

But the last thing I want to say is this. I'll just give you one other. You ought to go home tonight and ask yourself what you think the big challenges are. Go home and make your own list. But I'll tell you, if somebody said to me tonight, "Well, Mr. President, you don't have 14 more months; you've got to leave tomorrow. But I'm the genie, and I'll give you one wish. You can do anything for America you want, but only one." What I would choose is for us to be one America, across all the lines that divide us, for two reasons. First of all, we'll never be what we ought to be as long as we still have hate crimes where some guy in the Midwest that belongs to a church he says doesn't believe in God but believes in white supremacy, goes out and kills in rapid succession an African-American former college basketball coach, and then kills a Korean Christian walking out of his church; an angry guy out in Los Angeles shoots a bunch of Jewish kids going to a church school, a synagogue school, and then goes out and murders a Filipino postman, and the guy thought he had a two-fer: he had an Asian and somebody who worked for the Federal Government; James Byrd gets dragged to death in Texas; Matthew Shepard gets put on a rack.

Yesterday, all over America, there were gripping pictures of these two young soldiers, one 21, one 18. The 21-year-old, a gay soldier who the 18-year-old beat to death with a baseball bat. And I thought to myself, looking at these two young boys—keep in mind, I look at them in a certain way not only because they're young enough to be my own sons, but because I have a lot of your sons under my command. Those young men, when they put on that uniform—both of them—when they put on that uniform, they basically took an oath that says, "If Bill Clinton tells me to, I will go halfway around the world to fight and die." That's what it means. Let's not kid. That's what it means.

So here are these two kids. They make the same pledge. They've got their whole lives before them. One of them is dead, and the other one's life is ruined. And frankly, I ached for both of them. And the young boy that murdered the other one because he was gay, he wasn't born feeling that way; somebody taught him to do that. So that's the last thing I want to tell you.

You guys are smart. That's why I always say what government ought to do is create the conditions: get rid of the debt; give people the same incentives to invest in poor areas we give them to invest in poor areas in Latin America and Asia and Africa; give people empowerment, and they will do the job. But, first and foremost, we must be one America.

That is also the way we can have the biggest influence in resolving the crisis in the Middle East, in Kosovo, in Bosnia, the tribal warfare in Africa, you name it. This old world is still burdened down with people that can't get along without hating somebody who is different from them. And we all know better. We all know better.

So I tell you, if you go out there and you make the subject of the election the record of the last 7 years and what are we going to do with our prosperity—and the answer is, we're going to deal with the aging of America, the children of America, make America the safest big country in the world, put America out of debt for the first time since 1835, bring genuine economic opportunity to the poorest people in the country, and be one America—we will come home next time, too.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:50 p.m. in the auditorium at Keiser College. In his remarks, he referred to Ward Connerly, chairman, California civil rights initiative.

Remarks at a Unity Reception in Coral Gables, Florida *December 11, 1999*

Thank you very much. Thank you, Gene. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. I hope you'll forgive me if I'm a little hoarse. I've been battling a big cold today. I've had an amazing few

days. A couple of days ago we announced that we were going to start the peace talks again, after 4 years of hiatus, between Israel and Syria, and it's been a wonderful thing. And then I

had a very sad duty to go up to Worcester, Massachusetts, to the funeral of those firemen—you may have seen. And then I went home to Arkansas yesterday. So somewhere along the way I caught a cold, and my voice is not the best. And I thank you for indulging me.

I'm always glad to be back here. I love this hotel. *[Laughter]* I love the golf course. *[Laughter]* I love the people. And Gene Prescott has been very good to me and to many members of my family, and I thank him for that. And I thank all of you for coming.

I know there were Members of the Senate and the House who were here earlier, and they've gone to the next event. I do want to recognize State Representative Elaine Bloom, who is running for Congress and who is going to be a Member of Congress if she gets adequate financial support to help her win. And so thank you very much for coming.

Let me say to all of you, this has been a pretty emotional day for me in Florida, because it was 8 years ago this week that I came to Florida to the Democratic Convention when they were having straw poll. And this straw poll had been mightily hyped because it was going to be the first vote of any kind in the 1992 Presidential season. At the time, as I remember, I was running fifth in New Hampshire in the polls.

And I had been to the Florida Democratic Convention already by 1991, three previous times in the eighties, thanks to Bob Graham and Lawton Chiles. I had been in '81, '83, and '87, and had a wonderful time. But on this special day, we had worked very hard, and the Florida Democrats worked me very hard. They made me go to all of these little caucuses and answer all these questions. I must have answered a thousand questions. I was so exhausted by the time I finished visiting more than a dozen of these caucuses, answering hundreds of questions, I got to where I wondered what I was doing in this business. But we won over 50 percent of the vote in the Florida straw poll, at a time when we were running fifth in the national polls. And a lot of you in this room were a part of that endeavor. I thank you for that.

And I came back today to go up to Orlando to the Democratic Convention just to thank those people who gave me my start on the road to the Presidency; and also to thank Florida for voting for me and for Al Gore in 1996,

which is the first time in 20 years this State had voted for a Democratic ticket.

Gene has already said a lot of what he might say about the record. I just wanted to make a couple of points. In 1991, when I decided to run for President, I did so not because I had anything personal against President Bush. I actually like him quite well, and I had often worked as the representative of the Governors, both the Republicans and the Democrats, with the White House, for years and years. I did it because our country was at a time of economic distress, social decline, political division, and the whole enterprise of government was discredited. And I had worked for more than a decade as a Governor to try to bring people together instead of driving them apart and to try to figure out what makes the economy tick in the modern world.

And so I asked the American people to give me a chance to create a society where there was opportunity for every responsible citizen, and where we had a community of all, where everybody could participate. And Gene mentioned a little of this, but you know, I think the interesting thing is—it is true that in February we will have the longest economic expansion in history. We already have the longest peacetime economic expansion in history, but, you know, in wartime, you're fully mobilized, so they tend to last longer. We're going to outdo all the wartime expansions if we keep on plugging until February. And that's a great tribute to the American people.

But it also happened because we made some tough decisions. We got rid of this deficit; we turned it into a surplus. We got the interest rates down. We stopped taking money away from you that you might need to borrow to expand a business or to start a new one or to make a home loan payment or a car payment or a college loan payment. And the strategy has worked.

But I think it's important to point out that we don't just have the lowest unemployment rate the actual figure is 30 years, the lowest female unemployment rate in 40 years, but our society is coming together. We have the lowest single-parent household poverty rate in 46 years, the lowest Hispanic poverty rate in 25 years, and the lowest African-American poverty rate ever recorded and the lowest Hispanic and African-American unemployment rates ever recorded; we've been keeping statistics for about

30 years, now. So we're coming together as a society.

And we're also beginning to look at things that have been long ignored. We have 90 percent of our little children immunized against serious diseases for the first time in the history of the country. Two million more kids have health insurance now than they did in 1997. Seven million young people have gone to college under the HOPE scholarship, a \$1,500 a year tax credit that, in effect, opens the first 2 years of college to all Americans. Ten million got an increase in the minimum wage. More than 20 million took advantage of the Family and Medical Leave Act. These things are important.

In the last legislative session of Congress, we got 100,000 teachers to get the class size down in the early grades. We got 50,000 more police to keep driving the crime rate down. We got 60,000 vouchers to give to people on welfare so they can move from welfare to work and find a place to live where they work. We are moving this country in the right direction.

But I want to tell you why I'm glad you're here tonight, because I'm not much on looking back, except as it's evidence of where we're going. All elections are about tomorrow. I never will forget when I ran for Governor for the fifth time. I went out to the State Fair before I'd announced; and I used to have Governor's Day at the State Fair. And I'd just sit there at this little booth, you know, a fair booth, and anybody that wanted to come up and talk, could.

This old boy in overalls, who was about 70 years old, came up to me and he said, "Bill, are you going to run again?" I said, "I don't know. If I do, will you vote for me?" He said, "Yeah, I guess so. I always have." I said, "Well, aren't you sick of me?" He said, "No, but everybody else I know is." [Laughter] And I got kind of puffed up, and I said, "Well, don't you think I've done a good job?" He said, "Well, sure you've done a good job, but you drew a paycheck every 2 weeks, didn't you?"—it's very interesting—"That's what we hired you to do. We hired you to do a good job." So what I want to say to you is, I hope you will go out and share this record. These statistics are stunning. But they are evidence of the direction we need to take.

It's been an honor to serve. And nobody's entitled—none of us, not even the Vice President—none of us are entitled to a vote because we did a good job. And I'm not running for

anything. But it is evidence of the job that will be done if we stay going in this direction.

It is not about whether we will change, but what kind of change we'll have. And I want you to know I could not have done anything if I hadn't had the support of like minded Democrats in Congress, people who wanted to change the Democratic Party and change the country. Elaine Bloom is one of those people. She was out here for me in 1991. I'd like to see her have a chance to serve. I think she could make a big difference. And that's why you're here; this is important.

This is the last thing I'm going to say. Tomorrow morning or next week or next month, somebody might ask you why you ponied up the money and came to this thing. And I hope you'll be able to give an answer, and I hope your answer is, number one, there's not much argument about whether these people delivered. They've had 7 great years for our country. The ideas they brought, the direction they changed was right. Number two, the next election should be about America meeting the big new challenges of the 21st century, not about short-term, divisive, narrowminded politics.

And let me just say, in my lifetime—I had a bunch of kids up to the house at Camp David Thanksgiving weekend, and this little 6-year-old girl who is the daughter of a friend of mine said, "Now, how old are you again?" And I said, "I'm 53." And this 6-year-old girl, her eyes got big and she said, "Oh, that's a lot." [Laughter] And I have to admit she was right. [Laughter] But what I want to tell you is, in these lot of years that I've had the privilege of being on this Earth, never before in my lifetime has our country had this combination of economic success, social solidarity, national self-confidence, with the absence of an internal crisis or an external threat. It had never happened to me before in my lifetime. And what I have learned in these 53 years is that no set of conditions last forever. This is a time of rapid change. We will never forgive ourselves if we do not use this moment to shape the future of our dreams for our children.

We've got to deal with Social Security and Medicare, the aging of America, take Social Security out beyond the baby boomers' lives, lengthen Medicare, add a prescription drug benefit so the 75 percent of the seniors who can't afford the medicine they need can get it.

We've got to deal with the education of the largest and most diverse group of schoolchildren in history, and we've got to do it in a very serious and disciplined way. We have to help people do more to balance work and family. Nearly every parent is working now. We need more investments in child care and health care for children and equal pay for women. We need to broaden the reach of the Family and Medical Leave Act. We need to do these things.

We need to continue to protect the environment while we grow the economy. I'm convinced, folks that this—I'm not running for anything, and I'm convinced this climate change problem is real. And you could have in five or six decades a substantial part of the Everglades under water if we don't aggressively move to try to reverse this. And what I want to tell you is we can grow the economy even quicker if we do the right things environmentally than if we don't. You don't have to give it up anymore.

Just two other things that I hope you will say. There are still people in places that this economy has left behind: Appalachia, the Mississippi Delta, the Indian reservations, a lot of inner-city neighborhoods. But we have a strategy to try to bring free enterprise—not government jobs, free enterprise—to those places. And keep in mind, that's one way to keep growing this economy and keep this expansion going without inflation. If you invest in a new area, you create new businesses, new jobs, and new consumers. You're not adding to inflationary pressures.

And I will over simplify. Essentially, what we want to do is to give people who can come to political fundraisers the same incentive to invest in poor areas in America we give them today to invest in poor areas in Latin America or Asia or Africa. I'm for that, too, by the way. But I think if we can't give people the incentives to put free enterprise in America in places that are left behind, if we can't do this now, we're never going to get around to it.

You know, the national unemployment rate is 4.1 percent. Do you know what the unemployment rate on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation is in South Dakota, the home of the Lakota Sioux, the tribe of Crazy Horse? Seventy-three percent. I've been there now. There are plenty of intelligent people there. There are a lot of yearning young children who want a good education. There's plenty of things we could do there. And there's 120 years of history that

explains why this is so, and I won't bore you with it. But I'm just telling you, I hope that you will say, "I came there and I'm still—I'm glad I went, and I'm glad I wrote the check, because they've got a good record, and because they want to take on the big questions of the 21st century: the aging of America; the most diverse group of kids we've ever had; the balancing of work and family; the balancing of the environment and the economy; bringing economic opportunity to poor people; and" the last thing I'd say is "creating truly one America."

We had a fascinating time the other night. Hillary had these two guys come to the White House for one of these Millennium Evenings she has that we put out on the Internet all over the world. So this one man, Vint Cerf, was one of the men who created the architecture of the Internet, and he mailed the first E-mail 18 years ago to his profoundly deaf wife, who was so deaf she could not hear with the aid of even the most powerful hearing aids, and he wanted to talk to her when he was at work. That's how the E-mail started. And the other guy was Professor Lander from Harvard, who's one of the scholars of the human genome, this rapid thing we're doing to—you may have seen, we found 33 million components of one of the chromosomes. Did you see that last week? I mean, we're basically trying to map the whole genetic structure of the human body. So Dr. Lander knows about this.

Well, a lot of what they were talking about was how you couldn't do the science without the computer technology, and how the computer technology was going to amplify the science. For example, last year I was really happy that we transplanted nerves from the legs to the spine of a laboratory animal for the first time and got movement in the lower limbs. They now believe that a quicker answer to the problems of people who have spinal cord injuries, that maybe the development of microchips that are programmed to reflect an individual mapping of every person's injury, and to send out electrical impulses that replicate what the nerves do.

They believe that in 3 or 4 years, every young mother will come home with a baby and a genetic map. That'll be kind of scary; they'll tell you all the things that might happen to your baby, but they'll also tell you all the things you can do to minimize the chances that they'll happen. And most of my friends in the field believe

that some time fairly early in the next century, the average child will live to be 100 years old, have a 100-year life expectancy.

A lot of my friends who are interested in space say that we may find out what's in those black holes in the universe. And everybody knows that we're going to start having a lot more E-commerce and Internet connections, in ways we couldn't have imagined. I'll give you just one little example. Did you all ever buy anything on eBay? It's a trading site on the Web. There are now over 20,000 people that make a living on eBay. They don't work for eBay; they make a living buying and selling on eBay. And a number of them used to be on welfare. So if you can get Internet access to be as dense in America as telephone access, a lot of these poor people that worked their way out of poverty, they'll figure out how to do it.

So this is, anyway, to put it mildly, a very exciting time to be alive. And I think it is quite interesting that, with all this modern stuff going on, the biggest problem we've got is the oldest problem of human society with all this racial and religious and ethnic hatred, and hatred of gays. You know, it's just like, okay, so we're living in a modern world, but we can't let any of this stuff go. There are people and groups that don't think they count unless they've got somebody to look down on.

And if you look at what's taking my time as your President around the world—the Middle East, Northern Ireland, Kosovo, Bosnia, tribal wars in Africa, and a lot of things that are indirectly related to that—it's the biggest problem in the world.

One of the worst things you read about—crime rate keeps going down in America, but you've got all these hate crimes: black basketball coach in Illinois, Korean Christian coming out of his church, both killed by a guy who belonged to a church that said they don't believe in God; they believe in white supremacy. An angry guy up in L.A. shoots all these Jewish kids going to their synagogue schools and then goes and kills a Filipino postman. Matthew Shepard, James Byrd.

Did you see the pictures in the paper yesterday of the two soldiers, one 18 and one 21? The 18-year-old beat the one that was 21 to death with a baseball bat because he was gay. I've said this a lot, but my heart broke for both of them.

People have to be taught this kind of stuff. And I'm very proud of the fact that I belong to a political party that believes everybody has a place at the table, everybody ought to have a chance, and we ought to take a little extra trouble to help bring people in that need a helping hand.

I believe that, and I think now you've had 7 years—and I hope you'll think about this when Mr. Connerly comes down here and puts his anti-affirmative-action initiative on the ballot—we've now had 7 years to prove that our way works better. America's better off when you help everybody to participate, not worse off.

And if I could have one wish, it would be—just one; if somebody came, you know, one of those little angels came to me at night and said, "I'm sorry, Mr. President, you have to check out tomorrow morning. You can't stay 14 months, but we'll give you one wish. What would you like?" As much as I want to do something about the aging challenge and the children and all these other things, I would say, I'd like to leave America united across the lines that divide us—not just tolerating our differences, but celebrating them; and reaffirming the fact that our common humanity is more important than all these interesting differences.

There's no country in the world as well-positioned as we are for the next 50 years of what's going to happen. But we have to be willing to deal with these long-term challenges. If this election is about that question—what are we going to do with this unique moment in our history?—then our side will win.

And I hope that when people ask you, why are you doing this, you'll tell them about the last 7 years, but you'll also talk about your dreams for the next 20.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:45 p.m. in the Altamira Room at the Biltmore Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Gene Prescott, president, Biltmore Hotel; Ward Connerly, chairman, California civil rights initiative; Vinton G. Cerf, senior vice president of Internet architecture and technology, MCI WorldCom, and his wife, Sigrid; and Eric Lander, director, Whitehead Institute/MIT Center for Genome Research.