

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee/Democratic Business  
Council Luncheon  
September 29, 2000

Thank you. I don't know what I feel about getting all those golf balls. [Laughter] Is he telling me I should quit working altogether? He should at least tell me that he expects me to live long enough to lose all of them. [Laughter]

Thank you very much, and thank you for the warm welcome. I want to thank John Merrigan, who has been a wonderful friend to me and a wonderful friend to the Democratic Party, a generous and indefatigable person. And he got us a clap for everybody else, but he really deserves a lot of the applause today. Thank you.

I thank Bill Berkley and the other chairs and the vice chairs. The only thing I don't know about that I've seen today is that story that John told about Paul Equale in the steam bath. [Laughter] I thought he was going to say that he offered to get dressed if the guy would give him \$5,000. [Laughter]

Anyway, I want to thank Jason and the staff and all the folks here from the Democratic Party—Janice Griffin, Carol Pensky, Andy Tobias, Loretta Sanchez, and Ed Rendell. And I thank Ed for his generous remarks, but he has also worked like a demon this year.

It is true that in the early part of this election cycle, when the polls didn't look so good and everybody was in sort of a constant state of hand-wringing, I kept telling Ed, I said, "Just send me out there. I'll tell them it's going to be all right," because I believed it. And as John said, I told him that every election has its rhythm, and you have to wait for it. That's true. Every election is almost like a different symphony being written by the American people, and the language is always the same, just like musical notes, but you have to go and listen to the people and hear them, the way they speak, the way they talk, the way they feel about what this is. But also, the American people nearly always get it right if they have enough time and enough information. And that's why we're all still around here after over 200 years.

I always felt, as anybody here who talked to me about it, that this election would be all right, because I knew Al Gore and because I know what the underlying realities are. I know the country is in better shape than it was, that we're

moving in the right direction, that people want to keep changing in that direction. And I know, and I feel even more strongly now that Joe Lieberman has joined the ticket, that these two leaders will be very good for America. And I think the American people will agree with that on election day, and I'm very grateful.

But I know something else, too, which is that our friends on the other side suffered a time or two in this election process because they were already picking out their offices in the West Wing. You know, they thought it was over. They thought that they had won some kind of contest based on the tilt of the press for a given month or so or whatever. And I like all kinds of contests. I like sports—I don't know why; I'm not very competitive—[laughter]—I love the Olympics. I don't sleep enough when the Olympics are on. But one of the things I really love about the martial arts is that the opponents always bow to each other before the contest begins. And why do they do that? To remind them that you should always respect your adversary, never take anything for granted, and that anyone can be defeated.

What do you think the odds were on the Wyoming farm boy defeating that Russian wrestler for the gold medal? He wasn't as svelte, and he hadn't gone 13 years without losing a match. But you breathe that thin air long enough, and you lift all that heavy farm equipment and bales of hay and do all the things you do, you develop an enormous aerobic capacity—[laughter]—that all the weightlifting in the world can't overcome. And, poof! There he was.

I say that to say that this whole decision is ultimately in the hands of the American people. And make no mistake about it, they can make any decision they want. So it is well for us to remember to be like the martial artists and bow out of respect for our adversaries and for the process and then work like crazy and don't leave anything out there on the floor on election day.

I don't think I've ever worked any harder in an election than I'm working this time, for the last year. It's kind of interesting because it's the first time in 26 years I haven't been

on the ballot. [Laughter] Maybe I'm just celebrating. Who knows? [Laughter] But I've enjoyed working for Al and Joe, and I've enjoyed working for Hillary and a lot of other individual House and Senate Members and for the Democratic Party and for our Senate and House committees. I know we're going to be outspent. We always are. We were outspent \$100 million in 1998. We won anyway. And the lesson of all this in public life is that you don't have to have as much money as your opponent, but you do have to have enough to make sure your message is out and that, if there's an incoming assault, you can answer it. Then if they have more, it's nice for them, but it's not the end of the world for you. If you have a better message, better candidates, and clarity of choice, you can still win.

So I thank you for your help. And I thank you for the support you've given me these last 8 years and the opportunity that I have had to serve. I'd like to ask you to think just for a minute or two about what you're going to do when you leave here, between now and election day, because I don't think it's enough for you to contribute. I think that this is an election in which there is still some elasticity, in which people are still trying to get a handle on the issues and the candidates. Although it's beginning to settle down and settle down in a way that's good for us, we have to keep working.

And I have always had a simple theory about this election. It's not very complicated. I think if people focus on where the country was 8 years ago, where it is today, what kind of change they want, and they can keep thinking about not the stuff that occupies the daily headlines but who will make the decisions that will be best for my country, my community, and my family, and they clearly understand the honest differences—we win.

To the extent that people forget about where we were 8 years ago, where we are now, what kind of change they want, who would make decisions that are best for the Nation, the community, and the family, we have more difficulty.

Now, since I'm not running, I can say this. I get frustrated from time to time. Vice President Gore got a lot of bad press early on in the election, and then he wins all the primaries, and all of a sudden he's a genius again. John Kennedy once said, "Victory has a thousand fathers, and defeat is an orphan." Then, after our convention, he gave a terrific speech, and basi-

cally the Vice President's speech at the convention showed what I think the theme of this election was. In 1992 it was about the economy. In 2000 it's about the issues. People understand that they're hiring someone to make decisions that will affect their lives and our future, and they want to know what you're going to do if you get the job. I think that's a very healthy thing.

And so he had a big boost there because he actually said, "If you hire me, here's what I'll do." And now you've had an interesting thing the last 3 or 4 weeks where, first of all, Governor Bush was just getting pulverized, you know, and people were saying they were the gang that couldn't shoot straight and all that. And then they want to argue about the Vice President's mother-in-law's medical bills or some—but that comes after the Bush people say, "Oh, you're being too mean to us. The press is liberal"—which they hate, which is, by the way, manifestly not true. [Laughter] And I don't blame them. The press shouldn't like it when people level untrue charges against them. I don't like it. You don't like it either.

So then Gore gets a little of the treatment Bush was getting. But the truth is, I think all this stuff is fluff on the surface. Let me tell you what I think. I think both these people are good Americans who love their families and love their country and will do their best to do what they believe is right, if they get elected. Now, that's what I believe. And I believe that, based on over 30 years of working in public life.

Politicians, by and large, are better people than they are made out to be. Most of them are honest. Most of them work hard. Most of them try to do the very best they can. If you want to make a good decision, you have to know what the real consequences of your choice are, not what the superficial consequences are, based on whatever the sort of issue of the day is designed to make you think that one or the other of them is too craven, too dumb, too this, too that, too the other thing. That's all a bunch of hooley.

Now, you might not want to hear this. You may want to think, "Our guy's all good. Their guy's all bad." That's a bunch of bull. Most people in public life will do their best to do what they think is right. And I believe that the Vice President and Senator Lieberman should be elected because they've got more relevant

experience; they've got a record of greater success; their ideas are right, and the things they want to do will have better consequences for the American people than their adversaries. That's what I believe. And we ought to argue that case, because that's something that means something to the American people, to every business person and working family and—[*ap-  
plause*].

Let somebody else spend all their time sort of psychoanalyzing them or trying to find some bad thing or another thing to say or making jokes, or something like that. We don't have time for that. Let's talk about how this is going to affect our future.

Now, today, I have the great pleasure, as Ed Rendell said earlier—I've had three announcements this week that have made me very happy. First, we announced that this year the budget surplus would be \$230 billion. It was projected to be a \$455 billion deficit when I took office. And that was good. And over the last 3 years, we will have paid down \$360 billion on the national debt.

Then the next day we announced the poverty figures, which show that poverty is at a 20-year low. It's under 10 percent for seniors for the first time in our history. Median income in America is above \$40,000 for the first time in our history; and after inflation, income has increased by \$6,300, more than 15 percent, since 1993. And the gains in the last couple of years for the lowest income Americans and for minority Americans have been greater than the average gains in percentage terms.

Then, today I announced that in 1999, for the first time in a dozen years, we had a reduction in the number of uninsured Americans, almost 2 million fewer uninsured Americans, largely because in the 1997 Balanced Budget Act, we passed the Children's Health Insurance Program for kids of lower income working parents who were not poor enough to be on Medicaid but whose parents could not afford health insurance. And we had one of those parents there today, she and her husband and their two kids—they had a little 6-year-old boy, a darling little boy with asthma, that they could never have properly cared for and kept their jobs. Because they're in the Children's Health Insurance Program, both parents are still working; both kids are doing fine. The little boy and his sister have health insurance. And there are

2.5 million of those kids out there now, in 2 years.

So the last social indicator that wasn't going in the right direction, is now. Now, there is a dramatic difference from State to State in how many kids have been enrolled, but as one of the major papers pointed out in an analysis a couple days ago, it's almost exclusively due to whether the States are making the appropriate effort or not.

So the big question is, now what? What do we do with the surplus? How do we keep the economy going? Can we continue this expansion? Can we spread its benefits to the people and places that have been left behind? Can we now take on some of the big, long-term challenges of the country? The aging of America: When all us baby boomers retire, two people working for every one drawing Social Security and Medicare. The children of America: The largest and most racially and ethnically and religiously diverse group we've ever had, can we give them all a world-class education? The families of America: Can we actually find the ways to balance work and childrearing for all working families?

There are a lot of other questions. Can we meet the challenge of global warming, which the oil companies admit is real now, and still grow the economy, something we're very sensitive to now because the price of oil has gone up? How much can we do in conservation? How much can we do with alternative energy development? Are fuel cells a realistic alternative, and when will they be in cars, and how much mileage will they get? What kind of new energy sources do we need, and how do we do it without messing up the environment? These are the things that are going to affect your life.

How are we going to continue to increase trade in the rest of the world in a way that gets the support of ordinary citizens, so we don't have a riot every time in every city we have a meeting of the World Trade Organization or somebody else, some other international group? These are the huge questions that will shape the 21st century. Will the discoveries of the human genome, which will soon lead to a life expectancy, I believe, at birth of 90 years in America—will we be able to spread those benefits to all people and still protect the privacy rights of Americans who will have all their medical and financial records on computers?

So I ask you to think about that. To me, this election ought to be a feast for the American people. We have worked for 8 years to turn this country around and get it going in the right direction. So now you've got the longest economic expansion ever and the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years and the lowest minority unemployment rate ever recorded and the highest homeownership in history, highest small business rate of creation in history—every year we break records—lowest crime rate in a quarter century, lowest welfare rolls in 32 years.

So what are we going to do with all this? This election should be an exuberant experience for the American people, including those that are still in distress, because they know there is something we can do about it now.

And what I want to ask you to do is to think about anything you can do between now and November to talk to the people that you know and live and work with, who will never come to an event like this but who have every intention of voting. They're good citizens. They know they ought to show up and vote. They want to make the right decision. They'll watch at least one of the debates. They'll follow this on the evening news and in the newspapers. But what is the choice here?

And we have very different views, and we ought to talk about it. We have a very different economic policy here. The Vice President wants a tax cut of about \$500 billion over 10 years. Governor Bush wants one of \$1.6 trillion over 10 years. Most of you would make more money out of the Republican tax cut. Why are you here? [*Laughter*] You've got to be able to answer that. You get more money up front out of their tax cut.

What's our argument? Our argument is, number one, we have responsibilities to our children and education and health care and the environment. We're going to have to spend more money on national defense. We've already put another \$100 billion back in defense, and Vice President Gore has promised to put, so far, twice as much as Governor Bush has. Why is that? Because we got a big benefit from the end of the cold war, but because we had to deploy our forces in a lot of places, we cut the procurement of new weapons and old equipment back to keep up training, to raise pay, to provide for quality of life, to keep recruitment up because it's harder to recruit people into

the service when they can make more money doing other things.

We want to have a tax cut the American people need and can afford, but he knows we have to invest in other things, and we should do it in the context of keeping this debt coming down, running a surplus every year until we get this country out of debt over the next 12 years, for the first time since 1835. Now, that's why you're here. That's your answer to the business people. Why? Because if you do that, as opposed to—now keep in mind, the projected non-Social Security surplus, the most liberal number is \$2.2 trillion. That's the Congress. We think it's much smaller, at 1.8. If you do a \$1.6 trillion tax cut, that leaves you \$600 billion, right, for 10 years, if all the rosy scenarios are right.

Now that, however, scenario assumes that Government spending does not grow at inflation plus population, which it has done for 50 years. If that happens, that takes away another \$300 billion. That leaves you \$300 billion. Then it assumes that we will not extend the tax credits that are in the law now, like the research and development tax credit. Since the high-tech industry has accounted for one-third of our growth, with only 9 percent of the employment, don't you think we ought to extend it? Of course we should. So we will.

And it assumes, furthermore, that as incomes grow, we won't bump up the level at which the alternative minimum tax takes effect. You really think we're going to let middle-class people start paying the alternative minimum tax, so they don't get the basic tax deductions? Of course we're not. That's another \$200 billion. That leaves you with \$100 billion left.

Then he's proposed a partial privatization of Social Security, which means all of you under X age, let's say 40, can take 2 percent of your payroll and go invest it in the market and try to earn more money than you could from Social Security. The problem is, Social Security runs out in 37 years. So as you take yours out, I'll be retiring, and he's going to promise me that I can keep all that I'm guaranteed under the present law.

So what do you have to do? You have to fill up the hole of everybody taking their payroll tax out. That costs at least \$900 billion. So you're \$800 million in the hole before you spend

a penny for education, health care, the environment, or whatever else. That's why most economic advisers believe that interest rates will be a percent lower under the Gore plan than under the Republican plan. One percent lower interest rates will have a huge impact on business loans, business investment, job growth, income growth, the stock market, not to mention \$390 billion in lower home mortgages, \$30 billion in lower car payments, and \$15 billion in lower college loan payments.

I think our economic plan is better. I hope you can argue it. It's clear to me that this is the right thing to do.

We have a different education program. Both sides are for accountability. We're for accountability-plus. We think we should hold people accountable, but we ought to give them the tools to succeed—after-school and preschool for all the kids who need it, modernize schools, 100,000 teachers for smaller classes in the early grades. People can make up their mind which one they think is better, but they need to know what the real differences are.

There are vast differences in health care policy. Look, here's what the Patients' Bill of Rights is about—and I can say this because I've actually supported managed care. When I became President—everybody has forgotten this now—inflation and health care costs were going up at 3 times the rate of inflation. It was about to bankrupt this country. We had to manage our resources better. But as someone who has supported it, I know that with any institution in society, if you're not careful, you forget about what your primary mission is. The primary mission is to save as much money as possible, consistent with the care of the patients.

So we say we ought to have a Patients' Bill of Rights, and it ought to cover everybody. They say we ought to have suggestions that don't cover everybody. And to be fair to them, they say, "We don't want to do anything else to add to the cost that business bears and that people bear in health insurance." So a lot of you are interested in that. Now, their Congressional Budget Office says—not me, they say—that it would cost less than \$2 a month a policy to fully implement the guarantees of the Patients' Bill of Rights. That's what they say. I would pay a \$1.80 a month to know that when you leave this hotel room, if, God forbid, you get hit by a speeding car, you could go to the nearest emergency room and not have to pass three

to get to one covered by your plan. I would pay that, and I think we should.

So that's a real difference. And we don't have to hide around—we can argue it both ways, and you should hear them. Let them say what they think. But let's not hide the differences.

This Medicare drug issue is a very interesting issue. If you live to be 65 in this country, you've got a life expectancy of 82. We know that pharmaceuticals can keep people alive longer and improve the quality of their lives. We know there are lots of people choosing between food and medicine every day. We know this.

Now, so we say, "Look, we've got the money now under Medicare." When I was elected President, Medicare was supposed to go broke last year. We've added 27 years to the life of Medicare already. We have a plan to add more. We'll have to reform it some. But we say we ought to have a voluntary prescription drug benefit under Medicare, which has 2 percent or less administrative cost, totally voluntary, but everybody that needs it ought to buy it.

They say, "Well, it might cost more than the Democrats say." I'll make the best case for their argument. They say, "It might cost more than the Democrats say. So let's cover up to 150 percent of poverty, and then everybody else can buy insurance, and we'll give them a little help." Their side sounds pretty good. And why would you deny poor people, the poorest people the right to have health insurance?

Here's the debate. Over half the people who can't afford their medicine are above 150 percent of the poverty level. That's only about \$16,000 for a couple. Over half the people who need the help are above there, number one. Number two, after all the fights I've had with the health insurance companies, I've got to hand it to them. They have been scrupulously honest in this debate. They have told us over and over and over again, you cannot design an insurance policy that is affordable to people that won't bankrupt us on medicine.

The State of Nevada has already adopted the present Republican plan. Do you know how many insurance companies have offered drug insurance under it? Zero, not one. But I've got to give it to them. Evidence never phases them. They just go right on. I kind of admire that. *[Laughter]* You know, I kind of admire that. "Don't tell me about paying down the debt and 22 million jobs and all this." Say, "Here's the right thing to do. Don't bother me with the

evidence.” [Laughter] But the truth is, we tried their plan, and it doesn’t work.

Now, here is what is really going on. What is really going on is that the pharmaceutical companies badly don’t want our plan, but they don’t want to act like they don’t want older people who need medicine not to have it. And they’ve got a real problem. They do have a real problem. Here’s what their real problem is. Their real problem is, they’re afraid if we have a Medicare drug program and we enroll a lot of people in it, we will acquire so much power in the market that we’ll be able to get drugs made in America almost as cheaply as the Canadians pay. [Laughter]

Now, to be fair to them, it is—here’s their real problem. Look, I’m not demonizing them. I’m glad we’ve got these pharmaceutical companies in our country. I’m glad they find all these lifesaving drugs. I’m glad they provide good jobs to people. I’m glad they’re here. They do have a problem. You know what their problem is? It costs a fortune to develop these drugs, and they can’t sell them in other countries, except under very rigorous price control regimes, in Europe and other places. So the reason that Americans have to pay too much is, they have to recover 100 percent of their research and development costs from American consumers, because of the price controls in other countries. However, once they do that, they can still make good money selling those drugs in other countries.

So I’m sympathetic with their problem. But there’s got to be another way to solve their problem than keeping American seniors without the drugs they need. So that’s the difference in our two positions. You’re not going to read this in the paper very often. They all argue about this other stuff. If you strip it all away, that’s the truth.

And you don’t have to demonize anybody. They have a problem, and they’re worried about losing the ability to recover high profit margins from American sales of drugs made in America, because they can’t recover them overseas, even though once they do recover them from us, they can make a lot of money selling the drugs at discounts overseas. That’s the real issue. Nobody’s explained this to most Americans.

I think the Vice President is right. I think the most important thing is, take care of our people. We have tax benefits. We do a lot of medical research on our own that helps the

pharmaceutical companies. So we’ll find a way to solve their problem, but let’s don’t keep old people without the medicine they need. Provide the medicine. We can afford it. Do that, then focus on this other problem. Let’s get our priorities in order. There’s a big difference between the two parties, and I think we’re right, and I think they’re not.

But how are the American people going to know, unless somebody clarifies this? And there are lots of other examples, on the environment, on arms control. We’re for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and they’re not. You talk about something that could affect your kids future. This is big. This is not some sort of casual walk in the park deal here.

So here’s the main point. You’re leaving here. I hope you feel good about what you’ve done. I hope you will continue to feel good about it. I am profoundly grateful for the support you’ve given me and the reception you’ve given me today and the kind things that have been said. But in America’s public life, the subject is always tomorrow, not yesterday. That’s why we’re still around here, after all this time. The subject is always tomorrow.

I worked as hard as I could to turn this country around and pull this country together and get us pointing together, toward tomorrow. In fact, I think the biggest difference between our parties is that even though they have dramatically modified their rhetoric, and to some extent their substance—and I’m grateful for this—we’re still far more committed to one America than they are. That’s why we’re for the hate crimes bill, the employment nondiscrimination legislation, equal pay for women, stronger enforcement of civil rights, because we think we’ve got to go forward together.

But the point I want to make to you is, every one of you will come in contact, probably, with hundreds of people before the election, that will never come to an event like this. And you need to promise yourself when you walk out of here today that you are going to do something every single day to make sure not that people think ill of our opponents but that they clearly understand the choice before them. And I am telling you, if everybody understands that the Democratic Party believes every American counts, everybody deserves a chance, we all do better when we help each other, we’re committed to change, and here are the changes, and here

are the differences—if they understand that, then the election will take care of itself.

Trust the people, but give them clarity of choice and the information they need. You can do that with more than your money. Every one of you has lots of friends. You're going to touch a lot of people between now and the election. If you do that, we'll have a great celebration November 7.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:46 p.m. at the Mayflower Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to

John Merrigan, chair, Jason Bovis, director, and Paul Equale, vice chair, Democratic Business Council; Bill Berkeley, chief executive officer, W.R. Berkeley Corp.; Janice Griffin, chair, Women's Leadership Forum; Carol Pensky, finance chair, Andrew Tobias, treasurer, Loretta Sanchez, general cochair, and Edward G. Rendell, general chair, Democratic National Committee; Rulon Gardner, U.S. Olympic gold medalist, super heavyweight Greco-Roman wrestling; and Republican Presidential candidate Gov. George W. Bush of Texas.

## Remarks at Press Secretary Joe Lockhart's Last Press Briefing and an Exchange With Reporters September 29, 2000

*The President.* Most people think Joe's leaving for purely selfish, monetary reasons, but the truth is, he told me that I was no longer in enough trouble to make it interesting for him—[*laughter*—that getting up every day and going to work and making policy and helping the Democrats, you know, it's boring him to tears. [*Laughter*] And he said he couldn't stand to be alone in his office crying anymore, and so he had to leave.

So I have one little gift for him, a memorial of our one and only day playing golf together. [*Laughter*] It happened a couple of weeks ago. Here's Joe. [*Laughter*] And the caption is, "Joe, typical day as Presidential Press Secretary, lost in the weeds." [*Laughter*] "Unlike the press corps, I'll give you a mulligan." [*Laughter*]

Let me say seriously, I know what a difficult job this is, and I know it takes a toll on everyone, and I know Joe's spent a lot of time away from his wonderful wife and beautiful daughter, who are here. I remember when I appointed him, there was all this yapping about whether he was heavy enough to do the job. [*Laughter*] He leaves with *gravitas* and gravity toss—[*laughter*—and a lot of gratitude.

I know that I have a different perspective than the members of the press corps, but I've been following this business a long time, a long time before I showed up. I don't believe I've ever seen anybody do this job better. I admire

you. I'm grateful to you. I'll miss you, and I'll try to keep you bored. Thank you, friend.

*Press Secretary Lockhart.* You don't have to hang around for this part. You don't really want to talk to them. [*Laughter*] I'm still on the clock. [*Laughter*]

*The President.* You want us to go? Well, wait, I've got to do one thing. I have a gift for your successor, Jake. [*Laughter*]

[*At this point, the President presented Press Secretary-designate Jake Siewert with a helmet.*]

*The President.* They're going to try to get even with you, and they're also going to try to get even for everything they couldn't get away with with Joe, so I thought you ought to have this. I hope you'll wear it to your first briefing. [*Laughter*]

*Press Secretary-Designate Jake Siewert.* I worked enough on the Dukakis campaign not to put this on. [*Laughter*]

*The President.* Joe?

*Press Secretary Lockhart.* No, I won't put it on. [*Laughter*]

### Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, can I ask you, I guess on a serious note, about the violence in Jerusalem, and what that might mean to the peace process, and whether you would like to contact Chairman Arafat to see what you can do?

*The President.* I'm working on all that right now, but I think the less I say about it, the