AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

Last year, in my State of the Union Address, I asked Congress to support our plan to create hundreds of these partnerships between universities, colleges, middle schools, and community and business organizations. These innovative programs start early, reaching out to students no later than seventh grade, staying with them all the way, from providing students with mentors who encourage them to have high hopes and high expectations for themselves, to ensuring that schools teach the classes that prepare young people for college entrance exams, to helping families figure out how to pay for college. These programs can make all the difference in whether a young person goes to college.

Last year, with bipartisan support, Congress passed and I signed, legislation creating the GEAR UP program. With the leadership of Senator Specter of Pennsylvania and Senator Harkin of Iowa, we secured the funds to put this plan into action. Today I am pleased to announce the first $120 million in GEAR UP grants to help States and communities all over the country inspire and guide their children from the playground to the college classroom.

I'm glad to be joined here today by Congressman Fattah, by Senator Specter, and also by Congressman Becerra from California, who supports this program. And I ask Congress to fully fund my request to double our commitment to these programs now, so that we can reach more of our children than ever. GEAR UP is a great example of what we can accomplish when we put progress ahead of partisanship and put our children's future first.

Unfortunately, this is exactly the kind of program that the Republican large tax plan would jeopardize. Families don't take a costly vacation and then say they'll figure out when they get home whether they can make the mortgage payments or pay the college tuition. And I don't think we should decide on this big tax cut and just hope there's enough left over to pay for education and to save Social Security and Medicare and pay off our national debt. We have worked very hard to turn around the deficit. Now is not the time to turn our backs on our children's future.

So today I say again, let's join together across party lines to put first things first and build a stronger America for the 21st century.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 12:17 p.m. on August 5 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on August 7. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 6 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Remarks at a Gore 2000 Meeting in Little Rock, Arkansas

August 7, 1999

The President. Thank you. Well, Myreon, you did a great job. I don't know what you're running for, but you've got a good chance. [*Laughter*] Congratulations.

Let me thank all of you for coming here on this hot summer Saturday afternoon. Especially, I want to thank Congressman Bill Jefferson, Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, Congressman Bennie Thompson for coming from out of State to join our Senator Blanche Lambert Lincoln and Congressman Marion Berry back there. And I believe Congressman Vic Snyder is here. And also, a former Governor of Tennessee, Ned McWherter, our great friend, thank you for being here, sir.

I thank all the pastors and educators and businesspeople and community activists who are here. Many of you have been my friends for over 20 years, and all of you helped me to be elected President, with my friend and partner Al Gore. And then you helped us to be reelected for the first time a Democrat had done that in 60 years. And we know it could not have happened without your support.

I want to say just a couple of things and turn the microphone over to the Vice President. Oh, let me also thank our Secretary of Transportation, Rodney Slater, who's from the Arkansas Delta. We're glad that he's here.

When we took office—a lot of people have forgotten what it was like when we took office. We had high unemployment, low

growth, increasing social division, and gridlock in Washington. It was not a good time. We had social unrest in Los Angeles. A lot of you remember that. And we decided that we could pull this country together and turn it around if the people would help us.

Now, 7 years later we've got—yesterday we announced over 19 million new jobs, the longest peacetime expansion in history, the lowest minority unemployment rate ever recorded, the highest homeownership ever recorded, a 30-year low in unemployment, a 32-year low in the welfare rolls, and a 26-year low in the crime rate. And I think that's a pretty good record.

Now, I want to say two things to you about that. First of all, I could not have accomplished anything I have as President without the absolutely unprecedented role that Vice President Gore played. A year ago—6 years ago the day before yesterday, he cast the deciding vote on our economic plan, which all the Republicans said would ruin the country, and they used their fear tactics to take over the Congress. And that's what has given us the biggest surplus in history and this strong economic recovery. And he did it, and you should know that.

He has supported efforts to help families and communities. A lot of the pastors here appreciate the fact that he helped—he actually was our leading person in developing the television rating system and the Internet—the video game rating system and the V-chip for families. [*Applause*] Thank you.

He has led all our efforts in technology. We passed the Telecommunications Act, which has already produced over 300,000 new jobs for America. And he led the way in saying, we cannot let America get caught on a digital divide. We have to have an E-rate, a special rate, so that the poorest schools and libraries and hospitals in America—like those in the Mississippi Delta—have to be able to get big discounts so poor children can have those computers in schools, too, and have access to everything kids in the richest part of America do. Al Gore did that for America and for its future.

He has managed much of our difficult relationships with Russia, much of our promising future with South Africa. He has been involved in every good thing we have done, from restoring democracy to Haiti to ending ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Kosovo.

I know a little bit about American history, and I can tell you that whatever anybody thinks about whether I was right or wrong about a given issue, when the history of the last 6½ years, and the next year and a half, is written, there is one thing that no one will be able to question, and that is that Al Gore was, by far, the most influential and effective and productive Vice President in the history of the United States of America.

Now, here's the second thing I want to say. I think one reason we succeeded in helping the country is that when we asked you to hire us back in 1992, we put out a detailed plan of what we'd do if you gave us the job. An election is a job interview. He wants you to hire him. [*Laughter*]

The Vice President. I do. Absolutely.

The President. Okay? And all these other people that are running are perfectly nice people, but all of them are saying, you know, hire us, too; we want to be President, and sooner or later we'll get around to telling you why. [*Laughter*]

You already know more about him than anybody else running. But in spite of that, he said, here's my economic program; here's my crime program; here's my program to help attack social problems by working with faith-based institutions more in the community; here's my program to conquer cancer and other medical problems by increasing our efforts in medical research. Vote for me, and here's what I'll do.

And the third thing I want to say to you is this: Everybody always says they want change. Change is a good thing. We have been in continuous change. The next 4 years will be different than the last 4. We will have to change. The question is not whether we will change, but how we will change.

Don't listen to those folks who want to change by taking us back to what we tried before that got us in the ditch. What we want to do is to change in a way that goes beyond what we've done. And when 2000 rolls around, I'll be just a voter, like every ordinary citizen. But I want you to know, too, finally, that this man is a good and decent man. He is a good man.

And he has been with me through thick and thin, through light and dark. I've seen him deal with the challenges of raising his children under the scrutiny of the spotlight. I've seen him work with his wonderful wife in helping to make us think about things like mental illness, that we normally never wanted to talk about before. And I am telling you—everybody knows he's got a good mind—I'm telling you he's got a heart of gold, and he deserves your support.

And for a long time now, he's been at my back, and I intend to be with his. Thank you.

The Vice President of the United States.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:37 p.m. in Hall One at the State House Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to student Myreon Coleman of Marianna, AR, who introduced the President.

Remarks at a Gore 2000 Reception in Little Rock

August 7, 1999

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. Thanks for being here, and thanks for being in such a good humor. My remarks tonight could be summed up in two phrases—thank you for everything; here's Al. [*Laughter*]

I want to begin by saying to Mark Pryor how much I appreciate his taking on this responsibility for the Vice President. I once did the same thing in the same job for President Carter, and I hope you have the same result.

I want to thank Blanche Lincoln for being here, for her support of our administration and of the Vice President, but most of all, for the people of this wonderful State of ours. It really is true that—you know, when Blanche decides that she wants something for Arkansas, you can let her wear you out, exhaust you, break you down until you're prostrate on the floor and you'll do it, or you just go on and do it anyway. Those are really the only two alternatives.

I want to thank Congressman Berry and Congressman Synder for representing you so well and being such steadfast allies. I thank them. I thank the members of the Congressional Black Caucus who have joined us here today from other States in the South. And I thank Senator Bumpers and Senator Pryor for coming. I miss them.

You know, Dale called me last week and told me a joke—[*laughter*]—and it isn't repeatable from this podium. [*Laughter*] But it was just like old times. And I was kind of feeling low when he did it—I worked for another 3 or 4 hours in a fabulous frame of mind after he did that. Now I've got to try to give the rest of this introduction without thinking about the punch line and laughing in the middle. [*Laughter*]

I want to say just about three things tonight. The first thing I want to say is this. Yesterday, before I left Washington, we announced that the country has now produced more than 19 million jobs since I became President, as part of the longest peacetime expansion in history, which has given us the highest homeownership, the lowest minority unemployment in history, a 30-year low in unemployment, a 32-year low in welfare rolls, a 26-year low in the crime rate.

The air and the water is cleaner; the food is safer; 90 percent of our children are immunized against serious childhood diseases for the first time. Because of the HOPE scholarship, virtually every kid in this country can get a $1,500 tax credit to pay for tuition to go to college. A hundred thousand young people have served their country in AmeriCorps in 4 years. It took the Peace Corps 20 years to reach that milestone. We have been a force for peace from Bosnia and Kosovo to Northern Ireland to the Middle East.

And what I want you to know is I could not have achieved any of those things without the leadership and the support and the aggressive efforts of Vice President Al Gore.

In 1993, when all the Republicans said that the country would go down the drain if Bill Clinton's idea of economics—which was to return to basic arithmetic instead of smoke and mirrors—took off, he cast the deciding vote on the economic plan. And the rest is history. We went from the biggest deficit to the biggest surplus in the history of the country.

We made a decision that we wanted to do something to try to bring economic opportunity to people in places who had been left