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WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,

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## Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in Dallas, Texas February 9, 2000

Thank you. First of all, Fred, thank you for what you said. And I thank you and Lisa for being wonderful friends to me and Hillary and to Al and Tipper Gore and to our party. I thank Jess and Betty Jo for being here tonight. I can't help but say, Betty Jo is the niece of former Speaker Carl Albert, who passed away in the last couple of days, a great Democrat. And I had a wonderful talk with his wife today, and it reminded me of why I have been a Democrat all my life. And our thoughts and prayers are with your family.

I thank "B" and Audre Rapoport and Garry Mauro for their work here. And I wanted to acknowledge not only the mayor, who I think has done a superb job, and Senator Cain, thank you for being here, and Sally, thank you for being here and for being our regional Department of Education person, for all the good work you do. But I also want to introduce a former very important person on my White House staff, Regina Montoya, who is now a candidate for the House, who is here. I want you all to help her get elected to Congress. We need to win this seat. *[Applause]* Thank you. She's here, I think.

I got tickled—I started laughing all over again when Ed Rendell was up here talking about the rap that the Republican chairman laid on him after the New Hampshire primary. He said we were the candidate of special interests, and he mentioned—what did he say—trial lawyers, labor, gays, and Hollywood. *[Laughter]*

Let me take you back to 1992. In 1991, I was having the time of my life living in Arkansas in the 11th year of my governorship. I had had a new lease on life. I loved my job. I could have done it now to kingdom come. But I was really worried about my country, because that's the kind of stuff that everybody in Washington said, what Ed just said. And there was a Republican line and a Democratic line. There was

a liberal line and a Republican line. And everybody was struggling to be politically correct and to be as confrontational as possible, because that is the only way you would get your 15 seconds on the evening news.

I suppose it was perfectly good for the people who got on the talk shows all the time and the people who could raise funds for their reelection and stay in, but the country was in the ditch. Even when we were nominally in a recovery, we couldn't generate any jobs. And we had quadrupled the debt in 12 years, and we didn't have much to show for it, because we were spending less in real terms on things that we needed, like education.

The reason I ran for President is that I had been working on all this stuff for a long time, and it became clear to me there were limits to what any Governor or any people could do, or people in their private lives could do, to turn America around until we had a National Government that had it right—that had the right philosophy, that was dynamic and change-oriented and was interested in bringing people together and was committed to creating the conditions and giving people the tools to succeed in a very different world.

So I admit that what the chairman of the Republican Party said is right, but I don't think he got it right. That is, I'm not ashamed of the fact we've got a lot of trial lawyers here. I'm not ashamed of the fact that I think, if people have been shafted, they ought to be able to go to court and pursue their remedy. I also want to say this: I'm also proud of the fact that we've had a real relationship. This has not been a political deal. We haven't 100 percent agreed on everything. We've had a relationship. It's like being in a family or an organization or anything else. It's real here.

You know, I hear all these—our friends in the other party talk about how terrible the trial

lawyers are. All I want to know is, if you guys are so destructive, why do we have 21 million jobs and the best economy we've ever had? And the same thing about the labor unions. Labor enrollments went up last year for the first time in many years. I think that's a good thing for people to be organized, to be able to not only vent their grievances but, more importantly, build partnerships for the future. And if it's so bad, why do we have the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years? And why do we have the highest productivity that we can ever remember?

I plead guilty to believing that we should not deprive people of jobs or subject them to violence just because they're gay. I'm guilty of that; I believe that. I think anybody that shows up for work and pays their taxes and are willing to do whatever it takes to be a good citizen of their country ought to be treated with the same amount of respect as anybody else. That's what I believe. And I think the evidence is that that's right.

In terms of Hollywood, that's sort of the last refuge of the rightwing arsenal there. *[Laughter]* I was the first person—not a member of the Republican Party—I was the first political leader, in 1993, to go to Hollywood and ask them to give me a ratings system for television for children and to reduce the amount of inappropriate material our children were exposed to. And not everybody agreed with it, but again, we're in—I have a relationship with a lot of people out there, and we got a rating system. I wish it worked better now because it's kind of—practically, it's difficult because you've got to worry—if you're a parent, you've got to worry about the video games and the TV and the movies and all that. And we're trying to work through that.

But the point I want to make is, my whole idea about politics is that we ought to run it the way we—our country—the way we would run—we would sensibly run a family or a business or any other common enterprise if you were part of a big charitable endeavor here in Dallas. I just think that if you look at the way the world works and how it's changing, all these trends toward globalization, all the threats that are out there from people who are trying to take advantage of globalization for their own ends—if you look at all the opportunities that are out there through scientific and technological advances, it does not make sense for

us in this year to revert to the patterns that I have spent 7 years trying to break.

Everybody has got—we're going to divide up sides now, and if you're a liberal, you've got to be over here; and if you're a conservative, you've got to be over here. And here's your line attacking them, and here's your line attacking the other. And let's don't worry about whether we ever get anything done or not. I think this is nuts. None of you live like this, and none of you have any role at all like this; except when you vote, we're supposed to be like this.

I have worked for 7 long years, with the help of people in my administration, people like you, to prove that we could have a unifying vision that would bring this country together, not in the middle of the road but in a dynamic movement forward.

And look, 7 years ago we had a terrible economy, and now we've got the longest economic expansion in history. Seven years ago we had worsening social problems, and now we've got the lowest welfare and crime rates in 30 years and the lowest poverty rates in 20 years. This works, and it's not rocket science.

And if somebody asked me, "Well, what is the difference? What did you really do that was different as President," and you only get a sentence or two, I would not say our economic policy, although we have a good one, I think, and it's different; or our crime policy, although we have a good one, and it's different; or our welfare policy, although we have a good one, and it's different; or even our education policy, which is profoundly different from what was done before. I would say, I believe that everybody counts; everybody deserves a chance; and we all do better when we try to help each other. And I believe that we don't get anywhere by denying the challenges that are before us so that we can continue the comfortable arguments that we've been making in the past, instead of taking the uncomfortable but exhilarating march into the future.

That's what this whole deal has been about, and that's what I tried to say in the State of the Union Address. Anybody that's over 30 years old—we've got a few people who aren't in this room, so they will have to learn this—but anybody that's over 30 years old can remember at least one time, if not more, in your life when you made a real bad mistake, not because times were tough but because times were so good,

you didn't think anything could go wrong. And so you just didn't want to do what you knew that you ought to do, keep planning, keep thinking about the future, make the tough decisions now. Better to be diverted. Better to lay down and rest. Better to just indulge yourself for the moment. Anybody who has lived any length of time has made a mistake under those circumstances.

That is the question that is facing the United States today. And the consequences are far greater for the Nation than they are for any of us in our personal lives, because we have never had this kind of chance before. So what I tried to say at the State of the Union, what I want to say again to you, I hope you will hammer home to everyone you can talk about this year is that if there was ever a time when we ought to have an election that was a unifying referendum on our common future, it is this one, because the economy is in good shape; the society is in good shape; we've got a lot of confidence; we have relatively few internal crises or external threats. There is nothing to prevent us from saying, "Okay, what's out there that's a big problem or a big opportunity? And let's go deal with it."

And if we do both, we will be able to literally make the future of our dreams for our children. That's what I think the Democrats ought to be saying this year. And that is what we represent. We shouldn't be denying that we ought to change. If somebody who was running for President said, "Vote for me. I'll do just what Bill Clinton did," I'd vote against that person because we live in a dynamic time. But if somebody says, "Vote for me. I'd like to go back to the way it was in 1992 and before," I would certainly vote against that person. *[Laughter]*

So the question is not whether we're going to change; it is how. So I think if you know the number of people over 65 is going to double, you have to meet the challenge of the aging of America. Putting it off will only make it more expensive and more painful. Today we can save Social Security for the baby boom generation, extend the life of Medicare, and add a prescription drug benefit for the 60 percent of the seniors that don't have access to one. We can do it today. We have the money, and we have the reforms to save money, and we ought to do it.

If we know that education is more important than ever before and we've got more kids from

more diverse backgrounds, we should act today to make sure all our kids start school ready to learn and graduate ready to succeed: Head Start, after-school programs, school repairs and building and modernizing schools, hooking them all up to the Internet, training the teachers better, the whole nine yards. There is no excuse for us not doing this.

Test scores are up, graduation rates are up, college-going rates are up, but not near where they ought to be—but enough so that we know what to do. It would be different if we didn't know what to do. We know what to do now. We don't have an excuse. So to squander this moment in education would be a great error.

In health care, I was always—one of my friends in the Congress came up to me the other day, and they said, "You know, they told me, the insurance companies did, if I voted for your health care plan back in 1994, the number of uninsured people would actually go up." And he said, "They were absolutely right. I voted for it, and there's more uninsured people today than there was when I voted for it." *[Laughter]* So we had to find a different approach.

The only social indicator, just about, that's worse today than it was in '93 when I took office is that there are more Americans who work for a living without health insurance. So we got this program, and I wish you would look at this. Some of you, by the way, who work with the agencies in Texas, we've got this program that will enroll 5 million kids in the Children's Health Insurance Program of lower income working people who can't get health insurance on the job. We've got 2 million enrolled now. We've got money for 3 million more. A lot of the ones who aren't enrolled are still in Texas—for a lot of good reasons. I'm not criticizing anybody, but we just need to go out there and get those kids in there.

And I'd like the Congress to say their parents can be enrolled, too. And I'd like the Congress to let people between 55 and 65 who don't have insurance—it's the fastest growing group of uninsured people, people who take early retirement. They're not old enough for Medicare; they don't have insurance. I think they ought to be able to buy into Medicare, and we ought to give them a modest tax credit so it's affordable.

Now, this is a big issue. We know that more and more parents will work. Either they will

be single parents working or two-parent households where both people will be working. If we know that and we know right now that for all of our success, America does less to support work and family—that is, to help working parents succeed as childrearsers, which is the most important job anybody can have—if we know we don't do enough, we should do more.

We know more and more families, as people live longer, are going to be taking care of aging or disabled relatives. We should do more. So I recommended to the Congress to increase our support for the child care tax credit, to give families a long-term care credit for caring for elderly or disabled loved ones, to give parents a tax deduction for college tuition up to \$10,000 a year so we can open the doors of 4 years of college to all Americans. These are big things. Why? Because we know there will be big problems 10 or 20 or 30 years from now if we don't deal with them right now.

And I could go on and on. I don't want to give you the whole State of the Union Address, but the point I'm trying to make is, the Democratic Party is now in a position to say, we have the resources. We've worked very hard to get rid of this deficit. We've worked very hard to pay the debt down. And we've now got the resources to deal with the aging of America, the challenge of the children and their education, the challenge of health care, the challenge of balancing work and family. We can do it and still get this country out of debt in 13 years and still provide extra incentives to places like where I was this morning, in the Rio Grande Valley, to give people extra incentives to invest in urban neighborhoods, rural areas, Indian reservations, where our prosperity hasn't reached.

And why do we do all that? Because we believe everybody counts; everybody ought to have a chance; and we all do better when we help each other. That's what I believe. Nobody believes the Democrats anymore are weak on the budget, weak on the economy, weak on welfare, weak on crime. But we do believe that if somebody is trying, we ought to help them make the most of their lives. And we now have 7 years of evidence that that's not only a morally defensible thing to do, it not only makes us feel better, it actually works.

So I will close with this, and I don't want to be maudlin, but I can pretty well say what I want to because I'm not running for anything.

[*Laughter*] First time in over two decades I haven't been on the ballot for anything. Some of those guys on the other side may write me out just to—[*laughter*—they may feel deprived that they're being cut out of one more chance to vote against me, but I'm not on the ballot. So I'm just telling you this as a citizen.

Once before in my lifetime, I thought we had a chance to build the future of our dreams. In the last economic expansion—that was, until this month, the longest one in history; it ran from 1961 to 1969. I graduated from high school in 1964. And I think it's appropriate that I say this here. Most of the people who now look back at that period date the onset of American cynicism to the assassination of President Kennedy. That is dead wrong. That is wrong. The country was heartbroken, but they rallied. They united. They tried to lift themselves up. Lyndon Johnson did a good job of moving the country forward.

And we believed, when I graduated from high school, that we were going to solve the civil rights crisis and the poverty problems of America through the orderly legislative process in Congress and working with people. We believed we were going to be able to stand against communism without having an unacceptable cost at home or around the world. We believed that we could do this.

Four years later, I was at my college graduation, 2 days after Robert Kennedy was killed, 90 days after Martin Luther King was killed, 94 days after Lyndon Johnson said he wouldn't run for reelection. The economy was beginning to shut down. The country was torn apart over Vietnam, and we had had riots in the streets of America. I have waited, as an American, over 30 years for my country to get another chance to build the future of our dreams for our children.

Most of us get at least one second chance in life, and if we didn't, we'd be a long way behind where we are. Our country, in our lifetime, has this chance in even better circumstances than existed 30 years ago, with science and technology changes that are breathtaking. I believe that the young women here may very likely give birth to children who will have a life expectancy of 100 years. They will come home from the hospital with genetic roadmaps of their children's lives. And if they give birth to young daughters that have one of those two broken genes that are high predictors of

breast cancer, they'll be able to take gene therapies that will block them from ever developing in the first place. I believe that will happen.

I believe the young people here will soon be driving automobiles that get probably 80, 90 miles a gallon, and within 5 years they'll be running on biofuels that will be the equivalent of getting 500 miles to the gallon because they require so little oil to produce. I believe we'll find out what's in those black holes in outer space. I believe we'll be able to keep people with diabetes, adult onset diabetes, alive and healthy to a normal lifespan. I believe that we will actually develop computers the size of a teardrop that use DNA for computer memories more powerful than any human chip, so that you will have tiny little computers with a computing power of all the super computers today.

I believe all this is going to happen. I think we'll also have to deal with highly sophisticated terrorists and organized criminals and drugrunners that have access to chemical and biological and other weapons. There will always be enemies of civilization out there. But we'll do just fine if we understand that it still comes down to whether you believe everybody counts; everybody ought to have a chance; we're all going to do better if we work together.

For 30 years I have waited for this moment. If I contributed at all to it, I am grateful. But as a citizen, I implore you, don't let America turn away from what works when we've finally got a chance to redeem the whole promise of our Nation.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:30 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Fred Baron and Lisa Blue; Jess Hay, former finance chair, Democratic National Committee, and his wife, Betty Jo; Mary Albert, widow of former Speaker of the House Carl B. Albert; Bernard ("B") Rapoport, former chairman and chief executive officer, American Income Life Insurance Co., and his wife, Audre; Garry Mauro, former Texas land commissioner; Mayor Ron Kirk of Dallas; State Senator David Cain and his wife, Sally H. Cain, Region VI Director, Office of Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs, Department of Education; Regina Montoya Coggins, candidate for Texas' Fifth Congressional District; Edward G. Rendell, general chair, Democratic National Committee; and Jim Nicholson, chairman, Republican National Committee.

## Remarks at a Democratic Unity Reception

*February 10, 2000*

Thank you very much. Let me say how delighted and profoundly honored I am to be here with Senator Daschle and Leader Gephardt, with their colleagues in the Senate and the House who are here in large numbers, and all those who aren't here who are with us in spirit today; how much I appreciate Bob Hatcher and Thelma and Jenny Mae for being here to remind us of why we're all here in the first place. Their testimony makes clear that our agenda is America's agenda, and our presence here makes clear that we are united in our support of that agenda.

I know some of our friends on the other side of the aisle have suggested that, because this is an election year, we really shouldn't do much. Well, I don't think that the two people who just spoke could take a year off from their

jobs. And since everybody here is still drawing a salary, I don't think we could take a year off from our jobs either.

I want to join with what Senator Daschle and Leader Gephardt have said in thanking the members of this caucus for your role in this long boom and so much of the social progress we have enjoyed, beginning with the courageous vote for the economic plan in 1993. Your commitment, constant over the years, to opportunity for every responsible American and for a community of all Americans, to a Government that gives Americans the tools to live their own dreams, has been absolutely critical to anything that our administration has achieved.

I know that we've had a lot of different policies, but more important than all of the specifics was our common commitment. We wanted Bob