

Remarks at the Radio and Television Correspondents Association Dinner April 6, 2000

[Prior to the President's remarks, music from the movie "Titanic" was played.]

The President. Haunting, isn't it? [Laughter] You know, usually, I go for "Hail To The Chief"—[laughter]—but this week I can't seem to get that song out of my head. [Laughter]

Good evening, President Nolen, Senator McCain, Members of Congress, members of the Radio and Television Correspondents Association, distinguished journalists, Mr. DiCaprio. [Laughter]

Now, ABC doesn't know whether Leo and I had an interview, a walk-through, or a drive-by. [Laughter] But I don't know if all their damage control is worth the effort. I mean, it's a little bit like rearranging the deck chairs on the set of "This Week With Sam and Cokie." [Laughter] Don't you newspeople ever learn? It isn't the mistake that kills you. It's the cover-up. [Laughter]

Now, look, I want to say right now, I have nothing against ABC. I like ABC just as much as I like all the other networks. [Laughter] Just the other day, for example, Diane Sawyer came to the White House for an interview. Actually, she called it a visit. [Laughter] And everything was fine until she asked me to do some crayon pictures in the Oval Office. [Laughter] That was weird.

But I just want to say this to David Westin. You know, I've been in a lot of tough spots. Don't let this get you down. [Laughter] You may not be America's news leader, but you're "King of the World." [Laughter]

Wait a minute, before I go any further, I want to welcome the really funny person who is here tonight, the man who impersonates me every week on "Saturday Night Live," Mr. Darrell Hammond. And Darrell, I want you to know I used to think you were really funny but not so much anymore. I think it's Clinton fatigue. [Laughter]

Poor Darrell, what's he going to do when I leave office? [Laughter] Come to think of it, what am I going to do? [Laughter] I know that you've heard me say I hope to join the Senate spouses club. But I've been thinking, I don't really want to be a member of the Senate

spouses club. I want to be president of the Senate spouses club. [Laughter]

You know what the big, hot issue on Capitol Hill is today? The majority party, otherwise known as the Republicans, are raising a ruckus about this census long form. They say these questions are too intrusive. Maybe it's just a matter of perspective. [Laughter] Depends on whether you're the asker or the answerer. [Laughter] But I'd be pretty hard-pressed to call these questions intrusive. You should look at the questionnaire those guys sent me. [Laughter] Maybe again, I don't think you should. [Laughter]

You know what question really upsets the Republicans on the census form? Question 19: "Are you better off today than you were at the last census?" [Laughter] I mean, even a Presidential candidate has made this an issue. Just the other day he said he might leave his own census form blank. Hmmm—a blank census form? An adult literacy program? It's starting to add up. [Laughter] Sounds like a cry for help to me. [Laughter] Governor Bush even refused to state his date of birth, on the grounds that it happened more than 25 years ago. [Laughter]

But he's not the only person who's uptight about this long form. Let me just read you some of the questions that other prominent public officials refused to answer. For example, except for Senator McCain, the entire Republican caucus refused to answer this one: "Have you recently changed your policy on interracial dating?" [Laughter] "If so, do you know for sure your date is not a Catholic?" [Laughter] "Regardless, please attach parental approval slip."

Here's the second one. "What is the deal with your hair?" [Laughter] Trent Lott refused to answer that. [Laughter] Then again, so did Hillary. [Laughter] Wait a minute. How about this one—I thought this was important—how about this one: "Do you work and play well with others?" [Laughter] Mayor Giuliani had no comment. [Laughter] There's a first time for everything. [Laughter]

But look, I know the question that's on everyone's mind today, this custody battle involving the Gonzalez family and the United States and

Cuba. And I know the new hot issue is about my difference of opinion with Vice President Gore. But with all respect, you newspeople have missed the real story here, and there is a real story. We have finally found the one immigrant Pat Buchanan wants to keep in America. [Laughter]

Look, it's no secret, Presidents and Vice Presidents have always disagreed. So it's time to set the record straight on the whole range of issues where the Vice President and I differ. For example, in June he will reveal his plan to relocate the United Nations Headquarters in Nashville—[laughter]—a bold new idea. But I don't agree with it. Indeed, I'm growing more partial to New York every day.

When it comes to campaign finance, we differ. In our beverage of choice, I drink coffee; he drinks iced tea. However, if I'd known back then about the iced tea defense, I'd have drunk tea, too. [Laughter]

In the days before the Democratic Convention, Al will publicly announce another longstanding disagreement we've had. We've kept it under wraps for over 7 years now. It involves our weekly White House lunches. He strongly believes it is rude for one person to eat off another person's plate. [Laughter] Me, I think it's a sign of friendship and familiarity. [Laughter]

On technology issues, God bless him, Al invented E-mail. Me, I just can't find them. [Laughter] Everybody now knows the Vice President prefers earth-tone; all you see me in is "Primary Colors." [Laughter] We both share an abiding interest in Buddhism. [Laughter] But when I visited the Buddhists in India, it cost the taxpayers millions. When Al meets with Buddhists, he turns a tidy profit. [Laughter]

Now, our differences notwithstanding, I am a strong supporter of the Vice President. But beyond that, I'm not going to comment. After all, I'm not running for anything. For the first time in more than 20 years, my name is not on the ballot. This election is not about me. And hey, I'm okay with that. [Laughter] Suits me just fine. It's all of you in the media who keep trying to drag me into this thing. I mean, I don't see how it involves me at all. I'm the Commander in Chief. I've got a lot of responsibilities. Even if I were inclined to impose myself, which I'm not, I wouldn't have time. Ex-

cept for last weekend, when I did find just a few hours to produce a few campaign ads for Al. I'd like you to take a look at them and tell me what you think.

[At this point, a videotape of the President was shown, in which he spoke as follows.]

"This November, Americans face the future. The stakes are high, and the choice is clear. One candidate has worked for 8 years with Bill Clinton. He's considered by Bill Clinton to be a close personal friend, helping make his toughest decisions, a partner in progress as Bill Clinton moves America forward. The other candidate has never worked a day with Bill Clinton. Bill Clinton hardly even knows the guy, and when Bill Clinton first ran for President, he voted against Bill Clinton. Al Gore—he's Bill Clinton's choice. Shouldn't he be yours?

"When Bill Clinton chose Al Gore as his running mate, the conventional wisdom called it a mistake. They said Gore was too much like Clinton. Too much like Clinton? Too visionary? Too strong? With a plan that would bring America too much prosperity, and the world too much peace? Bill Clinton stood up to the pundits and stared down the pollsters. Choosing Al Gore was one of his very best decisions. And doesn't that tell you a lot about Bill Clinton? Al Gore—too much like Clinton? Good for him; good for us.

"As America's greatest Vice President, Al Gore has been a voice for our values, a fighter for our families, more than that, a strong partner to Bill Clinton. Bill Clinton, a small-town boy from Arkansas who dared to dream big dreams. Young Bill worked hard and played by the rules. He went on to lead his country and build a bridge to the 21st century. Most important, Bill Clinton created AmeriCorps. Bill Clinton still believes in the promise of America, and he still believes in a place called Hope. Al Gore—because there's a 22d amendment."

[The videotape ended.]

The President. Unfortunately, all these ads would be illegal under the Vice President's campaign finance proposal—[laughter]—not because they're unethical, certainly not because they're untrue, because they're just dumb. [Laughter]

Of course, in America, each of us has the constitutional right to silly or dumb speech. I

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have certainly asserted my right here tonight. But I think we should take another moment to honor that essential freedom, to recognize that vital principle, by asking the members of the McLaughlin Group to stand. [Laughter]

Let me say to all of you, I really am okay most days about not being President next year. And it will be nice for all of you to have someone else to chew on. But I have loved coming to this dinner, and I have been privileged to come every year but one that I have been here. I have enjoyed all my interactions with you, the battles, the agreements, the disagreements, the probing, the jabbing, even the occasional bloodshed. And believe it or not, I appreciate the efforts you make to bring Washington's world to the world beyond Washington. I know it's important; I know it's difficult.

I've tried to keep you entertained, and I've tried to keep you involved. [Laughter] And I hope you've at least had some pretty good, substantive things to write about for the last 7-plus years. But for all you have done, and especially once a year for giving me, and indeed all of us, the chance to have a good laugh, I thank you very, very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:34 p.m. in the Ballroom at the Washington Hilton. In his remarks, he referred to John Nolen, president, Radio and Television Correspondents Association; actor Leonardo DiCaprio; David Westin, president, ABC News; Gov. George W. Bush of Texas; Mayor Rudolph Giuliani of New York City; and author Patrick Buchanan.

Memorandum on Leadership of the Emergency Response Assistance Program

April 6, 2000

Memorandum for the Vice President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Defense, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Secretary of Transportation, the Secretary of Energy, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, Director, Office of Management and Budget, Director of Central Intelligence, Director, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Assistant to the President for Science and Technology, Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Director, United States Secret Service

Subject: Designation of the Attorney General as the Lead Official for the Emergency Response Assistance Program Under Sections 1412 and 1415 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1997 (Public Law 104-201) (the "Act")

Under sections 1412(a) and 1415(a) of the Act, the Secretary of Defense is responsible for implementing the Emergency Response Assist-

ance Program, commonly known as the "Domestic Preparedness Program," to provide civilian personnel of Federal, State, and local agencies with training and expert advice regarding emergency responses to a use or threatened use of a weapon of mass destruction or related materials, and for testing and improving the responses of such agencies to emergencies involving chemical or biological weapons and related materials.

Under the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including sections 1412(a)(2) and 1415(d)(1) of the Act, I designate the Attorney General to replace the Secretary of Defense as the lead Federal official with responsibility for carrying out these programs.

These designations are effective October 1, 2000, and constitute designations pursuant to sections 1412(a)(2) and 1415(d)(1) of the Act.

The Attorney General is authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON