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Remarks at a Reception for Senator Patty Murray in Seattle, Washington

November 22, 1997

The President Thank you very much. Ken, thank you for that wonderful introduction. I kind of wish you'd just finish the speech, you did so well. [*Laughter*] And Senator, thank you for your hospitality tonight and for your terrific statement and for a terrific record. Washington State should be very proud of Patty Murray. She has done a remarkable job.

I'd also like to say a special word of thanks to my dear friend, your outgoing mayor, Norm Rice, for all that he has done for you and for me. I wish Mayor-elect Schell well, and I pledge my cooperation. I thank Norm Dicks and Jim McDermott and Adam Smith for what they do for you and for our country in Congress. And I wish Brian Baird and Greta Cammermyer all the best in this election. I hope you'll help them.

Patty did such a good job that I almost feel like the sort of old saw about everything that needs to be said has been said, but not everyone has said it yet. [*Laughter*] But I would like to try to ask you to think about the issues she raised and the points she made and the work she's done in the context of where we are on America's journey.

If you just think back to 1992 when we were running for this job—I for President; she for Senator—our country was in a stagnant economy. We seemed to be increasing our social tensions. And we seemed to be drifting toward a new century and a new millennium and a very different time. Now, I don't believe that any person, even the most ardent partisan on the other side, could deny that America is in better shape today than it was 5 years ago.

It happened partly because of specific actions and specific votes and largely because of the enormously impressive efforts of all of our citizens all across this country getting up every day and trying to do the right thing. But it also happened, I believe, because we have been trying to pursue a common vision.

I ran for President because I wanted to reclaim the future for our children, because I wanted to restore a sense of possibility and confidence to people, that everybody who worked hard and did his or her best ought to have a chance, and because I really thought we had to do far more to prepare this country for the 21st century if we wanted to have opportunity for every responsible citizen, if we wanted to have a community of one America across all the lines that divide us, and if we wanted to continue to lead the world for peace and freedom and prosperity. I hope you have seen in the difficult week we have just had over the weapons inspections in Iraq how important it is for your country to continue to stand up for peace and freedom and security around the world.

So we started with this vision that we didn't have a person to waste, that everybody ought to have a part of our America, that we all needed to make ourselves into a common quilt of effort to prepare this country for the future, that we all needed to serve beyond our narrow ways in larger ways. And we knew that would require us to change. But one thing we had to change—what I thought was the completely irrelevant debate about Government in Washington, where one side said, ''We ought to keep on trying to do everything even though we don't have any money,'' and the other side said, ''Government is always a problem; we should do nothing.''

Our administration and Patty Murray—we said, now, ''We can't do everything. We're in debt. But we can't sit on the sidelines and let America drift and divide either. We are committed to a new form of Government that will create the conditions and give the American people the tools they need to make the most of their own lives. And we will do whatever we have to do to change our economic policy, our crime policy, our welfare policy, our environmental policy, our family policy, our health care policy, our foreign policy to meet the challenges of tomorrow. We're not going to freeze yesterday, and we're not going to allow ourselves to be divided. We're going into the future, and we're all going together.'' That is what we have said here.

Just consider this—Patty Murray mentioned the budget bill in 1993—we lost some people in the Congress, maybe some in Washington State, who had the courage to vote for the budget bill. Why? Because the

other party advertised heavily that we had raised the income taxes of ordinary citizens, that we were going to raise the deficit, bankrupt the economy, and it was going to be a disaster.

Well, the truth is that we cut taxes for 10 times as many people as raised them, including working people with children on modest incomes, that we reduced the deficit, that we continued to invest in education and our future. And 5 years later—we just got the latest figures—the deficit—before one dollar of the balanced budget plan is saved, before one dollar, based on the 1993 economic plan—has been reduced by 92 percent. Patty Murray was right, and they were wrong. The people who stood up were wrong. They were wrong.

In 1992, everywhere I went in America people were distraught about crime. They wanted something done about it. And I had learned already that the easiest thing in the world for a politician to do is to stand up in front of a crowd and talk about being tough on crime, and then you don't have to think anymore and, you know, just serve up some bill that raises sentences for some crimes and walk away.

But I was determined we could do better than that, and that we ought to listen to the police officers and the prosecutors and also the community workers who work with all these troubled kids all across our country, and let them write us a crime bill. And we did. And Patty Murray and I stood up for it. And all across the country, and in Washington State, there were some Members of Congress who lost their seats because the other guy said, ''They're trying to take your guns away from you. They're going to take your hunting rifle away from you.''

Well, in 1996, I had the pleasure of going all the way across this country, from New Hampshire, where it happened, to Washington State, where it happened, two States that voted for me and then voted people out over this gun issue. And I said, ''You voted people out in '94 over this gun issue. And if you have lost your gun, I want you to vote against me, too.'' [*Laughter*] ''But if you haven't lost your gun, one more time they did not tell you the truth, and you ought to let them know you do not appreciate it and send them a message.''

So the hunting seasons rolled on from Washington to New Hampshire. [*Laughter*] But 250,000 people with a criminal record or a serious mental health history couldn't buy handguns, and this is a better country because of it, and there are people alive on the streets because of it. And we've already put two-thirds of those police officers on the street, and the crime rate has gone down. It's a better country.

In welfare, on the other side they wanted to say, any able-bodied person——

[*At this point, an audience member required medical attention.*]

The President. I got my doctor coming to look; we're all right, relax—they wanted to say, ''Any able-bodied person that doesn't get a job in a certain amount of time should just be cut off welfare.'' We said, ''It's okay to make people go to work if they're able-bodied, but don't hurt their children. Don't cut off their medical coverage. Don't cut off their food coverage. Give them child care. Give them job training, and give them a chance to make a full life.'' That's what we said. And you know, a couple of vetoes, but we finally did it our way. We've had the biggest drop in welfare rolls in the history of this country. So I believe our side was right, and theirs was wrong.

On the environment, when they won the Congress in '95, they tried to implement the contract on America; their idea of the contract was get rid of all the environmental rules and regulations because they are bad for the economy. Our idea was you can make the economy better and the environment better. That's Patty Murray's idea. That's why she got such a big hand on Hanford—[*applause*].

The truth is, today, 1997, compared to 1992, we have 13.5 million more jobs, cleaner air, cleaner water, fewer toxic waste dumps, and a safer food supply. Patty Murray was right, and her critics were wrong. And you ought to send her back to the United States Senate on the basis of it.

So I guess my plea to you is, the people of Washington State have been good to Bill Clinton and to Hillary Clinton and to Al and

Tipper Gore. You voted for us twice. You've given us a chance to serve. But we need leaders in this battle who understand what local conditions are and what local concerns are and who stand up for the big national issues.

Patty Murray can come before the people of Washington and say, ''Compared to where we were, we've got the lowest unemployment rate in 23 years, the lowest crime rate in 23 years, the biggest drop in welfare rolls in history, a cleaner environment, and I support the direction that this country has taken. That is working.'' And, furthermore, let's look to the future. Who do you really trust to give every child in this State world-class education? Who do you really trust to make sure that we do everything we can to provide health insurance to the children in poor working families who don't have it? Who do you really trust to continue to fight these environmental battles and to deal with all these other things? Patty Murray.

I say this now, and every group of Americans I speak to, this is a democracy. There is a direct line of causation from your presence here tonight, the contribution you have made, the work you will do to what happens in Washington, DC, the decisions that are made, and how it echoes back all across America into every little hamlet in this State. This is a better country because the ideas and the values that Patty Murray espouses have dominated the American political landscape, and we are further toward the future, toward building that bridge to the 21st century because of it—more opportunity, more citizen responsibility, and a much, much stronger sense of community than if those who opposed her ideas and her votes had prevailed. So you stick with her, and we'll go there together.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:05 p.m. in the Pavilion at the Seattle Center. In his remarks, he referred to Ken Alhadeff, chairman, Elttaes Enterprises; Mayor-elect Paul Schell of Seattle; Brian Baird, candidate for Washington State's Third Congressional District; and Greta Cammermyer, candidate for Washington State's Second Congressional District. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Jean Chretien of Canada in Vancouver, British Columbia

November 23, 1997

President Clinton. I want to thank the Prime Minister for hosting this and for giving us the chance to come back to Vancouver. My family and I had a wonderful vacation here back in 1990, before I was President—back when I had a family life that was normal—and we loved it. This is a great place for the APEC summit.

I also want to thank Canada again for what I think is very probably the most cooperative relationship in the world in trade and investment and in the work we do in the environment and law enforcement. And I hope that as we look ahead to the new century, that the partnership that we've had, the cooperation we've had will be a genuine model that other countries will try to follow.

I think it's worth mentioning, Mr. Prime Minister, that we committed ourselves again to work to find a meaningful solution to the problem of climate change and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. We talked about our continuing commitment to secure democracy—democracy's roots and sustainability in Haiti. We discussed a number of other issues, and I wanted to say to you that I very much welcome these initiatives that were launched last April in Washington on how we can meet the environmental challenges of the future and how we can work to fight criminals who use cross-border telemarketing schemes to prey upon both Canadians and Americans.

And I wanted to reiterate, also, here in Canada that we discussed this issue of Pacific salmon, and our special representatives have been working hard to get these stakeholders talks restarted. I am committed to them. I think this issue has gone on too long; it's caused too much friction between our people. And I want to reaffirm to you publicly that I believe this process can produce an agreement in good faith and that I will do my part to implement it in good faith.

And finally, let me just thank you for your leadership in APEC. I am very, very pleased with the agreement which has been reached