

Washington to put the same priority on education that the parents and the teachers and the kids do at Hillcrest, that you would like for us to try to create an American community like the one that you are trying to create with your children here at this school, and that there are very specific opportunities Congress is going to have in the next 3 weeks where a “yes” vote or a “no” vote is required, and you’d like to see us vote “yes” for our children and our future.

Thank you very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:10 p.m. in the cafeteria. In his remarks, he referred to Susan Waldrip, president, Parent-Teacher Association, Alette Schar, principal, and Clair Hoey, teacher,

Hillcrest Elementary School; State Representatives Shirley Brown and Lars Hafner; Linda W. Chapin, chair, Orange County Board of Commissioners; Dennis M. Smith, superintendent, Orange County Public Schools; Gov. Lawton Chiles of Florida; gubernatorial candidate Lt. Gov. Buddy MacKay of Florida, and his wife, Anne; and St. Louis Cardinals first baseman Mark McGwire, who broke Major League Baseball’s single-season home run record, his son Matt, and Tim Forneris, the Busch Stadium groundskeeper who retrieved the record-breaking ball. The President also referred to Title I of the Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994 (Public Law 103–382), which amended Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law 89–10).

Remarks at a Florida Democratic Party Luncheon in Orlando September 9, 1998

The President. Thank you so much. Thank you, Jim Pugh, for all the work you’ve done on this dinner and lunch and for helping Buddy through this long campaign. And thank you, Governor Rossello, for everything you’ve said and for your leadership of our Democratic Governors’ Association.

I’d like to thank the Members of Congress who are here, Peter Deutsch, Rob Wexler, Corrine Brown, and your State party chair, Mitch Ceasar. And especially I want to thank Buddy and Anne MacKay for years and years and years of devoted service to the people of Florida and for taking on this campaign and seeing it through to what I predict will be a victory that will surprise some but not me. And I thank them.

I came here today to talk to you about what we’ve done together in the last 6 years and what’s at stake in this election. I think the people of this country have a serious choice to make in November between progress or partisanship, between people or politics, between unity or division.

You have been very good to me here in Florida—to me and to Hillary and to the Vice President and our administration—

Audience member. We love you, Bill!

The President. —and I’m very grateful to you. You have been astonishingly kind and generous to me today. And I will never forget it. If God lets me live to be an old man, I will never forget what Buddy MacKay said today from this platform when he could have said nothing. And so I hope you will just indulge me for a minute while I say that I thank you for that.

I have been your friend. I’ve done my best to be your friend, but I also let you down. And I let my family down, and I let this country down. But I’m trying to make it right. And I’m determined never to let anything like that happen again. And I’m determined—[*ap- plause*—wait a minute, wait a minute. I’m determined to redeem the trust of people like Buddy and Anne, who were with me in 1991—a lot of the rest of you were, too—when nobody but my mother and my wife thought I had a chance to be elected.

When I was over at the Hillcrest School—Buddy and I were over there a few minutes ago, and I was shaking hands with all these little kids out there. And this kid that reminded me a lot of myself when I was that young—he was bigger than the other students and kind of husky—he said, “Mr. President, I want to

grow up to be President. I want to be a President like you.” And I said—I thought, I want to be able to conduct my life and my Presidency so that all the parents of the country could feel good if their children were able to say that again. I’ll never forget that little boy, and it’s a big guide for me.

So I ask you for your understanding, for your forgiveness on this journey we’re on. I hope this will be a time of reconciliation and healing, and I hope that millions of families all over America are in a way growing stronger because of this. But I’ll tell you one thing that I hope you won’t let happen. There are a whole lot of people, in Washington especially, or who write about this, who would like for this—once again would like for something going on in Washington to be the subject of an election in November, instead of what’s going on in the lives of the American people. And I want to be open with you; I want you to understand these have been the toughest days of my life. But they may turn out to be the most valuable, for me and my family. And I have no one to blame but myself for my self-inflicted wounds. But that’s not what America is about. And it doesn’t take away from whether we’re right or wrong on the issues or what we’ve done for the last 6 years or what this election is about.

So what I want to say to you is, you’ve been kind and understanding to me today. I hope you’ll tell your friends and neighbors that I’m grateful and that I’m determined to redeem the trust of all the American people. But don’t be fooled, not for a minute, not for a day. Elections are about you and your children and your communities and your future. And I was looking at Buddy up here today, thinking, you know, how many people in how many places in this country would be well served to have somebody as profoundly decent and committed to doing the right thing as he is in any office in the land.

This is a big issue for Florida. What really matters is what decisions would the Governor of Florida make that would affect you. You take this HMO bill of rights—we’re trying to pass one in Washington. Suppose we don’t pass one. There is still a huge percentage of people in Florida that are in HMO’s. Forty-three HMO’s in this country have endorsed our plan. Why? Because they’re out there treating people right already, and they think you ought to be able to go to an emergency room if you’re hurt,

the one nearest to you and be reimbursed, not be taken across town. They think if you need a specialist, you ought to be able to get one. They believe if you have medical records, they ought to be private. They believe if your employer changes HMO’s in the middle of your pregnancy or your cancer treatment, you ought not to have to switch doctors. And they believe if these rights are there, you ought to have some way to enforce them. Now, that’s what this is about. Now, the vote for Governor of Florida could determine whether people in this State get those protections. That’s what the election is about.

We heard Buddy talking about education. We’ve got an education opportunity in this country with the diversity of our kids, but we also have an obligation. The States have constitutional responsibility for education. The vote for Governor of Florida will determine what kind of education our children get.

You heard him talking about the gun issue. I was, I guess, the first President ever to get into a public squabble with the NRA over the Brady bill and then the assault weapons ban. I was sort of sad about it; actually, I had worked with them from time to time when I was Governor of Arkansas. But we were in the business of letting politics and rhetoric get in the way of children’s lives. This is a better country because we passed the Brady bill and the assault weapons ban. And you’ve got this loophole in Florida—and this is about politics as opposed to principle. No one possibly could believe that if you need a check on the background, the criminal or mental health history of somebody who can go into a gun store and buy a gun, that you shouldn’t have that on any gun purchase. It doesn’t take that long.

Now, these are big issues. A quarter of a million people have not been able to buy guns because of their criminal history since the Brady bill passed. How many people do you think are alive because of that? So your decision in the Governor’s race in Florida will have an effect on that.

And we’re all here because we know all this, and I guess in a way I’m preaching to the choir again. But I wanted to say, as much as I have been touched by the wonderful reception you’ve given me today, as much as I hope you’ll share what I said to you today with your friends and neighbors, never forget you come here as citizens, with the responsibilities of citizens. And

we go forward from this room because we know that our individual lives and our family lives cannot be all they want to be unless our communities, our State, and our Nation is all it can be.

I go back to Washington to work on—with only a very few weeks left in this congressional session—an enormously important agenda for this country. And let me just give you three or four examples of what really the election ought to be about, because it will chart the future of the country for years ahead.

On October 1st—and I am counting the days—we are going to have the first balanced budget and surplus we've had in 29 years, and it's going to be amazing. Now, there are already people who say, "Well, it's election year. Let's give people a tax cut." Well, let me remind you, we have 16 million new jobs, the lowest unemployment rate in nearly 30 years, the lowest percentage of people on welfare in 29 years, and the first balanced budget in 29 years, and the highest homeownership in history, and the lowest inflation rate in 32 years because we didn't squander money. We kept at it until we eliminated the deficit. That got interest rates down; that led to huge investment and an explosion in the markets and the country going forward.

Now, if we spend this money because we estimate that we'll have surpluses for years ahead, what happens to our other obligations? You know, pretty soon the baby boomers will start to retire—I say, pretty soon, starting in about 13 years, 10, if you take early Social Security. I'm the oldest of the baby boomers. We're the biggest group of Americans, the people between 34 and 52, in the history of the country until the kids that started school last year. We finally have a bigger group of kids in school, which every Florida school district with a bunch of trailers out back of the regular building knows. *[Laughter]*

But before that, there was us, the baby boomers, the children of the World War II generation. Now, when we retire, at present rates of work force participation and birth rates and immigration rates, there will only be about two people working for every one person drawing Social Security. We'll all be eligible for Medicare. And I'm telling you, it is a mistake for us to go out and have an election year gimmick to please people, no matter how pleasing it would be with a tax cut, until we know we

have saved Social Security for the 21st century in a way that does not require us to maintain our retirement by lowering the standard of living of our children and grandchildren. It is important, and we ought to be tough about it.

And by the way, it's also good in the global economy for America to be strong and set an example. You see with all the gyrations in the stock market last week, a lot of you probably said, "Well, I hadn't noticed any companies going broke, and I haven't noticed any companies making windfall amounts of money. It looks like the economy is just growing steady. Why is the market jumping up and down?" And then when you read the articles they say, "Well, it's because of what's going on in the global economy."

So I say to you, the United States, as Alan Greenspan said the other day, cannot be an island of prosperity in a sea of distress. Thirty percent of our growth has come because of global growth, our expanding trade. In Florida, you know that. Buddy and I, we've done export events here in Florida with very impressive businesses here selling all over the world.

Now, the United States has an obligation to try to keep global economic growth going, to help the countries when they get in trouble, if they'll help themselves—if they'll help themselves—and to create an environment in which growth can occur. One of the things we have to do is at least pay our dues to the institutions like the International Monetary Fund that can put money into these countries that are reforming. And it's in our interest.

You know, we've got a lot of farmers in the Midwest and the high plains who are really going to have a hard time this year because in Asia, where the countries have had difficult economic problems, they can't afford to buy our food anymore. And it's led to big drops in farm income.

So I ask you to support, number one, an economic program that saves Social Security first, and don't fool with this balanced budget until we actually achieve it—we ought to look at the black ink just for a day or two before we start to give it away—*[laughter]*—and number two, fulfills our responsibilities to the global economy; and number three, recognizes that over the long run we can't grow this economy and become what we ought to be and be one country with all this diversity you have in Florida and throughout the country unless we have

a commitment to have a world-class education that's available to every single child.

Now, we have a national plan that will help Florida, for the first time, to help to build or expand or remodel 5,000 schools, to have smaller classes in the early grades, to have safer schools, to have better reading programs, to hook up all of our schools to the Internet. But in the end, I will say again, it matters who is Governor. And if you think about Florida's long-term history, if you look at the record that Lawton and Buddy have made for the last 8 years, I hope you'll encourage everybody in this congressional delegation to put partisanship aside and vote for our education agenda, but even if it all passes, in order to have the maximum impact it matters who the Governor is.

And unless we can prove that America can be one out of all these many cultures—to echo what Governor Rossello said—we're not going to have the America we want. And we won't be able to do that unless we achieve in education.

So, balance the budget; save Social Security before you spend the surplus; meet our obligations to stabilize the international economy, because it's the right thing to do morally and it happens to be in our interest; give us a world-class education; pass the Patients' Bill of Rights on the national level and at the State level; prove that we can—big issue in Florida—prove that we can grow the economy while improving the environment. Forty percent of our lakes and rivers are still not safe to swim in. We still have places with safe drinking water needs. As you have seen in Florida, climate change and the warming of the planet is real. We have to prove we can deal with these things and grow the economy. I'm so grateful for the chance that we've had to be involved together in recovering the Everglades. There are ways

to do these things that will promote economic opportunity and still improve the environment.

There are lots of other issues coming up in Washington. We're finally going to get a chance to give the Senate one more chance to pass campaign finance reform. And I hope we do that. You know, you've done it in Florida. Every single member of our caucus in the Senate supports it. They are determined to kill the bill through a filibuster. But we finally passed a good campaign finance reform bill through the House. I thank the House Members here from Florida for supporting it. We've got a real chance in the Senate.

And all this ought to be dealt with in the next 3 weeks. And if it's not, the voters ought to deal with it in November—choices, choices, choices. Elections should be about you and your children and your future, not what somebody else tells you they ought to be about.

Again, let me thank you from the bottom of my heart for the support you've given to all of us. Let me thank you for your kindness to me today. Let me thank you most of all for supporting Buddy. But let me challenge you: This is a big, fast-growing State that is a model of the future of America; don't you let a single, solitary soul you know get away without voting in November, because the future of America is riding on it.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:52 p.m. in the Lake Ivanhoe Room at the Orlando Marriott Downtown. In his remarks, he referred to Jim Pugh, event chair; gubernatorial candidate Lt. Gov. Buddy MacKay of Florida and his wife, Anne; Gov. Pedro Rossello of Puerto Rico; Hillcrest Elementary School student Marcos Encinias; and Gov. Lawton Chiles of Florida.

Statement on the United Nations Security Council Vote on Iraq *September 9, 1998*

I applaud the decisive and unanimous vote by the United Nations Security Council to suspend the review of sanctions against Iraq until Baghdad resumes full cooperation with the international weapons inspectors. Far from has-

tening the day sanctions are lifted, Iraq's failure to honor its obligations will prolong the sanctions, constrain Iraq from acquiring resources to rebuild its military, and keep the Iraqi economy under tight international control. The