

something called the Southern Growth Policies Board. And because I was the Governor of a southern State, we would meet and work together on how to develop jobs and education in the South. And of all the people I fool with from all the States that I worked with, I think I liked Joe Martin the best, which is sort of strange.

His brother was a chemistry professor who became the Republican Governor of North Carolina. I liked his brother, too. But you wouldn't expect that guy to be my favorite guy, but I liked him, because he was serious and he was full of energy. He was vital. He was charismatic. He was dynamic. He was constant motion. Fast forward 15 years, and he's got Lou Gehrig's disease, and he continues to go down, and he can't move.

So Joe Martin has lost all the things that I found most attractive, except the inner qualities, which have deepened. And he is a far more impressive man today than he was before.

And in about 2 months, Joe Martin will publish a book he wrote with his eyes. Every day he talks to his wife and children on that computer with his eyes. And he's still alive because he can say what he knows and what he feels to other people.

Now, I think it's a good thing that some of your tax money finances research into technologies like that and tries to spread it to other people and provides a center like that in Flint, where people can come who are disabled and get E-mails from—and he writes up there once a week. He E-mails them with his eyes. And when they know about Joe Martin, all those other people don't feel sorry for themselves anymore. I think that is a good thing.

So that's what I want to tell you. To me, this isn't very complicated. I believe that we are growing more and more and more interdependent. I believe in order to make the most of the modern world we live in and all these wonderful technologies, we have to understand that our enlightened self-interests requires us to try to make sure every man and woman and boy and girl get to live their story, even if they have to do it with just their eyes. And I believe that the best is still out there. I nearly know the best is still out there if we make the right decisions. So thank you for being so nice to me. Thank you for all the things you said. Thank you for raising the \$4 million-plus. But remember, if every day the people in this room took a little time to make sure that everyone you know understood what was at stake and why they ought to stick with us, we'd have the celebration we want on election night, and most important, you'd have the future that your children deserve.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:44 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Michael and Jena King; music producer David Foster; musician Richard Marx; actors Christian Slater and Rob Lowe; Representative Patrick J. Kennedy, chairman, Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee; Mike Honda, Adam Schiff, Janice Nelson, Jane Harman, and Gerrie Schipske, candidates for California's 15th, 27th, 28th, 36th, and 38th Congressional Districts, respectively; and musician Kenneth Edmonds, popularly known as Babyface, and his wife, Tracy.

Remarks at a Reception for Representative Lois Capps in Pacific Palisades, California

September 24, 2000

The President. Thank you.

Audience member. Four more years! Four more years!

The President. In your dreams. [Laughter] No way!

The amazing thing is that Susan and Ted should be surprised that I would want to come

to their backyard. I would be happy to come next Sunday, too. [Laughter] Is this a gorgeous place or what? I mean, amazing.

I want to thank you both for having us here and supporting one of the finest people I've ever known in public life. And I know when you have a family and your Sundays are

precious, and I thank you for giving us this time and making it possible for all of us to come.

I want to thank all of you for being here. I thank Representatives Becerra and Sherman for coming to support Lois, and I thank Senator O'Connell and Kathleen Connell for being here. And mostly I just want to thank all of you for being here.

I want to say just a few words about Representative Capps. I got a little choked up when she started talking about my relationship with her family. I loved her husband very much. He was a special man, and we had a great rally in '96 in Santa Barbara and there were 15,000 or 20,000 people there with the Sun out and the ocean glistening, you know. And I thought we all were just going to levitate off the side of the world. *[Laughter]* If I had done that, it would have been the subject of another investigation. *[Laughter]* "How did he do that? What was behind that? What mysterious foreign entity financed that levitation?" *[Laughter]*

And Laura, who is standing back there, did work in the White House for many years, and she worked right behind my office, so I saw her several times a day. And she was one of the true, good souls in the White House. She kept everybody in a good frame of mind, and you couldn't act small around her, not only because she's physically big, but because she's big inside, just like her mother.

So, I'm honored to be here. But I also want to emphasize what Lois said. Now, I have worked harder in this election, I think, than any other one I've ever been in, although it's the first time in 26 years I haven't been on the ballot. *[Laughter]* This is something like the 140th campaign event I've done this year. And I've done these things for individual House Members and Senators and for a Senate and House committee and for the National Democratic Committee, which basically benefits directly Al Gore and Joe Lieberman. And of course, I've made a little extra effort in New York—*[laughter]*—where I have more than a passing interest in the outcome of the race. *[Laughter]*

The new joke around the White House is that, now that my party has a new leader and my family has a new candidate, my title should be changed to Cheerleader in Chief, and I'm quite happy with that. But I want you to know, first of all, I hope you remember what Lois

said, and I hope you remember what Susan said about this election.

I worked as hard as I could, and Lord knows, the people of California have been good to me, from the June '92 primary to the general election in '92 to the overwhelming mandate I got here in '96. And we've worked very hard to turn this country around and to beat back the reaction to what we were trying to do that was manifest in the Gingrich revolution and the Republicans taking over the Congress and many of the extremist things that have been done over the last 5, 6 years.

And we've had a great deal of success in actually getting affirmative things done, because, as you're about to see, when the Congress gets ready to go home, if the Democrats stick with me even though we're in the minority, we get a lot of what we want. Otherwise, nobody gets to go home. *[Laughter]*

So we work all year long just to sort of keep our heads above water waiting for the last 3 weeks, and then we all sit there like calm Buddhas—*[laughter]*—waiting for the results to come in. So watch it, and see if we can pull it off one more time.

But now, the American people really do have to decide. I mean, they really have to decide whether you think they're right or we are. There will be an effort at bipartisan cooperation no matter what happens in this election, because if we win the majority, it won't be so big that we won't have to work with them. We might even win the Senate back; but if we do, it will just be by a seat or so.

I do believe that the Vice President and Joe Lieberman will be elected, and they should be, because they have a better plan and they've got a better record and they've got a better direction.

But you have to understand, I know better than anybody alive now the enormous consequences of every single seat in the House and every single seat in the Senate. And I cannot even begin to tell you, especially for the House, what a difference it makes to be in the majority. Because I can give you example after example, over the last 5 years, when we had enough Republican votes, voting with our side, to do things, and because of the way the rules work in the House of Representatives, we couldn't even get a vote on a measure, just because we weren't in the majority.

I could give you example after example where, because we weren't in the majority on these committees, amendments were put into bills weakening the environment or undermining the public health or the long-term public interests of America, where we couldn't get them out because, by the time they actually got to the floor, they were in some big defense bill or some big other bill that Lois and everybody else had to vote for because you can never explain to people at home why are you voting against education or against health care or against defense. And because we weren't in the majority on these committees, all that underbrush was in there.

And this is really important, and the American people now have to decide, because we actually have a chance, because of our economic prosperity and because crime is down, welfare is down, teen pregnancy is at a recorded low, every social indicator, virtually, is going in the right direction. We have a chance to build the future of our dreams for our kids. We can have a health care system that really serves everybody, in the ways that Lois said, with a Patients' Bill of Rights and the Medicare drug issue for the seniors. But also, we can do a lot more for people that don't have health insurance, to make it affordable for them to buy it. There are still over 40 million Americans that don't have it.

We can actually provide a world-class education for all of our kids. I've been working in education for all of our kids. It's not like—I've been working in education for 20 years, and a lot of the teachers here will tell you that there have been 20 years of hard work of trying to figure out how do you deal with a more and more diverse student body from more and more different and often very difficult home backgrounds and get a world-class education out there.

And we had a lot of ideas for a long time, but we now have lots of research that shows us how to do it. I was in a school in Harlem in New York City the other day that 2 years ago—listen to this—2 years ago 80 percent of the children in this school were doing reading and math below grade level. Two years ago—a failing school by any standard. Today, 2 years later, with a new principal, a school uniform policy, the smallest class size policy, a strong—you know, very high standards and accountability—2 years they went from an 80 percent

failure rate to 74 percent of the kids doing reading and math at or above grade level—in 2 years.

Now, that can be done everywhere. But you've got school after school after school where the kids are piled up in housetrailer out behind the buildings. You've got school after school after school in our cities where the average school building in many of our cities is 65 years old—New York City is still heating schools with coal-fired furnaces from the late 19th century—where they can't hook the schools up—the classrooms up to the Internet because the buildings won't take the wiring.

So we can do this. But we have to make a decision that we're going to make education a priority. We have to make a decision that we're going to make our health care a priority.

We have clearly proved that you can grow the economy and improve the environment. And yet, there are explicit commitments in this campaign from the other side to roll back the environmental advances of our administration. They say we're hurting the economy, so they want to relax the air rules, relax the water rules, repeal my order setting aside 43 million roadless acres in the national forests, review all the national monuments I set aside. They probably oppose what I'm going to do to protect the lands of the Big Sur today when I leave here.

And you have to decide, because if we win 12 seats in the House of Representatives, they can't do it. Simple as that. There are vast consequences here—education, health care, the environment, crime policy. Crime's gone down 7 years in a row. It will be 8 years this year, longest drop we've ever had, lowest crime rate in 27 years, gun violence down 35 percent. Now, they have said that, notwithstanding the evidence, our approach is wrong. [Laughter] "Don't bother me with the facts. We don't like what you're doing."

So, you have to decide if you want more sensible things—to keep guns out of the hands of kids and criminals, and you want more community police on the street. Most people think this is just about the minor little combat I've had over the last several years with the NRA. That's not true. They've also promised to repeal our bill that first put 100,000 police on the street and have now put another 50,000 people. They say that's not the business of the Federal Government.

All I know is, these cities couldn't afford the cops, and since we put them on the street, they prevented crime from happening and kept more people out of trouble in the first place, and this is a safer country, and you have to be safe to be truly free. So there's a huge difference here. You have to decide.

We can get this country out of debt in 12 years, unless we give away too much in a tax cut and spend another trillion dollars to partially privatize Social Security. Don't forget that in this debate. Whatever the tax cut number is, when you hear them debate, whatever the Republicans say their tax number is, it's a little bigger than they say. But you have to add a trillion dollars on top of that. Why? Because if we partially privatize Social Security and half the young people in this audience, let's say, under 50—that's young to me—[laughter]—if you're really young, you will learn, the older you get, young is somebody who is a day younger than you are—[laughter]—and half the people take their 2 percent payroll and put it in some sort of mutual fund—most of you do better; not all of you would. And then someday, we'd have to come around and pick up the pieces of the people that didn't. But they promise to give everybody the benefits they've got already under the present system if you're 55 or over. So if you take a lot of money out of the system but you still have the same payment commitments—right—you've got to put the money right back in from somewhere else.

It's a trillion dollars over a decade, plus, their tax cut. If you do that, forget it. The country is not getting out of debt. Interest rates will be about a percent higher every year for a decade. Under the Democratic plan championed by Al Gore and Joe Lieberman, if you have interest rates one point lower over a decade, do you know what that's worth to you? Compare this to the tax cut promises they make. If you keep interest rates one point lower, \$390 billion in lower home mortgage payments; \$30 billion in lower car payments; \$15 billion in lower college loan payments. Or, if my math is right, that's about a \$435 billion tax cut in lower interest rates by continuing to pay down the national debt.

It's interesting. I never thought I'd live to see the day that the progressive party in our Nation's Capital was the more fiscally prudent one, because that's progressive politics: to give people—everybody benefits from lower interest

rates. And I haven't even said how much money you'd save in business loans and how much it would do for the markets and all of that. So you have to understand there are huge consequences.

I've done everything I could do to leave this country in good shape. But when Al Gore stands up and says, "You ain't seen nothin' yet," that is not just a campaign slogan. I'm not on the ballot, and I believe that. I believe that.

And look, why do I believe that? Because we've turned the thing around. It takes a long time to turn a country around. It's like a big ocean liner, and you have to work at it steadily all the time. Why did the *Titanic* hit the iceberg? Because they couldn't turn around in a split second. They did see it coming.

So we took our time. We got this thing turned around. It's going in the right direction. But all of the great stuff is still out there.

I was just playing with Lois' grandson. You know, there are young people in this audience who will have babies over the next decade that sometime in the next 10 years, they will come home with babies that will have a life expectancy of 90 years, because of the human genome project. We will be able to predict for infants with their gene maps whether they are likely to develop certain kinds of cancers or other kinds of maladies, and we will then shortly know what kinds of things can be done to minimize—you can't eliminate risk or make people live forever—we will be able to dramatically minimize the health hazards that are predictable in our genes from birth. And when that happens, it will have the biggest boost in life expectancy we've ever seen.

That's the good news. But what are the rest of you going to do with all of us old codgers running around here in 30 years? [Laughter] We're going to have to totally rethink what old age is. We're going to have to—you know, we made a big step on it this year when the Congress voted to repeal the earnings limit on Social Security. We have to rethink this.

And we're going to have to totally rethink the nature of our obligations to our children. And we're going to have to get all this information out there and take advantage of it and still protect your privacy rights, because I don't think anybody ought to get your health records if you don't say yes. I think that's important.

So I think it would be a good thing to have somebody who was a highly intelligent nurse,

who knows about education, who understands these issues in the Congress, quite apart from California and her particular district and everything else. And I think you have to really think about this. I mean, I know I'm preaching to the saved today. You wonder why am I going on, because you already are for her, right? [Laughter]

Here's why: Because this is a very tough, competitive district. We already went through one fight together in order to hold on to her seat. And most of the people who vote on election day have never been to one of these events. They've never given any money to a Republican. They've never given any money to a Democrat. They've never been to a campaign rally. Maybe they see a few TV ads. Nobody ever comes up to them personally and says, "You know, I know Lois Capps, and I'd like to ask you to vote for her, and here's why: one, two, three." Believe it or not, that does not happen to most people.

And so, I thank you for your money—[laughter]—but if you live in her district, I hope you'll take some time between now and the election to tell people this is a huge election. In some ways, this is a more important election than '92 was. It certainly is one that requires more thinking. In '92 California was in trouble; the country was in trouble. You took a chance on me, but as I was always say, hey, it wasn't that much of a chance, because we were in a ditch, right? We had to do something different. [Laughter]

Now, people have to actually make a decision. What are we going to do with all this good fortune? And are we going to be disciplined and thoughtful and think about how our children are going to be living 20 years from now and do these big good things, or are we just sort of—kind of wander through and pretend like it doesn't matter?

I'm telling you, I'm not running for anything. I will not be in office. All I want to do is

to give the best gift I can to my country. We cannot squander this. In my lifetime, we have never had a chance like this to build the future of our dreams for our children, and what you need is people who are voting on election day who understand that they have to go in there and that every vote counts.

If they call this Presidential election on the East Coast, an hour and a half before the California polls close, whether you talk to somebody to tell them it was important to go vote for Lois might turn the tide in these Congress races and whether people think it matters for them to go vote. So I just implore you, if you cared enough to come here and contribute today, care enough to take every opportunity you can between now and election day to tell people about her, about the issues between the two parties, about the Presidential race. Talk to people about it. Make them think it's important.

I think it's finally beginning to sink in on people that they've got some big decisions to make. I saw yesterday that more people have followed the Presidential election than the Olympics. That is good for the health of America, but you need to participate in that.

And I'm telling you, I've been in this business for a long time. I basically like most of the people I've known in public life, including most of the Republicans I've known—most of them I like better than they like me. [Laughter] But I've never known a better human being than this woman, ever. And I want you to help her.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:36 a.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to reception hosts Ted and Susan Harbert; State Senator Jack O'Connell; State Controller Kathleen Connell; and Representative Capps' daughter, Laura. Representative Capps was a candidate for reelection in California's 22d Congressional District.

Remarks to the California League of Conservation Voters in Bel Air,
California
September 24, 2000

Well, Ruth has given me a lot of gifts over the years, mostly tapes of great old rock-and-roll songs. [Laughter] But I'm very grateful for this.

And I want to thank you, Ruthie, and Fran Diamond and Wendy James. I thank Rampa Hormel and Hilda Solis for their leadership. I really want to thank Carole and Phil for letting us come to their home on this beautiful, beautiful day and share it.

I thank all the officials that are here, those who have been introduced. But I want to say again to all these congressional candidates—Michael Case, Susan Davis, Gerrie Schipske—of course, Hilda—and my long-time friend Jane Harman. Thank you for running for the Congress, to give it back to the American people and to give our natural heritage back to the future.

I want to thank you for this award but, more importantly, for your leadership on environmental and resource issues. I basically have always thought Presidents shouldn't get awards. I thought that the job was reward enough. But you know, as I get ready to move out—[laughter]—this will look really wonderful in my home. So I do thank you. [Laughter]

The work we have done on conservation is among the things I'm most proud of as President. Ninety-four years ago today—exactly today—Theodore Roosevelt designated America's very first national monument, Devil's Tower, in Wyoming. He set us on a path of conservation a century ago that we are working to make stronger.

For more than 7 years now, Al Gore and I have fought to do that, most of the time with a Congress that was very hostile to our environmental objectives. We believed always that we could grow the economy and improve the environment. And we believed, in a larger sense, that if we didn't deal with the big challenges of climate change and other pollutions, that economic growth would turn in on itself, sooner or later anyway.

So over the last 8 years, we've cleaned up 3 times as many toxic waste dumps from neighborhoods as the two previous administrations did

in 12. We've taken the most dramatic steps to improve the quality of air in a generation. We've also improved the quality of our water and our drinking water with major new legislation. We made record investments in science and technology designed to reduce the threat of global warming.

You heard Ruth say some of the things we have done in California. We've had the national monuments designed to preserve the redwood forest, the coastal lands and waters. We had a big conference on preserving the oceans on the Monterey Peninsula a couple of years ago. We've begun to do some significant things to try to recover the quality of the oceans, particularly those that are near us.

There is a dead spot in the Gulf of Mexico the size of the State of New Jersey today because of pollution and runoff that will have significant adverse impacts on marine life over the long run if we don't do something to deal with it.

I was honored to create the national preserve in the Mojave Desert and to expand the Pinnacle Monuments, as Ruth said. We've done this from the Grand Canyon to Yellowstone to the Florida Everglades. And we have already set aside over 40 million roadless acres.

Today we took another big step by protecting almost 800 acres of the southern gateway to Big Sur. I'll never forget the first time I saw it 30 years ago. It's a coastline we value not just for its breathtaking views but as a home for endangered species like the steelhead trout and Smith's blue butterfly. And thanks to funds provided by the lands legacy initiative the Vice President and I have worked for, for the last several years, we are able to make this gift to the future.

I want the National Government and every community in our country to be able to have the resources to make gifts like this well into the future. That's why I have asked Congress to provide permanent funding for our open spaces and pass the "Conservation Reinvestment Act," CRA, that would significantly boost our lands legacy initiative.