

where we're pushing back constantly the frontiers of discrimination, which is why I have supported so strongly the "Employment Non-Discrimination Act."

And we have to be a country that relishes our racial, our ethnic, our cultural diversity and says we celebrate all this, but we know that underneath what God gave us all in common—in spite of all of our differences—is more important; that the framers of our Constitution so long ago were pretty smart when they talked about the inalienable rights given to every human being. And if we recognize that, then we ought to be able to find a way to live together.

I have done everything I know to do for 6 years to move us toward that one America. Should we have differences; should we have arguments; should we have elections; should we have discussions? Of course we should. But when you leave here tonight, if you don't remember another thing I said, you just remember this: No country throws away its common values and common humanity, even for an instant, without paying a price. And every night—every night—I thank God that we have the chance to be a force for peace, from Northern Ireland to the Middle East to Kosovo to Africa. I ask for the opportunity every night to make one stab to work out the problems between Greece and Turkey on Cyprus, to try to bring India and Pakistan closer together. And I thank God every night that we have not been cut apart by those things.

But America is growing more and more diverse. One of our new Governors here, Gov-

ernor Davis, while he is Governor—while he is Governor—may preside over a State that has no majority race. Now, this is a good thing in the world of the 21st century if—but only if—America not only preaches our doctrine to people abroad but lives by it at home.

The Democratic Party in the 1990's has constantly been for opportunity, for change, and for community. I like to joke that at the end of the 20th century, looking back on over 200 years of American history, our party leaves this century and enters the next as not only the party of Jefferson and Jackson and Franklin Roosevelt but also now the party of Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt. And I am very proud of it. I want you to stay proud of it. And I want us to live by it.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:58 p.m. at the National Building Museum. In his remarks, he referred to Governors Frank O'Bannon of Indiana, DGA chair, Paul E. Patton of Kentucky, DGA vice chair, Thomas R. Carper of Delaware, Gray Davis of California; former Governors John Waihee of Hawaii, Bob Miller of Nevada, Evan Bayh of Indiana, and Roy Romer of Colorado, general chair, Democratic National Committee; Katie Whelan, executive director, Jennifer Rokala, national finance director, and Mark Weiner, treasurer, Democratic Governors' Association; Mayor Dennis W. Archer of Detroit, MI; Joseph J. Andrew, national chair-designate, and Donald L. Fowler, former national chair, Democratic National Committee; and media consultant Frank Greer.

## Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters

*February 23, 1999*

*The President.* I'd like to make a very brief statement, and then we'll take a couple of questions. And as you know, you'll get to ask the leaders questions after the meeting, and we've got a lot of work to do. But I think it's important to—first of all, I want to say how pleased I am to have the whole leadership here, how much I appreciate their coming down. We've

got a lot to discuss, and I'm looking forward to it.

### *Kosovo Peace Talks*

I'd like to make just a couple of comments about the peace talks at Rambouillet on Kosovo. They made a lot of progress; they've got about a 40-page document which describes in greater detail than ever before what the nature of an

autonomous Kosovo within Serbia would be like. And that's the good news.

There are still some important disagreements. The Serbs have still not agreed to a NATO-led multinational force to try to maintain the peace over a 3-year period. The Kosovars still want some sort of assurance of a referendum at the end of the 3-year period, and neither side will agree to the other's position on that. And so we're working through that today, hoping for a resolution.

I talked to Secretary Albright last night. Whatever happens today and however they agree to proceed, I think it's very important that the Serbs exercise restraint on the ground and that the Kosovars respond in kind. They've made a lot of progress, and they don't need to let this thing get away from them. And we'll keep watching it, and I expect there will be more news on it as the day breaks.

Q. Will you extend the deadline again, sir; is that it?

*The President.* No, I don't know. That's up to the parties. I hope that they'll be able to resolve what they're going to do today. I think there will be some sort of resolution about where to go from here today, and we'll just have to see.

Q. But no bombings?

*The President.* Well, whether NATO bombs or not, the Secretary General has the authority in his pocket now. That depends upon the actions of the Serbs. And what we need is continued restraint. But as I said, they made a lot of progress; they had these two big differences, each side having one condition the other won't agree to. So we'll just have to see where we go today.

Q. Mr. President, Senator Lott expressed concern about a costly, open-ended, no-defined-

peacekeeping mission. What kind of reassurances can you give him on that point?

*The President.* Well, I think that what we learned in Bosnia was that we shouldn't set a date certain and later find out we can't meet it and have people feel that they've been misled. I don't want to do that. So I think the important thing to do is to have an exit strategy based on benchmarks, on developments. And then if the Congress agrees with the benchmarks, that those are reasonable standards, then I think we can have an open relationship that has some credibility in the agreements between the Congress and the executive branch.

In terms of paying for it, I think in this fiscal year, whatever we have to do, we would need emergency funding because we're in a fiscal year where the Defense budget is already set. In the years ahead, I would expect that we would have to work that into the budget, and I think that's what the Congress leaders—Congress, as far as I know in both parties—have expected us to do, because they don't want the Pentagon to have to absorb these costs away from readiness and taking care of our people in the military.

#### *Cooperation With Republicans*

Q. Mr. President, these Republican leaders all voted to oust you from office. How can you work with them?

*The President.* We all took an oath, and I think we intend to follow it. We owe it to the American people, and I'm looking forward to it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:15 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to NATO Secretary General Javier Solana. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

## Statement on the Kosovo Peace Talks February 23, 1999

The peace talks in Rambouillet, France, are a significant step forward in the search for a fair and lasting peace in Kosovo. In the last three weeks, the negotiations have produced more progress than we have seen in the decade

since Kosovo's autonomy was stripped away by the Government in Belgrade.

By agreeing in principle to a strong plan that would provide substantial self-government for the people of Kosovo, the negotiators on the