

Remarks at a Reception for Hillary Clinton in New York City October 22, 2000

Thank you very much. I want to thank Susie, who has been such a wonderful friend to Hillary and me for so many years now. And I want to thank Amy and Jeffrey and Harvey and all the others who spearheaded this event tonight. It's a beautiful testimonial to Hillary, and I'm delighted that it could be in this wonderful old theater.

I want to thank Sir Elton John for being good enough to come and be with us tonight and congratulate him on his smashing success in the last few days. This will be the second time he has performed during the Clinton administration; the first was at the state dinner for his Prime Minister, Tony Blair, where he and Stevie Wonder commemorated a truly historic night of Anglo-American partnership.

I want to say, too, very briefly, because we are all here basically to have a good time and see each other—and I hope that Hillary and I can visit with all the rest of you before you leave—because there are so many of you here who have been not only important political supporters of ours but very good friends over the last 8 years and, in some cases, from long before.

Hillary and I are delighted that her mother and Chelsea could be here tonight. This is sort of a family day we've had in New York, and I have been to Binghamton and Watertown and Alex Bay today in my capacity as Cheerleader in Chief in this election. *[Laughter]*

And I just want to tell you a couple of things very briefly. First of all, I believe on November the 7th, Hillary will be elected, and I believe Al Gore and Joe Lieberman will be elected. And I think a lot of you are asking me what you're supposed to say, and I think you should say three things about the national election.

First of all, if you want to keep the prosperity going, you only have one choice, because our team wants to give the folks a tax cut they can afford, keep investing in education and health care, and get rid of the national debt, which will get interest rates down. Their side is promising everybody the Moon: a huge tax cut, a huge privatization of Social Security, and a lot of spending, and it doesn't add up. The numbers don't add up. And if we go back into

debt, we tried it their way for 12 years. You remember that? We quadrupled the national debt. That's why I got elected President.

So if we give them one more chance, they might give us a whole generation of Democratic Presidents, but it's not worth it to do to the country. And you need to tell people this. We tried it our way for 8 years. We tried it their way for 12 years. Our way works better. If you want to keep it going, you better vote for Al Gore and Joe Lieberman and Hillary.

The second thing you ought to say is, "If you want to build on the social progress of the last 8 years, you've got to vote for Al Gore and Joe Lieberman and Hillary." What do I mean by that? The crime rate is at a 26-year low; the murder rate is at a 33-year low; the gun violence rate is down by 35 percent because of the Brady bill, the assault weapons ban, putting 100,000 police on the street.

Now, you all know where they are on the Brady bill and the waiting period. That's why Charlton Heston has a starring role in this election. Did you hear what he said yesterday? The most important election for gun owners since the Civil War. Some guy said they ought to lynch Gore. He said he'll supply the rope. Look, this is serious. It isn't true that Al Gore and Joe Lieberman want to take anybody's guns away, but they don't want kids and criminals to have guns. That's what this is about. It's also about, they want to get rid of 100,000 police. We're trying to put 100,000 teachers in the classrooms. They want to get rid of them.

We have given the American people cleaner air, cleaner water, safer food, more land set aside than in any administration except for Theodore Roosevelt. They want to weaken the air rules and relax the protections I've given to public lands. See, it's not like you don't have a clear choice here. We proved you can clean up the environment and improve the economy. They want to reverse that policy.

Same thing in health care, and Hillary will talk a little more about that. We've got a decline in the number of people without health insurance for the first time in a dozen years because of our Children's Health Insurance Program.

But all the things that we want to do to build on that, they're not for.

So if you want to build on the progress of the last 8 years, if you like the fact that we're a safer country, that we're an environmentally cleaner country, that education is improving, that health care is getting better, you don't have any choice, you've got to vote for Gore/Lieberman and Hillary.

And the third thing, and the most important thing to me, is if you believe as I do that the most important mission of any society is to build a unity, an affirmation of our common humanity, beneath all the lines that divide us, all the diversity in this society that makes it an interesting place to live, you really have to vote for Gore/Lieberman and Hillary. Whether it's equal pay for women or the hate crimes bill or the employment nondiscrimination bill or preserving a woman's right to choose or just preserving a philosophy on the Supreme Court that the National Government ought to be able to protect the basic health and welfare of the American people.

The next President is going to get two appointments. *Roe v. Wade* is hanging by one vote. And a majority on this court has already voted to invalidate the ability of Congress to pass the Violence Against Women Act if it requires the States to do anything. That's a theory that prevailed 70 years ago in the 1930's.

Now, you've got to go out and talk to people and make sure they understand this. If you want the economy to keep growing, if you want this society to keep making progress, and if you want America to keep coming together instead of being driven apart, you only have one choice.

And this should be a very happy election. The country's in good shape, and the best stuff is still out there. Yes, we have problems. There will never be a time on Earth when people are around that we don't have problems, because we all have imperfections, so there will be problems. But we will never have another chance in our lifetime like this.

Which brings me to my appointed duty. When Hillary was approached—when Senator Moynihan said he would not seek reelection, and Hillary was approached by a number of members of the New York congressional delegation over a year ago now to think about running for the Senate seat once held not only by Senator Moynihan but by Robert Kennedy, and then a lot of other people in New York started

to call her, she said, "Do you think we ought to consider doing this?"

And so first I gave—we went through the same drill that I go through when a young person comes to me and says, "I want to run for State legislature," or something. I said, "Can you stand losing? Are you prepared to win, to do what it takes to win? And do you know why you want the job, for some reason or another bigger than yourself?" And she had good answers to that. And then I said, "Well, are you prepared to give up what could be our last—what will be our last year in the White House, when we could have a good time, we could take all these trips together? We could do all these things together—memories of a lifetime." And "Get up to upstate New York and find out what's wrong with the economy. Get out to Long Island and find out why they're worried about some of their health care problems."

And we debated it, and I said, "I think you should not think about how you'll feel the day we leave the White House. You ought to think about how you'll feel a year after we're gone," because public service has been her life.

And one other point I would like to make, a lot of you who have known her a long time will identify with this. I don't get—you know, I feel nothing anymore when somebody attacks me. I'm sort of callused over. I can even stand it, normally, when somebody attacks Hillary now. But I am enraged when I hear somebody say that she wouldn't be up here running for Senator for New York if she weren't First Lady. If she hadn't spent the last 30 years of her life working for children and families and charitable causes and other candidates, mostly me, she could have been doing this 20 years ago.

And what I want to say to you is, I am very proud of the race she has run. I am proud what she has done in the White House, to advocate for children, for families, for women's health, to build the largest historic preservation movement in our country's history around the millennium celebration, to visit more countries, to work for peace in the Middle East, peace in Northern Ireland, to support our troops in the Balkans when they stood up against ethnic cleansing and took the first critical steps that were pivotal to the eventual elimination of Mr. Milosevic from the political scene over there. I am very proud of all that.

Of all the people I have known, the hundreds and hundreds of people I have known in public life, she has the best combination of brains and heart and consistent dedication and the ability to get things done of any person I have ever known, anywhere in public life. She will be a worthy successor to Senator Moynihan, Senator Kennedy, and a great partner for Chuck Schumer.

Come on up, Hillary, and give them a speech. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:36 p.m. at the Hudson Theatre. In his remarks, he referred to

reception host Susie Tompkins Buell; Jeffrey Katzenberg, founder, Dreamworks SKG Studios; Amy Rao, president, Integrated Archive; Harvey Weinstein, president, Miramax Films; entertainers Elton John and Stevie Wonder; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; Dorothy Rodham, the President's mother-in-law; Charlton Heston, president, National Rifle Association; and former President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Interview With Chris Bull of the Advocate September 27, 2000

Hate Crimes Legislation

Mr. Bull. Thank you for agreeing to this interview. I thought we'd jump ahead in the questions a little bit, because I noticed this morning at the press briefing you talked about the hate crimes legislation and opposition to including sexual orientation in it.

There was the front page of the Washington Post today, a man walks into a gay bar in Virginia and starts shooting. With all the evidence about this particular aspect of hate crimes, why is there still so much opposition in Congress?

The President. First, let's talk about the good news here. There's 57 votes for it in the Senate and about 240 votes for it in the House. Virtually all the Democrats, but four or five of them, are for it. And we've got 41 Republicans on a motion to instruct the conferees to leave it in the defense bill. So there's no question that we now have a majority for it.

How would it not be included in? The leadership of the Congress and the leadership of the Republican Party is still well to the right of the country on this issue. Same thing in Texas, you know, they could have had a hate crimes bill after James Byrd was killed, if Governor Bush had just lifted a finger for it. But he was unwilling to take on the rightwing in his own party, and so it died.

And it's the same thing in Washington. If the leaders of the House and the Senate can be persuaded to instruct their conferees to fol-

low the will of the majority, it will prevail. If it doesn't prevail, it's because the leadership of the Congress and the leadership of the Republicans is still to the right of the country on the issue.

Matthew Shepard

Mr. Bull. As you may remember, the murder of Matthew Shepard, the student in Wyoming—

The President. I remember it vividly.

Mr. Bull. —really changed the way Americans see hate crimes against gay people. What was your initial reaction to that murder?

The President. Well, I think it was particularly horrifying and heartbreaking because he was so young and so small and the way they killed him was so graphic. But it did galvanize the country. You know, the American people are fundamentally decent. But like human beings everywhere, since the dawn of time, they're afraid of something that's profoundly different from the life they know and the experiences they've had.

Usually, the way civilization progresses is something happens that forces people to see things in a different way, in a more human way. And that's what Matthew Shepard's death did. I think the fact that his parents, who are obviously not leftwing activists, just mainstream, hardworking Americans, became advocates for the hate crimes legislation and the fact that that