

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.

We can look ahead to the last year of this, the “American Century,” with confidence that we have never been a stronger force for peace and for democracy.

Some of the most entrenched conflicts the world has known have given ground in the last few years to a new spirit of cooperation—countries dominated for centuries by strife, speaking a new language, talking about a shared future: in the Middle East, where religious hatred seemed as old as the region itself; in the Balkans, where I heard propagandists blame tensions on the battle of Kosovo in 1389; in Peru and Ecuador, where a border war had roots that went back centuries; and of course, in Northern Ireland, where the Troubles dragged on for nearly three decades, but the arguments went back for hundreds of years. Fortunately, the people of Northern Ireland today are looking forward to a shared 21st century in freedom, democracy, and peace.

So many people are making progress around the world, but we all know it's hard. It's hard right now in Northern Ireland. It's hard right now in the Middle East; Hillary and I and members of our administration are going to Israel and Gaza at the end of this week to do what we can to keep the process agreed to at Wye on track. It's hard in Kosovo, where American diplomacy under Dick Holbrooke's leadership and NATO's threat of military force averted a crisis, but where we still must have a political settlement and political reform in Serbia to have a lasting peace. It is hard.

One of the things that makes it so hard, and one of the things that makes democracy so essential, is that people have to be both free to be the best they can be, free to live their dreams and lift people according to their aspirations. They have to know that they count just as much as anyone else. But one of the things that makes democracy so essential is they have to know that there is some restraint, on themselves and on others, beyond which they cannot go.

For how many times have I seen, these last 6 years, leaders of opposition factions, in talks or at the edge of conflict or trying to get out of conflict, desperately, desperately want to reach across the lines that divide them to advance the cause of peace, but so frightened that, instead, they had to rub salt in their adversary's wounds so as not to lose the political support of their own folks at home. It is imperative

that we push peace and democracy at the same time.

One thing I would like to say to the Irish here—both the Irish—Irish from the North and from the Republic, the American Irish—is that it is impossible for you to understand, perhaps, that even though all these issues may seem unrelated, a breakthrough in one area can dramatically increase the confidence and the passion of other peacemakers.

The Good Friday agreement and its overwhelming ratification by voters sent a strong signal around the world. It put a lot of extra pressure on me. Just a few days ago, I had a meeting with a group of Greek-Americans, and if I heard it once, I heard it 10 times, “Now, you did all that work in Ireland, and you sat there for 9 days and got that Wye agreement, and I do not understand why the Cyprus problem is beyond reach. I know that you can make some progress there.”

That's good. Headache for me, probably, but it's good. It's good that when people do things in one part of the world, it makes other people believe that they're not stuck in this mindless rut of conflict.

So I thank you for this award. I'm very proud of my Irish heritage. I'm proud that I could play a role in the process so far. I'm proud of what the First Lady has done with the Vital Voices movement and other ways—for what she has done.

As I can't say too many times, I'm grateful to Senator Mitchell, to the Congress men and women in this room and beyond who have reached across party lines in America to work for peace across religious lines in Ireland. And I'm very proud of the Irish-American community.

But the people on the other side of the Atlantic still deserve the lion's share of the credit. Many of them are here: Gerry Adams, Lord John Alderdice, David Ervine, Monica McWilliams, Gary McMichael, Malachi Curran. There are others. I thank Tony Blair, Bertie Ahern; their predecessors John Bruton, Albert Reynolds, John Major; Mo Mowlam—one of a kind.

I'm sorry I didn't get here in time to see David Trimble and John Hume off to get the Peace Prize. But I've had some good and good-natured talks with them both. I told David Trimble—I know you noticed this tonight—ever since he won the Nobel Prize, he's dressing

a lot better. [Laughter] Now, that's a very good sign for peace, you know. [Laughter] And my only complaint with the Nobel committee is that they should have given it to more people involved in this process as well, and we'd have had even a bigger, broader—[inaudible]—of enthusiasm. I thank you all.

I want you to think about this, because we're at a little bit of a tough spot in the road in Ireland right now. On the day that David and John get the Nobel Peace Prize, for their own work and as stand-ins for many of you, too, the world will also celebrate the 50th anniversary of one of the greatest documents of the 20th century, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The timing could not be better because, like democracy, the cause of human rights and peace are part and parcel of the same idea: the common claim to dignity of all humanity; the idea that self-respect and mutual respect are not exclusive, but two sides of the coin of peace and harmony.

In his Nobel speech a few years ago, Seamus Heaney said of Northern Ireland, "No place in the world prides itself more on its vigilance and realism. No place considers itself more qualified to censure any flourish of rhetoric or excess of aspiration." I think that is a dignified, Seamus way of saying, we don't like long speeches telling us what we have to do. So I will give you a short speech telling you what I think we have to do. [Laughter] I hope I can strike the right note between a celebration of how far we've come with a plea to keep the work going.

I hope the parties will move quickly to resolve the remaining differences, keeping an open mind, acting in good faith, remembering how much all have gained by the hard work that has already been done. Not only the letter but the spirit of the Good Friday accord must prevail.

I have closely followed recent efforts to hammer out agreements for the new executive political structures and the bodies to deal with cross-border issues. Bringing these institutions to life is absolutely essential to keep up the momentum for peace, and we urge a speedy resolution. I also applaud the tireless work of John de Chastelain toward achieving the vital goal of disposing of weapons now that the war is over.

Hillary just came back—[applause]—thank you—Hillary just came back from a profoundly moving trip to Central America, where our friends and neighbors are struggling in the after-

math of Hurricane Mitch, the worst hurricane in 200 years—so devastating that we are concerned that if we don't do all we can to help them rebuild, that they could lose the democracy, the freedom, the peace for which they have fought so long and hard. But one reason we think that it will hold on in Guatemala and El Salvador is because, as a part of their peace process, they were vigorous in decommissioning, in giving up arms and moving toward peace.

Somehow or another, sooner or later, we all have to decide we can't shoot our way out of our differences and our difficulties.

We know the real prize still lies ahead, that day in the not-too-distant future when men, women, and children can walk all the streets of Belfast, Derry, Omagh without fear; when respect and trust has replaced suspicion; when machine guns and explosives are as irrelevant as suits of armor; when investors pour money into new ventures that spread opportunity to all; when the people of Ulster are known far and wide as the people who rose to this great challenge, proved they were bigger than their differences, and were able to go across the world, as I said the last time I was in Northern Ireland, and look at the people on Cyprus, look at the people in the Balkans, look at the people in Central Africa and say, "We did this, and we had troubles centuries old, not just 30 years. We did it. And you can, too."

We cannot afford to be complacent or frustrated or angry. We always knew there would be bumps in the road and that no matter what the referendum vote was, after the Good Friday agreement, there would be difficulties. The United States pledges again to be with you every step of the way, because all of us know that the Irish in America for more than 200 years have brought us to this day, as much as any group of people.

We all know, too, as I will say again, that we must have democracy and human rights in the end to have peace. As long as I am President, I will do everything I can to advance the cause of peace, democracy, and human rights; to do everything I can to anticipate conflicts before they occur; to listen to both sides when they do occur; to do my best to persuade parties that benefits lie just ahead if they stop living in the past and begin to imagine the future—yes, in Northern Ireland, in the Middle East,

in Cambodia, Nigeria, Congo, Cyprus, the Balkans, everyplace where there are children who deserve a better future waiting to be born.

America will always stand with those who take risks for peace. I salute the NDI for keeping our democratic aspirations in sharp focus. I salute the honorees tonight, those of you whose names were called earlier. You really deserve these awards. I ask you to continue your efforts, to keep your spirits up, to keep your vision high, to remember how we felt when the Good Friday accord was ratified, to remember how you feel on the best days when the worst days come around, and to remember, no matter how tough it gets, it is always better for our children to reach across the lines that divide and build a future that they're all a part of together.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:48 p.m. in the ballroom of the Shoreham Hotel, at a National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) dinner. In his remarks, he referred to Paul G. Kirk, Jr., chairman, Kenneth D. Wollack, presi-

dent, and Jean Dunn, vice president for administration and development, NDI; James M. Lyons, Special Adviser to the President for Economic Initiatives for Ireland; former Senator George J. Mitchell, independent chairman of the multiparty talks in Northern Ireland; Special Envoy Richard C. Holbrooke; Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams; Alliance Party leader Lord John Alderdice; Progressive Unionist Party spokesman David Ervine; Monica McWilliams of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition; Ulster Democratic Party leader Gary McMichael; Northern Ireland Labour Party leader Malachi Curran; Prime Minister Tony Blair and former Prime Minister John Major of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister Bertie Ahern and former Prime Ministers John Bruton and Albert Reynolds of Ireland; United Kingdom Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Marjorie Mowlem; poet Seamus Heaney; and John de Chastelain, member and chair, Independent International Commission on Decommissioning. The President also referred to former State Department program officer Cecile W. Ledsky, who died December 2.

Remarks Honoring General Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., of the Tuskegee Airmen

December 9, 1998

Thank you. Well, Colonel McGee, I think this is one of those days where I'm supposed to take orders. [*Laughter*] I am delighted to see you. I thank you and Colonel Crockett for the jacket. I can't help saying as a point of personal pride that Colonel Crockett is a citizen of my home State, Arkansas. And we go back a ways, and we were together not all that long ago in Cambridge, England, when we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the D-Day invasion. And we were there together.

Colonel Campbell, I think you were picked to speak not because you were born in Tuskegee but because you give a good speech. [*Laughter*] I think you did a fine job. Thank you, sir.

Let me say to all the Tuskegee Airmen here, we are honored by your presence and grateful for your service. I'd like to ask all the Tuskegee Airmen who are here just to stand for a moment so we can express our appreciation. They are

out in the audience as well as here. Please stand. [*Applause*] Thank you very much.

There are so many distinguished people here in the audience; let me begin by thanking Secretary Cohen for his outstanding leadership. Janet, we're glad to see you here, glad you did that interview with General Davis many years ago. I thank the people from the White House who are here, General Kerrick and others; the people from the Pentagon, Deputy Secretary Hamre, Secretary Caldera, Secretary Danzig, Acting Secretary Peters, General Shelton, all the Joint Chiefs are here today.

I'd like to say a special word of thanks to Senator John McCain, the driving force behind the legislation to authorize this promotion. Thank you, sir.

I also want to thank one of the finest supporters of our military and of this action in the United States Congress, Senator Chuck