

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Reception
in Palo Alto, California
April 2, 2000

The President. Thank you very much. I must say, when Dick was talking about all those fights we've taken on—and I got to thinking about some more, when I helped Mexico. The morning we gave them financial aid, there was a poll in the paper that said, by 81 to 15, the people thought it was a mistake. So he kept talking about that. I thought, Mr. Gephardt is up there describing a fool, and now I have to get up and speak. *[Laughter]*

I want to thank Jim and Bridget for having us here. It is truly beautiful, and I always like to have an excuse to come back. And I want to thank my daughter for showing up tonight. Those of you—we were just talking around the table about newborns. When your children grow up, you're always mildly surprised when they want to spend time with you. It's actually quite wonderful. *[Laughter]* So this is quite nice for us.

I want to thank the Flying Other Brothers. I wonder how many young people here are Dead Heads in the crowd. But they were great. And I apologize, they caught me by surprise. They invited me to play with them, and I thought, well, these poor men don't know that that saxophone mouthpiece has no reed on it. And then after he went back up, I realized they had actually pickled me some reeds in a jar there. So you guys will have to give me a raincheck; I'll do it some other time. We'll have another chance to do it.

Band member. We'll hold you to it. *[Laughter]*

The President. I want to tell you how grateful I am to the Members who are here, to Patrick Kennedy and Bob Menendez, to my good friend Charlie Rangel, and to Zoe Lofgren and Ellen Tauscher, to Nancy Pelosi and Anna Eshoo. California has a marvelous combination of women there. We also have Martin Frost from Texas here and David Wu from Oregon. We're glad to have them. And I want to thank—and maybe others—I want to thank Mike Honda and Adam Schiff for being willing to run for the House of Representatives, and I, too, believe they will win.

I want to also thank all of you not only for being here but for the work that we have done together actually since I started coming out here in 1991. I wanted the Democratic Party in the 1992 election to be the party of the future in America. And it was quite obvious to me and to anyone who was paying attention that we couldn't be the party of the future unless we came to those of you who are making the future.

And I want to thank you for all the things we've worked on, to pass a pro-competition Telecommunications Act in 1996, to change some of the laws on exports and deal with the visa issues and a whole range of other issues. I want to especially thank—there are many people here, but I see John Doerr and Eric Schmidt within my line of sight, who have called me on your behalf and badgered me at all hours of the day and night to move the Government faster. They said, "We realize that the Government is not in the Internet age, but at least we ought to be out of the stone age. Please move."

I thank them and all the rest of you who have done that over the last 7 years. Dick Gephardt's talked about the issues and the stakes, and you're well aware of them. But I would like to say just a few things to you.

First of all, there is a huge difference in these two parties. And there is no doubt, as Mr. Gephardt said, that the Democrats are in the minority in the House of Representatives today because in 1993 and in 1994 they had the courage to vote alone, without a single Republican vote, to bridle the enormous deficit that had quadrupled the American debt in 12 years—it was \$290 billion a year when I took office, slated to be about \$400 billion this year. And we just decided we had to do something about it—that if we didn't do it, we'd never get interest rates down; we'd never get investment up; we'd never get growth going in the American economy. We had a little bit of a recovery; we were going to slip out of it. We just knew that we had to do it.

And from the moment I announced our plan in December of '92, things really took off. And then we had the vote, and I'll never forget

this—in August of 1993, when all these Members were having to walk the plank and go down and vote—and not a single Republican was going in—all the Republicans were saying, “You know, this is going to be a disaster; it’s going to be horrible. We’re not responsible for anything that happens after this.” And they’re not. [Laughter] That’s what they said, and they were right.

And then we got into the gun business. We passed the Brady bill, and we passed the assault weapons ban, which Senator Feinstein was especially active in passing. And oh, they said the world was going to come to an end. And we lost—I’m telling you, we lost a lot of Members of the House of Representatives on the budget bill, because the people hadn’t felt the benefit of the improving economy by ’94, and on the gun issue. I’ll never forget, when I went back to New Hampshire, which is a State like my home State of Arkansas, where more than half the people have a hunting license, and I said, “I want to go into the middle of a bunch of hunters”—and I went back in ’96, because they beat a Congressman up there because he voted for the assault weapons ban and the Brady bill. And I told those guys—I remember, there were just all these guys in their plaid shirts just looking at me kind of souled up, and I said, “You know, if any of you missed a day, even an hour in the deer woods on account of the Brady bill and the assault weapons ban, I want you to vote against me, too, because that Congressman lost his job because of me. But if you didn’t, they lied to you, and you need to get even.” And they did.

I say that because one of the things that I wanted to do when I ran in ’92 was to change the whole way people thought about politics in Washington. Everything was either/or. You know, there was a liberal position and a conservative position. There was a Democratic position and there was a Republican position. Everybody was supposed to hunker down and fight and get their 15 seconds on the evening news. And as a result, not very much got done, and we kept getting deeper and deeper and deeper in the ditch. And I believed that you could be, for example, pro-business and pro-labor. I thought you could be pro-growth and pro-environment. I thought you could be pro-work and pro-family. I thought we could balance the budget, still invest more in education and technology and scientific research. And lo and be-

hold, it worked. And I want you to understand this. These people here, who have served with me, under the most relentless pressure imagined, have stood up for a politics that will both unify this country and move us forward.

You know, I’m not running for anything this year. And most days, I’m okay about it. [Laughter] I do have a mild interest in the Senate race in New York that I’m—but I come here tonight as much as President as an American citizen who has had a unique vantage point on this last 7½ years. And I will say again, there is a huge difference.

This party—I want to thank Congressman Gephardt. I know you probably all saw the big press he got when he came out for a five- or six-point plan directed specifically at our high-tech future, or a permanent extension of the research and experimentation tax credit—a number of other issues that the Democratic caucus has embraced to move us forward. But there is a big difference.

Now, we’re in Washington today fighting for some things that I think are important. We believe that we ought to stop giving out education money to projects that don’t work, and only fund those things which do. We believe that there ought to be high standards. We think there ought to be an end to social promotion. But we think that every child ought to have a chance to learn. Children shouldn’t be blamed when the system fails.

I thank Governor Davis for his championing the charter school movement, and all of you who have helped that. But we also need to have after-school programs and summer school programs in these schools. We need to close the digital divide and finish the work of hooking up all the classrooms to the Internet. And a lot of you have helped us with that, and I thank you for that.

We need to reform the health care system and add prescription drugs to Medicare coverage. We need to save Social Security and take it out way beyond the life of the baby boom generation. And we can do that if we don’t have a tax cut that’s too big. And that’s going to be a big deal when all of us baby boomers retire.

We need to have a tax cut we can afford, and it ought to be targeted toward helping people send their kids to college, care for their parents and disabled family members and long-

term care, and to help working people on modest incomes afford their child care and other expenses.

We need to carry, I think to a much greater degree than we have, a commitment to the notion that we can improve the environment while we grow the economy. That's what this whole global warming issue is about. All over the world, there are people who just don't believe that you can get rich unless you put more stuff in the air that heats up the Earth. They think you've got to burn more coal and more oil, and in the digital economy that is not true. It is not true.

Pretty soon, we'll all be driving cars that get 80 miles a gallon, and if we can crack the last little chemical barrier, we'll be able to have biofuels where you can make 8 gallons of ethanol, for example, with only 1 gallon of gasoline. And then we'll all be effectively getting 550 miles a gallon.

Pretty soon everybody will be building their houses with glass that keeps out more heat and cold and lets in more light. We saved \$100,000 a year on the White House power bills just by changing the lights in one place. I've ordered the whole Federal Government to do what we did when we greened the White House. It will be the equivalent of taking 1.7 million cars off the road. And it's just the beginning.

These are some of the things where we actually differ with the other party. And Dick was talking about the gun issue. Somebody asked me what I thought about Charlton Heston the other day saying all those mean things about me, and I said, I still like his movies. *[Laughter]* And I do. And I actually liked him—he came to the White House, to the Kennedy Center Honors a couple of years ago. And I know that that's the way they think. But you have to understand the difference between the two parties.

The Republicans who follow the NRA believe that guns are the only area of our national life where we should deal with problems only with punishment and no prevention. They say, just throw the book at somebody if they violate one of these existing laws, but for goodness sakes, don't inconvenience anybody else by closing the gun show loophole, by requiring child trigger locks, by banning the importation of large capacity ammunition clips, which make a mockery of our assault weapons ban. This is a big deal because it shows you how they define community.

How would you feel if I said, "You know, nearly everybody who goes in an airport is a good, honest citizen; 99.9 percent of them are. And those metal detectors when it's crowded and you're late for your plane are a real pain, you know, especially if you've got a big money clip or something that keeps going off. It just drives you crazy. So I want to take all of the metal detectors out of the airports. And the next time somebody blows up a plane, I'm going to throw the book at them." You think about it. That is the logic that the other party has in blocking this commonsense gun legislation. This is a big deal. And it will carry over into other issues. It does carry over into the tobacco issue and many others. So there is a huge difference.

But maybe most important of all, there is a difference about how we define our community. We're for the hate crimes legislation. We're for the "Employment Non-Discrimination Act." We believe that everybody ought to be a part of America if they're willing to obey the law and work hard, that everybody ought to have a chance. We think everyone matters; we think we all do better when we help each other. That's what we believe.

I think that's even more important than our commitment to high technology and scientific research. One of the unbelievable ironies of this world in which we live is that we think about now, in the next few years, not only these energy advances I mentioned, but just in a couple of months, I will be able to announce the sequencing of the human genome, that it will be finished. And then before you know it, we'll figure out how to block the genes that cause Alzheimer's or Parkinson's. Before you know it, we'll be able to find cancers when there are just a few cells. There will be unbelievable advances in biochemistry, and a lot of you have been a part of that. We'll find out what's in the black holes in the universe in the next two or three decades. It's an amazing time.

Now, isn't it interesting, since all of you are in the dot-com world, that for all the wonders of the modern world, the biggest problem people face is the oldest problem of human society, the fear of the other, people who are different. And therefore, the most dangerous thing in a society are people who seek to exploit that fear of the other and that difference.

I just got back from India and Pakistan and Bangladesh. Now, I was in a little Indian village—you may have seen it; I was dancing with the village women, and they were throwing flowers and everything—a very poor village, but they have a computer with software sufficient to give the poorest villagers, in Hindi or English or good visuals if they don't read very well, all of the information available from every national and state agency in India in a little village. And they have a printer.

So I watched a woman with a newborn baby come in and get the webpage for the health department on the line, and she had it on her screen and exactly what she was supposed to do in the first few months of her baby's life. And then she printed it out, and she took it home, and she had information in this remote rural village in India, just as good as anybody could get here in northern California.

I went to Hyderabad, where I met with the chief government minister. They have 18 government services on the Internet now. If you're there, you can get a car licensed on the Internet. Nobody goes to the revenue office anymore. Governor, if you do that, you'll be elected until the end of your life. *[Laughter]* This is an amazing thing.

If you look at America, there are 750 companies in Silicon Valley, alone, headed by Indian-Americans. There are 200 ethnic groups in America; Indians and Pakistanis both rank in the top 5 in per capita income and per capita education. And yet, they are sitting there staring at each other across the divide of Kashmir with nuclear weapons. And they can't let it go, and they can't get beyond it.

Can you imagine what would happen to the Middle East, in no time, if we could actually resolve the remaining differences? It's no accident that Ireland has the fastest growing economy in Europe, because they finally started to make peace with one another. And yet, everywhere we see these demons.

It's very important that the governing part in Washington believe that we can be one America and be committed to the future and a unifying vision of the future. I want Al Gore to be President, not just because I'm grateful to him for being what everybody knows is the most influential Vice President in history, but because he understands the future, and he has the ideas, the experience, and the will, the strength, to lead us there.

I want these people to get in the majority, not just because I feel terrible that they fell on the sword for me when we had to get this economy moving again and we had to take a stand for sensible gun safety laws, but because I know they can represent that kind of future. I can look at every Member here and imagine some—remember some conversation I've had with them over the years that just made me proud that they were members of my party.

I just want to leave you with this thought. Most of you who have done real well here are younger than I am. And I never thought—you know, the older you get, young is always defined as somebody who's a year younger than you are. But I want to tell you a story about this moment, because I want you to understand, this is a terribly important election. I have worked as hard as I could to turn our country around and get us moving in the right direction. We have the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, the lowest African-American and Hispanic unemployment rate ever recorded, the lowest female unemployment rate in 40 years. That's the good news. But there's still people in places left behind.

We've got the lowest crime rate in 25 years, but the country's still too dangerous. We still haven't stepped up to our environmental responsibilities. And there are still a lot of dangers out there in the world. One of the reasons that I hope so much that this China MFN bill will pass, then getting China into the WTO, is that I think it will reduce the tensions across the Taiwan Strait, and I don't want a conflict there that will totally set back all of east Asia for a generation. I want them to keep moving forward, and I think it's important.

So let me say this. I want you all to listen to this, especially those of you who are younger than me. In February we celebrated the longest economic expansion in American history. So I got all my little team together, and we were laughing, probably being a little too self-congratulatory, because you had as much to do with it as we did. All I did was try to create the conditions and give people the tools to make the most of their own lives. But I asked them, I said, when was the last longest economic expansion in history? And it was between 1961 and 1969, when we grew up.

So let me tell you a story about that. And I'm not telling you this to get anybody down. There's no more optimistic person in this tent

tonight than me. But I want you to listen to this—1964, at the high watermark of the last longest economic expansion in history, I graduated from high school. Lyndon Johnson was President, uniting the country after President Kennedy's tragic assassination. We had low unemployment, low inflation, high growth, and everybody thought it was just going to go on and on and on. We had a civil rights challenge, but everyone thought it was going to be handled in the Congress and the courts, not in the streets, because we had a President and a Congress who believed in them. No one believed that what was then a sort of simmering conflict in Vietnam would rip the heart out of America. And so we just rolled along. We thought it would go on.

Then, what happened? Four years later, in 1968, I graduated from college—2 days after Robert Kennedy was killed; 2 months after Martin Luther King was killed; 9 weeks after Lyndon Johnson said he couldn't run for President; a few weeks before Richard Nixon was elected President, claiming that he represented the Silent Majority, which means that those of us who were on the other side were outcasts. We were in the loud minority. And it was the first of many elections where we attempted to divide America between "us" and "them." And those that weren't "us" were, by definition, "them." They weren't our crowd, and they didn't have a place at our table. And just a few weeks after that, in early 1969, the last longest economic expansion in American history came to an end.

Now, what I want to say to you as a citizen was that I have waited for 35 years, since I was a little boy, starting out in life, to see my country have a chance to build a future of our dreams for our children. We are free of internal

crisis. The threats we have in the world, while serious, are not paralyzing. You have created a whole new economy that hasn't repealed the laws of supply and demand but has made them infinitely more elastic with infinitely more possibilities.

This is the kind of chance that comes along once in a lifetime. Don't let this election be about little things, and don't let this election be about divisive things. This is a time for building tomorrows. It comes along once in a great long while. You have helped to make it so. And you can make sure that we make the most of this election.

These people should be elected because they represent the future, and they represent unity, and they believe we can go forward together. It is a precious gift. We have fought for it and worked for it and stood for it in strong winds. But now, it must be ratified in this election.

If somebody asked you tomorrow why you came here tonight, tell them that. Tell them we've got the chance of a lifetime to build the future of our dreams for our children, and you believe that these Democrats can give it to you.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:10 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to reception hosts Jim and Bridget Jorgensen; State Assemblyman Mike Honda, candidate for California's 15th Congressional District; State Senator Adam Schiff, candidate for California's 27th Congressional District; attorney John Doerr; Eric Schmidt, chairman of the board and chief executive officer, Novell, Inc.; Gov. Gray Davis of California; Charlton Heston, president, National Rifle Association; and Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu of Andhra Pradesh, India.

Remarks at a Democratic Leadership Council Conference in San Jose, California

April 3, 2000

Thank you. You saw me do this with my eyes. The lights are so bright in here that we only know when you applaud at the right times that we're talking to a DLC audience. [Laughter] Let me say, first of all, how delighted I am to be at the Tech Museum of Innovation. And

I want to thank all the people from the museum who have made us feel welcome here; a lot of them are sitting over here. But this is a very appropriate place for us to be meeting, and I think we ought to give them a big hand for welcoming us here. [Applause]