

Voter Intimidation

Ms. Ryan. Thank you so much.

Mr. President, we have a caveat to our interview. In the sermon—well, not the sermon, but when you spoke to the congregation, you talked about voter intimidation.

The President. Yes.

Ms. Ryan. Now, where is this coming from, and what's going on?

The President. Well, for the last several elections there have been examples in various States of Republicans either actually or threatening to try to intimidate or try to invalidate the votes of African-Americans in precincts that are overwhelmingly African-American, mostly in places where they think it might change the outcome of an election.

And we got some reports yesterday that some unusual steps were going to be taken, which I think you could only conclude would constitute voter intimidation, here in Maryland where we are, and perhaps in Michigan and Kentucky and Georgia and North Carolina and one or two other places. We have always fought it. We asked the Republicans to renounce it yesterday. The idea of having extra police officers just look at people when they go vote, or photographing them or doing videotapes when they go vote, or otherwise trying to scare people off from voting is totally abhorrent.

We don't try to keep anybody from voting for the Republicans. We think they have a perfect right to show up and do it. This is not American, this whole voter intimidation busi-

ness. And if it's going on as has been reported, it ought to be stopped. I would challenge the Republican Party to stand up and stop it. They ought to be like me. I haven't discouraged any Republicans from voting on Tuesday. All I'm trying to do is get the Democrats to go vote. It would suit me if every registered voter in America would show up. And that ought to be their attitude, too.

Ms. Ryan. But you know what the Republicans are going to say. They're going to say you're coming up with this; you're making this whole thing up.

The President. Well, these reports were quite specific. So they can easily show that they're all wrong, factually. And if they are, then I will say, "Good, we've got both parties now in favor of everybody voting." Listen, nothing would please me more than to say this is something that the Republicans have renounced, and we're going to both be together from now on forever for everybody voting. I would love to say that. I don't take any pleasure in saying what I'm saying here.

NOTE: The interview began at 3:25 p.m. in the Pastor's Parlor at the New Psalmist Baptist Church. In his remarks, the President referred to Rev. Walter Scott Thomas, pastor, New Psalmist Baptist Church; author Toni Morrison; and President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Telephone Interview With Tom Joyner, Sybil Wilkes, and Myra J. of the
Tom Joyner Morning Show

November 2, 1998

Mr. Joyner. We go to Washington, DC, and on the line right now is the President of the United States, President Bill Clinton. Good morning, sir.

The President. Good morning, Tom.

Mr. Joyner. How are you this morning?

The President. I'm great. It's a beautiful day here, a little fall coolness in the air, but it's a beautiful day.

Ms. Wilkes. It's a great day before getting out the vote.

Myra J. Yes.

The President. It is. I hope tomorrow will be as good as today is—with the weather.

African-American Vote

Mr. Joyner. Now, we've been talking all along about how important it is for African-Americans to get out and vote. I want to go back, first of all, and let's talk about the times when black Americans didn't have the right to vote. Because I know that you came up in an era where you

can remember the Little Rock Nine; you can remember Medgar Evers; you can remember the four little girls in Birmingham, where a lot of us only know about these events from recent movies.

The President. Absolutely.

Mr. Joyner. But you remember those times.

The President. I lived through all that. I lived through the churches being bombed and people being driven away from the polls. And then I lived through the poll tax era, where people would buy the poll taxes by the roll, and black people had to agree to vote the way they wanted and they—if they could get a certificate for the poll tax. I remembered all that—

Mr. Joyner. —from Arkansas. And you probably heard a lot of hatred growing up in Arkansas, too.

The President. I did. Of course, I did. To me, the passage of the Civil Rights Act, the voting rights law, the open housing law, all those things, they were the pivotal events of my childhood as far as my citizenship goes—I mean, just the whole civil rights movement. Now I see that we do—at least on election day, we are all equal. As I said yesterday in Baltimore, tomorrow, whatever anybody thinks about all the challenges and problems we still have in America, every single person tomorrow is just as important as the President or the Speaker of the House or Mr. Gates at Microsoft or anybody else. Everybody shows up, and everybody's vote counts, unless you don't show up.

You know what kinds of debates we've had here in Washington over the last couple of years; you know what the big issues are. And the real challenge here is that if this were a Presidential year, then African-American voters, Hispanic voters, working people generally—single mothers who have to work for a living and figure out how to get their kids to child care or to school and work through how to get to the polling place—all these folks would be voting. And it's clear, if that were the case, that we would win the congressional races handily, and we could change the direction of this country. We could end this last 8 months of partisanship we went through and really start building on the successes of the last 6 years.

So what I've got to try to do is persuade enough people just to go out and vote, because this election is not an ordinary congressional election. This Congress will shape how the

American people live in important ways for many years to come.

Mr. Joyner. The African-American vote is real important.

The President. Very important. It's important because in these midterm elections, normally, African-Americans do not vote in the same percentages as they do in Presidential elections. And normally the falloff is bigger than it is for hardcore Republican voters, who tend to be older, a little better off, have a little more free time, and more likely to vote. And of course, the so-called Christian Coalition, the very conservative right wing of the Republican Party, they always vote.

So if we want our voices heard and we want to continue the progress of the last 6 years, I need some support in Congress. We had a little more balance in Congress—if we had a few more Democrats in Congress, we could pass the Patients' Bill of Rights to make sure that health care decisions are made by doctors and not insurance company accountants. We could pass Senator Carol Moseley-Braun's school construction initiative to make sure that we have not only 100,000 teachers, but they're teaching our kids in modern schools and not classrooms that are all broken down buildings. We could pass an increase in the minimum wage. And we could stop this raid on the surplus until we save Social Security.

Those are huge issues. And that's really what this election is all about.

2000 Census

Ms. Wilkes. Mr. President, you were saying about African-Americans—and certainly there are a couple of things that are before the U.S. Government in the Congress, specifically, when you're looking at the U.S. census coming up and the importance of that, as well as representation in Congress, which the census obviously affecting that—

The President. Absolutely. Let me say to everyone here listening to us, the census is not just important because it's a way of telling us how many Americans there are and how we break down, what communities and States do we live in, what are our ages, what are our incomes, what are our racial backgrounds. The census also is used to draw the congressional maps and to determine the amount of assistance that comes in education aid and other things to various States and localities.

Now, all I have tried to do in this census is to guarantee that we have an accurate count. In the last census, we know we missed several million Americans, disproportionately Americans of color and Americans who live in urban areas. We know they were not counted. So all we've said is, let's take the most reliable way of doing that. The Republicans are adamantly opposed to the National Academy of Sciences' recommendations. They're opposed to the recommendations even of President Bush's own census taker. And the reason is, I think they don't want all Americans counted because if that happens we'll have a different distribution of the congressional district maps, and it will make a big difference for the long-term future of our country.

Now, this will happen in the year I leave office, 2000, my last year as President. But I just believe I owe it to the future as we grow ever more diverse. And this is not just an issue for African-Americans; this is an issue for Asian-Americans; this is an issue for Hispanic-Americans; this is an issue for new immigrants from even some of the Central European countries, countries of the former Soviet Union. All these people, if they're here, deserve to be counted. If they're citizens, they deserve to be counted and taken into account when we draw the congressional district maps. If they're legal immigrants, they should be counted so that we can give the appropriate distribution of Federal education and health care assistance and other things.

President's Motivation and Goals

Mr. Joyner. You know, Mr. President, I hear you talking about things like that and the fact that you'll be out of office soon, and I just read in the paper the other day about the millions of dollars that you have allocated for African-Americans and other minorities to fight AIDS. And I think that's a tribute to you and your dedication, and it makes me want to ask you what makes you keep pressing forward like this, knowing that you're going to be out of office soon? What makes you keep trying to do these kinds of things?

The President. Well, what would be the point of being President if you didn't use the power of the Presidency to try to solve the problems of the country, to meet the challenges of the country, to seize the opportunities of the country? When I ran for this job, I had a very

clear idea of what I wanted to do. I didn't know, obviously, every decision that would be presented to me or every challenge or crisis that would come up. But I knew that I wanted to turn the country. I wanted to change our economic policy. I wanted to change our education and our welfare policies. I wanted to give more young people the chance to serve their country in national service. But all of it together was designed to create a country that was ready for a new century and a new economy and a new world. And one of the critical things about getting ready is whether every person in this country believes that we're moving toward one America.

You mentioned that AIDS initiative. We got \$156 million to try to do special things to reduce the dramatic increase in HIV and AIDS in the African-American community, in the Hispanic community, in other communities of color. That's where the growth is now. How can we be one America if a ravaging disease like this is being brought under control in part of our population but not in another?

So I think this is very important to me. I have—I can rest when I'm not President anymore. I need to work like crazy till the last minute of the last hour of the last day to try to make sure I have done everything I possibly could with this precious 8 years of time the American people gave me.

Mr. Joyner. So what do you want historians to write about you when it's all over?

The President. I want them to say that I helped to take America into a new era, that I really prepared America for a global economy, a global society, for increasing diversity at home, for responsibilities in a world where there was no cold war but we had a lot of challenges from terrorism, from racial and ethnic and religious wars. I want them to say that I did create an America of dramatically increased opportunity for all people, an America where we were coming together more in a spirit of unity, an America that was a leading force for peace and freedom and prosperity in the world. That's what I want them to say.

President's Advisory Board on Race

Ms. Wilkes. You know, Mr. President, when you were talking about the Little Rock Nine and how you lived through that, and also people have said that as you have promised—and you have carried through on that promise—to give

us a reflection in your Cabinet and those around you of America, and one of the leading things that you brought to mind is the race relations panel. And I was just wondering what the status is on that.

The President. Well, we are preparing right now a final book on that. I got the report from Dr. John Hope Franklin and the other members of my panel on race, and we're going to do a book on it and get it out to the country. And then we're going to continue the work. We're going to take the recommendations of the panel and work with them on the next legislative program I present to the Congress, in the administrative policies of our Government, and in continuing to find things that are working at the local level and promoting them throughout the country.

I think this is very important. They did a terrific job. We've got literally hundreds of thousands of Americans involved all across America, and we're going to continue to work. I've got the report now, and we're going to be about the business of implementing it. I think it's very important.

Ms. Wilkes. And that's the importance of having the Congress that you can work with, that will get that out.

The President. That's right. That's right. And let me say this. The real problem now is that the Congress is basically dominated by not only the Republicans, but the right wing of the party is in the driver's seat. And if we get a big turnout here and we change the Congress, the composition of the Congress, you wouldn't have to change it all that much to get enough balance in there for us to be able to take some affirmative action.

If we had a few more Democrats we could do things positively instead of do what we had to do last year, which was to—this year—we fought a rear guard action for 9 months, and then at the very end they came in and had to deal with us on the budget. And because we all stuck together, we got 100,000 teachers; we did save the surplus for Social Security; we were able to get programs for children after school—hundreds of thousands—that was a good thing. But there is so much more we should do. And if the American people believe it's important to have modern schools and more teachers and to have the Patients' Bill of Rights, to have an increase in the minimum wage, to save Social Security, if they think these things

are important and they want us to keep coming together, not be driven apart, then it's important to show up tomorrow.

Voter Turnout

Myra J. Do you think the Republicans are counting on African-Americans not to come out tomorrow?

The President. Well, I think they are hoping that there will be a lower turnout among people who will vote for the Democrats, yes. They are hoping that there will be. And they are hoping there will be a higher turnout among people that they have tried to inflame, as they always do, in the various ways that they do it.

Republican Campaign Ads

Ms. Wilkes. And the Republican ads, certainly, have been flooding the airwaves.

The President. It's unbelievable. I think it's important that the people listening to us know that they raised over \$100 million more than the Democrats did in their Senate and House committees and their national political committees—over \$100 million. And they, over and above that, they have a lot of these so-called third-party expenditures where—just in the last 10 days they dropped another \$750,000 against a congressional candidate in Michigan, a few hundred thousand dollars they dropped into a television ad campaign attacking one of our Democrats in rural Ohio. I've never seen this kind of money.

But we have the message; we have the issues. The country is in good shape, and we can do better. And the public agrees with us on our program, so it's basically their money and our issues and the question of who votes. And that's why this interview is so important to me.

Mr. Joyner. Radio stations, I told you I would be running long. I'm running right through the break with the President of the United States. Please hold with us.

Ms. Wilkes. Bigger name.

1998 Elections

Mr. Joyner. Yes, bigger name. [Laughter]

Mr. President, we've talked about what happens if African-Americans turn out to vote tomorrow. What if we don't turn out?

The President. Then they'll win a lot more seats than they otherwise would.

Mr. Joyner. So we're going to be to blame if it doesn't work out?

The President. Well, I wouldn't say that. I mean, who knows—President Kennedy once said, "Victory has a thousand fathers, and defeat is an orphan." I don't think it's worth thinking about that, but I think it's worth thinking about the difference between what—you know, Carol Moseley-Braun in Illinois has been behind this whole race. She has been badly outspent. She has run against someone with millions and millions of dollars who attacked her and basically refused to appear and tried to disguise his philosophical positions, which were far to the right of the voters of Illinois. She's made a huge comeback in the last week. It's amazing. One survey even had her leading by 2 points after being down by as much as 16. But it won't amount to anything unless the voters in Illinois who would vote for her show up.

Senator Hollings is in a tough fight in South Carolina. We have a chance to win a Senate seat in North Carolina. Chuck Schumer in New York, Barbara Boxer in California, these are huge, huge races, and there are many more. I just mention them. In Las Vegas, Nevada, where there's a substantial African-American population, we've got a congressional seat and a very important Senate seat in play. So the extent of the turnout all across America—and there are 30 or 35 congressional seats that could go one way or the other, and how they go will determine the shape of this next Congress and what their priorities will be.

Ms. Wilkes. And into the year 2000 and beyond.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Joyner. And you, personally, have a lot riding on this Congress, with all of the troubles that you're having.

The President. You know, I've just got 2 more years to be President, and I would like it—I'll be happy to fight, just like I did this last year, if that's the Congress I have to deal with, and at the end of the year we'll get something done, just like we did this year.

But it would be so much better—here we have the lowest unemployment rate in 28 years, the first budget surplus in 29 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 29 years, the highest homeownership in history. The policies we've followed have been good for America, and it would be so much better now if we could just go to work and get rid of some of this bitter partisanship. The level of intense, angry partisan-

ship that the Republicans have injected into Washington is really not good for America.

I want to work with all people here who have good ideas, to go forward. It is possible to do. But it's not possible to do as long as they think they can win with huge amounts of money and divisive attacks and negative campaigns. So if we can change the balance here a little bit, then we can get everybody to work together to move the country forward for the next 2 years. And yes, that's what I'd like to spend my time on. I think we ought to be working on people's problems out there in America and not just fighting with each other inside the beltway.

Ms. Wilkes. Mr. President, you talked about how good things are in the country and some people have said that they're too good and people have become too complacent to get out there and vote for any difference.

The President. Well, I have two things to say about that. First of all, they are good, but they can be a lot better. Yes, we have the lowest African-American poverty rate ever recorded. But is it low enough? Of course not. They can be a lot better. And I have offered to Congress initiatives to dramatically improve the schools, to dramatically improve the economic prospects of inner-city neighborhoods. I'd like to have a chance to pass them.

Think of the need we have for this Patients' Bill of Rights. Think of how many people are out there in HMO's that are having health care decisions made by accountants, not doctors. Think of the need we have, with the biggest school population in history, to build 5,000 modern schools that can be hooked up to the Internet and smaller classes for 100,000 teachers to teach in. Think of the need we have for a minimum wage increase. You know, even with low unemployment, you can't raise a family on \$5.15 an hour. And think of the need we have to reform Social Security in the right way and to preserve the Medicare program and to meet these other challenges. So my first answer is that we have a lot to do.

The second thing I would say is that if everybody stays home and we have people in here who will be irresponsible and squander the surplus and risk our economic program and its stability as they did for the last 8 months here, if they tried to do that, then things could get worse in a hurry. So I believe that it would be a great mistake for anybody to stay home

because times are good and to assume, "Well, the President is dealing with all these guys all right, and things are fine, and I don't really have to show up." That's a big risk that's not worth taking. We have too much to do.

Mr. Joyner. Well, that seems to be the mood.

The President. I don't know. I think a lot of people know this is a big election. I think they know what their priorities are, and you mentioned them. And I think they know what our priorities are. And I think they know that the Democrats are focused on the people out there in the country and not on some sort of a partisan power game here in Washington. That's what I want to get out there to the people, and if they understand that, I think they'll go. I certainly hope they will.

The American people, given enough time, virtually always make the right decision. But we need people to go, because otherwise this huge, vast amount of money that's been spent in this campaign is going to beat a lot of very, very

worthy people who would be very good in the Congress and the Senate.

Mr. Joyner. All right. Thank you, sir, for coming on the air and talking to us.

The President. Thank you.

Mr. Joyner. And we look for results tomorrow and a better day on Wednesday.

Ms. Wilkes. Are you going home to Little Rock to vote?

The President. No, I'm not. I voted absentee already. I've already cast my ballot.

Mr. Joyner. All right, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you. Goodbye.

NOTE: The interview began at 9:05 a.m. in Room 415 of the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, the President referred to Bill Gates, president, Microsoft; and Dr. John Hope Franklin, Chairman, President's Advisory Board on Race. Myra J. was the on-air name used by Myra Hughes.

Interview With Hispanic Journalists November 2, 1998

Q. We will begin with a statement by President Bill Clinton.

1998 Elections

The President. *Buenos dias.* Good morning, everyone. And thank you for giving me this opportunity to address so many Hispanic-Americans and Latino media markets all across the United States, Puerto Rico, and in 18 other Latin American countries.

I'm glad to have the opportunity to discuss important issues with esteemed journalists from four major Latino radio networks: Radio Bilingue, MetroSource Network, CNN Radio Noticias, and Radio Unica.

Tomorrow is election day in America. It is no ordinary election. It is, instead, an election that will determine whether we as a nation focus on progress or partisanship for the next 2 years. It will determine which direction we take into the new millennium. It will be determined by who comes out to vote.

Our country is doing well now. I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to serve these last 6 years and grateful that we have

the lowest unemployment rate in 28 years, the smallest percentage of people on welfare in 29 years, the first surplus in 29 years. I'm grateful that poverty rates are dropping among all Americans and minority Americans. I'm very grateful that we have record numbers of new Hispanic-owned businesses, for example. But I think we all understand that a great deal of work still needs to be done in education, in health care, in child care.

We Democrats, we're running on an agenda of a Patients' Bill of Rights for all our Americans in health management organizations so they can have their health care decisions made by doctors, not accountants. We're running on an increase in the minimum wage. We're running on an aggressive program to improve our schools, with 100,000 more teachers and 5,000 new and rebuilt schools that are modern and good. We're running on a reform of the Social Security system so we can save it for the new century, and so much more. We also have run forthrightly on an open immigration policy and