

## Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Dinner in Cambridge, Massachusetts

July 28, 2000

Well, Swanee, if I had a bell right now, I would certainly ring it. *[Laughter]* You've been ringing my bell for years now. *[Laughter]* She's been very great for my personal maturity, Swanee has, because I know every time I see her coming, she's going to tell me about something else I haven't done. *[Laughter]* And it takes a certain amount of grown-upness to welcome that sort of message—*[laughter]*—with the consistency with which she has delivered it over the years. *[Laughter]* Actually, I love it. You know, I mean, I sort of hired on to work, so somebody has to tell me what to do from time to time. It's great.

Let me say, first I want to thank Swanee, and thank you, Charles, for welcoming us in your home, for the work you did in Austria, the work you did in the Balkans. And Swanee, I want to thank you especially for the work you've done to mobilize women in the cause of peace in the Balkans and the work you've done with Hillary, with women all over the world in trouble spots. That's one of the things I think that Hillary is the proudest of, that she's done in the 8 years we've been in Washington, trying to mobilize women who are not part of political factions but interested in human beings and how they treat each other and how they raise their children to try to be forces for peace in the Balkans, in Northern Ireland, and lots of other places, and I thank you for that.

Even though I was in a hurry to go to Chelsea's ballet that night, you might like to know that that little piece of rock from St. John Mountain in Croatia, where Ron Brown's plane crashed, along with a couple of screws and a piece of metal from that airplane, is one of my most precious possessions, because I loved him like a brother. And it's on my little table in my private office in the White House, next to a miniature painting of my mother done by the famous Russian artist Tsereteli, that Boris Yeltsin gave me when I flew to Russia on the night that I buried my mother.

I say that not to be morbid but to kind of get into what I am doing here tonight. For one thing, I want to say, Congressman Gephardt and Congressman Kennedy and all the Massa-

chusetts Members that are here are taking a big chance on me tonight because I haven't been to bed in 16 days—*[laughter]*—and I, frankly, don't know what I'm saying. *[Laughter]* And tomorrow I won't remember it.

And the only thing I can think of that they allowed me to come here, after being up—you know, I've been up in the Middle East peace talks, and then I flew to Okinawa for 3 days and came back, over there and back in 3 days—and then I said, "Well, surely, you're going to let me rest." And they said, "No, you missed 2 weeks of work, and the Congress is fixing to leave, and we've got a big vote, and you've got to do this, that, and the other thing."

So the last 2 days I stayed up until about 2 o'clock at night working, too. So I'm not quite sure where I'm at. I think the only reason they're doing it is, I know Joe Moakley will call me next Monday and say, "I am so glad you committed another \$50 million to the Boston Harbor." *[Laughter]* Capuano will call with a commitment; Markey will call—Lord knows what Ed will tell me I committed to. *[Laughter]*

So I'm honored to be here, even though I'm a little tired. And I'm here because I think these people ought to be in the majority. I'm here because, in a larger sense, I think that everything I have done this last 8 years, in a way, has been preparing America for this moment. And now we're all dressed up, and as a country we haven't decided where to go.

What do I mean by that? Eight years ago you didn't have to be a genius to know that we needed to make a change. I mean, the previous policies had quadrupled the debt of the country in 12 years and reduced our investment in our people and our future at the same time—that's pretty hard to do—increased interest rates to the point that the economy was stagnant and the political debate was sterile and hostile. The governing party in the White House had basically followed the politics of division.

So the American people took a chance on me. In the words of my predecessor, I was, after all, just the Governor of a small southern State. I was so naive when I heard him say

that, I thought it was a compliment. [Laughter] And I still do. [Laughter]

So we set about making changes. And what Dick Gephardt said is right. I do feel somewhat personally responsible for the fact that we lost the Congress in '94. Why? Because everybody could talk about getting the country out of the economic ditch, but it's one thing to talk about it and quite another thing to do once you get in as deep a hole as we were in. We had a \$300 billion deficit. We had quadrupled the debt in 12 years. And the Republicans had made taxes toxic, and we already cut a lot of spending—it's hard to cut more. And yet, we had to do both.

And so without a single vote to spare, we basically changed the economic and political history of America in August of 1993 by adopting an aggressive program to get rid of the deficit. We carried it by one vote in the House, and then we carried it by one vote in the Senate—Al Gore. As he always says, whenever he votes, we win. [Laughter] So we carried it by a vote in the House and a vote in the Senate. I signed it. And the Republicans, who now want you to give them the White House back and leave them in control of the House and Senate, said it would be the end of civilization as we know it.

And you ought to go back and read the stuff they said about our economic plan. "Oh, it would have another recession. It would lead to high interest rates. It would be horrible. Everything would be awful." It's unbelievable what they said. The same crowd that wants you to give it back to them now. And not a one of them voted for it.

And then in '94, we adopted a crime bill that banned assault weapons, on top of the Brady bill, which had been vetoed in the previous administration and I signed. And then the same crowd went out into the country, where all the hunters are, and told them that we were fixing to come get their guns. And we adopted the bill late in '94. And then we tried to do something on health care, and they decided, after promising me we would work together, that they didn't want anything to happen because they wanted an issue in the election. And those three things were enough to cost the Democrats the House in '94—and the Senate. And I feel personally responsible, because I drove them relentlessly to do as much as we could to turn this country around.

And then, since '95, we've actually had quite a lot of success working together to try to continue to do good things for our country. And one of the reasons that I think Dick Gephardt ought to be the Speaker is that he never thought about quitting. He never thought about giving up. He never walked away from his responsibilities to his people or to our country. And because he has done what he has done, we were able to stay together and work together, and we gained again in '96. And in '98 we picked up seats, the first time since 1822 the party of the President had gained seats in the House election in the sixth year of a Presidency.

So we're just like the little engine that could now; we're only five seats, six seats away from being in the majority. But I don't want it for them, in spite of everything. I owe it to them, but I want it for you and for the rest of this country. And that's why, believe it or not, we actually have a chance to win the Senate, too. And I believe that, notwithstanding the present polls, I expect Vice President Gore to be the next President.

But what I want to say to you is, we can win them all or lose them all, and it is hanging in the balance. I'm really grateful for everything Swanee said, but right now I don't care too much about my legacy. Somebody will take care of that down the road. And then it will be written four to five times, over and over again through the generations. I finally read a biography the other day claiming Ulysses Grant was a good President, and I think the guy was right. He said he was a pretty good President and a brilliant general and a greatly underrated person, and I'm persuaded by the historical evidence it was right and took 100 years to get it right, if that's true.

So you can't worry about that. The press thinks I worry about it, but—you know what I have on my desk in the Oval Office? A Moon rock that Neil Armstrong took off the Moon in 1969. You know how old it is? Three-point-six billion years. Somehow, I have the idea that 3.6 billion years from now, even George Washington may not be known to too many people. [Laughter] It's just all a matter of perspective.

And I keep it there to make me feel humble and uplifted at the same time, because what it means is that every second of time today is worth just as much as it was then, in fact, more, because they have a more interconnected, more well-developed society, but we're all just

passing through here. And what really matters is what we do and what's in our hearts and whether we act on it.

So I will say again, what I care about is not the legacy. The country is in great shape. We've got the strongest economy we've ever had. All the social indicators are moving in the right direction. We have no crisis at home or threat abroad that is paralyzing us. We have lots of national self-confidence.

But the only thing that matters is, what do we intend to do with this? That's all that matters. Nothing else matters. And here we have this millennial election, when the most disturbing thing to me is not today's or yesterday's or last week's or next week's polls or this or that race. The most disturbing thing to me is the repeated articles which say that the voters are not sure there's any significant difference in these candidates, and "they all seem pretty moderate and nice-sounding to me. And what difference does it make? Maybe I won't vote. Maybe I'll vote for the other guy. Maybe I'll vote for this one. Who knows?"

And what I wish to tell you is, this is the product of a deliberate strategy that you must not allow to succeed. There are three things—I say this over and over again—the people have heard me give this speech are getting sick of me saying it—there are only three things you need to remember about this election. It is a huge election. What a country does with unique prosperity is as big a test of its vision, its values, and its common sense as what a country does in adversity.

Number two, there are big, big differences, honestly held between good people running for President and Vice President, running for Senate, running for the Congress—big differences.

Number three, for reasons that you have to figure out, only the Democrats want you to know what those differences are. *[Laughter]* Now, you laugh, but it's true. Remember the Republican Presidential primary? Al Gore is still giving the same speech now as he was giving in the Democratic primary. They performed reverse plastic surgery on poor John McCain in that Republican primary. You don't ever hear them talking about that, do you? Oh, it's all sweetness and light now. *[Laughter]*

Now, I'm having a little fun tonight—*[laughter]*—but I'm dead serious. I am dead serious. There are real differences, and they matter to your life. It is very important that voters, when

they have a chance to vote, understand that they are making decisions. Elections are about decisions. Decisions have consequences. I'll just give you one or two examples. I made a list of eight or nine here. Maybe I'll give one or two. I have fun doing this.

Let's take the economy. There was a huge article in USA Today not very long ago saying, voters see very little difference between Bush and Gore on the economy. And I thought, "Oh my God, what am I going to do? Very little difference?" Every one of them opposed everything we ever did on the economy—until we were doing so well we then were able in '97 to get a bipartisan balanced budget signed because we had plenty of money, so we could satisfy the Republicans and the Democrats.

But let's look ahead: the economy. Here's their policy. Their policy is to revert to their old policy on the backs of our new prosperity. They say, "Look at this huge surplus that the Government has. That's not the Government's money. It's your money. Vote for us. We'll give it back to you." Sounds pretty good, doesn't it? I can give their speech as well as they can. *[Laughter]* "It's not the Government's money. They'd mess up a two-car parade. You pay. You earned it. Go vote for us. We'll give it back to you." *[Laughter]* I can sing that song.

We say over \$2 trillion in tax cuts over a decade is too much. It's the entire projected surplus, and then some. And frankly, too much of it goes to folks who can afford to come to events like this. Our plan costs less than 25 percent as much, gives more benefits to 80 percent of the people, and leaves us some money left over to invest in the education of our children and the health care of our seniors and lengthening the life of Social Security and Medicare and dealing with science and technology and the biotechnology revolution and our environmental responsibilities and our health care responsibilities and in getting this country out of debt by 2012, which will keep interest rates at least a percent lower than their plan for a decade, which is another \$250 billion effective tax cut and lower home mortgages, \$30 billion in lower car payments, \$15 billion dollars in lower student loan payments.

Now, it takes longer to say our position than theirs. But the difference is pretty great. And I always tell—and the most important thing—what they want to do is to spend next year, if they have the White House and the Congress,

the projected surplus. And as I said yesterday and I'll say this again: Did you ever get one of those sweepstakes letters in the mail from Ed McMahon or somebody, saying, "You may have won \$10 million"? Did you ever get one of those? Well, if you went out the next day and spent the \$10 million, you really should support them in this election. But if you didn't, you better stick with us so we can keep this economy going.

Now, this is—I'm dead serious. Who in the wide world—if I asked you to estimate your projected income over the next 10 years, how much money are you going to make over the next 10 years? Just think. Now, if I made you a very attractive deal to come in and sign it all away tomorrow morning, would you do it? Would you legally obligate yourself to all your projected income for a decade to do it? That's what they want us to do. That's what this tax cut deal is. It will mean higher interest rates. It will mean neglecting our responsibilities to the future. It will undermine the economy.

We have enough money in our tax cut to give you big incentives to invest in poor areas in America that haven't been developed yet, big incentives to have more money invested in school construction and school repairs all across America, and big incentives to help people send their kids to college, pay for child care, have retirement savings, pay for long-term care for the elderly and disabled. We can do this. We can have a tax cut. But this is crazy to give away all this projected income just because it sounds good at election time. "You made it. It's your money. I'll give it back to you."

And let me just say one other thing. It isn't like we haven't had a test run here. You just had a test run of 8 years, right? And you got a 30-year low in unemployment and 22 million jobs, and it's pretty good. Now, they had 12 years before. And they had a nice little economic runup there for a while when they were running all those bills up.

I used to have a Senator named Dale Bumpers from Arkansas, who said, "If you let me write \$200 billion worth of hot checks every year, I'd show you a good time, too." [Laughter] So, for a while—but what happened? It got to where we were so in debt that we got no economic stimulus out of that deficit spending; we got higher interest rates; we had to keep cutting back on the things we wanted to invest in; and

the economy was in the ditch by the time we took office.

Now, I am telling you, this is huge. We want to keep the prosperity going, and we want to extend it to neighborhoods and people in Indian reservations and poor rural towns where it hasn't reached yet. So it's huge. I'll give you just one or two other examples.

In education, they say they want to spend as much money as we do, but they don't want to spend it on what works. They don't want to have standards. They don't want to require people to turn around failing schools or shut them down. Dick Gephardt gave a passionate defense of education. I just want to give you—I'll just give you one example. I could keep you here all night with it.

I was in Spanish Harlem about 2 weeks ago in a grade school that 2 years ago had 80 percent of the children reading below grade level, doing math below grade level—2 years later, new principal, school uniform policy, high standards, accountability. In 2 years, there are 74 percent of the kids reading and doing math at or above grade level. Listen, these kids can learn; they can do fine. And you can turn these schools around, but you can't give them speeches and then not give them any money.

I will give you another example: crime. Everybody is against crime. The Republicans say we stole their issue when we started talking about crime. I didn't realize that you had to—I've never seen either a rap sheet or a report on a victim that had a box for party registration. [Laughter] This is our issue. Where I came from, it was a human issue.

Their deal about crime was, talk real tough and lock everybody up. You heard Dick talking about it. I thought we needed a more balanced approach, which included stopping people from committing crime whenever possible. And that's why we went for the Brady bill, the assault weapons ban, the 100,000 police on the street. And by and large, they opposed everything we tried to do. They said it was no good, terrible, you know, the whole 9 yards.

Now, here in this election, the head of the NRA says if their candidate for President wins, they will have an office in the White House. I didn't say that. That's not a negative campaign. I'm simply repeating what he said. They won't need an office in the White House, because they'll do what they want anyway. They won't

have to go to that trouble, because they believe that way.

Now, we've had a test run. The previous administration vetoed the Brady bill, and the group that wants to win now in the House and in the White House and in the Senate, they don't want to close the gun show loophole. They don't want to require mandatory child trigger locks. They don't want to ban large scale ammunition clips from being imported. And they certainly don't want to do what the Vice President does, which is to say if you want to buy a handgun in America from now on, you ought to at least do what you have to do when you get a car. You ought to have a photo ID. You ought to have a criminal background check, and you ought to prove you can use the equipment you're about to buy.

Now, they just don't believe that. But it's not like we haven't had a test run. Gun crime has dropped by 35 percent in America since we passed the Brady bill and the assault weapons ban—35 percent. And that's with this gaping loophole. Half a million felons, fugitives, and stalkers haven't been able to get handguns, and nobody has missed a day in the woods hunting. [Laughter] Now you laugh about it. They beat a dozen of our Members, didn't they, Dick? At least a dozen. They took them out. So you have to choose. The point I'm making is, this is a choice.

One other issue, both the candidate for President and Vice President—this affects the Senate, too, more than the House—say that they don't like *Roe v. Wade*, and they want to repeal it. And Vice President Gore said he likes it and thinks we ought to keep it. And you don't have to believe that anybody is a bad person. I think they just have an honest difference here. But there is going to be between two and four judges of the Supreme Court appointed next time, that the Senate will have to vote on. You have to decide how much that means to you. But don't listen to all this sort of let's, you know, pretend that there are no differences here. There are honest differences.

In foreign policy there are honest differences. We believe we ought to do more to relieve the debt of the poorest countries in the world. We believe we ought to invest more in AIDS and malaria and TB. And we're struggling to build bipartisan consensus for this. We believe we were right in Kosovo, and most of them didn't. And I still think we were right in Kosovo

and Bosnia, and I'm glad we did it. We believe we ought to have a comprehensive test ban treaty, and they don't. There are big differences. Now these are honest differences.

But I'm telling you folks, I know you may not want to have a serious seminar at this hour of the night on Friday night, but I am telling you this is a huge election. There are gaping differences. You cannot, in good conscience, permit anyone you know to vote without being aware of the differences and the consequences to the children of this country based on the choices that will be made.

What I believe is, if everybody knows what the deal is, then we ought to all be happy with the results. When Hillary asked me if I thought she ought to run for the Senate, I said, "It depends on whether you're willing to risk losing and whether you've got something to say that's bigger than you." The answer to both of those was yes, so off she went. And I'm really proud of her.

But when she calls in from the road or I call her, I say, "Remember, your objective in an election is to make sure everyone who votes against you knows what they're doing." You think about that. If everyone who votes against you, every vote you lose, knows what he or she is doing, then democracy has worked. And none of us have any complaints.

Now, you know and I know and they know that if the American people know what they're doing in this election, that is, if they understand what the real choices are, they will vote for the Democrats. They will make Dick Gephardt the Speaker. They'll make Tom Daschle the majority leader. They'll make Al Gore the President, because they know what I have told you is true. And that's why you have this attempt in the other party to create a collective amnesia about their primary and to blur all over these differences. I don't blame them. If I were them, I would do the same thing. It's their only shot.

But we ought to get a whoopin' if we let them get away with it, if you'll allow me to use a colloquialism from my small southern State. [Laughter] This is a big deal. I'm not even going to be here, but I have done all this work in the hope that if we could turn America around, we would be in a position to build the future of our dreams for our kids.

Why should we even be fighting about this? We ought to be saving Social Security and Medicare and adding a prescription drug benefit

for seniors who need it. We ought to be making sure that every kid in this country who wants to go to college can go. We ought to be making sure that there's economic opportunity for the first time on these Indian reservations and in the Mississippi Delta and the Appalachians and all these places, in the inner-city neighborhoods. There's plenty to do out here.

We ought to be figuring out how we're going to put a human face on the global economy so that those of us like me that believe we ought to have more trade will be able to prove it lifts people up and raises wages and creates jobs everywhere. We ought to be thinking about these big things.

What are we going to do about global warming? One of the reasons I'm for Al Gore for President, besides the fact that he's been my Vice President and the best Vice President in history, is, we need somebody in the White House that understands the future. That's what we ought to be talking about.

Al Gore was telling me about climate change 12 years ago. Everybody was making fun of him. Now, even the oil companies admit it's real. He was right. He sponsored legislation in the House to make the Internet more than the private province of physicists, and a lot of people in this room are making a pretty good living because of that.

And now all your financial and health records are on somebody's computer somewhere. Don't you think you ought to be able to say yes before somebody else gets them? Wouldn't you like somebody in the White House at least who understood that?

The other day we had this great announcement on the human genome—did you see it?—with the sequencing of the human genome. I had to read for a year so I would understand what I was saying in that 30 minutes. Do you think someone—when you get a little genetic map, and all of you that are still young enough to bear children, when your children come home from the hospital in a couple years, everybody will just have their little genetic map that will tell you, you know, what your child is likely

to be like, what kind of problems you're vulnerable to. It's scary and hopeful.

But do you think your little genetic record should be used by somebody else without your permission to deny you a job or a promotion or a pay raise or health insurance? Wouldn't you at least like to have somebody in the White House that understands that?

This is a big election, and all this great stuff is out there. And you must not allow people to take this casually. Dick Gephardt will be the Speaker if the people of this country understand what the issues are, what the differences are, what the stakes are. And that's why I've tried to be, even though I am in a semi-coma tonight and will not remember this tomorrow morning—[laughter]—I hope I have been somewhat persuasive.

The kids of this country deserve this. Look, in my lifetime, we've only had one other economy that was almost this good in the sixties. And we took it for granted, and we thought we didn't have to nourish that moment. And it fell apart in the national conflicts over civil rights and the war in Vietnam. And all of a sudden, it was gone. And now we've waited over 30 years for this chance again. We don't want to blow it.

And if we don't, believe me, the best is still out there. I've had a great time doing this. Massachusetts has been great to us. If you really want to tell me that you appreciate what I've tried to do, make him the Speaker, make Al the President, make Daschle the majority leader, and you will make America's best days ahead.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:23 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts former U.S. Ambassador to Austria Swanee Hunt and her husband, Charles Ansbacher; former President Boris Yeltsin of Russia; Republican Presidential candidate Gov. George W. Bush of Texas and Vice Presidential candidate Dick Cheney; Ed McMahon, Publishers Clearing House Sweepstakes spokesperson; and Wayne LaPierre, executive vice president, National Rifle Association.

## The President's Radio Address

July 29, 2000

Good morning. This weekend marks the start of the summer recess for Members of Congress. Many are heading home to their districts, and most Republicans are meeting in Philadelphia for their party's convention.

But wherever they go, I hope they will be thinking of the millions of Americans for whom summer vacations are not an option, the millions who work all summer long, all year long, earning no more than the minimum wage.

I want to talk to you today about giving these hard-pressed Americans a much-deserved raise and helping them to live the American dream. The face of the minimum wage is the face of America. Every one of us knows at least one person who works for minimum wage. It might be a member of your family. It might be the person who cares for your children during the day or serves you lunch at the shop on the corner or cleans your office every night.

Seventy percent of the workers on the minimum wage are adults; 60 percent are women; and almost 50 percent work full-time. Many are their families' sole breadwinners, struggling to bring up their children on \$10,700 a year. These hard-working Americans need a raise. They deserve it. They've earned it.

I've always believed that if you work hard and play by the rules, you ought to have a decent chance for yourself and for a better life for your children. That's the promise I made when I first ran for President, and that's the basic bargain behind so much of what we've done in the years since, from expanding the earned-income tax credit for lower income working people to passing the Family and Medical Leave Act, from increased child care assistance to health care for children to helping millions and millions of Americans move from welfare to work.

That's also why, in 1996, we raised the minimum wage to \$5.15 an hour over 2 years. It's high time we did it again. In fact, it's long overdue.

More than a year ago now, I proposed to raise the minimum wage by \$1 over 2 years, a modest increase that merely restores the minimum wage to what it was back in 1982 in real dollar terms. Still, it's no small change. For

a full-time worker, it would mean another \$2,000 a year—\$2,000 more to pay for a child's college education, to cover critical health care, to pay the rent. And for a year now, the Republican leadership has sat on that proposal.

Back in 1996, the last time we raised the minimum wage, some of these same Republicans called it, and I quote, "a job killer cloaked in kindness." They said it would cause—again, a quote—"a juvenile crime wave of epic proportions." Well, time has not been kind to their predictions, and neither have the numbers. Our economy has created more than 11 million new jobs since we last raised the minimum wage. And study after study shows that a raise in the minimum wage is good not only for working families; it's good for our entire economy, especially at a time of labor shortages when we want to increase incentives for all Americans who can, to find work.

So this time, unlike the last time, the congressional majority knows better than to speak against raising the minimum wage. This time, instead of arguing the facts, the leadership is playing legislative games, stalling action, and stifling debate. Already, these delays have cost the minimum wage worker more than \$900 in hard-earned pay. To paraphrase Shakespeare, they've come to bury the minimum wage, not to raise it.

For working Americans, the wait grows longer. As recently as this week, the majority in Congress was still talking about raising the minimum wage, but they couldn't bring themselves to actually do it. In the last hours before their recess, they were still working overtime to give tax breaks to the tiniest, wealthiest fraction of America's families and still doing nothing for the 10 million people who would benefit from a boost in the minimum wage.

This weekend Republican leaders gather in Philadelphia. From their seats inside the convention hall, I hope they'll stop a moment to think of Americans outside that hall—Americans working in the restaurants, the shops, the hotels of Philadelphia, working hard for the minimum wage.

If Republican leaders really want to make their compassion count, they ought to join me