

Statement on the Election of Gerhard Schroeder as Chancellor of Germany *September 27, 1998*

Today the German people have once again exercised their democratic right to determine their national leadership. I extend my sincerest congratulations to Gerhard Schroeder. He and I had good discussions in Berlin this spring and in Washington this summer. I look forward to working closely with him. Germany is one of America's closest allies. As always, our two gov-

ernments will be fully engaged in a comprehensive policy agenda.

I also want to convey my gratitude and that of all Americans to Helmut Kohl. During his 16-year tenure, he has made historic contributions to the unity of his nation, the strength of our Euro-Atlantic community, and to peace throughout the world.

Remarks at a Dinner for Gubernatorial Candidate Garry Mauro in Houston, Texas *September 27, 1998*

Thank you so much. I want to tell you that—I'll say a little more about this in a minute, but I'm very proud of Garry Mauro. I'm proud of him for having the courage to run. I'm proud of him for not listening to everybody, including me, who told him how terrible and difficult it would be. I'm proud of him because his commitment in the face of all the odds is the very kind of decision I now am trying to get the voters all over America to make in the coming election, and that is to discard what we normally do in good times—which is to just take a deep breath and kick our feet back and relax—and instead make a commitment to the future of our country.

He's coming out here against stiff odds because he thinks it's a mistake for Texas to sit back and relax and react to events but to take no initiative to prepare for tomorrow. It took a lot of courage. He made a very compelling presentation; and if you'll help him, if you'll get him enough help to get that message on television so that people can see what the real differences are, he'll make a very compelling presentation on election day in November as well.

I want to thank Lee and Sandra for having us in their unbelievably beautiful home and for doing so in a way that requires putting up a tent. I'd like to thank the people who prepared and served the meal. I'd like to thank the musicians; the piano player and the singer were wonderful, and the gospel group was amazing. And

I think I'm in the right frame of mind now to go back to Washington, DC, and deal with it for one more week. And I thank you for that.

I would like to thank Ambassador McLelland and Ambassador Schechter—boy, that sounds high-flown, doesn't it?—[laughter]—for being here tonight; my longtime friend Senator Rodney Ellis; Molly Beth Malcolm. Richard Raymond, thank you for running for office this year. And I'd like to say a special word of appreciation to Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee for her steadfast support of our agenda and work.

The temptation when you're with a bunch of old friends and some new ones, when you know you're basically preaching to the saved, especially on this day, is to kind of give a rah-rah speech. But if you'll forgive me, because of the present state of things and because I think this election is so profoundly important to the future of our country, I would like to take just a few moments to be serious with you.

I was looking at Garry today, thinking about how long ago it was I met him. And I saw Mark White tonight, and I thought about—it seemed like yesterday we were working as Governors together. It doesn't take long to live a life. It seems impossible to me, but next week it will have been 7 years next week since I first declared for President. The time has flown by. I want you to know, for all of you that have helped me make this journey, for all the

slings and arrows, I wouldn't trade one single day of it for the opportunity it's given me to move this country in the right direction. And I want to thank you for it every day—every single day.

But the question for us as citizens is always, well, what now? You know, if I told you on the day I was inaugurated President, I'll come back here for the 1998 elections, and we will have had ample time to implement our program, and by then we'll have 16.7 million new jobs and 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 the lowest—the first balanced budget and surplus in 29 years and the highest real wage growth in 30 years and the lowest African-American poverty rate ever recorded and the biggest drop in Hispanic poverty in 20 years and the highest homeownership in history; and, oh, by the way, there will have been somewhere between 12 and 15 million people take advantage of the family and medical leave law; and a quarter of a million felons wouldn't have been able to buy handguns—and not a single hunter, in spite of what the NRA told them, has lost the ability to get a weapon and go hunting during hunting season, but a lot of innocent people's lives have been saved; and we'll be ahead of schedule and under budget in putting those 100,000 police on the street; and we've opened the doors of college to all Americans with a \$1,500-a-year tax credit for the first 2 years and tax credits for the rest and deductibility of student loans and more scholarships and more work-study positions; and we've got 100,000 more young people in the AmeriCorps program working to make their communities better and earning money to go to college; we've got fewer toxic waste dumps, cleaner air, cleaner water, a safer food supply; and our country has been a force for peace all over the world and has tried to deal with the thorniest problems in the world in our time to make the world a safer place—now, if I had told you that on the day that I was inaugurated, you probably wouldn't have believed me.

But that's all true now. It turned out, because of the hard work of the American people and the wonderful people who were working with me and the loyalty of a Congress and the Democratic Party that had to fight bitter, bitter, bitter partisan opposition to nearly everything we did, we were able to implement the new ideas and

the new direction, and they turned out to be right. And I am grateful for how well America is doing today and for the support we have received.

And I'm grateful that Texas is doing well, and that every place I go in the country, people come up to me and say, "Mr. President, this is the best time I've had in a long time," or, "This is the best time I've had in my life." I am grateful for that. So what are we going to do about it? That's the question in the Governor's race. That's the question in these elections for Congress. What normally happens in good times is that people relax, and they're complacent.

A lot of you said some wonderful things to me tonight, gave me wonderful messages for Hillary tonight, proved once again what good people you are and what good friends you are. I thank you for all that. I'm very grateful. We've just had some great days, and we had one great night and a day with our daughter in California.

But I want to tell you, and I want you to hear me clearly, adversity is not our problem in this election. Adversity has energized our supporters. Adversity has clarified the choices. Adversity forces us to get to the bottom of ourselves and ask ourselves what we really believe in and what kind of people we want to be and what we're willing to put our necks on the line for.

Garry Mauro did something in presenting himself for Governor, near as I can tell, nobody else of his position, experience, and knowledge and ability was willing to do this year. Why? Because he believed it was time to make a difference.

Now, on the other side in Washington, as I've said many times, they believe that they'll do very well in these elections because of M&M—money and midterms—because they always have more money, and because traditionally at midterm elections the voter turnout goes down because our folks, the kind of folks that made it possible for us to have this good meal tonight, it's a bigger hassle for them to go vote than it is for most hardcore Republicans—who tend to be better off and older and find it easier to go to polls—and they tend not to be so interested. And then if you pile good times on top of it, there's a certain relaxation that says, "Well, let's just stay with the status quo and react to whatever comes along."

The enemies of our forces in this election are complacency and cynicism at what is going on in Washington, not adversity. Adversity is our friend. It's a harsh teacher sometimes, and I hate it. It's the kind of friend I could do without on some of the last several days. [Laughter] But it is, nonetheless, the truth. And what we have to decide as citizens is where we go from here.

Now, let me tell you what we're trying to do in Washington. What we're trying to tell the American people is, we're grateful that we're doing so well. But we did not get here by being casual, by reacting, by taking the easy path. We got here by making the big decisions and the tough ones in the right way. And the world is still changing very fast. All you have to do is pick up the paper any day and you see about the economic crises in Asia and the political turmoil in other parts of the world, and you realize that in this kind of dynamic world, as Alan Greenspan, the Chairman of the Federal Reserve, the other day said, America cannot simply be an island of prosperity in a sea of economic distress. So now that we have this balanced budget, this surplus, this success, we ought to use this moment to take on the big challenges facing America. That is the Democratic message. And let me give you four examples.

Number one, Wednesday we'll have the first balanced budget and surplus in a generation. The Republicans say, "Good, we finally got some money; let's spend it. Let's give everybody an election-year tax cut. It's only about 5½ weeks before the election, and we can make everybody so happy." It's great politics. And I say, it may be good politics, but it's the wrong thing to do. And it's wrong for two reasons.

First of all, this old world is in a lot of trouble. One-quarter of the world is in recession. Japan, the second biggest economy in the world, has had no growth for 5 years. Everybody looks to us to be strong and responsible and not to do the easy, quick thing but to do the right thing for our own growth and as a beacon of stability to the world. And I'm not going to give that up easily.

And even more important—even more important—everybody in America who has given it a minute's thought knows that while the Social Security system is very sound today and will be for anybody within shouting distance of needing it, that when the baby boomers retire—

that's me; I'm the oldest; it kills me to admit it. But people between the ages of 34 and 52 that were born after World War II are the biggest group of Americans ever, until the crowd of kids now in school. And when we retire, there will only be about two people working for every one person drawing Social Security. If we start now with this surplus to help us, we can make modest changes now that will enable us to secure the retirement of the baby boomers without imposing an unbearable burden on our children and their ability to raise our grandchildren.

Now, I know it's more popular to give an election-year tax cut. But I've been waiting for 29 years to get out of the red, and I've been working for 6 years to get out of the red. And when we voted in 1993 to get out of the red, for the economic program, we didn't have a single Republican vote. And the deficit was cut 92 percent before the bipartisan balanced budget bill passed in 1997. Now the same crowd that wouldn't help us cut the deficit wants to spend it before we even see the surplus. I would just like to see the red ink turn to black and dry at least for a day or two before we start spending it again, and I think that's right.

Now, this is a huge issue. Half the seniors in this country would be in poverty today if it were not for Social Security. We can make minor changes now, secure the retirement of the baby boom generation without undermining our children and grandchildren's future, and I am determined to do it. So that's the first issue. Do you believe in Social Security first, or do you want the election-year tax cut? Clear choice between the parties.

Issue number two: Do you believe that in order for us to grow economically, the rest of the world has to be growing so they can buy our products? Thirty percent of America's growth in the last 6 years has come from foreign trade. Now you've got a quarter of the world in recession, another quarter teetering. I have done my best to lay out a plan to try to help restore Asia, to try to help restore Russia if they will do what they can do for themselves; and more important for Texas, to try to keep what's going on there from spreading to Latin America and to Mexico, to our friends south of the border, our biggest trading partners in terms of growth. In order to do it, and for America to lead, we have at least got to pay our fair share to the International Monetary

Fund. That's where we get the money to do this stuff.

Ever since the State of the Union Address, I have been pleading with this Congress to fund our fair share of the International Monetary Fund, and they still haven't done it. They still haven't done it. And it's playing games with our own economic future and undermining our ability to lead. So that's the second issue. Do you want to keep the economic growth going in America, or do you want to take a powder?

The third issue is education. Garry spoke so movingly of that, but there are some things that we ought to do nationally to help. I have sent an education program to Congress in the balanced budget that does the following things: puts 100,000 teachers out there to lower class size to an average of 18 in the early grades all across America; it would build or repair 5,000 schools; it would provide funds to hook every classroom up to the Internet, including the poorest schools in south Texas or inner-city Houston or anywhere else in the country, by the year 2000; it would provide college scholarships to 35,000 young people and let them pay it off by going into our neediest areas and teaching off their college costs for 4 years. It would, in short, help move this country forward.

It would provide extra funds to the most troubled urban and rural school districts to have high standards, to stop social promotion, but not to tell the kids they're a failure when the system is failing them; instead, to give them after-school programs, summer school programs, mentoring programs to keep them off the street, out of trouble, and in learning. It is a good program, and it ought to pass. Now, for 8 months there has been no action, and the budget year begins on October 1st. We're for it, and they're not. It's a clear choice.

And the fourth issue is the Patients' Bill of Rights. You've had a little experience with that here. Our bill says, simply, you have a right to see a specialist if your doctor tells you you need it. If you get in an accident, you have a right to go to the nearest emergency room, not the nearest one your plan happens to cover that may be halfway across town. If you're in the middle of a treatment and your employer changes health plans, you can keep the doctor you've got until your treatment is over. In other words, they can't tell you when you're 7 months pregnant to get another obstetrician, or when you're 80 percent through a chemotherapy treat-

ment, you've got to stop and go see someone else; this happens today. It says if you have a question about whether a procedure is approved or not, you have a right to appeal it and get an answer, pronto, instead of months and months down the road when it's too late to do any good. It says you have a right to the privacy of your medical records. That's what we're for.

The response of the Republicans in Congress and the House was to pass a bill that didn't do any of the things I said, and left 100 million Americans out of what they did do. In the Senate, we tried to bring up the Patients' Bill of Rights, and the Republican majority was so afraid that the majority leader had to literally shut the Senate down for 4 hours the other night. I mean, they turned the lights out, and they got under their desks so they would not have to be recorded voting for the insurance companies against the people. I never saw anything like it in my life. It was death by stealth. [Laughter]

What else have they done with this last year, you might like to know. They have also killed campaign finance reform. They've killed the tobacco reform legislation to protect our kids from the dangers of tobacco. They killed the minimum wage legislation, and they're trying to continue their assault on the environment. I think we've proved you can improve the environment and grow the economy. That's the right policy, not to assault the environment.

So you've got a clear choice. In Washington, you've got a clear choice. Do you want to put Social Security first, make education our top investment priority, keep the economic growth going, and pass a Patients' Bill of Rights? Or do you want somebody that's against all that and wants to divert your attention to other things? It's a pretty clear choice. And if the American people understand it as that, I think they'll make the right decision.

In Texas, let me say one of the reasons I wanted to be here, apart from my friendship and admiration for Garry Mauro, is that I did something as President, with the help of the Democrats, that the Republicans talked about doing for years but never did. I don't know how many times Mark White and I went to the White House during the Governors' conference and listened to people intone about how, oh, the power in Washington should be devolved to the States. Near as I could tell,

all they ever did was cut money and ask us to do more with less. But we never actually had any more flexibility, any more authority.

We actually did that. The Government today has over 300,000 fewer people in it than it did the day I was inaugurated—the Federal Government. It is the smallest in 35 years. The States have more responsibility—more responsibility for education, for the environment, for health care, for crime, for the economy. It matters more who the Governor is.

Now, come back to Texas—I did this Governor's job for 12 years, and I could still be doing it if I hadn't gotten diverted in 1991 and '92. *[Laughter]* I would never have gotten tired of it; I loved it. But I'm telling you, the time to act on the long-term problems of a State or a nation is the good time—not when times are bad, not when you don't have any money, not when people don't have any confidence, not when people are so worried about keeping body and soul together you couldn't even stand up and give a speech like the one I gave tonight; you would have to stand up and talk in slogans and deal with people's emotions. Now is the good time.

This is Sunday, so let me use one Biblical reference. We ought to behave like Joseph did in the Bible. Now, Joseph was a lot like Garry Mauro. He was not part of the elite of Egypt, and Garry Mauro is not part of the elite of Texas. Joseph was even a slave—at least Garry didn't have to go through that. *[Laughter]* And finally, Joseph got put in charge of Egypt, and times were very good. And he made a lot of people mad because he made all the people go out and work like crazy, as if their life depended on it, to gather up all the grain to guard against the days when things weren't so good. So when this famine came and swept over the land, Egypt kept right on chugging. Why? Because they had a leader who thought about tomorrow, who did not sit on the lead, bask in good times, and just react to whatever came up, but did what was right for the long term.

Our country needs to follow that example today. Respectfully, I believe this State should follow that example today. I applaud what Garry said. We don't want, we Democrats, we never want to get into responding in kind. One of the deepest disappointments of my Presidency is that I hoped that after 6 years of working to reconcile our people across the lines that divide us, things would be a little less acrimonious in Washington.

I think people are getting along better across racial and religious and ethnic lines out in the country, but there is still a big political divide in Washington. The only thing that can close it now is the vote of the people. The only thing that can elect Garry Mauro now is if you believe that it's better to have Joseph; that it's better to think in the good times you should take the big steps, not the baby steps; that in the good times you should be acting with confidence, not reacting to whatever happens to come along.

I promise you, I see it every day as your President in information you can read in the papers, in information that comes to me as classified: This is a dynamic changing world. We stand for progress over partisanship. We stand for people over politics. We stand for unity over division. And we stand for the future of our children over short-term advantage.

He deserves your support. And if you can get that message out, he's going to surprise a lot of people. And if you'll stay with that approach, we will win the congressional elections in November.

God bless you for being here, and thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:10 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts H. Lee and Sandra Godfrey; State Senator Rodney G. Ellis; Molly Beth Malcolm, State Democratic chair; State Representative Richard Raymond, candidate for State land commissioner; former U.S. Ambassador to Jamaica Stan McLelland; former U.S. Ambassador to Barbados Arthur L. Schechter; and Mark White, former Governor of Texas.