeding generation, and strengthening the bonds of our Union.

The reason I'm a Democrat in 1998, apart from the fact that I was born and raised one and believed in the civil rights movement and the things that were dominant in my childhood, is that I think we more clearly represent the last of those ideas. I think we believe that Union is very important. I think we believe that part of the Declaration of Independence, that we are dedicated to the permanent mission of forming a more perfect Union, because there are some things that we want to achieve for ourselves, our families, and our future that we cannot achieve alone or in isolated groups.

And I say that because I think that we've, for the last couple of decades, seen a real assault on government and on the idea that we do have sort of mutual ties and bonds and responsibilities to one another that enhance our own lives. And I believe that very strongly.

So as we look ahead, I think—I will just tell you what I think some of the great challenges of tomorrow are. I think, first of all, it will

be the period of greatest possibility in all human history, and we ought to be ashamed of ourselves if we mess it up. It will be an age of breathtaking biological advances. It will be an age of breathtaking technological advances. It will be an age where we will be able to relate to people around the world through the device of the Internet—the fastest growing social organism in history, I might add—in ways that our parents could never imagine, probably in ways that most of us could never imagine.

But we have some big challenges at home and abroad. And I will just mention them and stop, and you ask yourself: If you're trying to imagine the future, what do you think the big challenges are? Now, let me just mention what I think they are.

At home, I think, first of all, the baby boomers have got to retire in a way that preserves the dignity of American society for the elderly without bankrupting our kids and undermining their ability to raise our grandchildren, which means we have to reform Social Security and Medicare in a way that keeps them there functioning for people who need them to the extent that they're needed and brings our country together, but does it in a way that does not dramatically undermine the standard of living of our children and their ability to raise our grandchildren.

Secondly, we have to recognize that in an information society we have to do a much better job of elementary and secondary education and preschool education, and not just for some or most but for all of our children. And we have to maximize everything we know about child psychology, about support for kids who come from troubled families and live in troubled neighborhoods, about the access to technology. But no one in the world who really knows anything about it would seriously question the proposition that American has the finest system of higher education in the world. No one believes that America has the finest system of elementary and secondary education in the world for all its children. And I think that's a big challenge.

Number three, I think we have a whole new attitude about the environment. We have basically, for 30 years, done great things as a country on the environment since the passage of the Clean Air Act and setting up the EPA, and we concluded that, if we take these things one at a time, we can afford to clean up the environment and keep our economy still growing. I

think now we have to understand that we cannot maintain or sustain our economy unless we make the preservation and even the improvement of the environment an integral part of our economic policy.

In other words, I believe global warming is real. I do not think it is an accident that 9 hottest years on record have all occurred in the last 11 years. I don't think that's an accident. I don't think it's an accident that '97 was the hottest year on record, and every month in '98 has been hotter than every month in '97. And I think there are at hand the means to continue to grow the economy and improve the environment in ways that will make sure it's all here a hundred years from now for our great-grandchildren.

Let me just mention a couple of other things. I believe that, with regard to the economy—I think it's obvious—and around our table I had a fascinating conversation talking about the global economy, in particular, as you might imagine, Japan and Asia, China, and we talked about Russia. We have a lot of challenges in the global economy; we have a lot of challenges in the area of world peace, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, dealing with terrorism, and trying to stop people from killing each other because of their ethnic, racial, and religious differences.

There will be plenty to do in the post-cold-war world to create a trade-centered, people-centered, peaceful network of national cooperation and institutions to help deal with those who won't be part of that framework.

We also have to recognize, I think, that we have an incredible opportunity and an obligation here—and those of you from New York, I'd say, should feel it especially—to prove that we can bring free enterprise to the areas of America

which haven't received it yet. There are still neighborhoods in New York City that have double-digit unemployment rates, largely because of underinvestment and low skill levels, not because most people aren't responsible; most people in most neighborhoods get up and go to work every day, pay taxes, and try to be good citizens. So we're never going to have a better time than the next couple of years to try to help.

And the last thing I'd like to say is I think that this theme, that Hillary and I have worked on, of one America means something to me. It means one America across all the lines that divide us. It means an America in which citizens commit themselves to serve their fellow human beings, which is why I'm so proud of our AmeriCorps program, our national service program. It also means that we understand that the unity we have is a precious gift, and we should manage our differences with dignity and decency and always strive for unity over division; always put people over politics; always put progress over partisanship. That's what I believe.

And if we do those things, I think we're going to do just great in the 21st century. And I'm going to do everything I can for the next 2½ years to make sure that that is exactly what we do.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:40 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Bruce and Claude Wasserstein; event cochairs Alan and Susan Patricof; Steve Grossman, national chair, Leonard Barrack, national finance chair, and Fran Katz, national finance director, Democratic National Committee; and fashion designer Ralph Lauren.

The President's Radio Address

August 1, 1998

Good morning. Today Hillary and I are at the fire station in Amagansett, Long Island, New York, one of many beautiful communities on Long Island, where we're joined today by doctors, nurses, breast cancer patients, and public health advocates to talk about something that

concerns all Americans, making a Patients' Bill of Rights the law of the land.

I'm also very proud to be joined by Congressman Michael Forbes and his family. Congressman Forbes is a Republican who is cosponsoring