

Remarks at a Reception for Senatorial Candidate Charles E. Schumer in  
Brooklyn, New York  
October 30, 1998

Thank you. First, let me just thank Joe and Trina for welcoming all of us into this truly beautiful home. I've had a wonderful time. I want to—if I could say one thing, when we get close to an election like this, and Chuck and Iris and all the people that are working so hard for him, you are more and more nervous, and you don't get any sleep. And you're more or less on automatic, and it's so easy to forget why you've been doing all that. And then we come in here and see all of these huge families with the children and the grandchildren and the in-laws—[laughter]—I believe I could sort you all out now because I've got all the different cross currents here. [Laughter]

But let me tell you, I am thrilled. This is what America is all about. And I cannot thank you enough. I find myself for the second Friday in a row racing the Shabbat clock. [Laughter] Last week, we were at Wye. We had a deal; then we didn't have a deal. And we had a time to announce it, and then we didn't. I was up for 39 hours. That's really how—people say, "How did this get done?" It's simple. I was the last person standing. [Laughter] They were saying, "Please let us go to bed. Please let us." "No."

I don't want to race the clock again. I want to respect this very much. One of the reasons this country is around here after 220 years is that the first amendment to the Constitution guarantees to every person who comes here the absolute unrestricted practice of his or her faith. And there are people in this room who have given me a chance to help move people from Syria out and come here. And for giving me the chance to work with you, I thank you.

The work that I have been able to do with my own people in Ireland or for peace in the Middle East, where my faith was born as well, in all other parts of the world, in Bosnia, now in Kosovo, where I think we have averted another humanitarian disaster, is very important.

But we also need to remember what makes America the world's leader is our strength at home and our ability to live at home by what we say we believe. The power of our example is necessary for the power of our armies to

make sense to anybody. Who else would the Israelis and the Palestinians say, "We would like your CIA to monitor part of our accords?" [Laughter] I mean if you think about it, it's an incredibly humbling thing, a great honor for a country to be trusted in that way.

And what I want to say to you, I can say very briefly. For 6 years I have worked to bring this country together, to move it forward, and to be a force for peace and freedom throughout the world. The country is better off today than it was 6 years ago, mostly because of people like you, but our policies clearly helped.

In the last year, I was deeply frustrated at all the things I tried to do that we couldn't do because of the increasing partisanship of the other party in Washington. And I can tell you that, especially for New York, to have someone like Chuck Schumer in the United States Senate, someone who could serve in the tradition of the greatest New York Senators and the greatest Senators in the history of this country, would be a great gift to America.

To have a few more Democrats like Chuck Schumer may mean the difference in whether we save Social Security or forget about our obligations to our parents and our children. It may make the difference in whether we can pass a Patients' Bill of Rights so all people, not just the well-to-do, can be guaranteed that they will get quality health care if they have health coverage. It may make the difference in whether we actually go out and build schools and hire teachers and provide excellence in education to all our people without regard to their incomes or their backgrounds or their family circumstances. In short, it can make a difference in whether America has more families that look like you do 10 years, 20 years from now.

You look at this room. If I could walk into any neighborhood in America and hold a meeting like this, we would have not 10 percent of the problems we have today. Look around here; look around. So I'm going to let you get on with the Shabbat, but remember, on Tuesday your responsibilities as citizens kick in.

And let me just ask you one more thing. Chuck said, you employ many thousands of people. Between now and Tuesday, you will come in contact with people with whom you worship, people with whom you work, people with whom you socialize, people with whom you may sit in a coffee shop. I implore you—usually in America—usually—we turn out in pretty good numbers for Presidential elections, and then half our people stay home in the off years.

This is not an ordinary time. These are big, big issues. And New York has a chance to give

a gift to itself and to the Nation in Chuck Schumer. And I want you to do everything you can between now and Tuesday, except when you're taking time off to worship, to ask people to show up. Will you do that?

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:35 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to Joe and Trina Cayre, dinner hosts; and Iris Schumer, wife of Representative Charles E. Schumer.

## Remarks to the Clergy in Jamaica, New York

*October 30, 1998*

Thank you so much. Please be seated. Dr. Walker, Dr. Forbes, "Reverend" McCall—[laughter]—he was doing pretty good, wasn't he? Bishop Quick; Reverend Sharpton; my good friend Congressman Schumer and his wife, Iris, and their daughter, Jessica; I think Congressman Towns is here. President Fernando Ferrer, the Bronx Borough president; Virginia Fields, I think, may be here, the Manhattan Borough president; Judith Hope, our State chair. I'd like to thank the St. Paul Community Baptist Church Choir for singing Red Foley's old hymn for me. Thank you very much; it was quite wonderful.

When I was a little boy, I used to listen to Mahalia Jackson sing that song. And when I was a young man and living in England, I went to the Royal Albert Hall in London to hear Mahalia Jackson sing, not long before she died. It was 29 years ago, and it was an amazing thing. She was singing "Precious Lord." At the end of her concert, there were all these young people like me there—but most of them weren't like me, most of them were British; they didn't grow up listening to all this, you know. And these kids stormed the stage at the end, almost like she was a rock star. They were five and six deep, screaming for her to keep singing.

And you reminded me of all that just a moment ago, and I thank you for that. Weren't they wonderful? [Applause] They were great. Thank you.

Let me say to all of you, I thank Carl McCall for his leadership and for what he said. I have tried to be a friend to all Americans, without

regard to race or income or religion or standing in life. I am grateful that in an economy in which we have the lowest unemployment rate in 28 years that the African-American poverty rate is the lowest we have ever measured. I am grateful that the tax credit that Congressman Schumer helped me pass in 1993, the earned-income tax credit, cutting the taxes of lower income working people, when put with the minimum wage, has lifted over one million African-Americans out of poverty through their own efforts of work.

I am grateful to have had the chance to double the number of small-business loans to African-Americans and dramatically increase support for historically black colleges; to have had the largest number of African-Americans serving in the Cabinet in my 2 administrations, by far, than any President, and 54—54—Federal judges.

I say all that to make this point—maybe not as well as Dr. Forbes did. I don't seek any credit for that. It was an honor for me to do. It was something I wanted to do. It was a desire born of the life I have lived and the people I have known and the things I have seen that I like and the things I have seen that I deplored and the potential of people too long untapped that I was determined to do what I could to lift up. But it all happened because of the American system of democracy.

Yesterday, all over America, all kinds of people were watching John Glenn go up in space at 77 years old—kind of made us all think we