

more to say about it next week when we'll have more time to talk about it in detail.

Colombia

Q. Sir, on Colombia, after the Senate's endorsement last night of the appropriation, are you optimistic that you will get the funding for Operation Colombia before losing so much ground it will be impossible to make it back up?

The President. Well, first, I'd like to compliment the Senate and the bipartisan vote. I'm grateful for it. As you know, there were some differences in the Senate bill and the House bill, first of all, a not insubstantial financial difference—I think about \$300 million over 2 years—and then some differences in how the money would be allocated. But I'm encouraged that we could maybe get the differences between the Senate proposal and the House proposal worked out.

The second part of your question is really a question that neither I nor anyone else is qualified to answer, that is, it requires conjecture. I think, as I've said all along, sooner is better than later. The quicker we can reach agreement and show that the United States is committed to democracy and to fighting the drug wars in Colombia and to strengthening the oldest democracy in Latin America, the better off we're going to be. The quicker we do it, the quicker the Colombians will be able to get Europeans and others who are very sympathetic

with them to come in and do their part, the more appealing it will be for the international financial institutions.

We haven't had a chance to talk about this much because there are so many other things going on. But those people, they're in the fight of their lives for their very way of life, with the combined pressure of a guerrilla war that's been going on for decades and the rise of the narcotraffickers over the last two decades.

I don't think the average American can imagine what it would be like to live in a country where a third of the country, on any given day, may be in the hands of someone that is an enemy, an adversary of the nation-state. I don't think we can even imagine what that would be like. Just, you know, driving through Washington, DC, and you've got a one-in-three chance of being in a neighborhood that your Government and the law of the land doesn't prevail in. This is a huge, huge issue. And again, I'm grateful to the Senate, and I'm grateful it was done on such a bipartisan basis, and we just need to get it done as quickly as possible.

Now, on Monday or so, I'll be back with something on the midsession review, and we'll have a chance for more questions next week.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10 a.m. in the South Portico at the White House, prior to his departure for Phoenix, AZ.

Remarks at a Federal Victory Fund Reception in Phoenix, Arizona

June 22, 2000

Thank you very much. I appreciate the standing ovation. [*Laughter*] Let me say I'm delighted to be back in Arizona again. If you only knew how many times I complained that I wasn't coming out here enough, you'd really be impressed. [*Laughter*] I love coming here.

I want to say, in his absence, that Bruce Babbitt has done a magnificent job as Secretary of the Interior, and I'm very proud of him. We had some rocky issues in the first couple of years, and we still do some things that our friends in the Republican Party don't agree with. But we decided together—and we've been friends for many years because we served as

Governors together—that all these emerging issues in the West, the challenges of reconciling all this growth with the environmental challenges, basically were ignored by the other party when they were in power, and they normally did well in the elections because the Federal Government wasn't getting in anybody's hair. And then when the Democrats got in, they tended to try to deal with them, but in a way that alienated so many people, we found further behind. So we decided that we would not ignore them, but we'd try to do it in a way that would make connections with people at the grassroots

level. And I think, by and large, the strategy has worked, and I'm very grateful.

We set aside, among other things, more land—in national monuments, in the 43 million roadless acres of the national forests, otherwise—than any administration in the history of this country except those of Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt. And I'm very proud of that. And you should be proud of him.

I want to thank the gentleman to my left—to your left, my right—Ed Rendell, the former mayor of Philadelphia who has been a great chair of our Democratic Party and who was leading us to victory this year. And I really thank him for doing that. I decided he ought to be chair of the party when Al Gore and I won Philadelphia with about 80 percent of the vote and a bigger margin than President Kennedy did when it was a much larger city. So I figured if he could work that kind of mathematical magic in Philadelphia, there's no telling what he could do with the country as a whole. [Laughter]

I want to thank Steve for his long friendship and Janet for her outstanding leadership. I also want to thank her publicly—I've never had a chance to do this before—for her sterling service as United States attorney here in my first term, before she became the attorney general.

I want to acknowledge the event cochairs here, John Shacknai, Bob and Carolyn Wolf, Delbert and Jewell Lewis, and Fred DuVal, who is much missed in the White House, but I thank him for what he did. And let's give them all a big hand. [Applause]

Now, I also want to say a heartfelt thanks to one present and one former Member of Congress, Ed Pastor and former Senator Dennis DeConcini. I think I'm going to see them sometime today. I don't know if they're in this room, but they really did a lot to help ensure the success that this country has enjoyed in the last 7½ years.

I will be brief, but I want to say some things as succinctly as I can. First, I am more grateful than you know that in 1996 we won the electoral votes of Arizona, for the first time since Harry Truman in 1948.

Second, I am profoundly grateful for the success our country has enjoyed in these last 7½ years, that Steve and Janet outlined. I've worked real hard to try to turn this country around and move it in the right direction. And I think we were helped by the fact that I had been

a Governor for nearly a dozen years, that I had dealt with most of the problems that the country was facing in 1992, and that we actually had specific, clear ideas about what we wanted to do and we laid them before the American people in great detail.

And that brings me to the present moment. Everybody knew what the problem was in 1992. The wheel was about to run off. The economy was in bad shape. The society was deteriorating by most indicators, and we knew what we had to do. We also knew that Washington was just paralyzed by this sort of partisan fight when basically people would say, "You got an idea. I've got an idea. Let's fight. Otherwise, neither one of us will get on the evening news." And so there was a real penalty put on thinking. If you thought you had new ideas and you tried to work things out, there was really no reward. And most of us out in the country, whether we lived in Arizona or Arkansas or someplace else, thought that it didn't make much sense. So we set about trying to turn the country around, and the results have been good.

But now we're in a new election season. And people ask me all the time, "Well, who's going to win? Do you think the Vice President is going to win?" I say yes. "Do you think Hillary is going to win?" I say yes. And I do, on both counts. "Do you think the Democrats will win back to Congress?" Of course, I say yes. But here's the real truth: Who will win this election depends upon, more than anything else, what the people of America think the election is about. The question you ask may determine the answer you get.

So that's what I want to say to all of you, because when I leave, somebody might ask you why you were here today and what you intend to do. And there's a lot of work for you to do between now and November, and you have to decide what you think the election is about. The election in 1992 was about what we were going to do to turn our country around. In 1996 it was about whether we would continue and build on that direction and build our bridge to this new century. This election is about, in my view, what do we intend to do with our prosperity.

And I would argue to you that what a country does at a magic moment like this is just as stern a test of its judgment and its character as what a country does when it's in trouble. Anybody in this audience today, who is over

30 years of age at least, can cite at least one time in your life when you made a mistake, a personal or a professional mistake, not because things were so tough but because things were so good you thought there was no penalty for the failure to concentrate and think about the long run.

Now, for me, what we ought to do with our prosperity is take advantage of it, because nothing lasts forever—nothing bad, nothing good, nothing lasts forever. So take advantage of this moment to build the future of our dreams for our children, to deal with the big challenges: to deal with the aging of America, to deal with the plain environmental challenges that are out there because of the way we have grown as a nation and as a world, to deal with the challenge of giving all of our children a world-class education.

And while I'm at it, I'd like to compliment the legislators. It seems to me like there's a bipartisan majority in Arizona for really doing something significant about the schools, and I hope it will get through the legislature. And I want to thank the Republicans who are supporting—[applause].

What are we going to do to help all these families who now have jobs balance work and family? Our country is behind other countries in that. You'd be amazed how many parents I talk to, whether they're working for minimum wage or whether they're making six-figure incomes, who worry every single day about how they're going to meet their responsibilities at work and meet their most important responsibilities of raising their children.

There are all these really big, interesting challenges. The reason that I want the Vice President to win, apart from my personal loyalty to him and the role that he's played—and he has been, by far, the most significant Vice President in the history of the country. No other Vice President—I'm a pretty good student of American history, and this is not just election-year hype—no other Vice President has ever had anything close to the positive impact on the affairs of America and the lives of the American people as Vice President than Al Gore has had. Not Harry Truman; not Theodore Roosevelt; not anybody as Vice President.

So when people say, "Why do you think he should be elected?" I say, first of all, because he'll keep the prosperity going; secondly, because he really wants to extend it to the people

and places that have been left behind and aren't fully part of this; and thirdly, because he understands the future, and he can take us there.

We worked very hard to build America's high-tech future because we fought for a technology act, the Telecommunications Act of '96, that was pro-competition and pro-education, with the E-rate that gives discounts so that all of our schools and public libraries can hook up to the Internet. We've got a very different world today. He understands a big issue that all of you will face sooner or later—probably sooner rather than later—which is, how are we going to preserve people's privacy rights when all of our financial records and all of our health care records are on somebody's computer somewhere? That's just one example.

You need to elect a President now who will keep the prosperity going, who will extend it to people and places left behind, and who understands the future and can lead us there.

Now, I want you to know three things about this election. One, it is really big. It is just as important as the elections of '92 and '96, because we may never have another chance in our lifetime to have a moment where there is so much economic prosperity, social progress, and relative absence of domestic crisis or foreign threat. So it's important.

Two, there are real differences between the parties, from the Presidential candidates to the Senate candidates to the House candidates—real differences—and that's good. It means we can have an exciting and fundamentally positive election. We've had too many elections in the last 20 years where both candidates tried to convince the voters that their opponents were just a notch above a car thief. And you don't have to do that. You can assume in this election that everybody is honorable, that everybody is going to try to do what they say they're going to do, and there are differences. So, one, it's important; two, there are differences.

The third thing you need to know is, only the Democrats want you to know what the differences are. [Laughter] For example, there is no question that it will be very appealing for the Republicans, beginning with the nominee for President, to say, "Hey, vote for us, and we'll give you a tax cut worth over a trillion dollars over the next 10 years. And we can easily afford it because we're going to have such a big surplus, because it's projected."

And we say—the Vice President said last week—“No, no, no. First of all, let’s start by saving 20 percent of the projected surplus by taking the taxes you pay for Medicare and putting it in a lockbox so it can’t be spent on anything besides Medicare. We’ll pay the debt down until we need it, and we’ll have a hedge in case this surplus doesn’t materialize. And, yes, let’s have a tax cut, but let’s focus it on the people who really need it and on their need to educate their children, to pay for child care, to pay for long-term care, to accumulate wealth and save for their own retirement.”

But let’s not spend it all, because if you pass a tax cut now based on an assumed surplus—it’s self-serving for me; I ought to say, “Of course we’re going to have a multi-trillion dollar surplus over the next 10 years, and I produced it, ha-ha.” But the truth is, you don’t know any more than I do whether we’re going to have all that money over the next 10 years. And I think—people ask me all the time, “What great economic innovation did you bring to Washington?” And I give a one-word answer: arithmetic. [Laughter] We brought arithmetic back. We said, “Look, if we don’t have it, we shouldn’t spend it. We’ve got to get rid of the deficit. We’ve got to pay the debt down.”

Now, the Democrats should be for, yes, investing in education; yes, giving working people tax breaks; yes, investing in the environment and scientific research. We should be for all that. But we should also be for continuing to pay down the debt. Why? Because it will keep interest rates lower. It will stave off inflation. It will keep the stock market growing. It will keep the economy stronger. We need to do it.

You don’t know any more than I do whether all this money that we now project is going to be there over the next 10 years. And if we give it away all on the front end in a tax cut, you know as well as I do, if it doesn’t materialize, we’ll be right back into the bad old days of deficits. Big issue. So you can’t pretend that there are no consequences here. And if you want this thing to keep going, prudence, arithmetic, relying on human experience is really important.

I’ll just give you a couple of other examples. We’re for the minimum wage, and they’re not. We’re for a real Patients’ Bill of Rights; a few of them are, but most of them aren’t. We be-

lieve you can grow the economy and improve the environment in the information age. It is no longer necessary for a country to stay rich or grow rich by putting more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Most of them don’t believe that, but I do. And I believe the evidence is clear.

Vice President Gore said the other day, “Vote for me, and I will build on and strengthen President Clinton’s declaration of over 40 million roadless acres in our national forests.” In the primary—something that the Republicans hope you’ll develop amnesia about—[laughter]—in the primary, his opponent said, “Vote for me, and I’ll get rid of that order protecting those 43 million roadless acres.” There’s a real difference.

So there are real differences. And what I want—what I would like to ask you to do is go out to the people who aren’t here, people you talk to every day, people that might not be Democrats—independents, Republicans—people with money, middle class people that spend everything they earn paying their bills every 2 weeks, people that work in this hotel and have to struggle to pay their bills—and talk to them about it, and say, “Look, this is a gift, folks. We can have an old-fashioned American election. We don’t have to be swayed by 30-second ads saying that this person’s bad or that person’s bad. Let’s assume everybody’s honorable and that they’ll do what they say they’re going to do.” And get the differences out there, and ask people to think about what they think this is about.

I have done everything I could to leave our country in good shape. And I just want us to take advantage of this moment to build a future we dream of for the kids that are in this audience. And if we do that, then the outcome will be clear, here and throughout America.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:30 p.m. in Salon 2/3 at the Ritz Carlton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to reception cohost Steve Owens; Janet Napolitano, Arizona attorney general, who introduced the President; and Gov. George W. Bush of Texas.