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Remarks in Dyersburg, Tennessee

August 31, 1996

The President. Thank you. Wow. Well, I asked you not to leave, and you didn't. Thanks for staying. We got here as quick as we could.

I want to thank the mayor and everyone who worked hard to make this event possible today. I thank the two bands for bringing us the music. Thank you very much.

I think you can see that Tipper and Hillary and Al and I have a good time when we're out together, when we're on the road, and when we're with the people who put us in the White House that we've been working for and fighting for for 4 years. And we thank you for being here today. It's wonderful to just to look out here and see you.

I want to thank Congressman Tanner and Governor McWherter, Houston Gordon, Bill Purcell, Lois DeBerry, all the other people in Tennessee that are going across Tennessee with us. It is great to be back here in western Tennessee. I want to thank my friends from Arkansas who came across the border. There's a sign over there that says, "Rector, Arkansas, is still Clinton country." And that's good. I'll be home for a barbecue Labor Day 2001, I hope. [Applause] Thank you.

Ladies and gentlemen, Thursday night I had the enormous honor of addressing the American people from Chicago when I accepted the nomination of my party for a second term as President. I want to say to you again, briefly, what I said then. The choice in this election is whether we're going to build a bridge to the 21st century or try to build a bridge to the past, whether we think we have to go forward together as one people, helping each other to make the most of our own lives, or whether we're going to say, well, you're on your own and we hope you make it.

I think the choice is clear. Look where we were 4 years ago. Four years ago when Al Gore and I came and asked the people of Tennessee to give us a chance to lead this country, unemployment was higher, wages

were stagnant, crime was rising, our problems were being unaddressed, we had a rising wave of cynicism in this country, and we were literally in danger of losing the middle class dreams that made America great.

Four years later, we have 10 million more jobs, 4½ million new homeowners, 12 million people have taken advantage of the family leave law to have babies or take care of their folks without losing their jobs. October 1st, 10 million Americans are going to get an increase in their minimum wage; 25 million Americans because of the health reform bill I signed last week are going to be able to change jobs or even to lose a job without having their health insurance taken away from them even if somebody in their family's been sick or is still sick.

We've upgraded the standards for food for limiting pesticides that are dangerous on food. We've got 50 million more Americans breathing cleaner air than we had 4 years ago. I'm telling you, folks, this country is on the right track to the 21st century. We don't need to change tracks now; we need to keep on going down that track.

But we all know there is more to do. We all know there's more to do. The first thing we've got to do to build the right bridge to the 21st century is to make sure every single American has the chance to live up to his or her God-given potential. And that means we have to increase educational opportunity and performance in the United States.

Thursday night I proposed a program to put 30,000 tutors together with our AmeriCorps volunteers to mobilize a million people to make sure that every single American child can read on his or her own by the time they're in the third grade. It will revolutionize their performance later on.

I propose that by the year 2000 every classroom and library in every school in America will not only have the computers and trained teachers to use the computers we need but will also be hooked up to the information superhighway so that kids in every classroom in Dyersburg, Tennessee, for the first time in the history of the country can get the same information in the same time in the same way that children in the wealthiest school districts in the United States do. It has never happened before.

I propose by the year 2000 to make at least 2 years of education after high school as universal as a high school education is today, a tax credit for the cost of community college in every State in America. We can do that and make community college education universal.

I propose to give a \$10,000 tax credit for the cost of college tuition, and I believe that would be the best money we ever spent. If you're old or young or middle-aged and you need to go back to school to get more education and training, we ought to give you the chance to do it to help your families and build a strong America.

The second thing we've got to do to build a bridge is to keep this economy growing and keep it stronger. That means we have to balance the budget but do it in the right way, without gutting Medicare, Medicaid, education, the environment or weakening the potential protection of our people, as they tried to do when I vetoed their budget last year, even after they shut the Government down.

Will you stay with me in building that kind of bridge?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. And I do believe you can have tax cuts—look, the weather is a lot better than if it was so hot people were falling out. When I was on the train trip, we took 30 people out of one rally, it was so hot. They were all fine, they just needed a little water. So we're going to get a little water in advance. Crop prices are up. This won't hurt them any. This is good.

We can have a tax cut, folks, but it needs to be targeted to the people who need it for the purposes we need it, to childrearing, to education, to buying that first-time home. I'm for an IRA that you can withdraw from without penalty to buy a home, to educate a child, to deal with a health problem. I think you ought to be able to sell your home and never pay any taxes on the gain. I think you ought to be able to send yourselves to college or your children to college and never have to pay taxes on that money. That's our plan. But we pay for it all and balance the budget.

Our friends say, "We're going to give you more money. We'll give you a lot more money." They're going to throw money at

you; that's what they say. But what they don't say is, in order to pay for their tax cut, they have to have much bigger cuts in Medicare, Medicaid, education, and the environment than I vetoed the last time. They still won't pay for it. That means a bigger deficit.

What does that mean in Dyersburg, Tennessee, a bigger deficit? Well, look around here. It means a higher home mortgage payment because interest rates will go up. It means a higher car payment. It means higher credit card payments. And look at all these little businesses here. It means every time they want to borrow money they will have to pay 2 percent more on their money. It means fewer investments in small business and fewer jobs. We have to have a healthy small business economy if we're going to grow America, especially in the small towns. We want to keep interest rates low, not up.

I want to build a bridge to the 21st century that will enable all Americans to take care of their families. That's why we worked on health care reform and why, in our budget plan, we're going to be able to help families who lose their jobs to keep their health insurance for at least 6 months. That's why we're helping small businesses to make it simpler to take out pension plans for themselves and their employees and to keep them when you move from job to job. That's why we want to change the family leave law to say you ought to be able to take a little time off from work to go to your kid's parent-teacher conference or take your child to a regular doctor's appointment. That's the kind of thing we need to do to build this country.

Will you help us build that bridge to the 21st century?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Folks, I love seeing all of you here. I want to get out here and shake a few hands. But I want to ask you one more time. We want a bridge that's big enough, strong enough, and wide enough for everybody to walk across together. Will you help us build it?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Will you help us build it for 68 more days in this campaign?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Will you help us build it for 4 years after that?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Do you believe our best days are still ahead?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. God bless you. Let's go bring them home to America. Thank you. Bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:10 p.m. at the Courthouse Square. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Bill Revell of Dyersburg; Houston Gordon, candidate for U.S. Senate; and Bill Purcell, majority leader, and Lois DeBerry, speaker pro tempore, Tennessee House of Representatives.

Remarks in Covington, Tennessee

August 31, 1996

The President. Thank you. Thank you very much. You know, not only is Al Gore the most influential, effective Vice President in the history of this country, he now makes me look stiff. [Laughter] But I can deal with it. Thank you, Mr. Vice President. I think you can all see that Hillary and Tipper and Al and I love coming across this country and especially coming into western Kentucky.

I want to thank Mayor Bailey and the people of Covington; your great native son, Speaker Naifeh; and Houston Gordon and all the other people from western Tennessee for making us feel so welcome. Thank you, and God bless you.

Now, I know you've been waiting a long time, and I appreciate that, but there were so many people alongside the road we had to stop and shake hands with a few of them. There were thousands of them. They're Tennesseans, too, and they're Americans, too. I thank Congressman Tanner and Governor McWherter for being with us all along this way. I'm glad Mr. Trotter and Mr. Ford are with us; Lois DeBerry, who has been with us all along the way; Bill Purcell.

Ladies and gentlemen, I won't take a lot of your time. I spoke to the Nation on Thursday night from Chicago, and I said what I had to say. But I would like just to ask you a simple question. Will you help me build that bridge to the 21st century?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. I want to build a bridge that everyone has a chance to walk across,

which means we've got to have the best education system in the world for all of our children. Will you help me build it? [Applause]

The Vice President said that we do respect not only Senator Dole for his 35 years in Congress and his service to the Nation, but also Mr. Kemp and Mr. Perot. But we have differences. In the last 4 years we worked hard to make college loans more affordable to all of our people. We worked hard to give school districts more money for safe and drug-free schools and more money to stay open after school to give our kids something to do if they needed it in communities. We worked hard to put more children in Head Start.

We worked hard, in short, from beginning to end. And the people who led the fight against what we tried to do are the people who are now leading the fight against us in this Presidential campaign, including the nominee of the other party. I believe we were right, and they were wrong, and I think we're right for the future. I want to build a country in which every single third grader in the entire United States can read a book on their own. Will you help me do that?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. I want us to have an education system in which by the year 2000, in Covington, Kentucky, and every—now, wait a minute—in Covington, Kentucky, in Covington, Tennessee, Covington, Massachusetts, in every Covington in America, every single one, every child will have access not only to computers with trained teachers but with computers that are hooked up to the information superhighway so that everybody in America, whether in the poorest districts or the richest, has access for the first time ever to the same information in the same time at a level of quality never before true in our history. Will you help me build that bridge to the future?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. I want to build a bridge to the future in which 2 years of education after high school becomes just as normal as a high school education is today because we give a tax credit worth the tuition cost for the typical community college in every State in America, so we will finance 2 years of community college education for everybody who