

Remarks With Judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg and an Exchange With Reporters

August 3, 1993

The President. Good afternoon. My fellow Americans, today we heard the sound of gridlock breaking in Washington, and I liked what I heard. Today the Senate passed our national service program, one of my top legislative priorities. Within months, thousands of young people will be at work in their communities helping our country and helping to pay for their own education. And middle class students everywhere will have an easier time affording college.

Also today, the Senate Judiciary Committee voted unanimously to confirm Judge Louis Freeh to be Director of the FBI. This support for a crime fighter of iron will and unshakable integrity affirms that he is clearly the right person for the job.

But I am most gratified today by the overwhelming vote in the United States Senate to confirm Judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg to be Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court. Too often in the past, judicial nominations have prompted a partisan brawl and generated more heat than light. Today we've put aside partisanship, and the national interest won out.

I have no doubt that Ruth Ginsburg will be a great Justice. She has the opportunity to move the Court not left or right but forward. Her legal brilliance, wisdom, and deep devotion to justice has brought our Nation together around her nomination. When I announced her appointment, she spoke about her grandchildren. Someday, I believe my grandchildren will benefit from and learn from the contributions she is about to make.

We've done some good work today, but there's more to do. Tonight I will address the Nation about my plans to put our economic house in order. I hope that my remarks will be persuasive. But this afternoon, I just wanted to take a few moments to congratulate now Justice Ginsburg and to give her a chance just to say a sentence or two about this very important day in her life and the life of our Nation.

Judge Ginsburg. I am so glad to be part of what has been a very good day for the

country. And last time I was here I don't think there was an opportunity for any questions. So if one of you has a question, I'll do my best to respond.

Q. Justice Ginsburg, what do you think that you'll bring to the Court that has not been present before in the Court? What insights, what experience, what background?

Judge Ginsburg. I think you must reserve judgment. I'll do the very best I can in this job, and then you can write a review of my performance in a year or so from now.

Q. You've been called a liberal; you've been called a conservative; you've been called a moderate. What are you?

Judge Ginsburg. I think you could report on that, too. But I don't believe that every child that's born alive is either a little liberal or else a little conservative, except in Gilbert and Sullivan.

Q. But you're not a child.

Judge Ginsburg. That's every child that grows to become a woman or a man, yes.

Economic Program

Q. Mr. President, even though this is Justice Ginsburg's moment, could we ask you what you hope to accomplish with your speech tonight? What persuading do you need to do? What misperceptions perhaps are there?

The President. Well, I think there is still a continuing job to do to make sure the American people know again exactly what is in this program and why I think it is good for the country, and what it means in terms of our long-term economic health and well-being to regain control over our economic destiny; to keep interest rates down; to have these economic incentives to create jobs; to lift the working poor out of poverty; to enable us to move on to deal with health care, with welfare reform, with an important crime bill. All these things will help to strengthen our efforts at economic recovery. And therefore, this moment in this debate is very, very important because it's decisionmaking time, not delay time. And I hope that I can persuade the American people that that time has come.

Q. Mr. President, throughout the budget process, people have seemed to be able to roll you and get away scot-free. Senator Boren, the prime example, got you to back

away from the broad-based energy tax and now says he won't support the deal. That begs the question, sir, how can you expect people to support a very—or take a very politically difficult vote when there doesn't seem to be any penalty for those who won't?

The President. How can you expect me to answer a question which is not credibly put? He had a veto on the Senate Finance Committee, didn't he, because the Republicans refused to engage in responsible budgetary discussions? So I didn't agree to do anything. He didn't roll anybody. He exercised his vote, and his vote was enough. And that's the way the legislative process works, near as I can tell, from the beginning of the country. Now, perhaps you know more than I do.

You know, I saw a lot of people talking about Lyndon Johnson. When Lyndon Johnson was the Senate majority leader, a Senator could not introduce a bill unless he signed off on it. Would you like to return to that system? Would the press favor that? That would give us a little more party discipline around here if no Republican or Democrat should introduce a bill unless they signed off on it. I've done the best I can. I think we've got a very good program.

Look at the principles that we've got. Look what we started with. We've got \$500 billion in deficit reduction. We've got a very progressive tax program that asks, now, 80 percent of the money will come from people with incomes above \$200,000. The middle class, that is, couples with incomes of under \$180,000 down to \$30,000, will be asked to pay this gas tax. It's about \$33 a year. Families with under \$30,000 of income will be held harmless.

We have the economic incentives that we have long asked for: for small business, over 90 percent of them getting a tax break; the working poor lifted out of poverty; new investments for children and for families. This is a very good program very much like what I recommended and very different from what we've been doing for the last 12 years. And if it passes, I will be very glad. And to do it with no help from the opposition party will be remarkable.

Q. Do you have the votes yet for this plan? And you've been waging this full-court press now for several weeks, and it doesn't seem

to have persuaded any Senators to come to your side. Do—

The President. We'll wait—watch and see. See if we win.

Q. Why do you think you've had such a hard time persuading the Democrats in your own party?

The President. Well, I think for one thing, I think we've shown a lot more party cohesion than the Republicans have. You know, more Republicans voted against the House Republican budget than Democrats voted against mine. And last year, 75 percent of the Republicans voted against President Bush's budget. So I think we've done pretty well. And also they've had to do it against a withering barrage of misinformation from the Republicans, trying to convince people there were no budget cuts, no deficit reduction, all the taxes on the middle class, all things that were totally untrue that they just kept saying. I think that the Democrats that are with us have shown a remarkable amount of political courage.

It's hard to get people to be brave when they see for 12 years we took the debt from \$1 to \$4 trillion and reduced investment in our future. And people made those decisions and were rewarded by them by just always taking the easy way out. I'm not asking them to do something easy. I'm asking them to do something hard. And I'm proud of the ones that are doing it. And I think when they vote, there will be a majority. I feel very good about it.

Partisanship

Q. Mr. President, I don't want to detract from your beautiful day, but you said that partisanship had been set aside; but almost unprecedented is the way the Republican Party in both Houses has united against you on this bill. Do you think it's personal? Do you think that there is some—over and beyond the political implications?

The President. No, I think it's all politics. I think that the guiding spirit there is incredible partisanship. I think they think their job is to hurt the Democrats in Congress politically and hurt the President politically on this bill. I don't think it has anything to do with principle, and I don't think it's personal.

But I'll tell you this: I don't think it will happen again. I think if you look at Judge Ginsburg's vote; if you look at the national service vote and the fact that they didn't sustain the filibuster all the way through until we voted on the economic program; if you look at the genuine dialog that's occurred on health care; if you look at the bipartisanship we'll have on trade issues, on the crime bill, on welfare reform, and I think on future budgets; if we prove we can take the tough decisions now and we're rewarded for it by resuming control of our own destiny, I don't think we'll have this level of partisanship on any other issue.

Q. Why not?

The President. Because there will be no incentive for them to do it. The only way they can win with this strategy is if the Democrats don't adopt the program. Once this is done, all the rhetoric goes away and the reality takes place. People will see that the middle class are not burdened, that they're benefited by the program. They'll see that the wealthiest Americans who can afford to pay are carrying the lion's share. They'll see the spending cuts. They'll see the working poor rewarded. They will see the reality.

The only thing that benefits them now is delay and denial and more of what we've had for too long. And I think if we move tonight and move tomorrow and move the next day and move this week on this program, then we'll get this country back on a forward movement. The momentum will be there to face the health care crisis, to face the welfare crisis, to face these other problems. And I believe we will do it in a bipartisan manner. I'm very, very hopeful about it.

Thank you.

Address to the Nation

Q. So have you finished the speech already? Are you still writing or is it done?

The President. I'll fool with it some more, but I'm done.

Q. Is it a good speech, sir?

The President. I'll give the Judge Ginsburg answer: That's for you to determine. It's what I believe.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:44 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Statement on the Confirmation of Judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg

August 3, 1993

I am extremely pleased at the swift and determined action by the U.S. Senate in overwhelmingly confirming Ruth Bader Ginsburg to the United States Supreme Court. I want to thank Chairman Biden, Senator Hatch, and their colleagues on the Judiciary Committee and the Senate as a whole for prompt consideration of her nomination.

As President, I am proud of having nominated such an outstanding jurist who demonstrated in the confirmation process tremendous intellect, integrity, comprehension of the law, and compassion for the concerns of all Americans. I am confident that she will be an outstanding addition to the Court and will serve with distinction for many years.

Statement on Senate Action on National Service Legislation

August 3, 1993

I am extremely pleased by action taken today by the Senate in passing the National and Community Service Trust Act. I am also gratified that Republicans and Democrats were able to work together to turn this landmark legislation into reality.

National service will take on our Nation's most pressing unmet needs while empowering a new generation to serve as leaders of change. National service is about enhanced educational opportunity and rebuilding the American community. Most importantly, national service is about getting things done.

A number of Senators played crucial roles in helping pass this bill. In particular, I would like to thank Senator Kennedy for the leadership and dedication he has shown throughout this process. Thanks to the efforts of the Senate today and the House last week, young people will soon be serving their country in their communities here at home.

I've always said national service is the American way to change America. I commend the United States Congress for taking action that will prove that true.