

Remarks at a Reception for Congressional Candidate Mayor Susan Bass  
Levin in Cherry Hill, New Jersey  
August 23, 2000

Thank you. Well, first, this place has wonderful memories for me. I remember when I came here in 1992, it was, I think, the Sunday evening before the election. The race was close in New Jersey and close in the country. And we had this great rally here. And then on election night, the people of New Jersey voted for Bill Clinton and Al Gore, and I'll never forget it.

Then in 1996 New Jersey went from giving us a 2-point margin of victory to giving us a 16-point margin of victory, one of the largest in the entire United States, and I will never forget that. So the first thing I'd like to say is, thank you. Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, New Jersey.

Now, the second thing I would like to say is, I thought Alexis Ettinger was gangbusters. Wasn't she wonderful? *[Applause]* To inspire the young is one of the most important responsibilities of any public leader. And if Susan can inspire Alexis, that's about as good a recommendation for her representation to Congress as anything I can think of, and I really think that's wonderful.

I want to thank Jon Corzine for being here. I know he's been out stirring up the crowd before I got here. But I like him. I admire him. I hope that he gets to be a partner with the new Senator from New York across the river. *[Laughter]* We were just up in Princeton together with Congressman Rush Holt, another good friend of mine, and I told somebody I love reading the press about Jon. You know, people were wailing away about the fact that he invested so much money in the primary. And I said, "I don't know what they're complaining about. He's the only rich guy that I knew who was spending that kind of money to avoid giving himself a big tax cut so he could give the rest of you a better tax cut, a better education, a better economy, and a better future." I hope you will support him and get him to the Senate. We need him.

And let me say, when Susan and I were walking down the steps tonight, I said—I looked at her, and I said, "I am so glad that you gave me a chance to do this for you tonight, because for more than 8 years now, you have been there

for me, every single day, in the good times and the bad, in every single way." I am so grateful to her.

And that's another mark of a good leader. If you live long enough and you stay in public life long enough and you take on enough issues and you make enough adversaries, you will have your bad days as well as your good ones. The mayor of Cherry Hill was always there for me and for our administration, for what we were trying to do for America, and I will never forget it.

So that brings me to why I am here tonight. Now, if you will let me use a colloquialism from my part of the country, I always wonder whether I can do any good at events like this because I know that in a way I'm preaching to the saved. I mean, if you weren't for her, you wouldn't be here. Either that, or you've got a lot of extra money on your hands. *[Laughter]*

But I want you to listen to me just for a few minutes tonight, because what I want to tell you is, number one, I believe she can win, and number two, I know she should win, and number three, the only way she can win is if you do more than give her money.

Every one of you—every one of you—has friends who live in this district who will vote on election day, people who think of themselves as good, upstanding citizens and wouldn't dream of not voting. But they don't spend nearly as much time as you do going to events like this. They may not know her as well as you do. They may not be living within 50 miles of here.

Every one of you has people that you work with, you go out to dinner with on the weekends, maybe you worship with, maybe you play golf with or go bowling with or your kids play soccer with, or some other way you come in contact with people. They will vote, but they don't know as much about this as you do. They don't know her as well as you do. They don't have as clear an understanding of what the differences between our parties, our candidates for President and Vice President, Jon Corzine and his opponent, as you do. And I am telling you—you know, I've been doing this a long time. *[Laughter]*

The first time I passed out cards at a polling place was in 1954 when my uncle ran for State representative. I was 8 years old. He served one term. His wife made him quit because she thought politics was too tough—ha! [Laughter] What did she know?

Every election is different. This election will turn, in my opinion, on what the American people, what the people of New Jersey, and what the people of this congressional district think it's about. I was so proud of Vice President Gore and his speech last Thursday because he gave sort of a mini State of the Union speech. He said, "Okay, here's who I am. Here's what I believe, but let's get to the meat of the coconut here. If the President is somebody who works for the American people, if you vote for me, here's what I'll do."

Now, you've got to be able to tell people why they ought to vote for them. You have to be able to put the election for Congress and the New Jersey Senate election in the context of what's going on in this country today. You clapped for all of Susan's issues, but I want to try to give some clarity to the ones she mentioned and then talk about ones she didn't, the one that may affect you most of all, that I'm afraid is least understood.

Look, if we started 8 years ago—I had this idea that if we could create an economic policy, a social policy, an environmental policy, and a foreign policy that would reward opportunity for responsibility, would create an American community that stopped dividing us by race, by religion, by gender, by sexual orientation, by whatever, and pulled us together—even by party, Lord knows I've tried to work with our friends in the Republican Party under somewhat adverse circumstances—that we could really go into the 21st century with America as the leading force for prosperity and peace, for human rights and freedom all around the world. And we are today. And I'm grateful.

But what I want you to understand is, all the best things are still out there. The good things that have happened in this country in the last 8 years are nothing compared to what all of us together could achieve in the next 8 or 10 years if, but only if, we make the right choices about our future.

Everybody in this room, at least who is over 30 years old—you can see a lot of nodding heads—everybody in this room over 30 years old can remember at least one time in your

life when you made an error, a mistake, not because things were going so badly but because things were going so well you did not believe you had to concentrate, think, or dream. You could just sort of wander through the day.

Now, our country has never been in a position like this before. And it may not be like this again in our lifetime, where we have so much prosperity and social progress, the absence of crisis at home and threat abroad, a projected surplus—we can build the future of our dreams for our children. So I will say again, how this race for Congress, how this race for Senate, how the Presidential race comes out, how Hillary does over in New York, it all depends on what people believe the election is about.

Are we going to build the future of our dreams for our children? If so, what do we have to do to give them all a world-class education? What do we have to do to deal with the aging of America, to preserve Social Security and Medicare in a way that when the baby boomers retire and there's only two people working for every one person on Social Security, people like me don't bankrupt our kids and their ability to raise our grandkids? How are we going to deal with the challenge of global warming and still grow the economy? How are we going to take advantage of these marvelous changes in medical science, the human genome project, and all the other biomedical revolutions that may allow people who are living with severed spines to stand up and walk, that may allow people who have Parkinson's disease to get over it, that may allow people who are certainly going to have Alzheimer's not to get it, that I believe will allow young mothers, girls in this audience today, by the time they have their babies, will go home from the hospital with a little gene card that will tell them how to maximize their children's health and minimize the problems, and within 20 years young women will be giving birth to babies with a life expectancy of 90 years, you can book it. It will happen.

Now, so how are we going to do all that and still make sure when you carry your gene card around, nobody can deny you a job or health insurance because of something that's on that card? How are we going to bridge the digital divide and hook up all of our schools and make sure everybody has got access to computers but nobody has access to your health and financial records on those computers unless you say yes?

These are big challenges. And there are clear differences. And Susan mentioned some, but I'll be more explicit. Let's just go back through the ones she mentioned. Education: Test scores are going up; the college-going rate is at an all-time high; the African-American high school graduation equals that of the white majority for the first time in history in the last few years. The schools are turning around. We had a very specific strategy to work with the schools: invest more money but demand more results; identify failing schools, have more preschool, summer school, after-school, mentoring programs, smaller classes in the early grades; hook all the schools, including the poor ones, up to the Internet.

Their strategy is, get rid of that stuff and just write a check to the State and hope they spend it right. Now, there's a very great difference. And don't give it all to the State; have some of it off in vouchers. So you have to decide whether you agree with our strategy or their strategy. It's not just this woman you like; it will affect people's lives how she votes. And you don't have to say anything bad about her opponent or anybody else. But you've got to know there's a consequence.

Health care, the Patients' Bill of Rights: Their leadership still won't let us bring it up because the HMO's either don't want us to cover everybody, or if we guarantee a Patients' Bill of Rights and somebody gets hurt, they don't want them to be able to sue and get any help if they get hurt. That's like a patients' bill of suggestion; it's not rights. *[Laughter]*

And look, I support managed care because we can't—I didn't want to have an explosion and inflation in health care costs, but "care" is even more important than "managed" in that phrase. And you can't take these medical decisions away from the doctors and the people.

In prescription drugs, I support, and Susan said she supported, Jon supports a Medicare prescription drug program that would allow all the seniors in this country who need it access to affordable prescription drugs through the Medicare program. They support a program that wouldn't cover half the seniors in the country who need it.

Now, I support the pharmaceutical excellence of America. I'm proud that we've got all these great drug companies in our country, a lot of them headquartered right here in New Jersey. And what they're worried about is, if Medicare

can buy all these drugs for the seniors, that maybe they'll buy them at such a low price that they'll be put in a tight—there's got to be a way to resolve that. The answer is not what the Republicans want to do, which is to make sure half of the seniors can't get the drugs they need. That is not the answer. There's got to be a good answer to that.

So, she says, he says, we say, Al and Joe say, "Take care of the seniors and the drug companies." Now, this is a big choice for you to make. This is not just another walk in the park here. We're talking about millions of people.

Crime—what's our position? Our position has been 100,000 police on the street, prevent as much crime as you can; the assault weapons ban, the Brady bill. And our position now is, close the gun show loophole on the Brady bill, mandatory child trigger locks, don't let them import all these big ammunition clips that you can then hook on to a rifle here and make it into an assault weapon. That's our position.

Now, what's their position? Their position is, "We were wrong when we passed the Brady bill. We were wrong when we passed the 100,000 police. We're wrong now in putting 50,000 more police on the street, and we're wrong trying to do all this." Their nominee said just a couple of days ago that if he were elected, he would get rid of the 100,000 police program, that that was not a national responsibility.

All I know is, crime is at a 25-year low. Gun crime's down 35 percent. We tried it their way. We tried it our way. Our way works. Now, they say what we should do is have even more vigorous prosecution, even though we increased prosecution. We've got a record number of people in jail. But when they tried it their way, it didn't work as well.

And what's their weapons position? Their weapons position is, more people should carry concealed weapons, even into houses of worship. That's their leadership position.

Now, they believe that. I'm not saying anything bad about them. That's what they believe. But it's not like we haven't had a test here. We tried it their way. We tried it our way. Our way works better. And America is not as safe as it needs to be. This will have significance. I'm telling you, every vote in Congress, every vote in the Senate matters. We're talking about the way the children in this room are going to have to live.

Now, so what have we done? We've got education, health care, and crime. Then, she said—and you clapped—she said, “I'm for preserving a woman's right to choose.” What she didn't say is—what she didn't say is, every year there is a wholesale assault on it in one way or the other through little riders in congressional legislation. So if you're in the House of Representatives, you actually have a chance to protect it.

And I don't know whether Jon said this or not, but the next President is going to appoint two to four members of the Supreme Court. And the United States Senate has to confirm those members.

And they have told us—and, again, I accept that this is their sincere conviction. This is not a personal criticism. Honorable people can have honest differences. But we can't claim we don't know that there is no consequence here. Their nominee is against *Roe v. Wade*. And you have to assume, being an honorable person, that he will act on his convictions. And you have to assume that their Members of the Senate are more likely than ours to vote to ratify those judges, because that's what is going to happen. So if this is important to you, either way—if it matters to you either way, you need to know that you can affect the outcome by the choice you make for Congress and for the Senate.

Now, this is the last point I want to make. And I want to say a little something about the economy, because I think maybe the differences in economic policy between the Republicans and Democrats today are the least understood. And yet, they'll have a huge impact on you.

Now, you all know that we have a large projected surplus. That's what we think we're going to get in over the next 10 years. They have a very compelling position. Their position is, “Hey, we had a deficit for years. Now we've got a surplus. It's your money, and we're going to give it all back to you in a tax cut.” It takes about 5 seconds to say, and it sounds so good. [Laughter] “It's your money, and I'm going to give it back to you in a tax cut, all of it. Why should the Government keep your money?”

Our position is, number one, you should get a tax cut, but it ought to be something less than half of theirs in total. Yes, there ought to be some marriage penalty and estate tax relief in there, but we ought to really focus on helping families who need it pay for college education, long-term care, child care, and retirement, to help people who need it, do that.

And by the way, we have to save some money for education and the environment and health care and science and technology. And there might be an emergency, and we've got to save some money for that. And oh, by the way, this is projected income. That means it's not in the bank yet. And if you cut the taxes now for all the projected income and the money doesn't come in, you've still got the tax cut.

I told somebody their position reminds me of those letters I used to get back when I was a private citizen from that—that sort of Publishers Clearing House sweepstakes letters from Ed McMahon. You've seen them. “You may have won \$10 million.” [Laughter] You may have. [Laughter] And when you got those letters, if you went out the next day and you spent the \$10 million, you should seriously consider supporting them in this election. [Laughter] But if you didn't do that, you better vote for Susan and Jon and Al and Joe and Hillary, if you live in New York. [Laughter] Jon Corzine made a lot of money in investments, ask him. Nobody would do this.

Let me tell you something else, this is before they spend their own money. Their Social Security privatization program, it's about a trillion bucks over 10 years, and the other things they want to spend money on, before they have to deal with emergencies. I'm telling you, folks, we don't want to go back to deficits.

Now, let me tell you one other thing. We have a study from the Council of Economic Advisers that says that if their plan were enacted, as opposed to the one the Vice President and Jon and Susan have endorsed, interest rates would go up by one percent a year for a decade. Now, if we keep interest rates one percent lower a year for a decade, would you like to know what that's worth to you? Two hundred and fifty billion bucks in home mortgages, \$30 billion in car payments, and \$15 billion in college loan payments. In other words, one percent lower interest rates is a \$300 billion tax cut to ordinary Americans who desperately need it, and you get the benefit of getting the country out of debt, investing in our future, saving Social Security and Medicare.

Listen, it may take me longer to explain our economic program, but I'm sure now that I've done it, you can get the gist here. You've got to be able to do that.

Now, I'm going to close where I've started. It is not good enough for you to come here

for somebody you know and believe in and contribute and go home and forget about this. You've got to be like Alexis. You've got to be a volunteer, even if you don't go in the headquarters. Every day between now and November you need to go up to somebody you know who is not here tonight and say, "Listen, here is why I am for Susan Bass Levin. Here's why I'm for Jon Corzine. Here are the differences on economic policy, education policy, health care policy, human rights policy, crime policy"—boom, boom, boom, boom—"here's how it's going to affect your life, your future, our children's future."

And you've got to be able to answer those questions, and you have to feel comfortable. And you can remember the Ed McMahon story. I'm telling you, this is a big deal. I worked real hard to get our country out of debt and get this economy going. And I'm telling you, when I hear people say there is no real difference in economic policy, you know, I want to just sort of jump in the ocean. I mean, come on, here.

We've got poverty going down. All income groups have their income going up. All the things are going in the right direction. We cannot change our economic direction. We need to do more to bring in people who still aren't participating in this economic recovery, but we don't need to throw away the policy that brought us to this dance we're at, that we're enjoying so much. It would be a terrible mistake.

So think about this. When you go out of here, if you don't remember anything else, you remember, you've got to be able to say, "I am for Susan Bass Levin because she's my friend, because she's been a good mayor, but because she's right for me and you and our kids and our future on education and health care and choice and the environment and the economy and crime and our future." Look, I can hardly remember an election where the choices were any clearer. The rhetoric is not clear anymore because they understand now that people don't like all that hateful stuff anymore, so they chucked it. And they're talking about inclusion. And you're laughing, and we have all made fun of them about it, but actually it's a good thing. It's a good thing.

The words people use matter. And we should say, "Thank you very much for not being so hateful anymore and demonizing your opponents

and doing all"—we should say—it matters. We should say that. But I'm just telling you, the substantive differences are still there.

Now, I know this woman. I admire her. She will be a great, great Member of Congress. But when it's all said and done, it's not those of us who hold office that matters; it's those of you who hire us to serve and whether we do what you hired us to do.

I want to close with a little story. I'm surprised I'm going to say this, but I want to tell you something. I got off the plane today in New Jersey to do these events, and the first person I saw was a young businessman from San Francisco. I didn't know he was going to be in the line. I was amazed to see him. I hadn't seen him in 4 years, maybe more. His name is Steve Sposato. He was there with his beautiful daughter, Megan, and her very young little sister and his wife.

The first time I met Steve Sposato, he was a grieving young widower with an infant child whose wife was cut down by a crazed person with an assault weapon in an office building in San Francisco. You may remember that awful incident when it happened. He was a Republican, always had been. He was just a businessman. And he thought—he couldn't understand why the political system in Washington didn't want to stop people like this crazy guy from getting ahold of assault weapons and going into office buildings and shooting people like his wife.

He wasn't all that political. He just wanted to make sure there wouldn't be any other little girls like his gorgeous little daughter. And I met him. And he came and stood in the Rose Garden at the White House and talked about this in very moving terms. And he said, "You know, I'm not a politician. I'm not a speaker. I just don't want any more kids to be without their parents." And he stood and went through that rough fight with me in 1994. And thankfully, he met another lady, and they had another baby, and I saw beautiful little Megan today and her new little sister and her stepmom and Steve's mother who lives on Long Island. They all came out to see me. It changed his politics forever.

Why? Because in the most awful, agonizing way, he had to come to terms with the fact that what we do as citizens, whether we like it or not, affects how we live as people. And

that brave, good, fine young man is standing here.

Now, I hope to goodness not a single living soul in this audience has ever gone through anything like this. But I promise you, in some way or another, for every single one of you, what you do as citizens affects how you live as people. I tell people all the time, politics is not the most important thing in life, not even in my life. Being President is the second most important job I ever had next to being a father. When they get ready to lay you down, you don't think about all the time you should have spent at the office; you think about who liked you, who loved you, how the flowers smelled in the springtime, what it was like to be a child. But politics is supposed to create the conditions and give people the tools to shape their dreams, not tear their hearts out.

When it's all said and done, that's what it's about. In my lifetime we have never had this chance before like we have it now. I'm not running for anything, for the first time in 26 years. I tell you this as a citizen: Make sure Susan wins; make sure Jon wins; make sure Joe and Al win. Give this country its best chance.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:40 p.m. in the paddock area of the racetrack at Garden State Park. In his remarks, he referred to Cherry Hill High School East senior Alexis Ettinger, who introduced the President; Jon S. Corzine, candidate for U.S. Senate in New Jersey; and Republican Presidential candidate Gov. George W. Bush of Texas. Mayor Susan Bass Levin of Cherry Hill was a candidate for New Jersey's Third Congressional District.

## Remarks Prior to Discussions With President-Elect Vicente Fox of Mexico and an Exchange With Reporters

August 24, 2000

*President Clinton.* Let me just say very briefly what a great honor it is for me, personally, and for the United States, to have the President-elect of Mexico here. I have looked forward to this very much, for the chance to congratulate him on his election, and all the people of Mexico on a truly historic affirmation of genuine democracy in their country. I'm glad he's here, and I'm looking forward to getting to know him, hearing his ideas, and doing what I can to help him get off to a strong start in our partnership.

*President-elect Fox.* Well, the same here. I'm very glad to be here, sharing a few minutes with President Clinton, the opportunity to know each other, the opportunity to tell him about this great day, July the 2d in Mexico, and the opportunity to get to know experiences that you have lived in this 8 years in this excellent and growing relationship between Mexico and the United States, and also to thank you for all the support you gave to Mexico in difficult times.

When we were in crisis, we also got and saw the hand of a friend. And so that's something that we recognize in Mexico and I personally

recognize and thank you for in the name of all Mexicans.

### *Mexican Democracy*

*Q.* Is Mexico considered a democracy example to *America Latina*?

*President Clinton.* Considered an example?

*Q.* Yes, to *America Latina*?

*President Clinton.* I think that what happened in Mexico is very impressive. I mean, we had a genuine, competitive, democratic election. And I think it's an example to people who are friends of freedom everywhere in the world.

### *Immigration Policy*

*Q.* President Clinton, excuse me—President-elect Fox has brought up a whole bunch of new ideas on the relationship between Mexico and the United States, including plans concerning the border immigration. Are you going to discuss these in full length?

*President Clinton.* Well, I certainly hope so. I want to hear them. Obviously, we have borders, and we have laws that apply to them, and we have to apply them, and so do the