

Remarks at a Unity '98 Dinner in Chicago, Illinois *August 10, 1998*

Thank you very much. First of all, I want to thank all the previous speakers for saying everything that needs to be said; I am free to say whatever I like. I am deeply indebted, as all of you know, to this city and this State for many things, the most important of which is clearly the First Lady, who asked me to be remembered to all of you tonight.

I have a picture on my wall in my office of Hillary and me on St. Patrick's Day in 1992 in Chicago—that was the night of the primaries in Illinois and Michigan, the night we knew that unless the wheel completely ran off, I would probably become the nominee of our party. And from that day and before to this, no place has been better to us and to the Vice President and to our whole team than the city of Chicago and the State of Illinois. And I am profoundly grateful to all of you, and I thank you for it.

I also want to say a word of appreciation to Steve Grossman, who has done a magnificent job. I thank Congressman Rangel, who has to put on his uniform every day. He's now in the most severe combat he's been in since the Korean war, I think, with the Republicans in the House, but he holds up his end right well. And I thank you, Charles. I'm proud of you in every way.

I want to thank Secretary Daley, who will soon get over being 50. *[Laughter]* Oh, to be 50 again. *[Laughter]* It's all a matter of perspective, you know. I want to thank Mayor Daley for his leadership here and his support and friendship. I thank Senator Durbin for many things and for being so courageous in his leadership to protect our children against the dangers of tobacco, to keep our streets and our communities safe, and many other things. I want to say a little more about Carol Moseley-Braun in a moment.

I want to thank Reverend Jesse Jackson for being a good friend of my family in personal as well as political ways, and for doing a superb job for our country as our Special Envoy to Africa, a very important part of America's future. Thank you, Reverend Jackson, for doing that.

Now, you heard all the politics. I would like to talk a little bit about—specifically about Illi-

nois and how it fits into the larger picture of America and our future. I ran for President because I honestly believed our country was not doing what was necessary to prepare for a new century, a new millennium, a completely new way of living and working and relating to each other and the rest of the world. And I think that what we have sought to do is best captured in the theme the First Lady picked for our Millennium Project, the things we are doing over the next 2½ years to celebrate the coming of a new century and a new millennium. The theme is “Honoring the past; imagining the future.”

And that is what we have tried to do: to offer new ideas based on our oldest values; to deepen the meaning of our freedom; to widen the circle of opportunity; to build the bonds of our Union stronger; to help America be the strongest force for peace and freedom and prosperity in the world; to give our children—all our children—the best chance to live out their dreams any generation of children has ever known. That is what we have worked on doing.

Now, all those words sound good, and it is an important thing, words. They spark ideas. They spark the human spirit. They motivate people to act. But in the end, you have to turn the words into action. And I would like to just give you one example.

The lion's share of credit for the economic statistics the Vice President reeled off belongs to the American people, to their hard work, their ingenuity, their good citizenship. But the policies of this administration have plainly played a role in giving people the tools to do what has been done and creating the conditions for success.

If it hadn't been for Carol Moseley-Braun or Glenn Poshard or Charlie Rangel or Al Gore, the economic plan in 1993—which drove interest rates down, drove the deficit down, got investment up, expanded our commitment to promote economic opportunity in the inner cities, including in Chicago—would not have passed, because it passed by one vote in both Houses, because every single member of the other party voted against it. And I want to tell you that I am proud to be a member of my party and

proud to be an ardent supporter of the reelection of Senator Carol Moseley-Braun and the election of Glenn Poshard.

There is—I was told today when I came into Chicago that Congressman Poshard's opponent has an ad on attacking him for voting for our 1993 economic plan, claiming it was a big tax increase, neglecting to point out that income taxes were raised on about two-tenths of a percent of the American people, that 5 times as many people in Illinois got a tax cut as got a tax increase—working families who need it the most—and that that bill lowered the deficit 92 percent before the bipartisan balanced budget agreement passed and, therefore, was the single most important vote to the economic recovery America enjoys today.

I think Glenn Poshard should thank his opponent for advertising for him. It's a good difference between Republicans and Democrats. They're still trying to mischaracterize the bill that brought America back. And I hope you will send a message on election day, by reelecting Carol Moseley-Braun and electing Glenn Poshard, that Illinois likes this economy and will support people who brought it about.

We have the lowest crime rate in 25 years. The crime bill of 1994 played a major role in that, with 100,000 police on the street and grants to communities like Chicago not just to punish people but to give our young people something to say yes to, so that more communities could have more programs like your after-school programs here and your summer school programs here. And most of the members, not all but most of the members of the other party voted against it. Carol Moseley-Braun and Glenn Poshard voted for it.

And so, if you like the fact that Chicago has all these new police officers under the crime bill and you like what has been done here to make the streets safer, I think you should show that you like it when words are turned into action by voting to reelect Carol Moseley-Braun and to elect Glenn Poshard. I think these are the kinds of things that you have to say to people.

Now, as the Vice President said, we have to decide what we're going to do with the good times we have. We are sobered and humbled when our friends in Asia, who once we thought would never have any economic problems again, have their own struggles. But we should be humbled because, when things change fast, the

ground can move, and the world is changing very fast.

We are heartbroken at what has happened in Africa to our Embassies, the tragic loss of life of American public servants and the more than 200 Africans who have died now and thousands wounded because some terrorist criminal wanted to hurt America. But this reminds us that freedom is a precious thing, prosperity is a wonderful thing, but in a dynamic world they bring responsibilities.

And this election year should not be about negative 30-second ads, or all the mean things they've said about me or the rest of you, or any mean thing we can say back to them. It really ought to be about what do we do now. We have been given the gift of this moment of prosperity, which gives us confidence and energy. What do we do with it?

What have you done in the times in your life when you thought everything was hunkydory? After things have been tough—and they were tough for America for a long time—the natural thing to do is to sort of say, “Man, I have been working like crazy. This is great. Leave me alone. Give me a break.”

That was really, in fairness, the import behind the quote by the Speaker that the Vice President read, “We don't really have to do anything. We just have to avoid another shutdown and get out of town. And things are so good, and we've got more money than the Democrats do. We'll be fine in the election. We'll worry about all of this tomorrow.”

And that is playing into what is often the dominant feeling in human nature. I suggest to you it would be a mistake for us to have that attitude today as a nation and that instead we ought to say, “Hey, we may not get a time this good again for a while. Let's take this time to think about the big, long-term challenges this country faced, and let's go on and face them and deal with them now. If not now, when? If we can't do it now, when will we ever have a better time?” And that's what we ought to be thinking about now.

So I'll tell you what I think they are, in no particular order—you may have different rank order. They've been alluded to already, but let me just tell you because this is why it's important to have people in the positions of Congressmen and Senators who will make good decisions about this.

One of the biggest challenges this country is going to face—every advanced country is going to face it—is when all the baby boomers retire. I know; I’m the oldest of the baby boomers. I’m the oldest man my age in America now. *[Laughter]* Think about that. Because we are the biggest group of Americans ever to live, until this group of kids that just started school last year, when we retire, at present rates of retirement, birth rates, and immigration rates, for the first time since Social Security came in there will only be about two people working for every one person eligible for Social Security.

The system we have, that has literally on its own lifted half of our elderly people out of poverty, is unsustainable as it is. But it has done a lot of good for the elderly, for the disabled, for children whose parents die when they’re still children. So one of the things that we have to do—and we ought to do it early next year—we ought to stop fooling around with it. The longer we wait, the harder it will be. We are prosperous now. We are confident now. We should reform Social Security to preserve its best characteristics and make sure it will survive into the 21st century.

You have to decide, who do you think you want to do that? And don’t you want somebody that will come in there and keep the very best of the system but have the courage to tell you what changes have to be made now?

The same thing is true of Medicare. We have to do that. It’s a big challenge. That’s why I have said, “Let’s don’t spend any of this surplus on a spending program or a tax cut that I like, even something I would dearly love to do. Let’s don’t do that until we know we have done what is necessary to save Social Security for the 21st century.”

Now, it’s election year. It’s popular to say, “I want to give you a tax cut,” or “I’m going to give you a new program, and we’re going to have a surplus, and it’s projected to be such and such.” Well, let me tell you, we won’t even have the surplus until October 1st. And we’ve been waiting for 29 years to get out of the red. I’d just kind of like to look at the black ink for just a few months—*[laughter]*—before we go squander this money that we don’t even have yet.

And I think down deep inside you and every other responsible person in Illinois, Republican, Democrat, or independent, knows that’s the

right thing to do. So go out and say, we ought to save Social Security first, and you’re for that.

I think everybody in America knows we’ve got the best system of higher education in the world. And one of my proudest achievements as President is that, working with the Congress, we’ve opened the doors wider than ever before with the HOPE scholarships, the Pell grants, the work-study grants, letting people deduct the interest on their student loans, all of the things that we’ve done.

No one believes we’ve got the best elementary and secondary education in the world for all our children yet. No one believes that, because it’s not true. But we need it. And I have given this Congress an agenda for smaller classes in the early grades and more teachers and modernized schools, whether we’re repairing old schools or building new ones, and connecting all the classrooms to the Internet and providing for better trained teachers and raising standards and trying to support things like the mayor’s reforms here in Chicago, including more after-school programs and more summer school programs.

And that school construction and repair initiative would not be a part of my program if it weren’t for Carol Moseley-Braun. And it ought to pass, and if you reelect her, you’ll send a loud message to Washington that you believe it ought to. It’s an important issue.

We just glanced over the Patients’ Bill of Rights today. You know, there are 160 million Americans in managed care. And when Hillary and I told the American people we had to find a way, because managed care was growing, to allow people to be in managed care to control costs, but we ought to make health care affordable and available and quality for all Americans, we were attacked by our adversaries, saying we wanted to have the Government take over health care.

I’ll tell you something interesting. When they attacked me for that, 40 cents on the dollar of health care dollars came from public sources. Do you know what it is today? Forty-seven cents, not 40. Do you know why? Because employers cannot afford to buy health insurance, so they don’t cover their employees, and more and more people even in the work force are eligible for Government-funded programs today.

But 160 million Americans in Medicare—our Patients’ Bill of Rights is the next big item on the health care agenda. Why? Because we think

that it's a good thing to manage health care costs and control them, but you ought to be able to go to an emergency room if you get hurt, without having to lay there on the gurney. How would you feel if somebody in your family were in a car wreck, lying in an emergency room on a gurney, and you're trying to call the insurance company to get authorization? We believe if somebody needs a specialist, they ought to be able to get a specialist. And if the doctor believes that, he ought to be free to say so. That's what we believe.

We believe if a woman is 6 months pregnant and her employer changes insurance carriers, she ought not to have to give up her obstetrician before the baby's born. Or if somebody is taking chemotherapy and they are 80 percent of the way through and the same thing happens, they ought to be able to stay with their oncologist until the treatment is over. But it doesn't always happen today.

That's what this Patients' Bill of Rights is about. It's about common sense, balancing of the need to control costs on the one hand with the need never to forget that the health care of the American people comes first. We are for that. We have a few—a very few—Republicans who are helping, and God bless them, including the physician representing the State of Iowa in the House of Representatives, a brave man, Congressman Ganske. But the leadership of the other party is against this, and what they would do would make it weaker.

We believe, with all this stuff being computerized, you ought to have more privacy in your medical records, not less. And I think most of you think that. That's what the Patients' Bill of Rights is about. Carol Moseley-Braun is for it; the leadership of the other party is against it. On that ground alone you should make sure she gets reelected. This is a big battle for how you and your families and your children will live in the 21st century.

I could go right down the list with the environment; with the need for us to build one America working together; with the need to provide more economic opportunity in inner cities, isolated rural areas where there has been no opportunity; and with the need for America to fulfill its responsibilities. The Vice President made the remarks about the International Monetary Fund and the U.N.

You know, Reverend Jackson and I and the First Lady and a big delegation, we just went

to Africa not very long ago. Believe it or not, several of those African economies are growing at 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 percent a year. They want to buy our products. They want to be our partners. An investment there today will pay our children many times over in return tomorrow.

All over the world, people still look to us to take the lead to stand against the kind of terrorism that we experienced just a few days ago; to stand against the kind of racial and ethnic and religious hatreds that we see in places like Bosnia, that are the part of the process of peace in the Middle East and Northern Ireland.

And if we want to be a source of peace and freedom and prosperity all around the world, then we have to have people who will say in Congress, "I realize it's not free. I'm prepared to invest in it and go home to my hometown in the heartland of America and say it's important."

You know why it's important in Illinois? How many people do you believe, if you went down to the central part of this State and said, "Do you know what the IMF is?" could give you an answer? Or, "It's the International Monetary Fund; do you know what it does?" They might not know, but here's why it matters. The International Monetary Fund provides funds to countries in economic trouble in return for their willingness to undertake disciplined steps to improve reform and grow their economies. Why does that matter to you? We export half of our wheat and our corn—half of it. Forty percent of all of that goes to Asia. Today, the exports to Asia are down 30 percent. It's costing the farmers of Illinois a pretty penny because there is a deep, profound economic crisis in Asia. And that will cost the people who do business with the farmers in Illinois a pretty penny.

But the United States is strong, and we should be leading. We shouldn't be looking for excuses not to assume our responsibility. We should be leading.

Now, those are the big things. So I ask you to think big, be big. But remember, with every high-flown idea, with every passionate phrase, in the end, as Governor Cuomo used to say, you have to turn the poetry of a campaign into the prose of daily work. We must turn these passionate ideas into action. That's what this administration has been about. That's what Carol Moseley-Braun has helped us to do. That's what

Charles Rangel has helped us to do. That's why I hope you are here.

And I would implore you to go out of here with a great deal of pride and energy and determination. And when somebody asks you, "Why did you go to that Democratic fundraiser?" you can say, "Because I'm for saving Social Security and Medicare for the 21st century; because I'm going to keep working until our schools are the best in the world; because I want American health care to be affordable and available and quality for all of our citizens; because I want to grow the economy and preserve the environment; because I want us to be one America, across all the lines that divide us; and because

I still believe our best days are ahead as long as we're willing to stand up against the terrorists and stand up for freedom."

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:35 p.m. in the Atrium at the Chicago Historical Society. In his remarks, he referred to Steve Grossman, national chair, Democratic National Committee; Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago; Representative Glenn Poshard, Democratic candidate for Governor of Illinois, and his Republican opponent, George H. Ryan, Illinois secretary of state; and Mario Cuomo, former Governor of New York.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on the Deployment of United States Forces in Response to the Embassy Bombings in Kenya and Tanzania

August 10, 1998

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

On August 7, 1998, two bombs exploded about five minutes apart at the U.S. Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. A number of American citizens were killed or wounded, and the embassies suffered extensive damage. Department of State officials requested immediate medical, security, and disaster response assistance from the Department of Defense.

On August 7, 1998, a Joint Task Force of U.S. military personnel from U.S. Central Command deployed to Nairobi to coordinate the medical and disaster response assistance arriving in Kenya and Tanzania. In addition, on August 8, 1998, teams of approximately 50–100 security personnel each arrived in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. These teams will enhance the ability of the United States to ensure the security of the American Embassies and American citizens in these countries.

The U.S. forces comprising the Joint Task Force and the medical and security assistance come primarily from elements of the U.S. Central and U.S. European Commands. Other elements are U.S.-based units. Each of the armed services is represented. Although U.S. forces are equipped for combat, this movement is being

undertaken solely for the purpose of enhancing embassy security and ensuring the security of American citizens. United States forces will re-deploy as soon as the additional security support is determined to be unnecessary.

I have taken this action pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive.

I am providing this report as part of my efforts to keep the Congress fully informed, consistent with the War Powers Resolution. I appreciate the support of the Congress in this action to assist in embassy security and the security of American citizens overseas.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Strom Thurmond, President pro tempore of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 11.