

Government regulation in the Department of Education by two-thirds. We just took what works.

And I hope that in the future there will continue to be a passion coming out of people in Washington and in every State capital and every community in this country of both parties. But every proposal should be measured against what we now know works, what you have proven works here. And if it works, whoever has got the idea, we ought to put it in.

But it's not like—I remember when I started this, when Hillary and I started going into classes in the late seventies, and we started trying to write new standards for our State in the early eighties, we had hunches. Educators thought they knew. There was a little evidence here and a little evidence there, but we were kind of making it up as we went along. And it was happening all over America. We've now had 15 years of solid evidence. You have given us that in schools like this one.

And so I would just say, I wanted to come here because Chicago has been good to me, and Chicago has been very good to its children these last 6 years. I wanted to come here because, as I leave office, I don't want America to let its concern for education reform and improvement abate; I want it to increase. I want more people to believe that every child can learn, and that in this global economy, every child must learn, not only for himself or herself but for the rest of us, as well.

Of course, there are big challenges that remain. But your school, like so many I visited over the past 8 years, teaches us all the most important lesson: We can do it.

Thank you very much, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:35 p.m. in the auditorium. In his remarks, he referred to Sharon R. Wilcher, principal, James Ward Elementary School; Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago; Illinois State Comptroller Daniel W. Hynes; and Gery Chico, president, board of directors, and Paul Vallas, chief executive officer, Chicago Public School District.

Statement on the Family and Medical Leave Act

January 9, 2001

The first legislation I signed as President was the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), which allows workers to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave to care for a seriously ill child, spouse, or parent; a newborn, newly adopted, or newly placed child; or for their own serious health problem, without fear of losing their jobs. This law was an important step forward in helping America's working families balance the competing demands of work and family. Since then, I am proud to say that more than 35 million working Americans have taken leave for family and medical reasons since 1993.

In 1996 the bipartisan Commission on Family and Medical Leave issued a report assessing family and medical leave policies. The Commission found that the FMLA was working well for both workers and employers. Today the U. S. Department of Labor released the results of its new surveys, which updated the Commission's work. Once again, the data show that the Family and Medical Leave Act remains a balanced approach to meeting the needs of workers and employers. We know that when needed most, covered and eligible workers were able to take this benefit—in fact, more than 15 million have done so since January 1999, the period covered by this survey.

FMLA has given millions of workers the ability to care for their seriously ill child, spouse, or parent, or stay home with their newborn child, without worrying about whether their job will be there when they return. Our work is not done, however. We must now build on the success of FMLA by giving more workers the protections of the act and finding new ways to provide paid leave to those workers who need to take off but cannot afford to do so.

Remarks to the People of Chicago

January 9, 2001

Thank you. You know, I thought we should come over here to sort of finish the circle

of my political history in Illinois, and I didn't know if anybody would show up. *[Laughter]* Apparently, the lobby's full, too. Let me say to all of you how grateful I am to the people of Chicago and Illinois. I thank the mayor for his great leadership and for giving me a chance to be a good President for Chicago; if I didn't have a great mayor, I couldn't have been.

I asked Rich, when Bill was up here talking, I said, "You get your brother to introduce you very often?" He said, "No, but I love it every time he does it." *[Laughter]* I want to thank Bill Daley for his exemplary service as Secretary of Commerce. He was brilliant. I think he did a brilliant job in leading Vice President Gore to victory myself.

Let me just remind you, when he went over there as the chairman of that campaign, we were way behind. And then we had a great convention and we got ahead a little bit. Then they got ahead again. Daley kept them on track. We started out, they were whizzing—we were way behind when Daley took over. They thought the election was over, the Republicans did. By the time it was over, our candidate had won the popular vote, and the only way they could win the election was to stop the voting in Florida. He did a great job.

I want to thank my great friend Alexis Herman. I did not know until she started talking that her grandfather once worked here. But I appreciate it, and since she said that, in a minute I'm going to tell a family story. I want to thank Bobby Rush and your great Senator, Dick Durbin. What a great job he's done. Our treasurer, Mr. Hynes, and his daddy, Mr. Hynes, thank you for being here, Tom. Good to see you. And Secretary Riley, our Secretary of Education, and the best Secretary of Education we ever had, thank you. And if I have forgotten anybody, I apologize.

I also bring you greetings from the newest United States Senator from New York, Hillary. I told Dick, ever since Hillary won that election in New York, you should just consider that Illinois has two Democratic Senators again. She told me to tell everybody hello.

You know, this place has a special place in my heart, and I just want to briefly review the history for you. When I ran for President

in 1992, I knew I had to do pretty well in New Hampshire. And when I started out, I was running fifth. But it was a small State of tough-minded but fairminded people, and I thought if I could just get up there and stir around, I could do all right. They were good to me, and I love them, and they voted for me twice. So I got out of it alive, anyway. Then I got through all the rest of that stuff.

Then we had Super Tuesday, and I won them, but I was supposed to because it was in the South. But I knew that to be nominated, I had to do well on Saint Patrick's Day in Illinois and Michigan, and I knew some things about Illinois other people didn't know. First, I had a wife from Chicago; that didn't hurt. *[Laughter]* Second, I knew southern Illinois was south of Richmond, and I spent a lot of time down there, which other guys didn't know, but when I was a Governor. And the third thing I knew was that half the people from Chicago had kinfolks in Arkansas, which nobody knew but me. *[Laughter]*

So I figured if I sort of sidled around here, I could do pretty good. So I showed up here in 1991, and in this very room we had a meeting of all the State Democratic chairs, and I tried to make a fairly presentable impression. And I had been thinking about what we ought to do as a country for a long time, and I put my ideas out. And then we went over to the Navy pier, and I announced that David Wilhelm of Chicago would be my national campaign manager. He did a great job, and you should be very proud of him.

And then—so we rocked along and everything went according to plan, and it was time to stand and deliver in Illinois. And on the election night and the primary—it was Saint Patrick's Day, 1992—now, I remember marching in the Saint Patrick's Day parade in Chicago. It was an interesting experience. *[Laughter]* Most people were waving all five fingers. Think about it. *[Laughter]* And on election night, a majority of the people in Illinois gave me their votes in the primary over my opponents. And I knew then it was just a matter of time. And the people in Michigan were very good to me. We won there by 10 points, but by more in Illinois. And ever since then, I have known that I could count on Illinois, that when the chips

were down, Chicago and the State of Illinois would be there for the Clinton/Gore ticket. And I am profoundly grateful.

We had the party that election night downstairs in the lobby, where the overflow crowd is, and I'm going to go down there and see them in a minute. And every day for 8 years, in my little private office, right off the Oval Office, every single day for 8 years, I have looked at the picture of Hillary and me standing with the confetti, the green confetti, coming down in the lobby of this grand old hotel, on Saint Patrick's Day.

So I wanted to come here to say goodbye and to say thank you. But let me tell you what else I want you to know. I have a—look, I've got a Senator to support, that's what I've got—and I'm not really saying goodbye. I'm just saying goodbye as President.

But let me tell you, I also have another picture of this hotel, which I don't think I've ever told anybody in Illinois. I have another picture that I have seen every night for the last 4 years—for the last 8 years, excuse me. It is a picture of my mother in early 1946, and my father, who were living here, when my mother went home to Arkansas to have me and my father was killed in a car wreck driving home. And right before that happened, they were here in this hotel with another young couple having what my mother told me was one of the happiest nights of her life. And she gave me that picture when I was a young man.

And I put it up on my desk in the White House in the Residence. And I look at this hotel in that picture twice, every day for 8 years, once in Saint Patrick's Day, 1992, and once when my mother and father were here before I was born. This is an important place for me, and you're important people to me. And I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Now, here's the second thing I want to say. Now, I want to say two things, seriously. Number one, this is a different, a stronger, a more united, and a better country than it was 8 years ago. The ideas we had worked. They worked. And let me just take you on a little walk down memory lane here.

Eight years ago, we had high unemployment; the deficit was \$290 billion; the debt

of the country had been quadrupled in the previous 12 years. Now we have the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, the lowest female unemployment rate in 40 years, the lowest minority unemployment rate ever recorded, 22.5 million new jobs. The deficit has been turned into the biggest surpluses in history, and when this year is over, my last budget will have paid down \$500 billion on the national debt. We can be out of debt in 10 years for the first time since 1835.

Now, in addition to that, Bobby Rush said I wanted to be President for the little people; I did. I didn't know the difference in little and big people. I was so naive when my predecessor referred to me in rather derisive terms as the Governor of a small southern State—I was so naive, I thought he was paying me a compliment. *[Laughter]* And I still do. *[Laughter]*

People ask me what was my Presidency about. It was about those 22.5 million people that have jobs now that didn't, about the 25 million people that took advantage of the family and medical leave law, about the 13 million people that took advantage of the HOPE scholarship tax credit and the other tax credits to go on and have family members in college, about the 90 percent of kids under 2 who are immunized against serious childhood diseases for the first time, about the 3.3 million children who have been covered with health insurance for the first time under the Children's Health Insurance Program. We got the uninsured population going down for the first time in 12 years. That's what it's about—about the 1.3 million kids in after-school programs with Federal funds for the first time. And I could go on and on.

It's about people—600,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers couldn't get handguns because of the Brady bill. How many people are alive because of that, because of the 100,000 police on the street? That's what this was about. It was about trying to bring America together, to create more opportunity for every responsible citizen, to make our diversity a blessing instead of a source of division, to be a force for peace and freedom and democracy and decency around the world. And I am proud of where America is today.

I'm also proud that we did have an urban policy, an urban policy that gave 15 million

families a family tax cut because the people weren't making enough money working full time to get their kids out of poverty, and now they can, because of the earned-income tax credit; an urban policy in which the Vice President ran an empowerment zone program that brought billions of dollars of new investment into cities all across America; an urban policy which cut the welfare rolls in half, which diversified public housing—and Chicago is leading the way in that—which gave people a sense that we could go forward together again.

Now, this was about people, putting them first, preparing them for a new century and a whole new era in human affairs. Look how much more diverse Chicago is now then it was 10 years ago, racially, religiously. Look how we're learning to live together across all the lines that have previously divided us. That's what I want for America, one America, going forward together, helping each other, making the most of what we can do.

You know, politics and public life is a lot like athletics. It's a team sport. I don't care how good the quarterback is or the center. If you don't have a good team, you're nowhere. You were my team, and we won for America.

So whether you're old or young, white, black, or brown or whatever, straight or gay, abled or disabled—we're all disabled some way or another—I thank you, because you were my team, and we won for America. And I want you to know—the second thing I want to say is this. America is always about becoming. It's always about new beginnings. It's always about tomorrow. The reason we're still around here after over 220 years is that we've always had a focus on the future. We always thought we could do better. We always thought we had a moral obligation to do better. We always thought we could widen the circle of opportunity and deepen the meaning of freedom and strengthen the bonds of our community and be better neighbors around the world. We always thought that.

I still believe that. And you cannot let any disappointment you may feel in this last election take away any pride you feel in what Al Gore and I and our team were able to accomplish with you these last 8 years. And you cannot let—you cannot let anything

deter you from your determination to be the best citizen you can be, to make Chicago and Illinois and America as great as they can be.

I'm telling you, there are still a lot of big challenges out there, but I'm leaving this country in good shape and the best is still to be. You just rear back, stay together, and keep fighting for tomorrow.

God bless you. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:50 p.m. in the Grand Ballroom at the Palmer House Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago; Illinois State Comptroller Daniel W. Hynes and his father, Thomas C. Hynes, member, Democratic State Central Committee; and David Wilhelm, former national chair, Democratic National Committee.

Remarks at a Private Party in Chicago

January 9, 2001

We had a rally upstairs. You heard them, didn't you? In the ballroom. A little loud. And I hope we didn't interrupt you. So there's an overflow crowd in the lobby. And they said they have to go through the edge of another ballroom. *[Laughter]* So here I am. *[Laughter]*

So I've invaded your dinner. *[Laughter]* Well, thank you for the wonderful, warm welcome. I'm in Chicago today to basically say goodbye to the people of Chicago and Illinois as President.

It's a very happy day for me in many ways. This hotel—since you're here for that, I should tell you, this hotel plays a huge role in my life. And I have two pictures of this hotel. That's what I told them upstairs, I have two pictures of this hotel which I look at every day of my life. One is of the lobby on Saint Patrick's Day of 1992. Hillary and I are standing there with green graffiti—not graffiti, what do you call it?—confetti, not graffiti, confetti—*[laughter]*—it's been a long day and a long 8 years—*[laughter]*—confetti coming down, because that's the night that we won the Democratic primary in Illinois, which basically sealed my nomination.

The second picture was my mother and my father dining here in 1946. And that's in my private office in the Residence of the