

Remarks to the Englewood Community in Chicago, Illinois November 5, 1999

Thank you very, very much. And thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for coming and for being so full of enthusiasm and making me feel so welcome. Mr. Speaker, thank you for coming. We are honored by your presence and your alliance.

I want to also thank my good friend Congressman Bobby Rush. We've been friends a long time, and he has worked in these last weeks through his own personal sadness still on your business and to bring us all here today. And I thank him for that.

I thank this great array of Members of the House of Representatives who are here, Congressman Danny Davis—we're the Arkansas contingent on the platform, Danny and I are—[laughter]—Congressman Jesse Jackson, Jr., and Congressman Paul Kanjorski who has made this whole tour with us twice, coming all the way from Pennsylvania—a good man.

I thank the Secretary of State, the Attorney General, and the State treasurer of the State of Illinois, all of them, for being here. I thank Secretary Slater and Small Business Administrator Alvarez for their strong support for our new markets initiative and their involvement. I want to thank Samuel Williams, your principal here, for welcoming us.

You know, this is the second biggest hand he's gotten here. [Laughter] Bobby, I hope you have made sure he's not interested in running for Congress. [Laughter] This is amazing. When he got his first big hand, the Speaker leaned over to me and said, "You know, when a school principal gets that kind of hand, something must be going right there." [Laughter]

I want to thank Paul Vallas, the CEO of the Chicago public schools, for being here and for the great job that Chicago is making in turning around its schools. This school, I was just told by the principal—when I walked in, the first thing he said was, "Thank you for Goals 2000." The second thing he said was, "We are hooked up to the Internet in this school; we are ready for the 21st century."

I want to thank David Shryock for his leadership and all the other CEO's who are here, Jack Greenberg from McDonald's and all the

others from the banks and the other companies. Thank you all for being here.

And let me say, this has acquired a greater significance here because the Speaker's come in, and in honor of this bipartisan event, we had the Speaker of the House, and out of respect, Reverend Jackson has dressed up like a Republican today. [Laughter] So this is a whole new day. [Laughter]

I am glad to be back here in Chicago. I have been interested in this city for a long time. And as you know, the First Lady is a native of Chicago, and we spent lots of years here. And I was interested in all these neighborhoods long before I even thought I'd have a chance to be President. And I worked with the South Shore Bank and set up a parallel bank in Arkansas, where we just were today.

There's one other thing I would like to say before I go further, both as President and as a citizen of this country. I am very grateful for the life and the example of Walter Payton. I know that this is the day of his service, and tomorrow there will be a great memorial service, and there will be sadness and sorrow. But what a magnificent life. And what gifts he gave us, not just on the playing field but on the playing field of life. And right to the very end, he showed us a lot of lessons about how we should all conduct ourselves and what kind of legacy we should leave to our children. And I think we should remember that today, for this is a day about our children.

Let me tell you—we use this word "new markets," and Bobby issued all these announcements, and I want to make a few more. But let me try to put this into some context for you. Compared to the day I became President, this is a different country, economically and socially. We have nearly 20 million new jobs; a 4.1 percent unemployment rate, the lowest in 30 years. We have the lowest female unemployment in 46 years; the lowest minority unemployment ever recorded. We have the lowest welfare rolls, the lowest crime rates in 30 years, the lowest poverty rates in 20 years, over 5 million men, women, and children lifted out of poverty. We have the highest homeownership, including

the highest minority homeownership, in the history of our country, and the first back-to-back budget surpluses in 42 years.

Now, we are here because we know there are people and places, in spite of all these wonderful numbers, that have still not been touched by this prosperity. In spite of the fact that this is the longest economic recovery in peacetime in our history—and in February will become the longest recovery of any kind in our history—there are people and places untouched by our prosperity. We know that we have an opportunity now, with all this good fortune, to deal with our obligation to bring the American dream to those people and places.

And I believe that the only way we can keep this economic recovery going is to find new customers, new jobs, and new businesses. There's a huge debate—I say this because this is, yes, about discharging our responsibility to our fellow citizens, but it's also very much in the self-interest of everybody from Wall Street to Silicon Valley. You can't imagine how many hours we spend in the White House talking about how in the world we can keep this economic expansion going.

You know, every time in the past, things either get so hot there's a lot of inflation and then you have to break the inflation and that brings on a recession, or the economic expansion just runs out of gas. So we have to find a way not to run out of gas and to keep going without inflation.

Obviously, if you bring opportunity to people and places that haven't had it, if there are new businesses, new workers, new consumers, you can have growth without inflation. So we are here today—what this new markets name means is that if Englewood still has a poverty rate more than 2½ times the rate of Chicago, if the median household income in this community is barely more than half of Chicago, if there are still boarded-up brownstones and shut-up storefronts, that means this is not just a problem; this is an opportunity. This is a new market, and everybody in America ought to care about it and be committed to it and do what can be done to advance it.

You have proved, by these announcements here and more, that there is more than poverty here; there is enormous promise. Look at these kids. Look at this school. Get the idea, the feeling, the pride, the accomplishment here. This is a place of promise. Later I will meet with

some of the members of the women's self-employment project, which has given—listen to this—more than 7,000 women the tools to create their own businesses and shape their own futures. I'm going to go visit Franz Print Shop, which is a small business making large strides in your community. You have more partnerships to build, more success stories to write with government and business working together. That's what we're here to celebrate.

We have seen it here in Englewood, thanks to the announcements that Congressman Rush made and all the work he did to lay the foundation for our business here today; thanks to the work of the mayor, who has committed over \$250 million in public and private investment for this neighborhood in the next 4 years; thanks to the efforts of Reverend Jackson, who launched not only a Wall Street project but a LaSalle Street project to bring private capital to our poorest neighborhoods.

This can work. It can work here; it can work all across America. It is already working in many places across America in the empowerment zones, in the enterprise communities we have been establishing since 1993 under the strong leadership of Vice President Gore. But Government can't do it alone.

One of the most important things that we have to do is to make sure we have genuine partnerships. And this ought to be an American idea. I mean, when you go into the bank and you deposit money or borrow money, your party doesn't make any difference. When you go into the restaurant and you spend money, nobody asks you before they take the money or the credit card whether you're a Republican or a Democrat. Nobody has a vested interest in anybody who wants to work staying unemployed. No one in America has a vested interest in anybody with a good idea for a new business not being able to act on that idea and bring their creative genius and their hard work to the arena of enterprise that has given our country all these blessings we enjoy today.

And I said in January, when I proposed this new markets effort, that I wanted it to be a bipartisan effort, indeed an American effort, above politics, because we all have a stake in this. I want to compliment Danny Davis for recognizing this and working with two Republican Members of the House of Representatives, Congressman Watts and Congressman Talent,

to come up with an American community renewal act, which has a lot of the same goals of our empowerment zone effort and our new markets initiative.

Now, this is something we ought to do together. I'm amazed we got any press about this at all today. Mr. Hastert got a lot of press coming all the way from Washington to be with us, and I think it's because they're used to writing in Washington about how we all fight about everything. So we had two choices here. We can say, well, they've got an idea; we've got an idea; let's have a fight. Or we can do what the Speaker and I and the others here have decided to do. In Reverend Jackson's famous words, we have decided to seek common ground and higher ground because it's the right ground for these children's futures to stand on.

Today the Speaker and I—I'll let him speak for himself, but basically we're here to commit to you and to the American people to work in good faith, to merge our proposals into a historic bipartisan effort to renew our communities, to open new markets and new doors of opportunity. If we work together in this way, Mr. Speaker, we can ensure that every hard-working family has a share of the prosperity and a stake in the future that our country plainly has before it.

We have a lot that we can do. We just worked together on a historic bill to modernize and broaden the reach of the financial institutions of this country. But we did it by keeping and broadening the reach of the Community Reinvestment Act, which has been responsible for about \$88 billion in investment into our communities in the last year alone. This is the kind of thing we can do together.

And we know that all we can do, really, is to set up a framework. My new markets idea is that we ought to give Americans with money to invest the same incentives to invest in poor areas of America we give them to invest in poor areas of Latin America or Africa or Asia. And I think all of you know that, for me, that's not an either/or choice. I'm glad when we have Americans try to help people in Africa or Latin America or Asia have a better future, because I think as they do, they make more responsible citizens and they make war less likely and they make cooperation and shared prosperity more likely. But we clearly have the highest obligations to our own people and we cannot, in good conscience, not give people the same incentives

to Americans a chance to make a living, to start a business, and to build a future.

I also want to reiterate, nothing we do will work without the commitment of the private business sector. You've already heard about the vital commitments that SB Partners has made today. I'm also pleased to note that Allstate Insurance will invest \$5 million in the Illinois Facilities Fund to go toward education and child care here in Englewood. That's very important. If you want to have jobs, you've got to have the child care support for parents. And I thank Ed Liddy* for joining us today. The Community Investment Corporation will expand its efforts here into Englewood and into the enterprise zone that is nearby.

And as part of the welfare-to-work partnership, Alliance Relocation Services is teaming up with Allied and DePaul University to launch a new job training program. McDonald's, represented here by its CEO, Jack Greenberg, which has a huge, long history of investing in America's untapped potential, is working to encourage mentoring relationships between large companies and small ones, through our BusinessLINC initiative. The idea is that big, successful companies can help small, emerging ones in neighborhoods like this succeed if they just know more about the basic things they have to do to get started and to keep going in the early periods of the business. This is a huge deal, pioneered by business leaders and the Vice President. And I want to thank you, sir, for doing this.

Well, I want to make room now for the Speaker and for Reverend Jackson, but I just want to close with this observation. For a long time, we were so used to some people being down and out that we acted like we believed it had to be that way. This is a big issue, because all the money in the world and all the good government action in the world can't overcome your lack of faith in yourselves. And for a long time, we just acted like it had to be that way.

The other night, Hillary sponsored a dinner at the White House, or an evening at the White House, to talk about the relationship of the revolution in computer technology to the revolution in the study of the human gene and the whole gene structure that's called the genome. And what the scientist and the computer genius said

* White House correction.

was, we could never unlock the mysteries of the human gene unless we had this remarkable revolution in computers, which can literally allow us to map these microscopic things that make up our body.

Here's the point I want to make to all of you here in Englewood—the most important thing that was said all night long. This big professor from Harvard who understands things about the human gene structure that I couldn't even describe said something I'll remember for the rest of my life. He said all human beings, genetically—all human beings—are 99.9 percent the same. And then he said, if you took any given racial or ethnic group—let's say you took 100 people from west Africa and 100 Chinese and 100 people from Mexico and 100 people from India and 100 people from Ireland, the genetic differences of the individuals within each group would be significantly greater than the genetic differences from group to group—that is, between any group of Irish and group of Chinese or group of Africans or group of Mexicans. You remember that.

You've got to believe. Just look at this high school. Look at the alumni of this high school. This high school's produced poets, Cabinet secretaries, the first African-American astronaut;

Lorraine Hansberry, the playwright of the wonderful play "A Raisin in the Sun."

Now—you're going to hear from a young man later who will do this better than me, but one of the greatest lines in "A Raisin in the Sun"—you ought to go back and read it—is, a character says, "All God's children got wings." That's another way of saying, genetically, we're 99.9 percent the same.

Do you believe that? Do you believe that all God's children got wings? Then you have to believe that all God's children can fly.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:45 p.m. in the gymnasium at Englewood High School. In his remarks, he referred to Illinois State Treasurer Judy Baar Topinka; Samuel Williams, principal, Englewood High School; David Shryock, partner, SB Partners LP; Jack Greenberg, chief executive officer, McDonald's Corp.; civil rights leader Jesse Jackson; Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago; Edward M. Liddy, chief executive officer, Allstate Insurance Co.; Vinton G. Cerf, senior vice president of Internet architecture and technology, MCI WorldCom; and Eric Lander, director, Whitehead Institute/MIT Center for Genome Research.

Statement on Foreign Operations Appropriations Legislation

November 5, 1999

I am pleased that we have reached an agreement with congressional leaders on a budget that will permit America to advance its most critical priorities around the world. This agreement meets our commitments to the Middle East peace process, funds our efforts to safeguard nuclear weapons and expertise in the former Soviet Union, makes an initial investment

in debt relief for impoverished countries, including in Africa and Latin America, and allows us to do our part in bringing stability and democracy to southeast Europe. I hope this marks the start of a bipartisan effort to ensure that America has not only the will but the resources to lead.

Statement on Senate Ratification of the Child Labor Convention

November 5, 1999

I am pleased that the Senate has given its consent to ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor.

In June I traveled to Geneva for the annual meeting of the International Labor Organization