

Statement Commemorating the Deportation and Massacre of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire

April 24, 2000

Today we remember a great tragedy of the 20th century: the deportations and massacres of roughly one and a half million Armenians in the final years of the Ottoman Empire. I join Armenians around the world, including the Armenian-American community, in mourning the loss of those innocent lives. I also extend my sympathy to the survivors and their descendants for the hardships they suffered. I call upon all Americans to renew their commitment to build a world where such events are not allowed to happen again. The lesson we must learn from the stark annals of history is that we must forge a more humane future for the peoples of all nations.

Our own society has benefited immeasurably from the contributions of Armenian-Americans. They have enriched every aspect of American life, from science to commerce to the arts. For

the past 8½ years, the Armenian people have been engaged in an historic undertaking to establish democracy and prosperity in the independent Republic of Armenia. Their courage, energy, and resourcefulness inspire the admiration of all Americans, and we are proud to extend our assistance to help realize the dream of a vital and vibrant Armenia. The United States fully supports the efforts of Armenia and its neighbors to make lasting peace with one another and to begin an era of security and cooperation in the Caucasus region. We encourage any and all dialog between citizens of the region that hastens reconciliation and understanding.

On behalf of the American people, I extend my best wishes to all Armenians on this solemn day of remembrance.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in New York City

April 24, 2000

Thank you very much. I think she's about to get the hang of it, don't you? *[Laughter]* Wow!

The Vice President, Tipper, Hillary, Chairman Rendell, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to begin with a heart full of gratitude by saying some thank-yous.

I thank Ed Rendell and Joe Andrew and all the people at the Democratic Party for the work they have done. I thank all of you at these tables who helped to chair this event and did the work so that we could all be here tonight. I want to thank Jon Stewart for making us laugh. I wish he would move to Washington. If we laughed a little more there, we might get twice as much done. *[Laughter]*

I want to thank my dear friend Tony Bennett for performing again so beautifully. You know, people always marvel—Tony's a year or two older than I am, and people always marvel at how great an artist he is. And I was telling people earlier tonight, the thing that is so amaz-

ing is that he still has perfect pitch. I lost my perfect pitch 10 years ago. And he has perfect pitch in more ways than one. I'm glad he's here.

I thank the people of New York, the Democratic Party of New York, and my special supporters in this room who have been with me and Al and Hillary and Tipper all these years. I want to thank those of you who are helping Hillary in this Senate campaign. I have no doubt of one thing, that if you elect her, she will be a worthy successor to Robert Kennedy and Pat Moynihan and will make a terrific difference to the people of this State and this Nation. And after I heard her speaking, I have no doubt she's going to win if you stay with her, so I feel good about that. Thank you.

I want to thank Tipper Gore for 8 marvelous years. I was looking at her tonight, thinking to myself—I've watched her raise her children; I've watched her deal with sick members of her family; I've watched her deal with all kinds of pressures and keep laughing. The thing I appreciate

most about her is that she believes that people who are fragile and people who are broken, whether they are homeless or suffering from mental illness, are part of our common humanity and still have something to live for, still have something to give, and ought to be given a better chance. And our country would be a better place if more people felt the way she did. I hope that more people will.

Let me say also that I am profoundly grateful tonight for the chance you gave me to serve. We were talking around our table tonight about—one of the chances that I've had as President is to learn a lot about the Presidencies of people you don't know much about. I thought I knew a lot about American history when I became President, but I've spent a lot of time studying periods of time when most Americans are not—that most Americans aren't too conversant with, the Presidency of Franklin Pierce or Rutherford Hayes—and I tried to do it so that I could see the whole history of this country in a seamless web.

One of the things that strikes me as strange is that some people who have been in this position—even people I very much admire—talk about what a terrible burden it is, and how the White House is the crown jewel of the Federal penal system, and how they can't wait to get out of there, and what a terrible pain it is. Frankly, most of those guys didn't have a tougher time than I've had there—[laughter]—and I don't know what in the heck they're talking about. [Laughter]

One of my friends from home called me a couple of years ago when things weren't going so well for me, and he said, "Just remember, Bill, a couple of runs of bad luck and you'd be home doing \$25 divorces and deeds. Don't feel sorry for yourself. You asked for this job."

And that's the way I feel. Every day has been a joy and an opportunity, and still is, and I thank you for it. But I want you to know, sometimes people say, "Well, what keeps you going?" And tonight we were sitting around our table, and I looked at Bob Rose, and I said, "Isn't this the place where we had that fundraiser in February of '92, right before the New Hampshire primaries, when I was dropping like a rock in the polls, and everybody said I was deader than a doornail?" He said, "Yes, this is it."

So I started telling people around the table, I said, you know, I met a guy here that night walking through the kitchen. This is a true story.

I said, I met a guy there that night walking through the kitchen. He was working here. And he came up to me, and he said, "Governor, Governor," he said, "my boy is in school. He's in the fifth grade. He studies this election, and he studies the candidates and the issues, and he says I should vote for you." And he said, "But I want to ask you a question first. If I do what my boy wants and I vote for you, I want you to help me." He said, "You see, I came here as an immigrant, and in my home country I was very poor, and here I have more money and a better job. But in my home country, I was free." He said, "Here, my boy, he can't go across the street to the park and play unless I go with him, because he'll be in danger. He can't walk down the street to school by himself because he could get hurt." So he said, "If I do what my boy wants and I vote for you, will you make my boy free?"

And as I was telling this story, that man, Dimitri Theofanis, came up to me and embraced me tonight. He doesn't even work here anymore, but he came here tonight to work this banquet, and I want to thank him. His son is now a student at St. John's University in New York City, and he is doing well.

Now, what's the point of all this? When Al Gore and I came to Washington, it was to help people like Dimitri and his son, people who serve these banquets but can't afford the price of the tickets; people who need the minimum wage and access to health care, whose kids ought to be able to go to college and ought to be able to get a good education on the way; people who maybe have been homeless at some point in their lives or stuck on welfare and want jobs.

And after 7 years and a few months, over 21 million of them have jobs that didn't 8 years ago. Over 21 million have taken advantage of family and medical leave. Over 5 million have taken advantage of the HOPE scholarship to go on to college. There are 500,000 people who couldn't get handguns because of the Brady bill, and gun crime in this country down 35 percent since 1993, the homicide rate at a 31-year low; 2 million kids out of poverty; more than 2 million kids with health insurance; students borrowing money through our new loan program, saving \$8 billion, to help them go on and go to college—real stories of real lives of real people. That's what this is all about.

I never, ever—for all the wonderful joy and love of the Presidency and my love of politics, and Lord knows, I have loved it—I always thought that it was wrong to seek power without purpose; that in the end, it was a hollow victory to have it and to exercise it to hurt other people with the painful disappointment in life that they never give you what you want. The only thing that really matters is knowing that people who otherwise wouldn't have done as well have a little better chance because of your endeavors.

And what I want you to know tonight, as I bring the Vice President up here, is that we have worked very hard to turn this country around and to get it going in the right direction. But the theme song of this election year ought to be the first song Tony Bennett sang, "The Best Is Yet To Come," because we are now in a position to take on the big challenges of this country that would have been unthinkable 8 years ago. We can get this country out of debt for the first time since 1835 and give a generation of Americans a chance at a strong economy. We can deal with the challenges of the aging of America, the children of America, and all the things that—I'll leave it to Al to talk about.

But we've got a chance to do that. But you have to understand that this election is every bit as important, if not more important, than the ones in '92 and '96. I want you to know a couple of things about Al Gore that he wouldn't say himself and I'm amazed that so many Americans, even a lot of our supporters, don't know.

First of all, as you might have noticed, we've had to make a few tough decisions over the last 8 years. He was at the fore of the process that produced every difficult decision we ever made, every controversial one, every one that could have wrecked both our careers and kept him from being here tonight as the nominee of our party.

He wanted us to take that tough stand against the deficit in 1993 that required him to break the tie in the United States Senate. He wanted us to become the first administration in history to seriously take on in a systematic way the problems of gun violence in this country and to try to have systematic, sensible measures to protect our children from its dangers. He wanted to be the first administration in history that took on big tobacco to try to give our children their lives back.

He was out there early with me on Kosovo, on Bosnia, on Haiti, on all the tough, controversial foreign policy issues, when all the experts in Washington were saying these were little places unworthy of America's great interests, and besides that, there was lots of downside and no upside—who cares if a lot of innocent people are just dying like flies?

He was there every time, in private, getting no credit, when a difficult decision had to be made. And the Presidency is defined, and the country goes forward, based on the hard decisions. The easy ones anybody can make.

The second thing I want you to know is that he has had more responsibility than any person who ever held this job. And he has performed in an absolutely stunning manner. And I just want to run through—yes, you can clap for that. *[Applause]*

I want to give you a few examples. He led our effort to give America a genuinely competitive and humane telecommunications policy, which meant—what did that mean? You look at all the companies in New York State alone that did not even exist in 1996 when we signed the Telecommunications Act—hundreds of thousands of new jobs. Plus we got the E-rate to guarantee that our schools, our poorest schools and libraries and hospitals would be able to access the Internet.

He led our efforts to hook all of our schools and classrooms up to the Internet. When we started in 1994, under Al's leadership, 3 percent of the classrooms in America were hooked up to the Internet. Today, 65 percent are, 11 percent of the schools. Today, 95 percent of the schools in this country have an Internet connection.

He led our efforts to bring economic opportunity to people and places left behind, in the empowerment zones and the enterprise communities. He led our efforts in the environment, which—things like our partnership for the next generation of vehicles with Detroit, with the automakers and the auto companies, the auto-workers and the auto companies. Now you'll be able to buy cars, decent size cars, actually getting 70, 80 miles a gallon in the next year or two.

He had a big part of our foreign policy when it came to arms control or dealing with Russia or South Africa or the Middle East. He led our efforts to reinvent the Federal Government, which meant, as I think all of you, even our

adversaries would admit, we have been slightly more active than previous Presidents in the last several years, and we did it while shrinking the Government to its smallest size in 40 years—all because of Al Gore's leadership.

But what I want you to know is more important than all that. I had lunch with this guy once a week, before he got something better to do here a few months ago. [Laughter] From the day I took office until the onset of the Presidential campaign, I probably know more about him than anybody but Tipper. I know what he likes and what he can't stand. I know what he loves. I know when he's having a bad day and how he deals with it. And by the way, he knows the same about me.

And all I can tell you is, I feel absolutely comfortable putting the future of my daughter, and the grandchildren I hope she will give us, in his hands. He is the most accomplished and effective Vice President in the history of the country. That is not a matter of dispute; that's a statement of fact. He is the most well-qualified candidate we have had in my lifetime. I wish I'd had half his experience coming into office in '93 that he will bring in, in 2001.

But the most important thing of all is, he understands the future, and he knows how to take us there. There are big challenges out there. We have not done all this work to turn this country around, to fritter away the chance of a lifetime to deal with the big issues. And there are huge differences between our parties and our candidates that will have dramatic, immediate, practical impact on the lives of the American people—not just those of us who

came here tonight but, keep in mind, those of us who served us here tonight.

So for all my gratitude to all of you, for all my gratitude to the American people, for the chance to serve in a job I love, the most important thing is always, for our country, what are we going to do today and tomorrow? All I have done for 7 years and 3 months was to try to get the country I love in the position to build the future of our dreams for our children. Now it's up to you to decide whether we do that.

And believe me, for the rest of the lives of everybody in this audience, I will be very surprised if you ever get a chance to vote for anyone for President again who has done so much, who is such a fine human being, and who so clearly understands the future that is unfolding at such a rapid pace. We owe it—we owe it to ourselves, to the labors of the last 8 years, and more importantly, we owe it to our children and the dreams we have for them, to make sure that the next President of the United States is Al Gore.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 8:50 p.m. in the Imperial Ballroom at the New York Sheraton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Edward G. Rendell, general chair, and Joseph J. Andrew, national chair, Democratic National Committee; actor Jon Stewart; singer Tony Bennett; investor Bob Rose; and Nick Theofanis, son of Dimitrios Theofanis. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the Vice President, Tipper Gore, and the First Lady.

Remarks on Proposed Hate Crimes Legislation

April 25, 2000

Thank you very much. Thank you, Amy Klobuchar and all the other law enforcement officials, civil rights leaders who are here; Attorney General Reno, Deputy Attorney General Holder.

Elían Gonzalez

Before I begin my remarks about hate crimes, I'd like to say just a brief word about the reunion of Elían Gonzalez and his father. After

5 months, it was long overdue. Now that they have been safely reunited, I believe it's time for all of us, including the media and those of us in public life, to give this family the space it needs to heal its wounds and strengthen its bonds; to work to lessen the pressure on them as the matter goes forward in the courts.

The thing that really matters now is that little boy and his life and his family. And I think, at least for the next several days, the less we