

## Remarks at a Majority 2000 Luncheon in Dearborn, Michigan April 16, 1999

Thank you so much. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your warm welcome. I want to thank all of those who have spoken and been introduced. This is, because of the operation going on in Kosovo—and I know that all Americans are proud of what our young people in uniform are doing there—it is an unusual moment for me to be here, but a very important moment for Americans to reexamine what it means to be a good citizen on the edge of the new century.

There are a lot of things I'd like to say, but the first thing I want you to do is to hear me. I am here—you know, I won't be a candidate in 2000. I wish I could be, but I can't. [*Laughter*] And I'm here because I care about my country's future. I am profoundly grateful to the people of Michigan for having given Al Gore and me a chance to serve twice by their votes in the elections of 1992 and 1996, profoundly grateful to the Members of this delegation who have all been introduced, Mr. Dingell and Mr. Bonior and Debbie—thank you for running for the Senate.

You can't beat anybody with no one; people have to show up and run. And Debbie could stay in Congress and have a good time and enjoy this and be a part of a majority, and she's taken a significant personal risk because she has a significant personal commitment to the future of this State and this Nation. And I appreciate it, and I know you do. And I think she has more than a significant chance to be victorious because of that.

I was talking to the people at our table—it seemed like every time somebody from the Michigan delegation was introduced, I had some new or different thing to say, but it is an unusual House delegation, really unusually remarkable people, each with their own strengths. And I cannot say enough about Senator Carl Levin, who is off on our common mission of securing a just resolution to the problem in Kosovo.

I also want to thank Senator Riegle and Frank Kelley and my good friend Jim Blanchard, my former colleagues in different ways over the years. I've been at this so long, Frank Kelley and I served together in the 1970's. [*Laughter*] I want to congratulate your new attorney gen-

eral. I know she's doing a wonderful job. And Mayor Stanley, I'm glad to see you. And I can't say enough about Dennis Archer, and I want to say that I admire the effort you are making to reform your schools. And I believe you will succeed. Let me tell you something: One thing I've learned in this business over a long period of time, having spent countless hours in our Nation's schools: All of our kids can learn, and all of our schools can succeed, but someone has to be in charge. Change has to be possible; expectations have to be high. There have to be clear standards, and then there has to be support. And I want the rest of you to support it.

I've heard a lot of people say today, "I'm so glad that we're making these changes in our school systems." If you want the kids to be held to higher standards, then you have to support them. And if you have to raise the funds for more after-school programs or summer school programs or whatever it takes, you have to support them. So you have made a commitment now to change the way you're going to run your schools. Nothing is more important. I want you to support the mayor and make sure he has what he needs to get the job done for the children.

I want to thank the leaders of the Michigan House and Senate for being here. I have enjoyed my opportunities to be with the legislature and to speak to the legislature recently.

And I want to thank Patrick Kennedy for going around the country and trying to make sure we can run a race. Last time, in 1998, when the party of the President gained seats in the House of Representatives in a midterm election, in the sixth year of a Presidency, for the first time since 1822—1822—when we lost no seats in the Senate, and it was projected that we would lose five or six, we were outspent by over \$100 million. And still these fine people, with a lot of your help, achieved that result. Thanks to the efforts of Dick Gephardt and Patrick Kennedy and a lot of other people, that won't happen this time, I don't believe, and I'm really grateful to them.

And finally let me say, I think you could see from what has been said by all these people

about each other, we have a real commitment to each other personally and a commitment to our shared agenda, and I think that is a very good thing.

I admire Dick Gephardt and David Bonior enormously, not only because of the positions they take, not only because they stuck up for me when I was down as well as when I was up, but because they are truly good human beings. They're the kind of people you would be proud to live next door to, the kind of people you'd be proud to have raise your children if something terrible happened to you, the kind of people you would trust with your life's possessions if you had to turn your back and go away and do something else for an extended period of time. And they're the kind of people that ought to be directing the Congress into the 21st century.

And I want to say something to all of you today in the midst of what is a difficult period. I want to tell you how this business in Kosovo fits with all the other things that we'd rather be here talking about today, with Social Security or education of our children or all the rest of it, and why it is an appropriate thing for us to be here today to talk about our responsibilities as citizens, which includes making choices about candidates, supporting them, and showing up and being counted.

Now, in 1992 when I ran for President, I spent a great deal of time in Michigan, partly because one of my secrets was that an enormous number of people who live in Michigan came from Arkansas. [Laughter] It's one of the benefits of a depressed southern economy after World War II, is that I got elected President 40 years later because Michigan and Illinois were full of people from my home State.

But I knew that this State, with all of its diversity, with its traditional industrial economy, its emerging high-tech economy, its magnificent agricultural economy, its big cities and small towns, really carried the future of America in its life. And I came here, and I said to the people, "Look, here's the deal. Things aren't going very well, and if we keep doing the same thing over and over again, we're going to keep getting the same results. And I believe that we need to imagine what we want America to look like in the 21st century. I know what I want it to look like. I want a country where there is opportunity for every responsible citizen. I want a country where we're part of one commu-

nity across all the lines that divide us. And I want us to build a world where there is more peace and freedom, more security, and more harmony. And we're going to have to change some things to do that. We're going to have to stop talking about how terrible the deficit is and do something about it. We're going to have to stop talking about how we wish our schools were better and invest not only money but the right kind of policies. We're going to have to stop talking about how we wish people weren't trapped in a lifetime of welfare dependency and say that able-bodied people have to move off, but we're not going to punish their children, and we're going to give them the education and training and support they need," and on and on and on. I said, "You know, we're going to take a different policy."

And a lot of it was controversial. And frankly, one of the reasons I'm here today is that the Democrats might not be in the minority today if we hadn't had to go all alone to reduce the deficit while we increased our investment in education. But it led to the balanced budget; it led to lower interest rates, which was a huge, huge income increase to people who benefited from those lower interest rates; it's given us record high homeownership in America. Millions of people have refinanced their homes and saved a lot of money.

There have been more businesses, more jobs, and for the last 2 years, finally, for the first time in over two decades, incomes are rising for all economic groups in the country. We have the lowest African-American, the lowest Hispanic poverty ever recorded since we have been keeping statistics and the lowest unemployment rate among African-Americans and Hispanics recorded since we have been keeping statistics, the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years.

And this is important. This is important. Now, we also have the first balanced budget in a generation, 2 years of surpluses now, the lowest crime rate in 30 years. We've genuinely opened the doors of college to everybody with tax credits and better loans and work-study programs and scholarships, the Pell grants. We've got 90 percent of our children immunized for the first time in our history against basic childhood illnesses. The air and the water are cleaner. We've increased—we've tripled the number of toxic waste dumps we've cleaned up. All these things have flowed from a few very tough decisions. Welfare rolls cut nearly in half.

Our country has been a force for peace and freedom from Northern Ireland to the Middle East. We have reached out in partnership to democracies all over the world. We are joining in an international fight against terrorism and the spread of chemical and biological weapons. We have tried to hope for the best and work for the best in the new century and prepare for any eventuality.

And this country is in a better place than it was 6 years ago. And because of our success, we have heavier responsibilities to ourselves and to others. But none of that would have happened—none of it—if it hadn't been for the people in this room that I came here to support today.

There are very few things that a President can do that the Congress does not either have to support on the front end or that the Congress cannot stop on the back end. And Dick talked about playing offense and defense. It isn't right that we have to play defense all the time; we ought to be working together from the beginning. But when we work together at the end of every budget year, we get to play a little offense, because if the President says, "I'm not going to sign this budget, and I'm not going to sign these laws," and they say, "I'll stick with him," then we get to play offense.

But it would be so much better—the point I want to make to the American people is these folks were right. We now have evidence; we have 6 years of evidence. We were right to put 100,000 police on the street. We were right to drive the deficit down and give us a surplus. We were right to do these things.

And I ask the American people, when these Democrats go back into the field for the 2000 election for the House races and the Senate races, to look at the record of the last 6 years. And I will always accord the Republicans the credit they deserve when we have done things together. But the driving force—the driving force—and the way we came out with the economy, with our crime policy, with our education policy, so many other policies, and the foreign policy we have pursued, came out of these Democrats in the Congress who stayed with me and supported my ideas. And I think they deserve the support of the American people because they're doing the right thing.

And let me be quite specific here and, again, keep the pledge I made at the beginning of the talk. What's all this got to do with what

we're doing in Kosovo? The country is working again. And we have now, I would say, both the opportunity and the obligation to say, "Okay, we've got things going right again. Now what do we have to do to have the kind of America and the kind of world we want for our children in this new century? What are the big challenges?" You might ask yourself that when you leave here. What do you think they are?

Here are what I consider to be the big five, if you will, and what I hope the 2000 elections will be about, unless we can resolve more of them between now and then, which we're working to do.

Number one, we must deal with the aging of America. The number of folks over 65 will double by 2030. There will only be two people working for every one person drawing Social Security. The older I get, the better that problem looks. *[Laughter]* This is a very high-class problem faced by all wealthy societies. But unless you deal with it in a responsible way, you run the risk that when all of us baby boomers retire, we impose big burdens on our kids and their ability to raise our grandkids. And instead, there is an enormous opportunity here for those of us—anybody that lives to be 65 now has already got a life expectancy of about 82 years, if you get to be 65 in decent health. So this is an enormous opportunity, but we have to re-think our whole way of dealing with these things.

Number two, we have to do more to balance work and family, both because there are more single-parent households and there are far more households in which both parents are working, where there are two parents. But there is no more important job in the world than raising children right.

And we have to admit that while America has done a lot of things better than other countries—we have generated more jobs; we've got lower unemployment; we've done great—we have not done enough to balance work and family. And too many parents, every day in this country, have to make decisions about health care, about child care, about time off work, all kinds of challenges that, in my judgment, we could alleviate and still have a very strong economy, indeed, strengthen our economy if we did it in the right way.

Number three, we need to have an economy that leaves no one behind, nobody responsible enough to work. I am encouraged that finally

all income groups have their incomes rising. I'm encouraged that there are cities like Detroit where the unemployment rate has gone down. But you know as well as I do that in most of the big urban areas of this country there are still huge parts of the cities where there has been no new investment and where unemployment is still high. There are many medium-sized industrial cities that have had more trouble changing their economy than the larger cities have. There are many small towns and rural areas in my home State and many other places, from Appalachia to the Mississippi Delta to south Texas, where there are problems.

You want to know how we're going to keep the economy growing with low inflation? Get more investment in the underdeveloped areas of America. That's our biggest untapped market.

Number four, we have to have a way of continuing to improve the environment and continuing to grow the economy. Our administration has spent, I think, probably more time and effort trying to pursue both these goals and reconcile them, not always to the satisfaction of everybody in this room or this country, but we have really made an effort. Why? Because I think if the country ever gets in a position where we really are making a choice between whether we're going to preserve the global environment or have our kids breathe clean air or drink safe water and seeing our economy grow, we're going to be in a terrible position.

The developments in technology have given us more and more opportunities to find ways to both improve the economy and the environment. But I think—I predict to you that it will be a huge challenge for our country and our world for the next 20 to 30 years.

And the fifth thing is that we have to learn how to reconcile unity and diversity at home and around the world.

Now, what does that mean in practical terms? On the aging in America, we've got a plan. We, the Democrats, have a plan. Set aside 62 percent of the surplus to make sure Social Security will be all right until 2055. And make some other modest changes in the Social Security program that will enable us to lift the earnings limit on people on Social Security, so those who want to work will be able to do so and contribute to our country, and that will enable us to do something for the elderly women who are living alone. Their poverty rate is twice the regular poverty rate.

On Medicare, set aside 15 percent of the surplus, run the Medicare Trust Fund out at least 20 years, and finally begin to provide a prescription drug benefit to seniors on Medicare. It will cost money in the short run. It will save lives and save money in the long run because it will keep more people out of hospitals, more people out of procedures, and it will improve the quality of life. It will keep more people well. So that's our program. We also have a tax credit for long-term care. I think this is very, very important.

Finally, we have what I think is the right sort of tax cut. Our USA accounts would basically give tax credits and matching funds for about 12 percent of the surplus to working families to set up their own pensions.

When Social Security was started, it was always assumed that you would have Social Security, and then people would get a pension at work, and then they would have some private savings. Well, today, a lot of people live on just Social Security. More and more pensions are shifting from defined benefit plans to defined contribution plans. And the personal savings rate in America is way down.

So what we propose to do is to say to people: Families with incomes up to \$80,000, you can get a tax credit and some matching funds from the Government to set up a private savings plan for your retirement; up to \$100,000, you can get tax credits but not matching funds; over \$100,000, if you have no present private pension fund, you can still qualify.

We haven't tried to start a class war here, but you should know that fewer than one-third of the tax benefits associated with retirement in America go to people with incomes of under \$100,000. Fewer than 7 percent of the tax benefits of retirement savings go to people with incomes of \$50,000 a year or less.

So wouldn't it be good, with the stock market having done what it's done, gone from 3,200 to 10,000 in the last 6 years—I think it would be better if more Americans owned a share of our national wealth. I think it would be better if more working families had some personal savings to go along with their retirement savings and Social Security and whatever they get from a pension plan. And this would be a good thing. That's our program for the aging of America.

When it comes to balancing work and family, we want to do more for child care. We want to pass the Patients' Bill of Rights and do more

for health care access. We want to broaden the family and medical leave law some, so that more people are covered by it. It's been immensely successful. I think still today more ordinary citizens come up to me on the street, after all this time, and mention an experience they had, a positive experience because of the family and medical leave law, than any other thing we have done, and that's the first bill I signed as President in early 1993.

In terms of leaving no one behind, what's the most important thing we can do? Build 21st century schools everywhere, as you're trying to do here in Detroit; smaller class sizes with our 100,000 new teachers; modernize school buildings; hook up all the classrooms to the Internet and help all the schools take advantage of it; give more school districts the ability to have after-school and summer school programs.

I believe we should have a national change in our policy and end social promotion and require States to turn around failing schools, as Detroit has now taken on the responsibility of doing. But I do not believe children should be branded failures when the system fails them. I do not believe that.

What else can we do to leave no one behind? We can recognize what I just said: A lot of places still haven't really fully participated in the economy. And I have asked the Congress to adopt what I call a 21st century markets initiative to provide for loan guarantees and tax credits to people who will invest in high unemployment areas in America. The same sort of benefits we now give people to invest in low income countries overseas. All I say—I'm for that, by the way. I want us to be good neighbors to Central America. I want them to be good democracies. I don't want us to have problems in the future. They should have a good life. They should be good markets. They can buy our products.

But I say, why shouldn't we have the same incentives for people to invest in the low income areas of America where people are dying to go to work, dying to start businesses and capable of contributing to our future. We should be for that.

We have a whole livability agenda that the Vice President and I worked up that I think has enormous support, grassroots support among communities in the country to help balance the environment and the economy.

But finally, let me say what I started to say. I've worked hard, as Dick Gephardt said, on this whole issue of race in America. And you remember after the Oklahoma City bombings and there was all this talk about paramilitary operations in America, and I came to Michigan and gave a speech about it, talked about it. I grew up in the segregated South. I grew up with people who were taught not to like people who were different from them.

And if you think about it, it is the oldest negative force in human society. You go back to prehistorical times; people fought each other because they were in different tribes and they were afraid of difference. And sometimes there is a rational basis for it. But in the world we live in, the forces of global economy bringing us closer together, the technological opportunities to share the future with people beyond our immediate reach increasing, our diversity—the diversity you have just here in Detroit in Wayne County—I remember the first time, I think, when Ed McNamara had me out to the airport dedication—I think it's the first time Dennis or Ed, one told me you had over 140 languages spoken in this county. This is an incredible gift for the future. But it is a gift only if we make a virtue of it.

Now, how do you make a virtue of it? Let's take what's going on in Kosovo. We have Albanian-Americans here, and we have some Serbian-Americans outside demonstrating against us, right? It's okay. That's America. We don't tell people they have to shut up in this country. They can speak their piece and do their thing and be there. But what we have to find is a way to respect our diversity and lift it up and still say what unites us underneath is more important.

And that's what they have to find a way to do in the Balkans, too. And our quarrel there is not with the people of Serbia. Because of the state-run media, most of them don't have any idea what their people did in Kosovo. Most of them don't have a clue about the ethnic cleansing. I mean, people walking around on the street in Belgrade—they don't know, because they have a state-run media, they don't have a free press. So they think it's some political disagreement, and we're just trying to keep their country down.

I have no quarrel with them. The Serbs were our allies in World War II. My quarrel is with Mr. Milosevic and his policies. He has sought

to establish the principle that the most important thing in the Balkans is having a Greater Serbia. And if you have to kill the Bosnian Muslims and the Croats in Bosnia and the Croats in the Krajina, and then if you have to clean out all of Kosovo and run all the Albanians into Albania and Macedonia and crush them, most of them Muslim but not all of them, that's okay. I don't think it's okay. I don't think it's okay.

What I want you to think about is, look what we've tried to do in the Middle East. We have tried to be a fair and honest interlocutor in bringing the Palestinians and the Israelis together. We have worked hard, and we have a bill before the Congress now to try to help our friends in Jordan to stabilize their economy and keep being a force for peace.

In Northern Ireland, we've tried to help the Catholics and the Protestants put aside three decades of conflict. Why? Because in a global economy—and Lord knows that if the American people hadn't learned anything in the 20th century, it's that sooner or later, if the world goes haywire, we get pulled into it—World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam. So, increasingly, we have done things to try to get involved to stop things from happening.

Now, this war in Bosnia went a long along time. It went on nearly 3 years before we really got the coalition together among the allies to try to go in and stop it. And by that time, there were over 2 million refugees and about 250,000 people had been killed, lost their lives.

Now, we've had a few thousand people killed and a million-plus refugees in Kosovo. And what I have tried to say to the American people is, this is not some crusade America went off on its own. We've got all of our NATO Allies, 19 countries, all believing that this is something that needs to be contained and reversed—not because we have a quarrel with the Serbian people. And I want to point out, I said, I made it absolutely clear that we would not go in there even in a peaceful environment unless it was absolutely clear that our charge in Kosovo was to return all the refugees to their rightful homes and their neighborhoods and their communities, under conditions of peace, and then have a secure environment that would also protect the Serb minority within Kosovo.

What I'm trying to do is to establish a principle here that we have to resolve our differences by force of argument, not by force

of arms. And you cannot tell somebody you love the land but you hate the people that inhabit it because of their ethnic, their racial, or their religious affiliation.

And if you think about the world we want our kids to live in, and if you think about how we want it to be free of war, free of conflict, there is no way to get there—no way—unless our historic alliance with Europe includes a Europe that is undivided, democratic, and at peace, and unless we are standing for the principle that we're not afraid of people that are different, not just in terms of racial or religious or ethnic differences but in terms of political opinions.

We don't have to be afraid. All we need is a system that gives people a legitimate way to express their grievances, to fight their political battles, and limits the ability of people to oppress each other. And I believe we've done the right thing there.

I cannot tell you how strongly I think that we would feel, no matter what apprehensions you may have in the moment—and I'm quite confident of the ultimate success of our mission—but no matter how many apprehensions you have, ask yourself how you would feel today if I were up here giving this speech, after what we did in Bosnia, after what we stood for in the Middle East and Northern Ireland, after all the work we've done in America to get people to live together across racial and religious lines, after the work we've done to end employment discrimination and to stand against hate crimes, and all the things this administration has stood for and this party has stood for and our people have stood for—how would you feel if I had come here to give this speech today and the headlines were full of all those people being killed and all those people being thrown out of the country, and we were having to explain to people why we couldn't lift a finger to do anything about it?

So life is full of hard decisions, and sometimes the most important things in life are difficult. This has been a difficult period for Dick Gephardt and for Dave Bonior and for John Dingell. For all of us it's been so frustrating these last 6 years, going through this position where we've had to fight so many rearguard actions. But they have grown stronger and deeper and wiser and more determined.

And this is what I want for our country in this moment. We must always keep our hearts and our ears open. We must always be open

to the possibility of constructive resolution. But I think that we ought to say, "Look, the 21st century world we want to be a place where people live free of this sort of madness, of hating each other because of their differences." And we have to be free of it in America because we will be the most diverse democracy in the world.

That is what is at stake. And that's why it's good that we're all here today. Because, in the end, the political leadership of the country cannot go where the people will not travel. That's what a democracy is. So it matters what you believe. It matters whether you will support candidates. It matters which candidates you support.

And all I can say to you is, I am profoundly grateful to you because you and the people of Michigan have been good to me and to my family and to my Vice President, to our administration. You have been good to the Members of Congress that are here. And we have tried in turn to do things that were good for America and good for Michigan.

We face big challenges. But if you look at the record of the last 6 years, two things should

come forth: Number one, you should be very optimistic about the future; but number two, you should be willing to make tough decisions and be firmly in the camp of those who are committed to what is truly in the best interest of the children of this State and this country. They I have come to stand with today, and I'm very proud to be here with them and with you.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:15 p.m. in the ballroom at the Fairlane Club. In his remarks, he referred to Representative Debbie Stabenow; former Senator Donald W. Riegle, Jr.; former State Attorney General Frank J. Kelley; former Gov. James J. Blanchard; State Attorney General Jennifer M. Granholm; Mayor Stanley Woodrow of Flint, MI; Mayor Dennis W. Archer of Detroit, MI; Representative Patrick J. Kennedy, chairman, Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee; Wayne County Executive Edward H. McNamara; and President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

## Remarks to Humanitarian Relief Organizations in Roseville, Michigan *April 16, 1999*

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you, Dean, for your work and your introduction. Mr. Mayor, thank you for making us feel welcome. I'd like to thank Hattie Babbitt and James Lee Witt, Eric Schwartz, and the other members of our humanitarian team at the Federal Government level for being here with me today.

I thought the youth choir was magnificent. I think we should give them another hand. [*Applause*] Thank you. I'd like to thank the Members of the Michigan delegation who are here, Congressman Dingell—we just left his district—Congressman Levin, Congressman Kildee, Congresswoman Stabenow. I thank Congressman Patrick Kennedy from Rhode Island, who has joined us today; and a special word of thanks to our leader, Dick Gephardt, and to your Congressman, Dave Bonior, for their leadership and support in this important endeavor.

I know many people here have very strong feelings about the conflict in Kosovo. In a moment I will meet with a few families who have relatives there. Later tonight, 50 reservists from the area will go to France to support Allied Force. I'm going from here to Selfridge Air National Guard Base to thank the people there for their service to America and the cause of peace.

The Detroit area has a large number of Albanian-Americans, roughly 40,000. Many here today are from here, in Roseville, from Armada, from other communities in the region. Many of you have loved ones in Kosovo, relatives, friends, kicked out of their homes under pain of death. Our hearts and our prayers, our aid and our arms are with you today.

But I also want to point out, so as to make the larger point of my remarks, that America is proud to be the home to a large community