

of some complex, high-tech glitch. We just want to make sure people can read the prescriptions. Two out of three of these errors can be eliminated.

Taken together, these actions represent the most significant effort our Nation has ever made to reduce medical errors. It's a balanced, commonsense approach based on prevention, not punishment; on problemsolving, not blame-placing.

If we can do this and pass a strong, enforceable Patients' Bill of Rights, we will have gone a long way toward ensuring quality health care for all Americans in the 21st century. Just think about it. We can cut preventable medical errors in half in 5 years, reduce concerns about lawsuits and about medical mistakes, avoid needless injuries and deaths, save lives, and make the

world's best health care system much better for all Americans.

This is a worthy endeavor. It is one that, as you see, will be bipartisan, and one that I am committed to seeing through. Thank you all for being here, and let's get about the business of doing this.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:53 p.m. in Presidential Hall in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Barbara A. Blakeney, first vice president, American Nurses Association, who introduced the President; John M. Eisenberg, Administrator, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality; and Paul A. London, Senior Policy Adviser to the Secretary, Department of Commerce.

Remarks at a Reception for Lieutenant Governor Ruth Ann Minner of Delaware

February 22, 2000

The President. Thank you very much, Lieutenant Governor Minner, Senator Biden, ladies and gentlemen. I was sitting here looking at all of your faces, and I reached over and whispered to Joe Biden, I said, "You know, I really like Delaware." [Laughter] It has certain unique parallels to my home State. It's two of the places in America where there are more chickens than people. [Laughter] And depending on what day it is, that's not all bad. [Laughter]

I am profoundly grateful to Delaware for many reasons. You have been so good to me and to Al Gore. Twice you have given me your electoral vote; you supported the Vice President, for which I am very grateful. I couldn't even begin to tell you, in the time I have allotted tonight, all the reasons for my gratitude, respect, and affection for Senator Biden.

Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr. Go ahead and tell them. [Laughter]

The President. Beginning with his uncommon humility. [Laughter] His retiring personality. [Laughter] His always muted voice. [Laughter] Actually, if you're looking for somebody in American politics who understands what life is like for ordinary people, who's always there to defend the Constitution of the United States,

and understands the rest of the world—in other words, the three big things you've got to do if you're a Senator—there is nobody in the Senate who can do all three as well as Joe Biden. You are very well served.

And the third thing I'd like to say is, I'm also grateful to your Governor for a lifetime, nearly, it seems like, a political lifetime of friendship and all the work we've done together on welfare reform, on strengthening families, on child support enforcement. I'm elated that he's running for the Senate. And I look forward to his success and to his service.

The fourth reason I'm here is, this is my year to support women for elected office. I'm into that. I think we ought to do more of that. [Laughter] Hillary tried to call me right before I got here. She's up in New York and coming home tonight. And I would imagine she was trying to call me before I got here to say that she thinks you guys ought to stick together—[laughter]—and so do I.

But let me tell you, finally, I'm here because I really admire Ruth Ann Minner. I really admire Ruth Ann Minner. Some of you know this, but I was born to a widowed mother who had to leave to go back to school. I can only imagine

what it was like. She had to go back to get a GED, start her own business, depend on herself, raise three sons—I met two of them to-night. They both look like—they look like they ought to be playing for the Redskins—[laughter]. They'd improve our defense a little bit. And I've watched her in public life.

And you know, people make fun of little States. When I ran in '92, President Bush kept referring to me as the Governor of a small southern State. I had to hear him say it five times before I realized it was a putdown; I thought he was bragging on me. [Laughter] I was proud of it; I didn't have any better sense than to think that was a good thing. [Laughter]

You can't really play games with people in a place like Delaware, and you can't posture. And people don't hire you for hot air; they hire you to produce. And people know most of the problems we have are human problems, and they don't expect us to let our political differences paralyze us. And I just wish there were more people like Ruth Ann who have been through the kind of life experiences she's been through, who still had enough energy and optimism left to devote themselves to public life.

We need more people who are making decisions in State capitals who know what it's like to try to feed kids without a high school diploma. We know. We need more people who can remember what it was like when they wondered if their children would be able to get a decent education, who understand what it's like to be on the other side of life's arc of opportunity—both because they understand the government ought to give people a helping hand and because they understand that if the hand is outstretched and you don't work for it, you still won't reach it. We need that. Our country needs it.

And I was flattered that she said that what we needed in this election was to ratify the direction in which we're going. I have only a slightly different take on that, and I'd just like to close with a few moments speaking to you more as a citizen than as your President.

Before I was President, I had the privilege of being Governor for a dozen years, and I loved it, and I was not burned out on it. And every time I got tired, a week or two later I'd get a second wind and go on. I think I could be doing it still, because if you are a truly committed Governor or a truly committed mayor or you have some other responsibilities

at the grassroots level, you can actually see people's lives changing before your very eyes.

And we have—the way I view this last 7 years is that we basically turned the ship of state around. When I took office, we had high unemployment, and the social problems were getting worse, and there was political gridlock in Washington. And we had decades of national elections decided by the politics of division, us and them. And it never made much sense to me, and I tried to turn it around. And I think we have turned it around.

The question for the country now is, what are you going to do with this good fortune? I'd like for more people in positions of influence to have the memories Ruth Ann Minner has of what's it like not to have good fortune. They are more likely to make good decisions in times of prosperity. They are more likely to remember that not all people and communities have participated in this economic recovery; more likely to remember that we still need to keep paying the debt down, get this country out of debt so we'll keep interest rates down for other people; more likely to remember that not every child has a world-class education; more likely to remember that there are still young families out there struggling to balance work and family, trying to succeed at home and at work. And that is very important.

I told somebody the other day, if somebody stood up and ran on a platform, "Vote for me; I'll do just what Bill Clinton did," I'd vote against them, because times are changing. We're living in a time of very rapid change. But I do believe we ought to change in the direction in which we have been going. The question is, ought we turn the country around now? Not me—we. All of us, together.

Now we have a chance to meet the big challenges out there. The longest economic recovery in our history—what are we going to do with it? Now is the time to think about the big challenges: What are the big challenges our kids face? How are we going to deal with the retirement of the baby boom generation? How are we going to grow the economy and continue to improve the environment? Big, big challenges.

And you are so lucky to be backing someone who not only has a distinguished career in public service, a proven ability to make progress, but a life story which guarantees that even in these good times she won't forget what our shared

mission is. That is a great privilege. You ought to make sure the people of Delaware take full advantage of it.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:09 p.m. in the ballroom at the Washington Court Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Thomas R. Carper of Delaware; and Wayne and Gary Ingram, sons of Lieutenant Governor Minner, who was a candidate for Governor.

Remarks at a Reception for Representative Maxine Waters February 22, 2000

Thank you. When Maxine said, you know, she looked at me like that, and I said what I said—[laughter]—I looked at Sidney, and I said, “Does she ever look at you that way?” [Laughter] He said, “After 30 years, what do you think?” [Laughter]

Let me say, first of all, on the way over here with Minyon Moore, my political director, and Lynn Cutler, from the White House, I told Minyon—she said, “You know, you’re not running for anything, and you’re still out doing these things.” I said, “Let me tell you something. Maxine gets mad at me, but she was with me from the get-go in 1991, and she was with me on June 2, 1992, in California after the California primary, when I was nominated and all the press wrote that I was actually the third choice of the country, Ross Perot was going to be the next President.” And that was just between June and November. Caution: don’t predict too much about this year—remember that. [Laughter]

So we’ve had this wonderful relationship. It has been full, rich, and honest. [Laughter] And I have loved it. I told Maxine one time she was mad at me, I said, “You know, Sidney is an Ambassador, and he doesn’t talk to me that way.” [Laughter] And she said, “Well, he’s a diplomat. I’m a politician.” [Laughter] I’ve got 11 months. If I keep plugging, I’m finally going to win one of these arguments. [Laughter] I’m really working on it.

I want to thank my great friends Eleanor Holmes Norton and Elijah Cummings for being here. And Ron Dellums, we’re glad to see you, and thank you for the copy of your book. It’s at your local bookstores—[laughter]—I recommend you buying this book. I figure I might as well turn this into a two-fer tonight. [Laughter]

And let me say to all of you who are here who have been my friends over these years, I thank you very much. I’m honored to be here. I thank you for supporting Maxine, and I thank her for supporting others. I think we’re all here because she’s so feisty and full of conviction, and because as the years go by she seems to get healthier and more beautiful—[laughter]—and more full of energy. She and Sidney, both of them look better than they did the first time I saw them, and that’s saying something. [Laughter] And I thought they looked pretty good then.

But we need to remember, in times where all of us have been fortunate enough to come to a place like this, an event like this, that we got here by working hard and by working together on good ideas based on our shared values. And now is not the time to stop doing that. Now is not the time to relax or to become diverted.

The other day I said—some of you were at the White House, I think, the other day when we celebrated Black History Month and I read my radio address. But I want to say that when we celebrated, this month, the longest economic expansion in our history, I went back—and I was curious, so I said, I wondered when the longest expansion in our history was before we got to this month and ours took over. And it was, interestingly enough, between 1961 and 1969. And those of you who were of age then will remember that.

I graduated from high school in 1964. Our country had gone through the terrible trauma of President Kennedy’s assassination. We had rallied behind President Johnson. I thought then, and I believe now, he did a magnificent job of unifying the country and saying we had to take up the unfinished agenda of America.