

who is almost too big for me to hold. And she has come repeatedly to the National Institutes of Health.

And I held her today, and I said, "Jimiya, how you doing?" She is so beautiful. And I have seen her a half a dozen times. She is so beautiful. And she said, "Oh, Mr. President, I'm giving myself my own shots now, and I'm going to be just fine."

Now, is this playing on your emotions? You bet it is. What is life about anyway? Tom Harkin didn't put a heart in that little girl or a heart in the mother. But she has a chance because of the kind of things he's fought all his public life for. And it is a beautiful story.

So I just ask you to be faithful to your friend Tom Harkin, to fight for the things we believe in. If your friends and neighbors wonder whether the President is right or whether the Republicans are right in saying we ought to take all the non-Social Security surplus and spend it on a tax cut right now and make everybody happy right here before the election, tell them that you think we have earned the benefit of the doubt with our record, and that, you know, we should not squander this. We ought to think about our children's future. We ought to think about what we're going to do when the baby boomers retire. We ought to think about how we can make everybody a part of this economy.

And remember the stories. That's part of what makes us who we are.

It's not about power. It's about ideas and action, and in the end, it's about people. When you breathe your last breath, you are not going to be thinking about what some arcane political philosophy was that you embraced. You're going to be thinking about who you liked, who you loved, how you felt when the seasons changed, and what you're proud of that you did for somebody else. And I want to be part of a political party that tries to give those gifts to America.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:35 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Jerry and Linda Crawford; Gov. Thomas Vilsack of Iowa, and his wife, Christie; Lt. Gov. Sally Pederson of Iowa; Senator Harkin's wife, Ruth, former President and Chief Executive Officer, Overseas Private Investment Corporation; former Congressman Neal Smith and his wife, Beatrix; American University student Brianne Schwantes who suffers from brittle bone disease; and Laura Poisel and her adoptive daughter, Jimiya, who was born with AIDS. The President also referred to the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-127). A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Reception for Senator Tom Harkin in Des Moines July 16, 1999

Thank you very much. First of all, I'm delighted to be in a true Iowa museum, the place where Tom Harkin went to his high school prom. I'll tell you, he is a silver-tongued devil, but when he started talking about bringing the love of his life to the high school prom, old Ruth said, "I don't know how he is going to get out of this one." [Laughter] Sure enough, there he was on his feet again, before you know it. [Laughter]

I want to thank many of you for many things. I want to thank my good friend Secretary Dick Riley for coming with me today and going to the school in Iowa and talking about the need to build or modernize thousands of new schools for America's children for the 21st century. I

thank him. I want to thank my great friend, and Hillary's great friend, Congressman Leonard Boswell for going around with us today and for representing Iowa's farmers and workers and educators and children so well in the House of Representatives. And Dody, thank you for your 31 years of teaching. Thank you very much. Thank you, Rob Tully, for your role in making it fun to be a Democrat again in Iowa. Thank you. Thank you, Lieutenant Governor Sally Pederson, for your leadership. And thank you, Jim Autry. And I'm glad you got a better office, because you deserve it, Sally. Thank you. And I want to say to Governor Vilsack and to Christie, this has been a very impressive administration to watch from afar.

We were—everybody in the White House—Hillary and Al and Tipper and I and all of us who work there—we were thrilled when Tom was elected, and we have been so impressed by his intelligence and his energy and his direction and his leadership, and it's just quite amazing to watch unfold. You know, you could elect him for 32 years if you like and still be just trying to get even with the Republicans.

I want to thank Ruth Harkin for her service in our administration which she left for more lucrative fields, but I hope not more rewarding one. She did a wonderful job. Yes, give her a hand. *[Applause]*

I'm here basically for three reasons tonight. First, I want to thank the people of Iowa for being very, very good to me, to Hillary, to Al and Tipper Gore, to our whole crowd; for voting for us twice, in '92 and '96; for making us always welcome; for always telling us what was going on here and in the heartland of America. I will never forget that. I have been here a lot, and I have loved every trip.

We had several hundred people at the school we visited earlier today, and I told them all they should actually be quite glad to see me because I was the first person who had been here in weeks and weeks who wasn't running for everything. I just wanted to come see you and say hello and see how you were getting along.

The second thing I want to do is to thank Tom Harkin. You know, I didn't say this at the other place—Governor Vilsack asked me to repeat my speech. Since I didn't write it down, I have hardly any idea what I said; it's going to be hard to do. *[Laughter]* I want to tell you something. When Tom Harkin and I entered the primaries in '92, my mother was really the only person who thought I was going to win, and you know, we had this sort of spirited race. And I didn't come to Iowa because I didn't think I should, because you all were for him, and you should have been.

And I sort of admired Tom Harkin from afar, but you really get to know a person—and he—in Iowa you get to know a person, but you get to know a person if you just kind of travel around and you're out there, you're bone tired, and you're still trying to make one more speech, shake one more hand, go to one more forum. And then I was fortunate enough to be elected. He didn't have to do anything for me. I want you to know that on every bright and dark day

of the last 6½ years, my wife and I have not had a better friend in the United States Senate than Tom Harkin. And I will never forget it.

I want you to know—I also want you to know, even more important, for everything that we have fought for that has made this a better, stronger country, that has given children a better future, that has helped to bring us together as one community, there is nobody in the Congress that has a better combination of intelligence and experience and heart and sheer ability to get things done than Tom Harkin. He is a precious asset for Iowa and the United States, and I am glad you are here to support him tonight.

He was very generous; he talked about me going to Switzerland to speak for the children all over the world who are the subject of abusive child labor. It's the sort of thing a President is supposed to do. But a person could be elected and reelected Senator from Iowa and never say anything about abusive child labor around the world. Tom Harkin was out for that issue a long, long time before I was. I was there because of Tom Harkin and his leadership.

And today the Governor and Leonard and Tom and I, we sat around and we met with some farmers—and I want to say more about that in a minute—but we know we've got a terrible problem in farm country all over America. And you can be sure that when something is done to help America's farmers, Tom Harkin will be in the forefront of that. He won't be in the forefront of that. He won't be dragging up the rear; he'll be there pushing everybody to do more, to do better, to think through it. And he'll be—every time somebody wants to do something that doesn't make a lick of sense based on decades of history on the farm, he will be there to remind people to do the right thing by America's farmers.

You know, he says I've been a good President for the disabled of America. I hope I have been. But if I have been, half of it is because of what I learned from Tom Harkin.

Let me just close with this—because I hope you will think about this as caucus-goers, but also as American citizens. You have to ask yourself, why are you here tonight? Why do you have the political views you have? What really matters to you? What do you think politics is about? Is it about money and power, primarily, and the kicks you get if you get invited to the White House or the statehouse or whatever? Or is it about what I think it's about?

I'll tell you what I think it's about. I think politics is about ideas and action and people. And I believe that the reason the country is in the shape it's in today is in no small measure because we had a different set of ideas. We really believe that we could create an America in the 21st century with opportunity for every person responsible enough to work for it, an America that was a community of people who were very different but had a common citizenship and a common humanity, an America that was leading the world toward peace and freedom and prosperity. We believe that. And we believe that we could go beyond the paralyzing debates that had put this country in a terrible hole in 1992, when we were out there running.

We thought you could improve the economy and improve the environment. We thought you could make it so people would succeed at work without being able—and still be able to succeed at home in the most important job any American has, raising children. We thought that you could be tough on crime without giving up personal liberty. We thought that you could have sensible gun control without interfering with people's right to hunting and fishing and sporting season. These are things we thought.

Now, we thought we could balance the budget and increase our investment in education. We thought we could cut the size of Government and increase its effectiveness and its impact in ordinary people's lives. And every step of the way, we were opposed by people who believe differently. And what I want to say today is that, yes, I'm glad that we've got 19 million new jobs, the longest peacetime expansion in history, a 30-year low in unemployment, a 30-year low in the welfare rolls, a 26-year low in the crime rolls, the highest homeownership in history, the lowest minority unemployment in history. I'm glad for all that. I'm glad. But at this moment, I tell you that the people hire us to win for them tomorrow. And if we did a good job yesterday, most taxpayers think that's what they were paying us to do.

And the reason I say that is, I am very grateful that I've had the chance to be your President and grateful that I have had a chance to be the instrument of this. But what we need to think about is, what are we going to do tomorrow? What are we going to do tomorrow? And in particular, what is our obligation at this moment of enormous prosperity when we went from having the biggest deficit in history in 1992

to the biggest surplus we've ever had? What are we going to do with it? What are we going to do with this opportunity? And there are big decisions to be made here.

Tom Harkin and I are on one side and most of our friends in the other party are on the other side. But let me just mention three things, because you want to have fun tonight and you don't want to have a serious talk, but I want you to think about three things. Number one, I'm the oldest of the baby boomers, and when we retire there's going to be a whole bunch of us retired, and there will be more people retired and fewer people working than ever before, and we had better use this surplus now to save Social Security and modernize Medicare for the 21st century.

Number two, as everybody who knows—a farmer knows—not everybody who is a part of this country has participated in this recovery. From Appalachia to the Mississippi Delta to the Indian reservation to the inner city to the farm to the disabled and welfare populations who still want to go to work, we can't quit until we put everybody on a track to opportunity in this country. And if we set aside most of the surplus for Social Security and Medicare, we can, in 15 years, be debt-free for the first time since 1835. That's what we ought to do.

And finally, we ought to give our children a better future. We ought not—we ought not to squander this surplus in a way that has not enabled us to invest in world-class schools, connecting the classrooms to the Internet, world-class teachers and enough of them to do the job, education. Save Social Security and Medicare first; pay down the debt; take care of education; then give the country a tax cut. That's what we believe. That's good for the future.

Now, what I said was—what I said over there at the other place that I just want to say is, I noticed in the debate over the Patients' Bill of Rights, where the Republicans won the battle in defeating our attempts to give every American the right to see a specialist, go to the nearest emergency room, stay with the doctor through treatment, but we will win the war—you—work.

But in this thing—during this debate, the Republicans were actually making fun of the Democrats for talking about stories, human stories of people who had been hurt because we don't have a Patients' Bill of Rights, and they acted like there was something wrong because a lot of them think politics is about power and

position. But we think it's about ideas, action, and people.

I saw a little girl today at that school that I first met in Iowa in 1992, an African-American girl being held by a white woman in a rally in Cedar Rapids. And I asked this mother, I said, "Whose child is this?" And she says, "This is my baby." And I said, "Where did you find this baby?" She said, "This baby was born in Miami with AIDS, and no one would take it, so I did."

And I came to find out this woman was divorced; her husband had left her; she was raising her own two children with modest income; but she cared enough about a child she had never known of another race, afflicted with AIDS, to take this child into her home. Today, at that school, that child was in the audience. She is tall; she is beautiful; she got up in my arms, and she said, "Mr. President, I can give myself my own shots now. I'm doing well in school, and I'm doing well." And she has gone—the reason she is still alive is in these 6½ years since I first saw her mother holding her—7 years now—she's been able to come to the National Institutes of Health and get good health care, even though she comes from a family of modest needs. Why? Because of the leadership that Tom Harkin has exercised over the years for health research and other research.

Now, this is a story—am I trying to affect your emotions? You bet I am. Is that wrong? No. This is what politics is about to us. When I see nurses weeping, weeping because the insurance company tells them that the doctor they worked for can't send a patient that is sitting there in front of them to a specialist to save their lives—is that somehow illegitimate to make laws based on those stories? No. That's what counts in life. What we care about is our relationships with each other, whether we've all got a chance to live out our dreams and live up to our God-given potential.

I told another story. When I was here in the flood in '93, I met a little girl when I was putting those sandbags up that wasn't even 5 feet tall. But she was already 13 years old. And her forehead was real big and bony, and her elbows and knees were prominent, and her knuckles were, because she lived with brittle bone disease and had already had more than a dozen operations in her life, and could have broken all the bones in her body sitting there working with the people stacking sandbags. And

she came all the way from Wisconsin to do it, because she wanted to be a good citizen. And she told her parents she couldn't hide in her life; she had to do something. There was a flood, people needed her help, and even though she had bone after bone after bone after bone broken in her body, she showed up like everybody else to be a good a citizen in Iowa when the flood came.

Now, just a few months ago, I had a rally at American University in Washington, DC. The same girl was there, a freshman in college, with all of her roommates—up there, still being a good citizen, showing up. Now, why do I tell you that? And that child made several trips to the National Institutes of Health in the last 6½ years, becoming stronger.

Now, did Tom Harkin have anything to do with the character of this child? No. Did he have anything to do with the heart of the other little girl with AIDS? No. Did he affect the mother with her generosity and her love? No. But did he do things as an elected representative of you that gave those kids a chance to have better lives and make this a better country? You bet he did. You bet he did.

So I tell you, people ask why you came here, why you support Tom Harkin, why you're a member of our party. Tell them you believe that politics and citizenship is about ideas, action, and people. Power and money are incidental—incidental—to the ability to advance ideas, take action based on those ideas, and help people if your actions turn out to be right.

Now, all of you young people, I can tell you, I just celebrated—Sally was talking about her 30th high school reunion—in a couple of weeks I'm going to have my 35th. And I want you to know, by the way, I don't know if I can go to this one because of the efforts we're making in the Balkans, in Kosovo. But if I miss it, it will be the first one I've ever missed. And I want to encourage you not to miss yours. Why? Because, I'll tell you something, the older you get and the closer you get to the end of your life's journey, the more you know that when it's all over, what you really care about is who you liked, who was your friend in good times and bad, who you loved, how your children were, how you felt in the Iowa springtime and in the fall and the winter and the summer—all the things that make you alive.

Politics, the purpose of politics, is to allow free people to be more fully alive and to help

each other have better lives. That's what we believe. And so I say, let them make fun of us for telling our stories. That is all that matters in the end. There is nothing abstract about America. It's a bunch of people who believe in liberty and who believe in each other and who believe that they make life better for their children. It is the story of people. Even George Washington was a person. So you remember that. You remember that.

I'm going to tell you one thing, and I'll let you go. Last week I went to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation where the Oglala Sioux live. The most famous Oglala Sioux was Crazy Horse, and they're building a great monument to him there, even bigger than Mount Rushmore. But the unemployment there today is 73 percent.

Before I went out there, the chief of the Oglala Sioux and a number of others came to see me at the White House, from the high plains, from Montana and the Dakotas. And they had a meeting, and they told me about the problems, the problems in their States on the farm. They told me the problems of the Indians with education and health care and all of that.

But we had just come out of this conflict in Kosovo—we weren't actually quite out of it yet. And the chief of the Oglalas stood up in a very dignified manner, and he said, "Mr. President," he said, "we have a proclamation supporting your action in Kosovo against killing people because of their religion and their ethnic background." And he smiled in a very dignified way, and he said, "You see, we know something about ethnic cleansing." But listen; he said, "But this is America." Now listen to this story. He said, "My great-grandfather was massacred at Wounded Knee." He said, "I have two uncles. One was on the beach at Normandy; the other was the first Native-American fighter pilot in the entire United States military." He said, "Now their nephew, me, I am in the White

House talking to the President. I have one son"—I later met the boy—"I have one son," he said. "He is more important to me than anything in the world. But I would be honored to have him go and fight for my country against ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. America has come a long way, and we should stop this wherever we can."

Why do I tell you that? That is a story about liberty and freedom and the absence of oppression passing down through the generations. That is the story of America. It is the unending effort to form a more perfect Union, to widen the circle of opportunity, to deepen the meaning of freedom, to strengthen the bonds of community. That's what this guy represents to me. That's what my party represents to me. That's the promise of the Governor's administration to me. That is everything that I have tried to do in these 6½ years. And I am telling you, when you walk out of here tonight and somebody asks you why you were here, you ought to be able to tell them that kind of answer. And you keep fighting for it. And if you do, America's best days will be in the new century.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:53 p.m. at the Val Air Ballroom. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Harkin's wife, Ruth, former President and Chief Executive Officer, Overseas Private Investment Corporation; Representative Leonard L. Boswell's wife, Darlene (Dody); Rob Tully, chair, Iowa State Democratic Party; Lt. Gov. Sally Pederson of Iowa and her husband, James A. Autry; Gov. Tom Vilsack of Iowa and his wife, Christie; Laura Poisel and her adoptive daughter, Jimiya, who was born with AIDS; and American University student Brianne Schwantes, who suffers from brittle bone disease. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's Radio Address *July 17, 1999*

Good morning. I want to talk to you today about a great debate now underway in Washington, the debate over how best to use America's recordbreaking budget surpluses. That we

can even have this debate is remarkable. Just remember, 6½ years ago, when I first became President, we faced budget deficits that were \$290 billion and rising. In the previous 12 years,