

Remarks at a Dinner for Hillary Clinton in McLean, Virginia *August 9, 2000*

Thank you very much, Claire. Thank you for your wonderful words, and I thank you and Al once again for being so generous. And I want to say to all of you what I said to them at dinner: I apologize that we had to reschedule this, but it worked out very well. I was involved in the Camp David peace talks at the time we were going to have this dinner before. I think that—believe it or not, we still might get there, and at least we headed off a disaster and got them talking about the fundamental issues, really for the first time in an official setting. So it was very good.

Claire asked me if I'd be willing to answer a couple of questions, and I have to go on to another event tonight because we had to double up since we rescheduled, but what I think I'll do is abbreviate my remarks and then maybe answer some questions.

I would just like to say a couple of things. In 1992 the country was in trouble, and I heard it in the stories of individuals all over the country. A lot of people have forgotten it now. And I ran for President because I thought that there was no plan for getting us out of the trouble we were in and maximizing the opportunities that were before the country. So I put together a plan.

And some of you who are political junkies may even remember that when I went to New Hampshire, only Paul Tsongas and I put out little detailed books of exactly where we stood on the issues, and people actually, a lot of them, made fun of us. "Nobody is so wonky they're going to read this 30- or 40-page book." But it turned out we got the biggest crowds at the town meetings because people knew America was in trouble, and they wanted to know exactly what we were going to do.

And when I got elected with Vice President Gore on the commitment to put people first and restore the principles of opportunity, responsibility, and community to our national life, we actually implemented an economic plan and a crime plan and a welfare reform plan and an education plan and an environmental plan and a plan to down-size the Government in a way that would enable us to be more active but less oppressive in the way the Federal Gov-

ernment operated, and health care initiatives—right across the board.

And the country has benefited. Whenever a democracy does well, most of the credit goes to the people who live there, not the politicians who serve. But it is clearly true that what we did was to establish the conditions and give the people the tools with which they have made astonishing progress in the last 8 years.

So the question before the American people is, now what? My strong conviction is that the American people should not be lulled into a sense of complacency because of our prosperity and our social progress but instead should realize that this might be the most important chance in our entire lifetime that we ever get as a people—any of us in this room—to really build the future of our dreams for our kids; that change is the only constant in the global information society, nothing stays the same forever; and we need to be focused on what the big challenges, the big opportunities are. We ought to vote for people we believe will help to make the most of this magic moment.

And essentially, that's why Hillary decided to run for the Senate—that and the fact that half a dozen or more New York House Members came and asked her to run. And then she went up to New York and spent some time, and we talked about it. She was, frankly, reluctant to give up our last year in the White House and all the fun and enjoyment, the relaxation, the savoring of successes. But she knew that the things that can be done now are the things that she's worked on and dreamed about for 30 years, ever since I first met her.

When we met in law school, she took another year—she took a fourth year in law school so she could work at the Yale hospital in the child study center on legal and health issues affecting children. When we went home to Arkansas, she led the move to build our first neonatal nursery at the Children's Hospital and then organized a group called the Arkansas Advocates for Families and Children. By the time I was elected President—and our little State was what my predecessor used to affectionately call a small southern State of which I was Governor—

[laughter]—had the seventh biggest children's hospital in America.

And since she has been First Lady, she has taken an unprecedented role in issues affecting children and families, from lobbying for the family and medical leave law in 1993 to having the first White House conference on early childhood and brain development, dealing with issues of violence, working on the Children's Health Insurance Program, and a lot of the education initiatives we've done, to her, literally, nationally recognized work to make it easier for people to adopt children, to adopt across racial lines, to provide incentives to adopt children with disabilities, and to do better by the kids who are in foster care and especially children who age out of foster care. She has really done an amazing job, I think.

And then, for the last 2 years she has been running our millennial program, giving a wonderful series of lectures at the White House on the big issues of the future. We've brought in people from all over the world to talk about—and launching this Save America's Treasures program. The head of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Dick Moe, told me a couple of weeks ago, when we were saving Abraham Lincoln's summer cottage at the Old Soldiers' Home in Washington, he said that Hillary's millennial treasures program has now provided the impetus for over \$100 million for investment in historic preservation. That's 60 percent public money, 40 percent private money. It is the largest, single historic preservation effort in the history of the United States.

So what she recognized was that I've done everything I could to turn this country around, leave it in good shape, get us into the 21st century going in the right direction. But all the great stuff is out there still. And we need people to carry on the work. That's why she took what I thought was a personally brave decision, after 30 years of helping other people in every election, to try to run herself. I'm very proud of her. And the latest Quinnipiac College poll had her up 3 points today—it came out today. And I think she's going to do well.

But it's a very expensive election, and as you know, it has been heavily targeted, not only by the Republican Party but by their affiliate groups that didn't think much of anything we did. [Laughter]

So we like—we love our time in New York. We've got a wonderful house in Chappaqua.

It's a 111-year-old farmhouse. And I'm looking forward to the years ahead. I think she's going to win this race, but it's going to be quite expensive and quite controversial and quite difficult. But she's in good shape, and she has done an astonishing amount of work over the last year and a half to make sure that she is the Senate candidate that has actually been to all the counties in New York, that actually knows a lot about the upstate economy, the rural economy, the farm economy, the things most people who think of New York know nothing about. And I'm very, very proud of her.

I feel the same way basically—I want to make the same argument about Al Gore and Joe Lieberman, who has been my friend for 30 years, since I supported him when he ran for the State Senate in 1970, when I was a first-year law student at Yale and he was a 28-year-old graduate there. And we worked together for 15 years in the Democratic Leadership Council.

The issue is whether we're going to keep the change going in the direction of the last 8 years or take a U-turn. That's basically what the issue is. And I think that what we ought to do, those of us who agree with that, ought to take it as our mission from here to November to do two things. One is to make people understand this election is a very big deal.

Look, we had a huge voter turnout in '92, huge, because everybody knew it was a big deal. I mean, our backs were against the wall. We had high unemployment. We had exploding welfare rolls. We had high crime rates. We had all the sort of social division and acrimony and riots in L.A., and we had a sense of political paralysis here. And there was a lot of wedge politics, pitting one group against the other. And you didn't have to be a genius to figure out it was pretty important.

Someone gave me that great saying in 1992 that insanity is doing the same thing over and over and over again and expecting a different result. So the people gave us a chance to serve. Now, however, I think you can make a compelling case that how you use your prosperity is just as stern a test of your judgment, your values, and your character as a nation as how you deal with adversity.

In my lifetime we never had a chance like this, so much economic prosperity, social

progress, the absence of domestic crisis or foreign threat. We get to decide what kind of future we want for our children—huge, huge thing. So you have to go around and convince people of that, because all these surveys show that most people think, “Ah, things are going so well, who could mess it up? It’s not this an big election.”

The second thing that we have to say is, you have to bring clarity of choice to this election, because people have to understand there are real consequences and profound differences. I enjoyed the Republican Convention, and I was flattered by all the rhetorical devices which recalled, apparently, exact phrases and things I said over the last 8 years, and according to a news story I saw. And I don’t think we should minimize it. It’s a good thing for them to stop being harsh and mean-spirited in their rhetoric. That’s a good thing. But there was a difference between changing the rhetoric and changing the policies of the party.

We actually came out with policies that were new in 1992, different on the economy, on crime, on welfare, on education, on the environment—right across the board—foreign policy. So we have to bring clarity, because there wasn’t much clarity. If you saw at the end of the—all the news stories of interviewing undecided voters at the end of their convention said, “Well, we liked what we saw, and it sure felt good. But we don’t know what they’re going to do. We don’t have a sense of that.”

Now, there are profound differences on economic policy. Principally, they want to spend all the surplus on tax cuts, leaving nothing to lengthen the life of Social Security and Medicare, leaving nothing to pay for their Social Security privatization programs or Star Wars or anything they promised to pay for. We want to spend much less than half—just a little over a quarter of what they do, but 80 percent of the people would get more money out of it, because we want to pay this country out of debt and keep investing in education and technology and health care.

We were just talking before we came up here about long-term care needs. The average person in America who lives to be 65 today has a life expectancy of 83. People over 80 are the fastest growing people in America, percentage-wise. We have to reimagine old age in America. It’s going to be totally different than it ever has been. And as I never tire of saying, the other reason

that they’re wrong on their economic policy is, besides the fact that they don’t leave any money for their own spending promises, the second thing is, if you spend all this, then you won’t pay us out of debt. And that will keep interest rates higher, and that will cost most Americans more money in higher interest rates than they’ll get in a tax cut.

I’ll just tell you what the numbers are. One percent for a decade on interest rates—one percent equals \$250 billion in home mortgage payments, \$30 billion in car payments, \$15 billion in college loan payments; never mind the impact on business loans, which affects business growth, employment, and income.

The other thing, as I’ve said over and over again, is this is a projected surplus. It’s not there yet. And if I ask you what your projected income is for the next decade, and you thought about it, and I said, “Now, be real sure. Be conservative. Be pretty sure. This is an optimistic projection, but you be conservative,” and I said, “Okay, right now I want you to contract, binding contract to spend it all right now”—if you would do that, you should actually seriously consider supporting them in this election. [Laughter] But if you wouldn’t, you probably ought to stick with us and keep this thing going.

Now, there are same differences on crime and gun safety, on health care policy, on education policy—I could go through them all—on choice and the question of who gets appointed to the Supreme Court, which is not just about choice; it’s about civil rights, civil rights enforcement.

So this is a huge election. And Al Gore understands what’s happened the last 8 years and has been an integral part of every good thing that’s happened. He has a keen understanding of the future. He understands the implications of the human genome project, not only the potential for it but the privacy issues that were raised. He understands climate change, and now nobody is making fun of him anymore, like they did in 1992 and 1988. It turns out he was right all along.

But still they took a dig at him at the Republican Convention on the Internet because, like a lot of things people said about me—he did not say he invented the Internet. There is an article in the Washington Monthly or one of those things, which was—he said, yes, he said he was instrumental in creating—he sponsored legislation that helped to create it. The actual

fact is, the Internet was for a long time a defense research project that was the private province of research physicists. There was a bill introduced and passed which essentially helped to make the Internet technology available to businesses and individuals, from which—growing out of that, it became worldwide, the fastest growing communications network in all of human history by a good long ways.

Do you know how many sites there were on the World Wide Web when I became President? Fifty, 5-0—50. You know how many there are today? About 15 million—7 years.

So we've got two people running for President, and the Vice President understands all this stuff. They've got the right economic policy. And the most important thing to me is, they want us all to go along for the ride. They want the people that worked here and made this dinner possible tonight to have the same chance we do to send their kids to college. They want employment nondiscrimination and hate crimes legislation, and they don't think gay people ought to be discriminated against, as long as

they show up for work every day and obey the law like everybody else. They believe in the minimum wage and Patients' Bill of Rights. They passionately share these things that I have worked so hard to advance.

So if you want to keep the prosperity going and keep America more justified and keep ahead of the future, I think it's an easy choice—for Al, for Joe, and for Hillary.

Thank you for your money, but remember, when you leave here, every one of you have great networks of friends and family. You need to make sure people understand. It is a big issue, this election. There are big differences. And clarity of our choice is our friend. If the choice is clear, our side wins.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:45 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Lisa Claire and Albert J. Dwoskin; and Republican Presidential candidate Gov. George W. Bush of Texas.

Remarks at a Dinner for Hillary Clinton *August 9, 2000*

Thank you. Thanks for the tie. You know, I got interested in ties when I realized that the older and grayer I got, the more it would be the only sort of fashion statement I could ever make for the rest of my life. Thank you, Tom; thank you, Pam; thank you, Brosim, and thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for coming.

I'll tell you what I would like to do. I'd like to just talk for a couple of minutes and then just have a conversation. If you have any questions you want to ask, anything you want to say to me, I will be glad to do it. We kind of started our dinner that way.

But I want to begin by thanking you for coming here and for helping Hillary. And I wanted to just give you a little background on that. I am immensely proud of her for making this race. And we just got a good poll today from Quinnipiac College, saying that she was ahead 46 to 43, which I think is quite good. And if you understand anything about New York democratic politics, if you go into election day

and you're two or three points ahead, you're going to be just fine.

So I feel good about that, and I'm very proud of her because, you know, we had actually been looking forward to this year and being able to relax a little bit. We knew we'd have to work hard for the Vice President and now for Senator Lieberman and for our crowd in Congress. But we also looked forward to the nights at the White House and enjoying our last year there and going to Camp David. And my wife gave up a lot of that because she understood that it was important to carry on the work that we have been about this last 8 years and because half a dozen or more New York House Members asked her to do it, and she got up and spent her time—she's been to every county in New York now, and she fell in love with it and figured out that what they needed and wanted was the same thing she had been working on for 30 years.