

I think we should be doing much more than we are to help countries deal with the breathtaking breakdown in public health systems in a lot of the former Communist world and in a lot of the developing countries, things which really could just eat the heart out of democracy over the next 10 or 15 years unless people can at least find a way to keep babies alive and to stop children from dying prematurely.

I hope we will be very creative in the ways we fight terrorism and chemical and biological warfare, cyberterrorism, and what I think will be the most likely threat to our security over the next 20 years, which is that the miniaturization process that we see, inevitably, part of technology that now allows you to have a little computer in your palm with a screen and a keyboard that people with big hands like me can't use anymore—will also—you will see this with weapons. And it is far more likely that we will deal with those kinds of weapons in the hands of terrorists, with enormous destructive potential, even than we will have to fend off hostile missiles coming in. And I hope we'll have a bipartisan consensus about how to imagine the new most likely security threats of the 21st century.

I hope there will be even stronger support for relieving the debt of the poorest countries in the world. I hope there will be even stronger support for the initiative that Senator McGovern and Senator Dole brought to Secretary Glickman, who is here. We have—we really believe that for a relatively modest amount of money, a few billion dollars, we could guarantee one nutritious meal to every poor child in the entire world every day at school. If we did it, it would dramatically increase school enrollment, especially among young girls, and do a lot to reverse the tide of trafficking in young women and of the abuse of the rights of young women. And it would change the whole fabric of society all across the world in a way that would be very good for democracy. We need a real consensus on those kinds of things that there has not been nearly enough talk about. And we need to look at all these things in terms of our commitment to democracy, our commitment to national security.

We have to have—and as I said, I don't think I have to take a back seat to anybody

in my commitment to a strong national defense, but our national security and our advancement of democracy depends on far more than our military power. And as wealthy as we are now, as successful as we are, for a relatively modest increase in terms of the surpluses we're projecting, in the investments we make around the world in people problems and in building institutions and in giving people the capacity to fight off the demons of the 21st century, we will get a huge return in the advance of freedom.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:20 p.m. at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. In his remarks, he referred to Gary Winnick, founder and chairman, Global Crossing, Ltd.; Mayor Richard Riordan of Los Angeles; Paul G. Kirk, Jr., chairman of the board, and Ken Wollack, president, National Democratic Institute; former Vice President and former U.S. Ambassador to Japan Walter F. Mondale; Rev. Jesse Jackson, Special Envoy to Africa; Alan J. Blinks, former U.S. Ambassador to Belgium; Derek Shearer, former U.S. Ambassador to Finland; Prime Minister Milorad Dodik of the Serb Republic (Republika Srpska) of Bosnia-Herzegovina; Zlatko Lagumdžija, president, Social Democratic Party in Bosnia; President Stjepan Mesic and Prime Minister Ivo Račan of Croatia; President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro); Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel; President Kim Dae-jung of South Korea; Republican Presidential candidate Gov. George W. Bush; and former Senators George McGovern and Bob Dole.

Remarks at an American Federation of Teachers and National Education Association Luncheon in Beverly Hills, California

August 14, 2000

Thank you very much. Well, first I want to thank Sandy and Bob and all of you with the AFT and the NEA for all these years of support and friendship and for what you have done in our schools over the last 8 years. It seems like only yesterday that I started this odyssey to become President in late 1991, in no small measure because I wanted

to see the President and the National Government really, really take education seriously on a consistent, day-in and day-out basis, to care for our children not just in word but in deed.

And one of the best decisions I made the whole time I was President, I think, was to ask my friend of more than 20 years, Dick Riley, to become the Secretary of Education. He and Tunky are here today, and he deserves at least—at least—50 percent of the awards and the recognitions that you have given to me.

I can't tell you how much it has meant to me to know that what we have done together has actually made life better for the children of America. Bob gave a little history lesson. I got tickled, actually, when I heard them talking in Philadelphia. It was really almost funny, you know. *[Laughter]*

You know, when they were in—remember that?—*[laughter]*—they took credit when the Sun came up in the morning. *[Laughter]* “It’s morning in America.” *[Laughter]* But now they want you to believe that the turtle on the fencepost got there by accident—*[laughter]*—and that we just somehow just coasted along. Where do they think I got all this gray hair? *[Laughter]*

What I’d like to point out is that all the things that Sandy and Bob talked about have actually changed the lives of millions of Americans. In our schools today the math scores are up; the reading scores are up. Some of the biggest gains have come in some of the poorest schools, and I’ll just give two examples for the public record here.

I was in Harlem the other day, in a school, celebrating the “Save the Music” program that VH1 is doing. And I was in this elementary public school in Harlem which 2 years ago had 80 percent of the kids reading and doing math below grade level—2 years ago. So they get a new principal; the teachers all get together; they adopt a school uniform policy; they adopt real standards of measurement of what they’re going to do; and 2 years later—in 2 years—they went from 80 percent of the kids doing reading and math below grade level to 74 percent of the kids doing reading and math at or above grade level—in 2 years.

Then I was in western Kentucky a few weeks ago, at a school where well over half the kids are on the school lunch program. It was identified 3½, 4 years ago, under the Kentucky law as one of the failing schools in Kentucky. They got some more of our teachers we were talking about; they have smaller classes in the early grades and a dedicated, very well-trained young woman that I had the privilege of meeting, known in her school as the “Clinton teacher,” which I like. *[Laughter]* So in 3 years, they went from 12 percent of the kids doing reading at or above grade level to 57 percent. Listen to this; it gets better—from 5 percent of the kids doing math at or above grade level to 70 percent; from zero percent of the kids doing science at or above grade level to 63 percent. It’s now one of the 20 best elementary schools in the entire State of Kentucky.

So what’s the point of this? The teachers of America now have example after example after example to rebut the critics. They can say all our children can learn, number one. And number two, our public schools, all of them, can produce; they can educate our children; they can make the grade.

You know the argument for Proposition 38 out here, the argument for that proposition in Michigan? Their whole argument is that there is this sort of mindless bureaucracy out there grinding our children down. And the appeal really goes to people who really don’t know what’s going on in the schools, don’t understand how hard it is, and don’t understand how much it’s changing. Now, you have evidence.

And we say to our friends in California, our friends in Michigan, and throughout America, we don’t have a dollar to spend on something besides the educational improvement of our public schools, and that’s what we ought to be doing with that money. *[Applause]* Thank you.

Now, let me say—let me just go on a little bit. *[Laughter]* Sandy talked about the big expansion in college aid. We had a big increase in Pell grants. We went from 700,000 to a million work-study positions. We had the education IRA’s. There are now 15 million families taking advantage of the HOPE scholarship tax cut. And the direct student loan program—listen to this—has already

saved college students over \$8 billion in loan repayment rates.

So this is really good news. Why? Because the dropout rate in high school is down. The college-going rate is the highest it's ever been. The SAT scores are up, even though more people are taking it from more diverse backgrounds. And last year, for the first time in the history of our country, the high school graduation rate for African-Americans was about the same as it was for white American students. This country is moving in the right direction.

Now, who deserves the lion's share of the credit for that? The teachers, the other educators, the students, themselves, and their parents. But it matters that we have a national policy that says: high standards, strict accountability, more investment, do what works, and empower these schools, put more teachers out there. Well, I just announced an initiative a couple days ago to let teachers who go into underserved areas or into underserved fields get more of their college loans forgiven for teaching. We need to do things that work.

Now, that brings me to the next point. I was given a note here before I came in, and I don't know if they're still here, that Congressman Earl Hilliard and Congressman Rush Holt are here, or at least they were here. I'm going to New Jersey for Rush Holt in a few days. He's got a tough race. He's the only physicist in Congress. *[Laughter]* Somebody told me the other day, he said, "Rush is not qualified to be in Congress. He actually knows something." *[Laughter]* Now, Earl has got no problem, but I want you to help him, too. *[Laughter]* But Rush Holt was the first Democrat from that district in—I don't know—since the Civil War, and he deserves to be reelected.

And every one of these House and Senate seats is important. We still have to fight every year for that 100,000 teachers. Every year it's another battle. We still have not succeeded in getting Federal assistance to build or do major repairs on 6,000 schools and repair another 5,000 a year for 5 years, which is a desperate problem for our public schools all over America. It matters. Every one of these House and Senate seats matter.

And I hope you'll forgive me if I put in a little extra plug for the Senate candidate from the State of New York. *[Applause]* Thank you. I'll tell you, I am quite sure that there is no person running for the Congress this year, the House or the Senate, who was not previously a teacher, who spent as much time in school, listening to teachers, listening to principals, talking to parents and kids as Hillary has over the last 20-plus years. Even when she was younger, when she was a young girl, she would go door to door in Chicago trying to figure out why kids weren't in school and what it would take to get them there. Her whole life has been an obsession with the welfare and the proper development of our children.

And you know, the big question for the American people this year is whether to keep this progress and prosperity going. It's very, very important, every one of these House seats, every one of these Senate seats. And I can tell you, if the people of New York see fit to elect her, she will be one of the great Members of the United States Senate, now or ever.

I will also say that by far the biggest decision the American people have to make, obviously, is the race for President and Vice President. And you all know how I feel. *[Laughter]* But there is a big teaching job here, and I just want to say a few things about that.

I've known Joe Lieberman for 30 years, since I was a law student, still a student, and he was a young man running for the State Senate. I probably know Al Gore better than anybody outside his family now, because of the way we've worked together for 8 years. We had lunch once a week, every week for 8 years, until he got something more important to do. *[Laughter]*

You know, as your time runs out, you have little—it's sort of a gradual, your increasing humility; it doesn't just all hit you at once. *[Laughter]* One former President once told me it took him 3 or 4 months to realize he wasn't lost every time he went in a room because nobody played a song anymore. *[Laughter]* Anyway, it'll be all right. *[Laughter]*

To get back to the main point, I know this guy. This is not politics. I know this guy. I

have seen him when he was happy. I've seen him when he was sad. I've seen him when he was worried about his children being sick and when he was happy and elated about some achievement we had secured. I know him.

And I know how deeply he feels about equal opportunity for all people, because of his depth of conviction about the inherent worth of every person. And I know how that will play itself out in education policy. I know he will be a ferocious advocate of the children, the teachers, the schools and the future of this country. And I think it's really important because—you know, I say this, and a lot of times people laugh. But sometimes it's better to get people to laugh; they'll actually listen to you then. One of the things I learned when I became President is, just because you're talking doesn't mean somebody's listening. *[Laughter]* I'm sure you've had that experience in the classroom. *[Laughter]*

But look, we need you. I know you're all well organized, and I know you've contributed your dues. And I know that you'll invest money in this, and I am sure you'll do your Get Out the Vote and everything. But we need you from now until election day to be teachers. We need you to do the kind of thing that Bob did here on the education record and throw it into the future.

Why is that? Because this is a really big election. And what we do with our prosperity is as big a test of what kind of wisdom and what kind of values we have, what kind of judgment we have, as what we do in adversity, maybe a bigger test. Because, when you're, you know, in the ditch, you don't have to be as smart as a tree full of owls to know you've got to do something different to get out. *[Laughter]* But when everything is just rocking along, you can just sort of bliss out and say, "Well, you know, what difference does this make? They all seem pretty nice to me."

So it's a big election. Most of you are younger than me, but those of you my age or older know that you maybe get one chance in a lifetime to build the future of your dreams for your kids, unencumbered by incoming fire. America has—the people of this country must know how blessed we are now. You can help them understand that.

Then it's a big election because there are very large differences between the two candidates and their visions—the parties—which will have immense concrete impact on the lives of every American.

Now, does that mean this should be a negative campaign? No, this should be a highly positive campaign. I don't want anybody at our convention to say anything bad about them. I don't like that. We've had enough of that for the last 20 years, mostly coming out of their side, to last us a lifetime. I don't like that. We should posit that they are good, honorable, patriotic people who love their children and love this country and will do what they believe is right.

But then we ought to say, however, we disagree with them on a lot of things, and it seems like we're the only ones who want the American people to know what our disagreements are. Big election; big differences; only the Democrats want you to know what the differences are. Who does that tell you about who you ought to vote for?

Think about this. This is really true. I think we should compliment them for abandoning their mean and harsh rhetoric. *[Laughter]* We should. No, we should—wait, wait. Words are important. Woodrow Wilson said once, "Words could inflict more pain and damage than bullets." I wouldn't know, but he said that. *[Laughter]* So we're all having a good time, but you should welcome that. It's a good thing they did.

And everybody talks about—there was even a big article in one of the papers about phrases, verbatim phrases we had used in '92 and '93 and '94, verbatim were used by the Republicans in their speeches in Philadelphia. And I consider that both a compliment and an advance. *[Laughter]* Look, I'm being serious now. Don't laugh when—*[laughter]*.

But the difference in where we were in '92 and where they are today is that we actually had policies that backed up our rhetoric. We had a new education policy, a new welfare policy, a new crime policy, a new environmental policy, a new economic policy. We had policies that backed up our rhetoric. And Al Gore and Joe Lieberman can speak for themselves, but I just want to say one word about the economy because that affects how much we can help our schools. And I think

I've earned the right to talk about economic policy.

People say to me all the time, "What great innovation did you and Bob Rubin bring to Washington to get this great economy?" And I always say, arithmetic. [Laughter] We stopped pretending that 2 and 2 was 6. We got rid of rosy scenarios and looked at the money that was coming in, and we had priorities for what was most important.

So we had this new economic policy. But it really was based on arithmetic. And that's what is at issue now. The Vice President says we ought to have a tax cut, but it ought to be one that we can afford, targeted to helping people send their kids to college, pay for long-term care, pay for child care, pay for retirement, easing the marriage penalty, helping low income workers with a lot of kids. And we ought to save some money for education and to cover Medicare and Social Security out through the life of the baby boomers and add a Medicare prescription drug benefit. And oh, by the way, the money may not come in because this so-called surplus is a projected surplus.

So his policy is: Stay with what works; get us out of debt; keep the interest rates down; give a tax cut we can afford; save some money to invest in our future, in education, Medicare, drugs, lengthening the life of Social Security and Medicare. That's his policy.

Their policy sounds better the first time you hear it. Their policy is this: "Hey, we're going to have this big surplus. It's your money. We're going to give it back to you." That sounds good. There are several problems with it.

First of all, if you give all the projected surplus and more in a tax cut, it leaves you nothing to lengthen the life of Social Security and Medicare. It leaves you nothing to invest in education. It leaves you nothing to prepare for an emergency. We've had 3 years of big farm emergencies. And it leaves you no cushion in case the money doesn't come in.

Never mind the programs they have. If they privatize Social Security partially, like they say, that will cost another trillion dollars over a decade. So inevitably what they're really saying is—what they're saying is the sweet part of it, "I will give it all back to you in tax cuts." They're not playing the sour

part, which is, "Now, of course, this will mean that we'll have higher interest rates, because we're going back to deficits, and we will have less money to invest in our future."

Our tax cut, the one our side has proposed, costs way less than half theirs and gives two-thirds of the American people more money. Plus which, by keeping interest rates at least a percent lower than they otherwise would over the next decade, you know what that's worth, a percent a year for 10 years? Two hundred and fifty billion bucks in lower home mortgage, 30 billion bucks in lower car payments, 15 billion bucks in lower college loan payments, all to middle class people, like school teachers.

Now, how is it that we could have a tax cut that costs less than half theirs, that gives two-thirds of the people more money? Because, like always, as Bob said, most of their money is going to people like I hope I'll be when I get out of here. [Laughter] But you know, that's not our way. We think the people that served this food to you deserve the same chance to send their kids to college that we have. That's not our way. [Applause] Thank you.

So you've got to think about it. And you've got to be teachers. You need to ask people who tell you, "Well, it's not a very important election,"—you have to say, "Oh, yes it is; here's why." "Well, they both seem pretty nice, and there's not any difference in them." Say, "Oh, yes, there are, big difference in crime policy, big difference in environmental policy, big difference in civil rights policy and over a woman's right to choose. Big difference in"—[applause].

You just go down through all the things that will affect real people's lives. Anybody that writes a column in the newspaper saying there's not much difference between them is somebody that's already got everything they want in life and doesn't think anybody can take it away from them.

This is a big election. And you don't have to say one single, solitary mean thing personally about the people who are on the other side. Just be teachers.

But now this economics thing is big. Because if we put this country back in the ditch economically and we start running deficits again, there won't be any money for anybody

to keep these education promises or to invest in our children. And you need to go out and ask people, say, "Listen"—just go up and ask people, be a teacher—say, "What's your projected income for the next 10 years? How sure are you that it's going to come in? Now, if I ask you to sign a binding contract today to spend it all, every last penny, even on something you really, really wanted, would you do that and save no money for your family's health care or education or an emergency or just have a cushion in case you didn't get the raises you're counting on?" Of course, they wouldn't. Now, if they would, they should really consider supporting the Republicans. [Laughter] But of course they wouldn't, and America shouldn't either. This is dead serious. This is a huge difference, and so much else depends on that.

So I want you all to think about this. It's not enough to vote. It's not enough to work on election day or the weekend before. It's not enough to give your dues to the organization and have them invest it right. I am telling you, this election is going to be determined by what people think it's about. This is one of those deals where the answer you give depends on what you think the question is.

And if people really believe it's about how to keep the progress and the prosperity going and if they really understand the differences, then the Vice President and Senator Lieberman and Hillary and Rush Holt and our crowd—we'll be fine because we're on the side of the American people, and they agree with us. But we have to flush this out, and you have to be teachers.

The last thing I'd like to say is that I have no words to convey how grateful I am to you for what you do every day, for taking care of our kids. Almost a hundred percent of you could be making a lot more money doing something else. And you embody, to me, the best of American citizenship. Working with you has been a joy; knowing that we made it better has made it even more joyful. I'll be grateful for the rest of my life.

But remember, we are all citizens first, and our citizen duty now is to make sure the American people understand exactly what is at stake. If they do, trust me, the best is still out there.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:34 p.m. at the Beverly Hills Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Sandra Feldman, president, American Federation of Teachers; Robert F. Chase, president, National Education Association; Ann (Tunky) Riley, wife of Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley; and former Secretary of the Treasury Robert E. Rubin.

Remarks to the Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles, California

August 14, 2000

Thank you. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. Isn't it great to be here in California together? [Applause] Forty years ago the great city of Los Angeles launched John Kennedy and the New Frontier. Now Los Angeles is launching the first President of the new century, Al Gore.

I come here tonight, above all, to say a heartfelt thank you. Thank you. Thank you for giving me the chance to serve. Thank you for being so good to Hillary and Chelsea. I am so proud of them. And didn't she give a good talk? [Applause] I thought it was great. I thank you for supporting the New Democratic agenda that has taken our country to new heights of prosperity, peace, and progress. As always, of course, the lion's share of credit goes to the American people, who do the work, raise the kids, and dream the dreams.

Now, at this moment of unprecedented good fortune, our people face a fundamental choice: Are we going to keep this progress and prosperity going? Yes, we are.

But my friends, we can't take our future for granted. We cannot take it for granted. So let's just remember how we got here.

Eight years ago, when our party met in New York, it was in a far different time for America. Our economy was in trouble. Our society was divided. Our political system was paralyzed. Ten million of our fellow citizens were out of work. Interest rates were high. The deficit was \$290 billion and rising. After 12 years of Republican rule, the Federal debt had quadrupled, imposing a crushing burden on our economy and on our children. Welfare rolls, crime, teen pregnancy, income inequality—all had been skyrocketing. And our