

Third, I believe we must construct a system where Social Security can be counted on regardless of the ups and downs of the economy or the markets.

Fourth, Social Security must continue to provide financial security for disabled and low-income beneficiaries. One in three Social Security beneficiaries are not retirees, and we must never forget that.

And fifth, any proposal must maintain our hard-won fiscal discipline. It has helped to fuel the prosperity Americans enjoy today. That is, after all, what gives us the chance to do this in at least a less painful manner.

I look forward to transforming these ideas into action. Let us begin firm in our faith that Social Security can bind our people not only across generational divides but across party lines.

Let me say, too, in that regard, I am grateful for the presence here of Senator Santorum and Congressman Shaw from the Republican majority, and the minority leaders, Senator Daschle, and Congressman Gephardt. I thank you very

much for your presence here. And now I'd like to turn it over to them to make some opening remarks so we can get on with the work of this conference.

Let me say this before I sit down. You have to decide that we are going to do this. You have to tell these Members of Congress that you will support them if they act. If you come here representing a particular point of view and you know these Members of Congress agree with you, you should ask them to defend your point of view, but to be willing in the end to make a decision that will deal with the problem. This will only get harder, every single year we avoid resolving this, it will get harder and harder and harder. And everybody's favorite idea will have a less beneficial impact the longer we wait. Now is the time to do this.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:50 a.m. in the Cotillion Ballroom at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel.

## Remarks at a Dinner Honoring Dale and Betty Bumpers

December 8, 1998

Ladies and gentlemen, Hillary began by saying this was a bittersweet moment for us, and indeed, it is. Nonetheless, I do want to thank all of you for making it possible. I thank Joan Baker, Deba Leach, and all the Peace Link folks. I thank our good friend Reverend Wogaman for praying over us. God knows we need it. I thank my friend Peter Duchin for being here and for playing.

And I thank Alan Simpson for destroying all the stereotypes that we Democrats like to have about Republicans. *[Laughter]* He's tall and funny. *[Laughter]* And you know, in his new career, he has finally destroyed the myth that Harvard is an elitist institution. *[Laughter]* And maybe even that it's an elite institution. *[Laughter]*

I thank Ann Bingaman for her wonderful remarks, and all the Members of the Senate, the diplomatic corps, and others who are here tonight; and our wonderful friends David and Barbara Pryor for being here.

You know, the six of us—we three couples—we've been together a long time. I met David Pryor when he was running for Congress in 1976. I voted for Dale Bumpers when he ran for Governor the first time, in 1970. We were all on the ballot in 1974, and I was the only one that lost. *[Laughter]* And—it's a good thing, I could have—if I had won, I'd have gone to Congress, been infected by people like Simpson, and never become President. *[Laughter]*

But over these last more than 20 years now, we've been together on countless occasions. When we were all in public office—when I was Governor and they were our Senators, we did all those parades that David talked about. We did countless toasts and roasts. We even crashed in a plane together once, nearly made every other politician in Arkansas ecstatic all at one time—we opened all the jobs at once. *[Laughter]* But we walked away from it.

We've borrowed each other's stories mercilessly. Then I became President, and they said it wasn't Presidential for me to tell jokes, so

I had to stop. I wish I had a nickel for every time Dale Bumpers has called me and said, "Now, tell me that joke one more time." [Laughter] And I'd get halfway through the joke, and he'd remember it and remember the punchline and start laughing. I could just hear the tears rolling down his cheeks, he'd laugh so much.

This would be a better place if we had more people who laugh like that. This would be a stronger National Capital if we had more people like Alan Simpson and Dale Bumpers and David Pryor that could tell these stories and reach across party lines.

You know, Betty and Dale were raised in a tradition in Arkansas—a little town in western Arkansas where, if you took yourself too seriously, you were deflated quickly. And people knew about you, all about you, and they loved you anyway. It's easy to get away from that, the more distance you get from real life and this business. So I have to tell you that one of the things that I am most grateful to both of them for is remaining real people in every way, throughout all these years—the laughter, the tears, the drama, the struggles; real flesh and blood, patriotic, wonderful human beings. It means a lot and more every passing day.

I thank Betty for her vision. We've made a lot of fun of all the things she's done with Peace Links, but if you think about it, it's a truly astonishing thing. It proves, really, that there is such a thing as citizen empowerment. And one person with vision and enough people, like Ann, ready to be dragged into service, can change the course of history.

Think about what we're discussing today. Today, we're impatient because the Russians haven't ratified the START II treaty, so we can negotiate another treaty, so we can dramatically slash our nuclear arsenals further. And when we do, it still won't be enough to suit Betty, but it will be partly because she has been pushing us all this time, and all the other Peace Links members.

I want to thank Betty for something else, too, that she and Dale pioneered this whole business of immunizing our children. Last night we had a Christmas party at the White House, Betty, and I thought about you, because a young, handsome man came through the line and shook hands with Hillary and me, and he said—he looked at us, and he said, "I want you to know, for the last 3 years, I have run your immuniza-

tion program. And it's been the proudest experience of my life." He said, "We've gotten tens of thousands of volunteers all across America, and for the first time in our history we've got over 90 percent of our children immunized. And all these kids are going to live, that would not have lived; they'll be normal, that would not have had normal lives before." And you were the first person that sensitized me to that issue. And I thank you for that, and I hope you're proud of that achievement for your country.

I want to say just a word about Dale. I have to forgive him, for one thing—I'm in this sort of forgiveness mode. [Laughter] Dale Bumpers never fails to introduce me and David Pryor as the second-best Governors Arkansas ever had. [Laughter] And I forgive him, because it's probably true. He was an inspiration to David and me, as David said. And as I look back on his long public career, including his service as Governor and the 9,447 votes he cast in the United States Senate, votes for energy conservation, votes to preserve the ozone layer—people used to make fun of Dale Bumpers about the ozone layer, the way they used to make fun of Betty about Peace Links. Two days ago I got a report on the hole in the ozone over the South Pole; it's the biggest it has ever been, and its duration is longer than any we've ever measured. And we have at least made some progress on it, because he started griping about it so long ago.

He stood up for reform of our laws on natural resources, and he got some things done. And we didn't get everything we wanted to do done because there were too many people like Simpson stopping us, but—[laughter]—eventually we'll get it done.

He stood up for the Constitution of the United States, for the welfare of our children, for the future of America. In his own way, just as Betty did in Peace Links, he was always trying to build bridges to tomorrow over the fears and ignorance and conflicts of today, always trying to bring out the best.

And I was sitting here looking at David and Barbara and Betty and Dale, and I was thinking, it does not take long to live a life. Time passes quickly. And all we can do is make the most of every day God gives us. I think that my days have been richer, and I know that Hillary's have, and I believe our public service has been better because very early on we met, came to know, love, admire, and learn from Dale and Betty Bumpers. We will love them always.

On Dale Bumpers' last official visit to the White House, not very long ago, a couple of weeks ago, we had this huge gathering under a tent of every soul we could find in Washington connected to Arkansas. And I signed legislation making Little Rock Central High School an historic site, a companion to a bill that will award Congressional Gold Medals to all the Little Rock Nine who integrated that high school so long ago, a real milestone on America's long march towards justice and equality and reconciliation.

At this time, when the world needs so much from the Middle East to Northern Ireland to the Balkans to central Africa to our own meanest streets, a remembrance of what is basic and good and fundamental about our national life, when we need so badly to be reconciled one to another and to reach out to those around the world, the enduring legacy of Betty Bumpers and Peace Links, and Dale Bumpers' entire career as a public official, to me was somehow crystallized on that magic day when we celebrated a seminal event in all of our lives, and his commemorating it for all time to come.

We will remember them for all of our days with gratitude, thanks, and laughter. God bless you both, and congratulations on your award.

Please come on up.

This magnificent and beautiful award is richly deserved. It's also very heavy. *[Laughter]* But, what the heck. If John Glenn can go into space, they can hold this award.

God bless you. Congratulations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:36 p.m. in the ballroom at the Capitol Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Joan Baker, chair, and Elisabeth (Deba) Leach, vice chair, Peace Links; Rev. J. Phillip Wogaman, who delivered the invocation; Peter Duchin, orchestra leader; Ann Bingaman, National Link and wife of Senator Jeff Bingaman; former Senator Alan K. Simpson, master of ceremonies; and former Senator David H. Pryor and his wife, Barbara. Peace Links, founded by Mrs. Bumpers in 1982 to help educate women on nuclear arms issues, presented Senator and Mrs. Bumpers with the Eleanor Roosevelt Living World Award at the 12th annual Peace on Earth gala for their combined years of public service.

## Remarks on Receiving the W. Averell Harriman Democracy Award December 8, 1998

Thank you for the wonderful welcome. My good and longtime friend Paul Kirk, thank you for your wise words and your kindness and for the award. Generally, I don't think Presidents should get awards, but I like this one awful well. *[Laughter]*

I am honored to be here with the NDI. I thank Ken Wollack, Jean Dunn, and all the others here who worked to make your work a success. I thank you for establishing a fellowship in Cecile Ledsky's name. I thank you for honoring our other honorees who richly deserve to be recognized.

I thank the members of our Government who have helped me to become involved in Ireland. I thank the Members of Congress who are here, whose support and interest and consistent commitment has been absolutely indispensable for the work that we have done in these last few years.

I thank our Ambassadors: Phil Lader, our Ambassador to Great Britain; and our new Ambassador to Ireland, my longtime friend Governor Mike Sullivan, I welcome him. Jim Lyons, thank you; Brian Atwood; all of our special guests from Northern Ireland and Ireland; my fellow Irish-Americans; and a special thanks to George Mitchell. I thank you all.

Let me also say I'm delighted to have an award named for Averell Harriman. Hillary and I had the great honor and real joy of getting to know Governor Harriman in his later years. We spent the night with him a time or two. We once stayed up half the night listening to him talk to us about how he was Roosevelt's envoy with Churchill and Stalin. It is a pretty hard act to follow.

But I think—I believe Governor Harriman and the men and women of his generation would be proud of America as it stands on the eve of a new century and a new millennium.