

Remarks at a Luncheon for Gubernatorial Candidate Heidi Heitkamp September 19, 2000

Thank you. You know, I have a lot of interest in this race. Heidi was attorney general; I was attorney general. And I was Governor for a dozen years. It's a wonderful job. It really matters whether we have a few more Democratic Governors. This year more than ever, I think women should be elected to public office. [Laughter] But the main thing I want to say is, you've got Dorgan, Conrad, and Pomeroy. And you all know how strong I've been for diversity. I just want anyone who doesn't look like a spy during the cold war—[laughter]—representing North Dakota. [Laughter]

I'm convinced that sometime years ago when the Republicans were winning all the races, these brilliant guys made a pact and said, "Listen, guys, if we all have short hair, if we're thin, if we wear glasses, we ain't going to scare nobody, and we can do whatever we want to do." [Laughter] And look, what can I say? It worked. I never carried North Dakota. [Laughter] It was great, but I think they're really stepping out here. [Laughter] I mean, they're really stepping out.

Now, I'll be brief and serious. The two things should always go together. One of the greatest things about this country is its genuine diversity, going beyond even race and religion and all the other things we talk about in Washington, to the way people make a living off the land, the way they organize themselves in their communities, the difference in what it's like to live in a place like North Dakota where Heidi can invite you all to come and mean it, and it's so big we could all be missed if we showed up, and a place where nobody's got any elbow room.

And the genius of our system is that if we all do our part, the country works better. Central to that is what happens in all these States. And North Dakota, too, is growing more diverse and more faced with the challenges of the 21st century. And I can just tell you I have an enormous amount of respect for Heidi Heitkamp, and I know how important it is that we have good Governors.

I'll give you just one example. I could give you 20, but after she scared me by saying I talked an hour and a half in North Dakota,

I'm not going to do that. [Laughter] I started to bring a cup of coffee up here, too, and I couldn't. [Laughter] But anyway, I'll give you one example. We passed in the balanced budget bill in 1997, with a bipartisan vote in both Houses, big majorities, the largest expansion in federally funded health care for children since Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program. And we knew that the number and circumstances of the children were different from State to State. So we reached a bipartisan agreement that instead of just expanding Medicaid, we would allow the States to build and design these programs and enroll the children.

Now, there's enough money in that program to enroll 5 million kids. And if the program really identified all the people who were eligible, it would also pick up another 2 million or 3 million kids who could be served by Medicaid. There is a drastic difference in how well the different States have done in identifying and enrolling their children. It matters who the Governor is in a State.

I'll give you another example. Under the leadership of Secretary Riley over the last 7 years, we have cut Federal regulations on States and local school districts by two-thirds, but we have increased the focus of Federal spending on certain standards, so that for example, all the schools—all the States that get Federal funds have to have some standards, have to identify failing schools, and have to have strategies to try to turn them around. As some of you know, I've tried to get Federal funding tied a little tighter, to say you've got to turn them around, shut them down, or give the kids some other alternative. But already, we have required them to identify failing schools.

Now, some States have said, "So what?" Some school districts have said, "So what?" But I was in an elementary school in western Kentucky the other day that was one of their failing schools 3 years ago that's now one of the 20 best schools in the State. Lots of poor kids, lots of problems—it worked.

I was in a school in Harlem the other day, to take a totally different culture, that 2 years ago had 80 percent of the kids reading and doing math below grade level, elementary

school. Today, 76 percent are reading and doing math at or above grade level—in 2 years.

Now, if you do it on a—one of the biggest problems with education reform is that no one has ever done it systematically. Every problem in American education has been solved by somebody somewhere. Places like North Dakota have generally done very well because they have time and space enough to give everybody the personal attention they needed. But they will have a lot of these challenges, too. And I'm telling you, it really matters who is Governor. No one has ever succeeded in systematically doing what teachers and principals do every day in the most difficult circumstances, creating miracles all over this country. It's never been done in any State in a systematic way, but some have done much better than others. It matters who the Governor is.

And those are only two examples. It matters economically. It matters in terms of the social services. It matters in terms of how the elderly are treated, and especially those that get nursing home care. And what about the people who are going to be living in boarding homes, and

what about the people that are going to be—you're going to see the most unbelievable explosion of living options for elderly and disabled people, as we are able to keep more disabled people alive and functioning and doing well, and more elderly people live longer, that you can imagine.

And a lot of it—I don't care what we do at the national level and who's the President and what the Congress does; it will matter who the Governor is. I just—the first time I ever met her, I thought she was great. I wanted to take her home to meet Hillary and keep her there for a couple weeks. And she had other obligations. [Laughter] She is an extraordinary woman. You did a good thing coming here and giving her money today. And if we all keep doing it, I think she'll win in November.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:30 p.m. in the Crystal Ballroom at the St. Regis Hotel. State Attorney General Heidi Heitkamp was a candidate for Governor of North Dakota.

Remarks on Senate Action on Permanent Normal Trade Relations With China and an Exchange With Reporters September 19, 2000

The President. Good afternoon. Today the Senate voted to pave the way for permanent normal trade relations between the United States and China. This landmark agreement will extend economic prosperity at home and promote economic freedom in China, increasing the prospects for openness in China and a more peaceful future for all of us.

When we open markets abroad to U.S. goods, we open opportunities at home. This vote will do that. In return for normal trade relations—the same terms of trade we offer now to more than 130 other countries—China will open its markets to American products from wheat to cars to consulting services. And we will be far more able to sell goods in China without moving our factories there.

But there is much more at stake here than our economic self-interests. It's about building a world in which more human beings have more

freedom, more control over their lives, more contact with others than ever before, a world in which countries are tied more closely together, and the prospects for peace are strengthened.

Trade alone won't create this kind of world, but bringing China under global rules of trade is a step in the right direction. The more China opens its markets to our products, the wider it opens its doors to economic freedom and the more fully it will liberate the potential of its people.

When China finishes its negotiations and joins the WTO, our high-tech companies will help to speed the information revolution there. Outside competition will speed the demise of China's huge state industries and spur the enterprise of private sector involvement.

They will diminish the role of government in people's daily lives. It will strengthen those