

to be able to see one. Number three, if you work for a small business who changes providers, health care providers, at a given time during the year, you still shouldn't have to change your doctor if you're in the middle of a critical treatment.

Now, let me just graphically demonstrate what that means. This happens; these things happen. You remember when you had your first child. How would you feel if you were 7 months pregnant and your employer says, "I'm sorry, go get another obstetrician"? If anybody in your family has ever had chemotherapy—I've been through that—if your family member needs chemotherapy, you sit around thinking; you try to figure out ways to make jokes about it. My mother stood there thinking, "Well, maybe I won't lose my hair, or when I do, maybe I will finally get a wig." I never had to—you think—you try to be funny about it. And then you wonder whether you're going to be too sick to eat, right? In the middle of a chemotherapy treatment, do you think somebody would say, "I'm sorry, go get another doctor"? That's what this is about—basic things.

Our bill also protects the privacy of your medical records, which I think is very, very important and will become more important in the years ahead.

Now, the House of Representatives, the Republican majority passed a bill that guarantees

none of these rights and leaves 100 million Americans out of what little it does cover. The Senate wouldn't even vote on the bill because they didn't want to be recorded, so they shut down business.

That's what this election is about. Don't be fooled about a smokescreen. This election is: Are we going to have a Patients' Bill of Rights? Is our policy going to be to grow the economy and preserve the environment? Are we going to put education first? Are we going to stabilize the global economy, so we can continue to grow? Are we going to save Social Security first? That's what it's about.

And if we go out and say, we are Democrats, this is what we're running for; we believe elections should be about the people that live outside Washington, not about who's crawling on whom in Washington, DC—everything is going to be fine. So I ask you, go out there and make sure that's what it's about.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:35 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to luncheon hosts William S. and Star Lerach; Leonard Barrack, national finance chair, Democratic National Committee; Lynn Schenk, candidate for State attorney general; and San Diego City Council member Christine Kehoe, candidate for California's 49th Congressional District.

Statement on Strengthening Social Security *September 26, 1998*

The Republican tax plan drains billions of dollars from the surplus before we have done the hard work of strengthening Social Security. First things first. I will insist that we reserve the entire surplus until we have seized this historic opportunity to save Social Security, and veto

any bill that doesn't meet that principle. While it is regrettable that this plan survived today, I am heartened by the strong commitment to fiscal discipline and Social Security shown by those who opposed it.

Remarks at a Unity '98 Dinner in Los Angeles, California *September 26, 1998*

Thank you very much. I hate to begin with a request, but if there was any way to turn

down some of these lights, I would like it. I can't see any of you out there. Can you turn

these lights down? It's not a nightclub act. But I'd just like to know that you're out there, you know? [*Laughter*] Thank you.

Let me begin by telling you how very grateful I am for the warm welcome you have given me tonight, to those of you whom I saw earlier. I thank you especially for the personal messages you had for me and for Hillary. You know, even Presidents and their families have to be people, too, and that means a very great deal to us. And I thank you more than you will ever know.

I want to thank Haim and Cheryl for having me back in their home and having all of you here in this beautiful, beautiful setting. I'd like to thank Michael McDonald for that wonderful song. We were all up there singing, but not as well as you. I want to thank the staff of our Unity events, the people who catered this wonderful dinner, and the people who served it. I thank them all. They did a wonderful job for us. Thank you.

I want to thank Gray and Sharon Davis for being such good friends to Hillary and me and such good friends to the people of California. You have to make sure that on election night they're victorious, and I believe they will be. I thank you so much for being here. I thank my friend Phil Angelides for being here and for running for office.

Let me say to all the Members of Congress here, I'm very proud of this Unity event. We began to do this in 1996, to work together through the Democratic committee and the Senate campaign committee and the House campaign committee. We found that our contributors were relieved because they were only being hit once, instead of three times. But we also found that when we pooled our efforts, as is always true in life, when we work together, we do better. And Nancy Pelosi and Bob Torricelli have done a wonderful, wonderful job and a great thing for our country.

I'd like to thank the other Members who are here. You may have heard through the applause what Nancy said about Brad Sherman, that he was on Speaker Gingrich's top 10 hit list. Well, for whatever it's worth, he's on my top 10 protect list, and I think he's going to win in November, thanks in no small measure to your help. And I thank you for that.

I have a lot of things to be grateful to Henry Waxman for, but one thing stands out above all: He has put the public health of the children of this country over the interests of the tobacco

industry that has done so much to undermine it and to stop us from passing comprehensive tobacco legislation. He fought that battle a long time before it was popular and before we in our administration got into it. And Henry, we're going to win sooner or later, sure as the world, and when we do, it will be in no small measure because of you. And I thank you for what you've done for our children.

I want to say, too, that I'm very glad Barbara Boxer is here tonight. You know she's in a tough race. She's always been in a tough race. She was in '92; she is now; she has been since the spring. But I think she's tougher than her race is. And I can say this about, to some extent, every Member of Congress who's here. But I want you to remember that many of the things for which the American people very generously give our administration credit, which flow from the economic prosperity we have, on one August night in 1993 hung by the thread of a single vote, first in the House and then in the Senate. And we did not have a vote to spare when we passed the economic plan that brought the deficit down 92 percent, before we passed the bipartisan Balanced Budget Act. That plan cut taxes for 15 million working families on modest incomes. I invested dramatic new monies in health research, as Nancy said, and education. It gave real incentives for people to invest in inner cities that had been left behind in the development we had enjoyed. And it hung by a single vote.

And Barbara Boxer, who had been elected in a narrow race in California in 1992, never blinked. She just went up there and did the right thing for America. And now the voters of California should never blink. They should go to the polls and do the right thing for California and for America and reelect her, because we need her in Washington, DC, very, very badly.

I would also like to thank Dick Gephardt and Tom Daschle for their sterling leadership of our caucus in the Senate and the House through some very, very difficult days and tough decisions. Again I say to you, many of the things for which the administration is credited required the support of Democrats. Even in the bipartisan legislation, we never would have gotten the money to insure 5,000 children who don't have health insurance—5 million children. We never would have gotten the funds to give a \$1,500 tax credit to virtually every family in the

country for the first 2 years of college and tax breaks for the other costs of higher education, and to expand dramatically the student loan program and the scholarship programs, if it hadn't been for the leadership of Tom Daschle and Dick Gephardt.

So every time you think about the good things that I have been able to achieve, if a law was required and a change was required, I can tell you that if it hadn't been for those two men sharing the same values, the same hopes, the same dreams, and being willing to pay the same heat, it would not have happened. And I want to see them and their counterparts rewarded in this election because they have consistently, in the majority and the minority, done the right thing for the United States. They are builders, not wreckers; they are uniters, not dividers; and they ought to be the leaders of the United States Congress.

Let me just say one final thing of appreciation for the Democratic Party. I want to thank the chairs of this event nationally and the chairs in California. I want to thank Steve Grossman, who did the right thing to go back home to his child; and Len Barrack, our finance chair.

We've had a wonderful couple of days. Hillary just got back from Washington and Oregon, campaigning for our House candidates. She was in northern California with Barbara last night, and we got to spend the evening with Chelsea, and the morning until noon. And I was in Illinois yesterday and in San Jose last night, in Silicon Valley. I went to San Diego earlier today, and I'm here, and I'm going on to Texas in the morning.

America knows that it has a decision to make. And I want to talk to you pretty seriously about that just for a moment. The kind reception you gave me is an indication of a deep feeling that you and millions of other Americans have about what's going on in Washington. But what I desperately want this election to be about is what's going on outside of Washington, in the lives of the American people.

You know, I ran for this job because I did not believe the country was moving in the right direction, and I didn't think we had a vision to get to the new century. And I believe that we had some ideas—I and the people who were working with me—that would, first of all, make America work for ordinary people again; and secondly would bring us together in a spirit of reconciliation and community across this incred-

ible diversity that we have in our country. Indeed, one of the things that I regret the most about so much of the rancor of Washington is that it undermines what we so desperately need in this country now, which is a deepening spirit of unity and what we have in common with our neighbors and friends, no matter what the differences are. And I wanted America to be a force for peace and prosperity and freedom throughout the world.

And in the last 6 years, because of what we were able to do together, I'm very proud of the fact that we have the lowest unemployment rate in 28 years and the lowest crime rate in 25 years and the smallest percentage of people on welfare in 29 years, and we're about to have the first balanced budget and surplus in 29 years. I'm proud of the fact that we have advanced the cause of peace and freedom around the world and that we banned assault weapons at home and passed the Brady bill and passed the family and medical leave law and did a lot of other things to change life for people who could never afford to come to an event like this. I'm proud of all that.

But the real issue is, what are we going to do with this moment of prosperity and confidence? And you showed me once again tonight that adversity is not our enemy. Adversity is our friend. It's a harsh teacher sometimes, and I think we've all experienced that in one way or another in our lives. But it animates us to action and it forces us to get to the bottom of ourselves and ask what we really believe in and what we really care about and what we're prepared to work for and to sacrifice for. No, adversity is not our enemy in this election season, but complacency and cynicism are enemies.

Our opponents in the other party believe that they're going to pick up seats in this midterm election and because of what I call the M&M syndrome: midterms and money. Even though you're here tonight, they'll still have more money than we do for the next few weeks—quite a bit more. And usually at midterm elections, the electorate is older and wealthier and more likely to be Republican. In order for us to win, which I clearly believe we can, the American people have to understand what the real choice is and have to believe that just because times are good doesn't mean we can sit on our lead, because we can't.

All you have to do is look around the world today. Ron Burkle and I were talking tonight

before I came over here about the troubles in Asia, the troubles in Japan, the terrible challenges the people of Russia are facing; the fear that many of us have that it could spread to our friends in Latin America who are actually doing a pretty good job running their economies; and what Alan Greenspan said the other night, that America could never remain—or at least not forever remain—an island of prosperity in a sea of economic distress.

The world is changing very fast. That's why I have said that we ought to be using this time to look at the big problems facing our country and to take action. Let me just mention a couple very quickly that I think are important and then give you the real comparison of what's going on.

Number one, we're going to have this surplus on October 1st. We've been waiting for it for 29 years; and every Member of Congress and I in this room, we've been working on it for 6 years. Now, I would like to see the red ink turn to black and dry a little. I'm just waiting for October 1st, just to take a deep breath and say that's another thing we did that was good for America.

The leaders of the other party, they want to give an election-year tax cut. Just a few weeks before the election, it would be popular; it would be great politics. But it's wrong. It is the wrong thing to do. It's wrong for two reasons.

One is, we need to show stability and discipline. We quadrupled the debt of this country in the 12 years before I became President. And now, with so much of the rest of the world in trouble, we need to show people we have got our head on straight and we are not going to knee-jerk in the management of our economy; we're going to be a force of strength and stability for the whole world.

The second and really the more important issue is that everybody knows the Social Security system we have now is not sustainable when the baby boomers retire. It's fine now, and it will be fine for several years in the future. But we know right now we cannot maintain the present Social Security system and take care of the elderly—and I remind you that half of the elderly people in this country are lifted out of poverty today because of Social Security. They would be in poverty were it not for Social Security, even those that have other sources of income.

Now, I have not said I'm against tax cuts. We have tax cuts in my budget, in the balanced budget, for child care, for education, for the environment. All I said is we shouldn't spend the surplus on tax cuts until we save Social Security for the 21st century. And that's very important. Everybody I know—there are some baby boomers here tonight—everybody between 34 and 52 is a baby boomer. I'm the oldest of them, though it grieves me to say so. [*Laughter*]

But I can tell you—not very long ago I was home in Arkansas eating barbecue with 20 people I grew up with, and very few of them would classify as upper middle class. Most of them have very modest incomes; they're just good, hard-working Americans doing the best they can to raise their kids. But every one of them was plagued with the notion that when they got ready to retire and there were only two people working for every one person on Social Security, if we don't do something about this now, we would have to take lots more money from our children and undermine their ability to raise our grandchildren just to sustain our retirement.

Now, you heard Bob Torricelli quoting de Tocqueville—we're going to see, because it's a clear choice in this election. They're offering everybody a quick-fix tax cut that won't amount to a lot of money to most people, but it sounds great before an election. And we're going into the teeth of the election and we say, "We would like to tell you this, but we're not going to do it; we're going to tell you truth: America needs to set a financial example, and we need to save Social Security first before we use any of that surplus for spending or for tax cuts. That's our position." It's a big issue, and it's the right thing for America.

The second big issue—I never thought I'd ever be giving a speech about this within 6 weeks of an election—is whether we're going to fund the International Monetary Fund. Most Americans probably don't know what it is. But I can tell you this, if you like the fact that your country has almost 17 million new jobs, and you want us to continue to lead the world, and you understand that 30 percent of our growth has come from what we sell to our friends around the world and a quarter of the world today is in a serious recession—in Asia, where so much of California's wealth has come from in the growth of our trading with Asian

markets—then you know that America has to do something to lead the way.

I'm doing my best to get all the other wealthy countries in the world to focus on this, to try to help Asia recover, to try to get Japan restored to growth, to try to help Russia, not only because it's the morally right thing to do for them but because it's in our interest. We can't grow and continue to prosper unless our friends and neighbors grow.

And for 8 months, I've been asking this Congress to fund our contribution to the International Monetary Fund. They need the money, and I can't do the job without it. And we can't possibly be expected to lead if we're the biggest piker on the block and we won't pay our fair share. So that's a big issue in this election.

The third thing I'd like to talk to you about is education. Eight months ago, in the State of the Union, I gave the United States Congress an education agenda to try to make sure that all of our children have access to world-class elementary and secondary education. It was based on the best research available of what we know works. The plan, paid for in the balanced budget, would put 100,000 teachers out there to lower average class size to 18 in the early grades. It would build or repair 5,000 schools, because a lot of schools are overcrowded or breaking down. It would hook up all the classrooms in the country to the Internet by the year 2000. It would provide for the development of voluntary national standards, exams to measure whether the kids were meeting them; and would reward school districts that are in trouble if they end social promotion and adopt tutoring, after-school and summer school programs for the kids who need it, so we don't tell them they're failures because they're in a system that's failed. It would provide college scholarships to 35,000 young people that they could pay off by going out into our most troubled school districts and giving a few years of their lives to teach. It would provide for 3,000 charter schools over the next few years, something that California is leading the way in.

It is a good program. It ought to be passed. And I can promise you it will not be passed by this election, and it won't be passed in toto unless we have a Democratic Congress. And that's a good reason to fight for the people who are here and all the people they represent throughout this country.

Finally, let me just give you one other issue, because to me it is sort of the crystal representation of the differences in our parties now. For 8 months, I have been trying to pass a Patients' Bill of Rights. It sounds good, but let me tell you what it really means—160 million of us Americans are in managed care plans now. I have supported managed care because when I became President, inflation costs in health care were going up at 3 times the rate of inflation, and it was going to absolutely bankrupt the country if we didn't do something about it.

On the other hand, I want to manage the health care system as best as possible, consistent with the main goal, which is keeping people healthy or making them well if they get sick. That's the goal; it's not managing the system. You manage the system so you can use your forces to advance the health of Americans. But in too many cases, health care decisions are being made by accountants, not by doctors. And in too many cases—cruel individual cases—the interest of ordinary people are being washed away.

So let me tell you what our bill does. It says that if—God forbid—you get hit by a car leaving this party tonight, and you're in a managed care plan, you should be taken to the nearest emergency room, not one 10 or 15 miles away just because it's covered by your plan. It says if your physician tells you that he or she can't treat you and you need to see a specialist, you have a right to see one. It says that if you're in the middle of a treatment of some kind, and your employer changes health care providers, you can stay with your doctor until you finish your treatment.

Just imagine—this actually happens in America now. Most of us—some of you have young children here; some of us have children that are grown or children who think they are grown. [Laughter] But just remember when your first child was born. How would you have felt 6 months into the pregnancy if somebody had said, "I hope you're all right, but you've got to change obstetricians"? It happens.

Have you ever had anybody in your family in chemotherapy? I have. And if you have, you'll identify with what I'm about to tell you. You know it happens, and you try to find a way to put on a happy face and be brave and even try to find a way to make jokes about whether your loved one is going to lose their hair or not. And then you wonder when you're going

to be so sick you can't eat anymore. It's tough enough. If you're in the middle of a chemotherapy treatment, how would you feel to be told that you have to change doctors?

This is serious business. That's all our bill does. It gives you these basic, human protections. And it says your medical records ought to be kept private.

Now, for 8 months there's been no action on our bill. But let me tell you what the majority in the other party has done. In the House of Representatives, they passed a bill which they called the Patients' Bill of Rights which did not guarantee a single, solitary thing I just described to you, and left 100 million Americans out of what little it did provide.

In the Senate, when Senator Daschle and his friends attempted to bring up the Patients' Bill of Rights, the Senate Republican leader was so frightened of it, was so afraid to have his Members recorded voting against it that he actually shut down the Senate for 4 hours—unheard of. He called off business. They turned out the lights. They ran away and hid under their desk to kill it by stealth because they did not want to be caught voting for the insurance companies instead of for the people of this country.

Forty-three managed care plans are endorsing our bill. Why? Because they take good care of their people, and they're being punished for it.

Now, I want you to think about this. What do we stand for? We stand for saving Social Security first, for putting the education of our children before any other investment priority. We stand for America's continued leadership to keep our own growth going and to help the world economy. We stand for a Patients' Bill of Rights.

What have they done this year with their year in the Congress? They have killed the tobacco legislation that would have helped our children. They killed campaign finance reform. They are killing the Patients' Bill of Rights. They've taken no action on the International Monetary Fund, no action on the education program. And insofar as they have taken action, they've moved backwards on saving Social Security first, and they're still continuing their stealth attack on the environment.

Now, that's what this is about. It's about what kind of country America is going to be. So we have a choice to make. It in some ways grieves me to make these speeches. I had hoped by the time I'd been here 6 years, trying to bring

people together, that we would have a greater sense of bipartisanship in America; that there would be a greater sense of harmony here, just as I believe there is a greater sense of understanding across racial and ethnic and religious lines in this country than there was 6 years ago. But you know the truth. You knew the truth when you stood up and cheered. I wanted you to hear it tonight not in a political, rah-rah speech, but in calm, direct, but very blunt terms.

This is a very great country. We are blessed to be in this moment. But we have a solemn responsibility to our children, to our legacy, and to the world to make this election about the American people, not about the squabbles in Washington, DC. And if you will go out and do that, I promise you we'll spend every red cent you have given us tonight to do that.

But you have friends; you have neighbors; you have means of communication. You need to talk to people about what's really at stake here. And you tell them, "You know what the other guys are for. The Democrats are for keeping the economy strong, saving Social Security first, putting the education of our children above all other investment priorities, and passing that Patients' Bill of Rights. They're for an America coming together. They're for progress, not partisanship. They're for people, not politics."*

If you do that, we're going to have a stunning victory in November, against all the tide of history and against all the money and all the mid-term arguments they can make, because it's the right thing for our country, for our children, and for our future.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President, spoke at 9:42 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Haim and Cheryl Saban; musician Michael McDonald; California gubernatorial candidate Lt. Gov. Gray Davis and his wife, Sharon; Phil Angelides, candidate for State treasurer; Leonard Barrack, national finance chair, and Steve Grossman, national chair, Democratic National Committee; and Ron Burkle, chairman, Yucaipa Companies. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

* White House correction.