

Remarks at a Luncheon for Senatorial Candidate Mary Boyle in Cleveland, Ohio

October 2, 1998

The President. Well, let me begin by thanking you for the wonderful welcome, thanking you for being here for Mary. Tony and Kristine, I have now been in your home and Slam Jam's. [Laughter] And I like them both very much. Thank you so much for opening your home to a few of your friends today. It is a wonderful act of generosity.

I'd like to thank all the candidates who are here. They've all been introduced, but I thank them for coming. I thank Mayor Coyne and David Leland and Mayor Starr and—Mayor Coyne, thank you for being here. I would like to say also a special word of appreciation to David Leland and the work that he has done with the Ohio Democratic Party. I think it's one of the best State Democratic Parties in the entire United States, and I thank you. And I thank all of these legislators and others who are here who are a part of that.

I'd like to thank Tony and Kristine for having their family here; and I'd like to thank Mary for having her mother, her husband, her kids—her whole family here. This has turned out to be a family affair.

I'd also like to say a special word of thanks—I always try to do this when I come to Ohio. You know, the press said that I would be the nominee of the Democratic Party when I won the Ohio primary in 1992. And then at the Democratic Convention in New York, Ohio's votes put me over the top officially. And then on election night in 1992, all the experts didn't predict that I was a winner until Ohio flashed on the screen for the Clinton-Gore ticket. And I thank you for that. And then in 1996, our margin of victory here was more than tripled over 1992. And I thank you for that. It took a lot of heartache away from me on election day, so I thank you for all that.

As Tony has already said, I would like to say a special word of appreciation to the family of Tom Coury for continuing to sponsor and support this event, for the love they had for him. And I would like to say a special word of appreciation for the feeling he had for the First Lady. We talked about that a little tonight. She is down in Uruguay, having the second of

her Vital Voices conferences. That's a group that she's organized all over the world—starting, I might add for the Irish here, in Northern Ireland—to organize women committed to peace and to economic development and to good family-supportive policies. So I wish she could be here.

But I would like to thank Robert, Thomas, Traci, Teri, and Robert for being here and for what the Courys have meant in their support of me. And thank you for supporting Mary today. Yes, give them a hand again. That's good. [Applause]

I want you to know why I came here today. I am here to support Mary Boyle for the Senate. I'm here to support her because she's got an outstanding record in public service, because she has good values and good positions on the issues; you just heard them. I came here because I like her, I have confidence in her, and because if enough of you help her, she can win this election in November and make a big difference to the future of the United States.

Ohio in so many ways is so representative of America. And it's important that you understand that a Senator from Ohio, in a very profound sense, can represent America and the best in America and can have a profound impact on the future of this country, simply by doing what's best for you.

John Glenn called me night before last, just to tell me to hang in there and expressed his support and friendship. We've had a wonderful relationship. But he called me also one more time to thank me for letting him go up in that spaceship—[laughter]—because he was going down to Florida to complete his last training. First of all, he told me he was too old to be in the Senate, and then he asked me if he could go into space. [Laughter] When he said that, I didn't think we could get anybody to run for the Senate. I thought everybody would be mortally terrified. [Laughter]

But when I think about that—you should think about what kind of person you want to replace John Glenn, because he not only represented you, America looked to him—and not

just because he went up in space early but because of what he represented after he came down. And I think you need to think about that.

You know, when I ran for President in 1992, except for President Carter's term, we hadn't had much success at electing Presidents since 1968. And I said to the American people and to the people of Ohio, "Look, I'd like to take a different approach to the country's problems. I'd like to put an end to a lot of this partisan bickering in Washington and the shouting back and forth." And I believe that a lot of what we're hearing about National Government is just flat wrong. I don't believe that you can help business by hurting labor. I think a good economic policy is pro-business and pro-labor. I don't believe you can grow the economy by destroying the environment. Over the long-run, that's a loser. I think we have to prove that we can improve the environment as we grow the economy. I don't believe that you can just jail your way out of the crime problem. Sure, people should be punished, but the best policy is to keep kids out of trouble in the first place with a sensible prevention policy.

I don't believe people on welfare who can work should be on welfare. I think they ought to have to work. But I don't think when they go to work their children ought to be punished by losing their nutrition and their health care benefits. If you took a totally nonpolitical poll of families and you asked them what they were really worried about—working people with children—most people would tell you, even in upper income levels, that what they really worry about is how to properly balance their job at work and their job at home, which is still the most important job in America, raising your kids. Most everybody would tell you that. So I said, "If you vote for me, I'll try to reform the welfare system to make people work who ought to work, but I'm not going to make them sacrifice their responsibilities to their kids. There's got to be a way to balance these two things." And that's what we've done.

I said there was a way to bring the deficit down and continue to invest in education, in health care, in research, in making this country strong. I felt that America could be more active than we had been in promoting peace and freedom and prosperity around the world. And the American people gave me and Al Gore and Hil-

lary and our whole team a chance to see whether we were right or not.

And when we celebrated a couple of days ago the first balanced budget in 29 years, the biggest surplus in the history of the country, the biggest surplus as a percentage of our economy since the 1950's, it came at a time when we also had the lowest unemployment rate in 28 years, the lowest crime rate in 25 years, the smallest percentage of people on welfare in 29 years, the lowest inflation rate in 32 years, with the smallest Federal Government in 35 years, and the highest homeownership in the history of the country. I am proud that we were able to work together to achieve those results for the United States.

Now, let me tell you why this election is important. It's important for two reasons. First of all, we've got to decide what to do with this moment. That's the big issue. And let me say, I can't thank you enough, a lot of you who came by and said hello to me earlier, for the very kind, personal things you said to me and, through me, to my wife. But I want you to understand something very clearly. If I had to do it all over again, every day, I would do it in a heartbeat, to see America where it is today as compared to 6 years ago.

I want you to understand, too, that we all have to live with the consequences of our mistakes in life. Most of us don't have to live with it in quite such a public way. *[Laughter]* But nobody gets out of this life for free—nobody does. And so that's not the real point.

The other thing I want you to understand is that, in this election, all this adversity is not our enemy. The adversity is our friend. The mayor and Mary and I were just walking on the street not very long ago. We talked to a lot of people that couldn't afford to be here today, but they might vote now because they understand that there are big issues at stake. Adversity is not our enemy. Adversity is our friend. Complacency is our enemy.

If you listen to people talk on the other side about why they're going to do well in these congressional elections, they'll tell you—I mean, privately—they tell me, "Oh, we're going to do very well, Mr. President, in these midterms because we have so much more money than you do, than you Democrats, and because they're midterm elections and the people that came out and voted for you for President in 1996, a lot

of them won't show up in 1998 because it's not a Presidential election."

The people that were good enough to serve you here at this event today, they've got a lot of hassles in their life. A lot of them have to worry about child care. A lot of them have to worry about transportation. They've got a lot of things on their mind. And the other guys say, just bluntly, you know, those people—working people on modest incomes, younger people with kids to deal with, along with their jobs, minorities who may live in inner cities that are too far away from the polling place to walk, and not have transportation—don't worry, they won't show up. Adversity is our friend, because it will focus us on what is at issue here.

And what is at issue here is, what are we going to do with this moment of prosperity? That's why this Senate seat is so important to Ohio and to the country. And I want you to think about it just a minute. Yes, we're doing well. I said all that; I just told you. We're doing very well. I'm grateful for that. I had some role in it, and so did you. When Mary Boyle said we produced the surplus, she was not wrong. You paid the money into the IRS. And you got up and went to work every day. And a lot of you created a lot of those new jobs. I didn't do that; we did that. My goal in Washington was to have the policies that would establish the conditions and give you the tools so that you could do the job. That's the way America works.

Now, I'm also gratified—and you just look around this crowd today, we have here at least Arab-Americans, Irish-Americans, African-Americans, and Lord knows what else—[laughter]—Ukrainians, Slovenians. [Laughter] What?

Audience member. One Ukrainian.

The President. And one Ukrainian. [Laughter] Probably some Jewish-Americans, probably some others. This is America. And this is what I try to do, not just for our party but for our country, just say, look, you know—you look around the world and people are so troubled because of their racial, their ethnic, their religious, their political differences. They're killing each other. If we want to be a good influence in the rest of the world, we have to be good at home. We have to prove that what we have in common is more important than our differences. And that's the only way we can celebrate our differences in a civil way.

And I'm proud of that, of the work we've done for peace in Bosnia and Northern Ireland and Haiti and the Middle East. A lot of you talked to me about the Middle East today. We had Mr. Arafat and Mr. Netanyahu here a few days ago. They talked alone for the first time in a year. We spent an hour and a half together, and they're coming back in a few days—little over a week. And we're going to work and work and work and try to take the next big step in the peace process. These things are important. But what you need to understand is, in large measure, it all rests on you.

Now, I have said that when things—we have two things going on. Number one, America is doing very well, right? Number one. Number two, America is doing very well in a very fast changing world, where events are changing every day. You see it. You see the financial crisis around the world. You see the troubles in Kosovo. When I was riding through the neighborhood, there was a young woman that had a sign that said, "Please help Kosovo."

Now, what are we going to do with this moment? I think we have to use it to deal with the big long-term challenges of the country. In this election it means, at a minimum, don't spend the surplus until we fix Social Security for the baby boom generation so that they can retire in dignity without hurting—so we, I'm one of them—[laughter]—so that we can retire in dignity without hurting our children and our grandchildren's standard of living. That is a huge issue.

Now, members of the other party are going to fan out all across America and say, "We're trying to give you an election year tax cut. I mean, it's just a few weeks before the election. We're trying to give it to you, and that mean old President and his party won't come across." But it's not very much money, and we waited 29 years and we worked hard for 6 years to see the red ink turn to black, and I'd kind of like to watch it dry for a day or two before we squander it.

People like Mary's mother, their Social Security is secure. You're 60 years old, now, your Social Security will be fine. But if we don't make some modest changes in the system, by the time all of us baby boomers retire and there are only two people working for every one person drawing, we will only have one of two bad alternatives. If you're between 34 and 52, you're in the baby boom generation. When you get

into Social Security, if we don't make some changes, we'll have one of two alternatives: We'll either have to put a whopping tax increase on our kids so that we can continue to sustain the present system, undermining our children's ability to raise our grandchildren; or they'll have to put a whopping cut in Social Security benefits on us, undermining the security of our retirement. Not everybody is going to have as good a pension as I do, you know. *[Laughter]* And it's a serious thing. It's a serious thing. Half the senior citizens in this country today would be in poverty were it not for the Social Security system.

Now, people say, "Well, how can you do this, with the election 4½ weeks away and the tax cut something you get right away, and we're looking to the future?" America is around here after 220 years because when we needed to do it, we always looked to the future. And I trust the American people to say, "We prefer to put Social Security first and to save it." I think that's the right decision.

The second issue that's really big to me, that you can see if you see all this financial turmoil around the world: 30 percent of our growth comes from selling things to other countries, our products and our services. And when we can't, because they don't have any money, we suffer.

There are a bunch of farmers in North Dakota today, if you went up and told them these were America's best times, they would think that you needed a serious mental health examination. *[Laughter]* Why? Because they sell wheat. And we sell half our wheat overseas and 40 percent of it to Asia, and they don't have any money to buy their wheat. And farm income has dropped to nothing. We're going to lose this year, unless the Congress passes the emergency agricultural legislation I sent—we could lose 10,000 American farmers this year, family farmers.

So I say, we've got to take the lead in trying to do the following things. Number one, we've got to try to limit this financial crisis in Asia and Russia before it spreads to Latin America where our biggest markets are, our fastest growing ones. Number two, we've got to try to help them, our friends in Latin America and Russia, if they'll do the right things, get back on their feet so they can grow again and participate with us. And number three, we've got to make some

changes in the world financial and trade system so that it works for ordinary people.

Freedom and free enterprise will not be embraced forever around the world unless it works for ordinary people. The reason we've still got this system here is that most people, every time an election comes around, believe that freedom and free markets and free enterprise are good systems. And if they didn't, the voters would have changed them here a long time ago. Now, we've got to do that.

So I never thought in my life—if anybody ever told me when I came to Washington that funding for the International Monetary Fund would be an issue in an election, I never would have believed it. Most people, if you talk about the IMF, most people don't know what it means. But what the IMF means today is continued economic opportunity for the people of the United States of America. Now, I have been waiting 8 months for the Congress to fund what we owe to the IMF. The United States has got to lead the world out of this financial mess, and we've got to do it before it bites us and our friends in Europe, and even sooner, our friends in Latin America.

If you want—a lot of people here are concerned about the Middle East peace—one of the reasons we need to hurry up is the abject poverty in which too many people, not only Palestinians but others, Jordanians, others in the Middle East are living in. We can't help them unless there is a general climate of growth and investment in the world. This is a big deal. But it's become a partisan political issue in Washington, so after 8 months we still don't have it.

So if you want to send a message that you expect your country to protect your jobs and your businesses and your future, then you've got to support our program to keep America leading the way in the world economy. It's very important and very simple.

I'll just mention one other issue. I know I'm preaching to the saved here today, but when I leave, you're going to be here, and you've got to go talk to other people. The third issue is education. Now, I'm really proud of the fact that in the bipartisan balanced budget bill we opened the doors of college wider than ever before because our party's initiative, my administration's initiative, was embraced: tax credits for all 4 years of college, for graduate school; deductibility of interest on student loans; more

scholarships through the Pell grant program; more work-study programs. That's great. Everybody knows now we've done that. But what we have not done is made our elementary and secondary schools the best in the world, no matter where children live, what their race is, what their income is, what their circumstances are. You know that.

Now, I gave the Congress 8 months ago an education program, fully paid for. Here's what it does. It would provide 100,000 teachers to take class size in the early grades down to an average of 18. All the research shows that's the most important thing you can do to give kids a good start in life and the benefits are permanent. That's the first thing it does.

The second thing it does is provide a tax incentive program to help rebuild and repair or build 5,000 schools. Why is that important? I visited a little school district—a little school district—in Florida the other day where one school had 12 trailers in the back for classrooms. It's the biggest group of kids ever in school, the first group bigger than the baby boomers. In Philadelphia, where I'm going when I leave you, the average school building is 65 years old. I visited a school where the whole floor is shut down.

We tell our kids they're the most important thing in the world; what do we say to them if they walk up the steps of the school and the windows are broken and the floors are closed and they can't even look out the window in a lot of these places? And they're not safe.

This program also would provide funds to school districts who would do like Chicago did and say, "We're not going to have any more social promotion; you've got to prove that you know what you're supposed to know to go to the next grade. But we will not tell you children that you are failures just because the system failed. So if you don't make the grade, we'll send you to after-school programs; we'll send you to summer school programs; we'll give you tutors." The Chicago school system's summer school is now the sixth biggest school district in the United States of America.

And I want to do that everywhere. I think every child deserves not to be defrauded in education. You're not doing them a favor if you promote them if they don't know anything, but you're sure not doing them a favor if you brand them a failure because the system failed them.

So give them the after-school programs and give them the summer school programs.

Now, this program expands our efforts for safe schools, a big issue now. It would hook up all the classrooms in the country, no matter how poor or rural they are, to the Internet by the year 2000. That's what it does—8 months, no action.

Now, what is the record of the other party? What have they done with their year in the majority? And keep in mind, I have done my best to work in a bipartisan way. We got a few Republicans—after no Republicans on our budget bill, we got a few for the Brady bill. We got a few for the crime bill to put 100,000 police on the street. We had a genuine bipartisan effort, big majorities in both parties, finally, for the welfare bill, after I vetoed the first two because it took the health and nutrition benefits away from the families. And now it's going in the other direction, in the wrong direction.

What have they done? They killed the minimum wage increase for 12 million Americans. They killed campaign finance reform. They killed the tobacco reform legislation that would have put in billions of dollars to protect our children from the danger of tobacco, still the number one public health problem in America today. They killed the Patients' Bill of Rights that says that you have a right to go to the nearest emergency room if you're in an accident, to see a specialist if you need one, to keep your doctor even if your health provider changes while you're pregnant or in chemotherapy or some other reason. They've actually gone backwards in protecting the environment; there are all kinds of assaults on the environment in their budget. They have gone backwards at protecting Social Security first with this House tax bill. And there's been no action on the International Monetary Fund and the education.

And this shows a larger set of different attitudes. I believe with all my heart that we're up there not to fight with each other about where we are on the totem pole but to fight for you to make sure you and your children have a better, safer, freer future. That's what I think we're there for.

If you want to send a message to Washington that you want your interests put first, that you want progress over partisanship, that you want people over politics, that you believe in Social Security first, education is our top investment priority, and keeping the economy going—if you

Oct. 2 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1998

want to send that message, the best way in the world you could ever send that message is to send Mary Boyle to the United States Senate.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:35 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to luncheon hosts Tony and Kristine George; Mayor Thomas Coyne of Brook Park, OH; David J.

Leland, State Democratic Party chair; Mayor Gary Starr of Middleburg Heights, OH; Mary Boyle's husband, Jack, and her mother, Catherine O'Boyle; event cohost Thomas R. Coury, who died September 28, and his brother Robert Coury, Sr., son, Thomas J. Coury, granddaughters Traci A. Ade and Teri Coury Strimpel, and nephew Robert Coury, Jr.; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; and Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel.

Statement on the Death of Gene Autry

October 2, 1998

Hillary and I are saddened to learn of the death of Gene Autry. An entire generation of Americans has lost a beloved old friend from childhood. Gene Autry's music and movies captured all that was good and inspiring about America's Old West. His characters taught children across America important lessons about

courage and freedom, justice and fairplay. And in leaving behind a treasure trove of recordings, from "Back in the Saddle Again" to "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," America's First Singing Cowboy will sing forever. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the Autry family.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Reception in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

October 2, 1998

Thank you. Thank you very much for the warm welcome. [*Laughter*] I've had a wonderful time in Philadelphia today, and I am deeply indebted to you for being here tonight, for supporting our party, our candidates, and what we stand for.

I, too, want to thank Congressman Chaka Fattah for the High Hopes program. He and the mayor met me today at the airport with a number of young children from Philadelphia who are in your school system, in your middle school system. And then later, we sat down and drank a soft drink together, and I visited with them. And Chaka asked how many of them wanted to go to college, and they all wanted to go. And now they and literally tens of thousands of children like them all across our country are going to be able to go because of the initiative that he brought to me, that I embraced, and that we have worked so hard to pass: the High Hopes scholarship program. And

we thank him. America is in your debt, Congressman. Thank you.

And I believe we have one of our candidates for Congress here, too, tonight, Roy Afflerbach. Let's give him a hand. He's somewhere—where are you, Roy? There you go. [*Applause*] Thank you. Thank you for running.

I want to thank Steve Grossman for doing a superb job as the chairman of the Democratic Party. And we will not tell his mayor that he bragged on Rendell shamelessly tonight. [*Laughter*] I also want to thank Len Barrack of Philadelphia for being our finance chair. He's doing a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful job.

And finally, let me say that the mayor was uncommonly generous tonight, but his administration is basically the embodiment of my philosophy of government. When we came before the American people, Al Gore and I, in 1992, we said we had a different idea, that we wanted