

Remarks at a Dinner Honoring Senator Pete V. Domenici in Albuquerque
August 15, 2001

Thank you all very much for that warm New Mexican welcome. Gosh, we've had a great day in Albuquerque, haven't we, Pete? We've had a great day. It's really fun to travel with such a decent man around your important city. I'm really glad I came. No better way to end it than to urge the good folks of New Mexico to send this good man back to the United States Senate.

I appreciate Congresswoman Heather Wilson for being here. We need to send her back, too, by the way. She's plenty capable. So is my friend Joe Skeen. I'm honored that Joe came up and worked today with us as well. I want to thank your Lieutenant Governor and all the State officials who joined us today.

I particularly want to thank Bill Keleher and John Dendahl for their leadership of our party. I want to thank my friend Ken. Where are you, Kenny? Thank you so much for your leadership on this event, and thank you for your friendship. You've done a great job. Sherolyn Smith, Rick Alvidrez, I want to thank you all for setting up this event. And I want to thank each and every one of you for contributing to Pete's reelection. It's really important that you've done so.

Like you, I can't believe anybody would dare run against him. *[Laughter]* But somebody might be foolish enough to—in which case, we need to send the message that when you get a good, decent man representing an important State, send him back in Washington; keep him in Washington.

The thing I've learned about Pete Domenici, he's a man of great passion. He's a passionate person. He's passionate about subjects that are dear to his heart. He's a national leader—along with his beautiful wife—in mental health. It's an important issue. And by the way, we both married

pretty darn well. *[Laughter]* I'm sorry my wife isn't here. She's holding down the fort in Crawford, Texas. I like to tell people that I love my new address, but I also love my home. It's important never to forget where you came from. I came from Texas. I will serve my time in Washington, and I'll return back to Texas.

Pete's passionate on research. He's passionate about research in New Mexican laboratories. Trust me. *[Laughter]* He's been to the Oval Office a lot. *[Laughter]* By the way, it's important to have a Senator who can come into the Oval Office representing your State. You want a Senator who will have the President return his phone calls. He talks about making sure New Mexico stays on the leading edge of important research, and you've got a President who's listening to him, by the way.

Pete is passionate about the budget. He's brought fiscal sanity to Washington, DC. You see, the tendency in Washington is to want to overspend. Sometimes people forget up there, they're not spending the Government's money; they're spending the people's money. And Pete is a fiscal watchdog for the taxpayers' money.

Pete is passionate about his family. It's important to have a person in Washington, DC, who loves his family. As a matter of fact, there's nothing more important for America than family. Pete personifies family. Pete loves the people of New Mexico. He's passionate about the people of New Mexico, like he's passionate about the State of New Mexico.

It's important to have a passionate American representing your State, but he's also more than that. He's a man of enormous dignity and integrity. And this Nation needs more leaders that set good examples for our young, like Pete Domenici.

I've got a selfish reason for getting him back up there. I need his help. *[Laughter]*

We're working on some important agenda items for the American people, and we're making good progress, but there is more to do.

You know, when I went up to Washington, I was a little disturbed at the tone that was taking place. I can remember sitting in Austin, Texas, being perplexed and disturbed by the rancor and the bitterness that seemed to have constantly gripped our Nation's Capital. And I made a determined effort to go change the tone. We can disagree in Washington, but we should do so in a respectful way. We need to respect each other more. We need to hold up the American people more than we hold up our own political parties, it seems like to me, to get some things done. And we're making good progress.

One of the areas where we're making good progress is the budget—it is to say to the American people through our budget, “We're going to be responsible with your money.” As Pete mentioned, we've inherited some problems. But what the heck, I like to solve problems. That's my job. And one of the problems we inherited was an economy that was sputtering along and slowing down. And one way to make sure that we kick-start our economy is to give people their money back. And so we campaigned on, argued for, and I had the honor of signing in the White House the largest tax reduction in a generation. It was necessary. And it's the right thing to do.

You'll hear them screaming up in Washington, “Oh, we're running out of money.” Well, that's because they want to spend every single dime that ever gets up there. You'll hear people say, “Well, the surplus is going away because of the tax cut.” No, folks, the economy is slowing down, which means we have less projected money, and that's why we needed tax relief, money back to people who are going to help kick-start this economy.

And I want to remind you of something. We still have the largest surplus—second largest surplus in the Nation's history. And

we're still paying down more debt than ever paid down before in our Nation's history. And the tax relief plan was eminently fair.

See, it used to be up there in Washington they'd say, “Well, we're going to pick and choose the winners and losers when it came to tax relief. You get tax relief. You don't get tax relief.” The attitude of Senator Domenici and myself and the members of the congressional delegation who are here said, “If we're going to have tax relief, let's provide tax relief for everybody who pays taxes.” And that's the fair way to do it. It's a responsible, fair tax program.

We also sent a clear message to small-business owners and farmers and ranchers when we said, “We need to get rid of the death tax.” The death tax is unfair to people who have built up a business. The death tax is unfair to the small-business owner who wants to leave a business to a son or a daughter. The death tax is unfair because we're taxing entrepreneurs and producers twice in America. The Tax Code not only reduced all rates and provided tax rebates, it also got rid of the onerous death tax, which is going to make the code more fair and more responsible.

Now, we're going to have a fight over the budget coming up. And fortunately, we've got a good man named Domenici who is going help fight off the big spenders. They will push for more money here, and they'll push for more money there. But I want to remind you, the growth in the budget that Pete passed out of the Senate, and was concurred by both the Senate and the House, provides responsible growth in our budget. And I can assure you, Mr. Chairman—or I wish would be Mr. Chairman—[laughter]—should be Mr. Chairman, and will be Mr. Chairman after next 2002—and I want the Members of Congress to hear that once we set a budget we're going to stick by it. And if not, I'm going to use the veto pen of the President

of the United States to keep fiscal sanity in Washington, DC.

Today we had the pleasure of going to an elementary school, first day of school. Gosh, it was exhilarating to shake hands with the first graders and the second graders that were just showing up. Their mothers and dads were thrilled to get them back in school, it seemed like. *[Laughter]* The teachers were great. They were all excited. And my message to the folks assembled there was this: that education is a domestic priority of mine. I know it's one of Pete's, as well. It's so important we get it right in America that every child gets educated.

We passed a good bill out of the House and a good bill out of the Senate. And I hope they don't play politics with it. They need to get the conference committee, get the bill resolved, and get it on my desk. And let me explain to you some of the principles involved in the education bill.

First, it trusts the local folks to run the schools. I strongly believe in local control of our schools. I believe we need to pass more power and flexibility and authority out of Washington to the folks in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The bill does that.

There's some wonderful programs in the bill. One of them is a reading initiative that my wife is all involved in, and I'm passionate about. I'll never forget the phrase of Phyllis Hunter in Houston, Texas. She stood up in front of a large crowd of people, and she said, "You know, Governor"—and I was Governor then—she said, "Governor, reading is the new civil right." I believe that. I believe reading is a civil right. I believe when you can learn to read, then you can learn, and then you can access the American Dream.

The sad thing is, too many of our children can't read. And I intend to do something about it. Not only have we targeted money for diagnostic tools to make sure we determine whether or not young children have got problems that we correct early, before it's too late, we've got teacher-training money; we've got intervention

money. But the core of the education bill is accountability. The core of the education bill says that if you receive any taxpayer's money, you must measure. You must show us whether or not children are reading and writing and adding and subtracting.

Now, I know there's a lot of—oh, you hear all kinds of arguments about whether or not that should take place. Some will say, "Well, you can't measure because it means there's too much Government." My attitude about that is, is that if we're spending taxpayers' money, it seems like we want to know whether or not it's working. It seems like it makes sense to ask the question, what are the results? And there's no more important place to ask, what are the results, than whether or not the children of the United States can read or write or add and subtract.

And then there are those who say, on the accountability system, it is racist to test. Folks, I'm going to tell you as plainly as I can, it's racist not to test, because guess who gets left behind in a system where there's no accountability? It is so easy to quit on a child whose parents do not speak English as a first language. It's so easy to walk into a classroom full of the so-called hard-to-educate and say, "Let's don't test. Let's just move people through."

We cannot have a system that doesn't hold each child as precious. And so the cornerstone of reform coming out of Washington, DC, is more money, focused money, but as well, the demand for strong accountability, so that we can praise the teachers and principals and superintendents who are getting it right but, as importantly, blow the whistle on failure when we find children trapped in schools that won't teach and won't change. There are no second-rate children in America and no second-rate dreams.

Pete mentioned we're making progress in bringing some sanity to America when it comes to an energy policy. This country has drifted along without an energy policy. And we laid out a good, constructive plan.

It's a plan that says, we can do a better job of conserving our resources. And the Federal Government is beginning to take a role. We're making sure that we purchase vampire-defeating devices. A vampire is a device like a charger for a telephone. When you plug it in a wall and your phone may not be in there but the charger is, it still eats a lot of electricity—or more than it should. Some entrepreneurs came along and invented a device that uses 7 times less energy. So we're going to start using those devices to set the example that we can do a better job of using technology to save.

But California is the State that's got the best conservation record in the country, and yet, they ran out of energy. *[Laughter]* Now, one of the things they're doing is, they're building 12 more powerplants. And that's great, and our Government has helped them. We've expedited the permitting of the plants. Those plants are going to require natural gas to power them, and we've got to get the gas from somewhere. And so, on the one hand, we need better conservation. On the other hand, we need more exploration for the resources. I'd like us to be less dependent on foreign sources of energy. I think it's going to make our foreign policy a lot more—*[applause]*.

Washington has been struggling with what they call Patients' Bill of Rights for the last couple of sessions. I made up my mind we're going to get a good Patients' Bill of Rights out of the Congress, one that heralds the relationship between patient and doctor but one that doesn't encourage frivolous and junk lawsuits that will cause people to lose their health insurance. We got a good bill out of the House, a not-so-good bill out of the Senate. And I'm hopeful we can get—finally get a good Patients' Bill of Rights to begin meaningful reform of our health care system in America.

The Vice President and I spent a lot of time in the campaign—and by the way, he's doing great. And what a heck of a

selection I made. As he likes to put it, "Who said those three electoral votes in Wyoming don't matter?" *[Laughter]* What really matters, he's a steady hand. He's capable.

We said we're going to make sure that our military remains strong and ready. In one of my trips overseas, I went to Kosovo, and I signed another pay raise for the troops. It's important to make sure those who wear the uniform are well paid, well housed, and well treated. We're doing a much better job in America of treating our folks right. We've got big budget increases in defense.

But I also want you to know that ours is an administration that believes in vision, that there's got to be a plan. So I've asked Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld to develop a strategic vision for what our military ought to look like today and what it ought to look like tomorrow to keep the peace; how we can remain strong and ready this moment and, as importantly, how we can use technologies to devise a military that will be harder to find, more lethal when it moves, easier to move, and that will incorporate the new technologies so that we don't waste taxpayers' money when it comes to building the weapons systems of the future.

One of the things that—as you've probably read about, is that I believe that, as we go into the 21st century, we need to have new strategic relations with some of our old enemies. I had some fascinating meetings with Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia. I told him in plain terms—I said, "Mr. President, you don't have anything to fear from the United States. We're a peaceful nation. We don't view you as our enemy. The true threats facing the United States are threats from terrorist nations, nations that they call rogue nations, nations that are developing weapons of mass destruction that may be pointed at us, may be pointed at our friends the Israelis or other allies we have, to hold us hostage, conduct international blackmail. That's the

true threat, Mr. Putin. And therefore, we need to get rid of those ancient treaties, codified during a time when we hated each other, so that America can develop the technologies and the defenses necessary to protect ourselves and our allies from the true threats of the 21st century.”

The ABM Treaty is outmoded, outdated. It codified a hateful relationship that no longer exists. We need to move beyond the days of the cold war and free this great freedom-loving people to provide protections for freedom-loving people from all around the world by getting rid of the ABM Treaty once and for all.

We have told our friends and allies around the world we will consult with them, and we will. And I told Mr. Putin, “Come along with us.” It’s a chance to set up a new strategic relationship. And we’ll see how it goes. I think we’re making pretty good progress. My point to you is that we’ll remain strong when it comes to our military and wise when it comes to our planning and ready when it comes to the true threats that face the American people as we head into the 21st century.

And finally, I had a fantastic meeting today with members of the faith community here in New Mexico. Archbishop, thank you for being here today, sir. And I want to thank Pete for inviting folks to come and to hear me discuss the philosophy behind a Faith-Based/Community-Based Initiative.

We’re moving beyond the old welfare paradigm in America. I gave a speech at Notre Dame and talked about the fact that another Texas President gave a graduation speech and talked about a welfare help plan, and that was Lyndon Johnson, and the Great Society began. And then there was welfare reform signed by my predecessor that said, “People must be independent in America, and you’ve got to work.” And it had some successes; it really did. A lot of folks went from welfare to work, but there’s still more work to do. There’s a lot of people in our society who

hurt, a lot of people who really have no hope. Gosh, I remember one of the times I was at a juvenile justice facility in Texas, and I was talking about the American Dream. A little fellow who had been incarcerated said, “What does that mean? What is an American Dream?” He doesn’t understand dreaming. He doesn’t understand setting goals.

There’s a lot of hopelessness, lot of addiction, lot of people lost. And we’ve got to do something about it in America. We’re too good a people to allow that to continue. But what Government cannot do is change hearts. Government can’t inspire. We’re good for law. We can spend money, but money isn’t the only answer. In many cases, the lost soul needs somebody to say, “I love you,” or to put your arm around you and say, “America is meant for you.” We need mentors all across America saying to young children whose parents may be in prison, for example, “I care about you. I want you to understand somebody cares.”

And so one of the most important initiatives that we’re discussing in Washington is how do we unleash the great passion and compassion of America. How do we unleash those who have heard the call to love a neighbor like they’d like to be loved themselves, those not inspired by Government necessarily but inspired by a higher calling. The people of faith who live in every neighborhood across America must not be feared by our Government, but energized and welcomed when it comes to healing those lost souls. It’s a powerful initiative because it taps the great strength of America. And the great strength of America lies in the hearts and souls of our citizenry.

I can’t tell you what an honor it is to represent the people of this country. My dream is for us to be a more responsible nation, a nation when the moms and dads of the world understand their most important job is not their day job but the job of loving the children they happen to have

brought into this world, and love them with all their hearts and all their souls.

But a responsible nation also requires corporate America to be responsible. It requires all of us to be responsible to shepherd our resources well. And as importantly, it requires all of us to ask the question, if we see a neighbor in need, shall we not—shall we make sure we don't cross to the other side of the road? Shouldn't we as a responsible citizen help a neighbor and not expect Government to do so? Shouldn't we find out areas where we can help somebody who's crying out for help? And the answer is, in this country, absolutely. But responsible societies begin with responsible leaders.

And that's why I'm so proud to support Pete Domenici for the United States Senate again. He understands responsibility. He lives it every single day. And my hope is that the good people of New Mexico

don't make a terrible error. My hope is the good people of New Mexico send this good man back to Washington, DC, with a resounding victory.

Thank you all for having me.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:05 p.m. at the Sheraton Old Town Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gov. Walter Bradley of New Mexico; Bill Keleher, campaign chairman, People for Pete Domenici; John Dendahl, chairman, Sherolyn Smith DeSantis, second vice chairman, and Ken Zangara, Bernalillo County chairman, Republican Party of New Mexico; Rick Alvidrez, board of directors member, Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce; Nancy Domenici, wife of Senator Domenici; Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan, Archdiocese of Santa Fe, who gave the invocation; and Phyllis Hunter, consultant, Texas Reading Initiative.

Statement on the Floods in Thailand *August 16, 2001*

I am very saddened to learn of the tragic deaths that have occurred as a result of on-going flooding in northern Thailand. This disaster, which has already claimed more than 100 lives, is particularly cruel because it occurred during a holiday weekend, when many Thais had traveled to their hometowns and villages. The American people join me in sending our condolences to all those in Thailand who have lost loved ones, suffered injury or other loss as a result of the flooding. Our sympathy for the Thai people at this difficult time is heightened by our common experience with recent flooding, casualties, and destruction.

The United States stands ready to assist the Royal Thai Government and the Thai people to respond to the effects of the flooding. Our Embassy in Bangkok is in the process of providing emergency support, through the Thai Red Cross, to the initial relief efforts. I hope that our assistance, and the lasting friendship of the United States with the Royal Thai Government and the Thai people, will be helpful as Thailand works to overcome the tragic effects of the flooding.