

Remarks at a Production of “The Iceman Cometh” in New York City June 28, 1999

Thank you. Wow! I would like to thank Bill Haber and Kevin and all this magnificent cast for giving us too much to think about. [Laughter] Here we are, all reliving our entire family histories—[laughter]—trying to come to grips with some little common element. And now you’re supposed to think about being good citizens. [Laughter]

I want to thank Senator Torricelli and Senator Lautenberg and Senator Schumer; Congressman Gephardt, I know is here, and I think Congressman Kennedy is. There are a lot of people here from the New York and New Jersey and Connecticut delegations. I saw Congressman Rangel, Congressman Payne, Congresswoman Lowey.

Let me just say to all of you, these people have made a great sacrifice to give us this gift and to give the DSCC and the DCCC this gift. You know, Monday is their day off, and they couldn’t even wait until the normal time to start; they did it in the middle of the afternoon. We took a day out of their lives, and they have given us something immeasurably more valuable. So I think we should give them another—[ap-
plause].

I hope that as you leave here you know how grateful we all are for the work you have done to help us do well in the coming elections, in the Senate and the House elections. I hope that you saw this morning the announcement that—we did our annual review, our so-called midsession review, and it turns out our surplus will be \$20 billion more than we thought this year. And tomorrow I’m going to announce our Medicare reform program, which our Democrats support, that will include for the first time a prescription drug benefit for seniors, which I’m very proud of and which I think is important.

If we can prevail upon our friends on the other side in the Congress to go along with us just generally with the budget and Social Security, we’ll have another \$155 billion to spend on children, and we’ll be out of debt as a nation for the first time in forever. In 15 years, we’ll be totally out of debt. So I’m happy about that. And I feel very good about the fact that all of this is benefiting all kinds of ordinary citizens.

But I’d like to just mention one other thing. We saw in this magnificent opus of Eugene O’Neill’s something about the fragility of life, the frailty, the brittleness, the tenderness, the weakness that makes life more interesting than politics sometimes—nearly always. [Laughter]

One of the reasons that I became and stayed a Democrat is that I always felt that our party was more interested in people, in their individual struggles, and we always thought everyone should have a chance. And I’d like to just, before you leave, ask you to remember one or two things of which I am especially proud for our party, as we have tried to deepen the meaning of freedom and responsibility and bring more people into our national family and our sense of global community.

The first is that it was 30 years ago today, not very far from here, that the Stonewall riot occurred, which sparked the gay and lesbian civil rights movement. I’m proud of the fact that the Democratic Party has been clearly and unambiguously for the elimination of all forms of discrimination, for the “Employment Non-Discrimination Act,” for the “Hate Crimes Prevention Act,” for the proposition that every law-abiding person in this country ought to be treated with equal dignity.

Today, we are struggling in Kosovo, a very small place, a very long way away, for the proposition that people ought not to be slaughtered because of the way they worship God or their racial or ethnic heritage, as we have done in Bosnia. Today, we’re working, along with our friends in Ireland and Great Britain, in the 11th hour of an Irish peace process. Today, we hold our breath with anticipation as the new government is about to take hold in Israel, in the hope and prayer that we will see a culmination of the peace process there.

And I’m proud of the fact that our party has stood for the proposition that people ought to be able to get along based on their common humanity, across all the things that divide them, and that that’s a—[inaudible]—we’re striving for.

Let me say one other thing. We’ve been through a lot as a country in the last several weeks: the difficulties of the conflict in Kosovo; also the difficulties we face at home, especially

after the horrible loss of those children's lives at Littleton. I am still hoping that the members of the other party will decide that they really are the candidates of law and order and will join us in our attempts not only to support community policing, which means that we stand against abuses and for building bridges in the community, but that we ought to give the police a chance and the children a chance by having sensible restrictions to keep guns out of the wrong hands.

Finally, let me just say I'm profoundly grateful to the people of New York and this wonderful city for being so good to Hillary and me and to the Vice President and Mrs. Gore, for the Broadway night we had in '92 in the campaign, for the magnificent convention, for two great electoral victories, for a 50th birthday party I had here which I will never forget. I can still remember when that happened.

I hope you will continue to stand for these things, which deepen the meaning of the word,

"America." We have a lot to think about in this play. We have a lot to be grateful to these gifted people for. You have a lot to be proud of in supporting our party and our ideas and our values. And you have done a good thing here today by giving us a chance to reflect the views of most Americans in the United States Congress.

I thank the Members of the House and the Senate who are here. Again, I thank you. Good evening.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:42 p.m. in the Brooks Atkinson Theatre. In his remarks, he referred to producer Bill Haber and actor Kevin Spacey. The President also referred to DSCC, the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and DCCC, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.

Remarks at a Majority 2000 Dinner in New York City

June 28, 1999

Hello, everyone. I really came over here just to have a chance to shake hands and say hello, because you were all in the theater, so you heard me speak, and I don't think you should have to endure two speeches.

I would like to say again how much I appreciate the leadership role that you assumed in making this evening a great success. I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did. And again, I want to thank the cast and all the people who put the production on. I thought it was magnificent.

But mostly, I came here to thank you for making this a success and for helping Mr. Gep-

hardt and the other members of our congressional leadership—you're very happy. We're giving them a chance to have a good November next year.

Thank you, Congressman Engel, Congressman Kennedy, Congressman Rangel, Congresswoman Lowey. Thank you all very much. Congressman Payne, thank you.

God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:30 p.m. at the Supper Club restaurant.

Remarks Announcing a Medicare Modernization Plan

June 29, 1999

Thank you very much, and good afternoon. I would like to welcome all of you to the White House. I appreciate the presence here of Secretary Shalala, Secretary Rubin, Deputy Sec-

retary Summers, Social Security Commissioner Apfel, OPM Director Janice Lachance. I thank all the people on the White House staff who are here who worked so hard on this proposal,