real progress this year, arguing over what happened 600 years ago in battles. Think about Rwanda, where most of us might not be able to tell without being there a while a Hutu from a Tutsi, where hundreds of thousands of people were killed. How much time I have to spend on your behalf trying to keep people from literally killing each other because of their differences.

And here we have our—the school district across the river from me, that I get up and look at every morning when I get up in the White House, Fairfax County School District, has kids from 182 nations, speaking over 100 languages in one school district. We have 5 school districts with people from over 100 countries in it. But 2 years from now we'll have 12. People still believe in this country. They're still looking to come here to redeem the promise of America.

And I think that if we can figure out how to take a charitable but honest and open attitude toward working with people—which I must say I have seen more in abundance in Texas on questions of immigration and other things across party lines than I have in a lot of other States—if we can figure out how to do that, there is no stopping this country.

We have a sound economic policy, everybody gets an education, and we all work together, then the 21st century will be the time of America's greatest days. And that vision I started with 6 years ago will be protected. And if we can keep working together and finding principled compromises in the Congress, if I can convince the Congress and the Senate to confirm my judges, for example—[*laughter*]—if we can do the things that we ought to do, I believe we're going to be fine. But don't forget that depends upon having two parties that can fight for what they believe in within honorable bounds. And there are differences, and I gave you some of them tonight. When you go home tonight, I hope you will think about it and be glad you came.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:50 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Tilman and Paige Fertitta; special hosts F. Kenneth Bailey and John Eddie Williams; Alan D. Solomont, national finance chair, Democratic National Committee; former Gov. Ann Richards of Texas; and Bill White, chair, Texas Democratic Party. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

September 27, 1997

Good morning. I want to talk this morning about a very real threat to our judicial system. For more than 220 years, our Nation has remained young and strong by meeting new challenges in ways that renew our oldest values. Throughout our history, our judiciary has given life and meaning to those values by upholding the laws and defending the rights they reflect, without regard for politics or political party.

That is the legacy of the judicial system our Founders established, a legacy we recalled this Thursday on the 40th anniversary of the court-ordered desegregation of Little Rock Central High School.

But in the past 18 months, this vital partnership has broken down as the Senate has refused to act on nomination after nomination. And in Federal courthouses across America, almost 100 judges' benches are empty. In 1996, the Senate confirmed just 17 judges. That's the lowest election-year total in over 40 years.

This year I've already sent 70 nominations to Congress, but so far they've acted on less than 20. The result is a vacancy crisis in our courts that Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist warned could undermine our courts' ability to fairly administer justice.

Meanwhile, our courts are clogged with a rising number of cases. An unprecedented number of civil cases are stalled, affecting the lives of tens of thousands of Americans, from the family seeking life insurance proceeds, to the senior citizen trying to collect Social Security benefits, to the small business protecting its right to compete. In our criminal courts, nearly 16,000 cases are caught in limbo while criminals on bail await punishment and victims await justice. Our sitting judges are overloaded and overworked, and our justice system is strained to the breaking point.

The Senate's failure to act on my nominations, or even to give many of my nominees a hearing, represents the worst of partisan politics. Under the pretense of preventing so-

called judicial activism, they've taken aim at the very independence our Founders sought to protect. The congressional leadership has actually threatened sitting judges with impeachment, merely because it disagrees with their judicial opinions. Under this politically motivated scrutiny, under ever-mounting caseloads, our judges must struggle to enforce the laws Congress passes and to do justice for us all.

We can't let partisan politics shut down our courts and gut our judicial system. I've worked hard to avoid that. And the people I've nominated for judgeships and had confirmed have had the highest rating of well qualified from the American Bar Association of any President since these ratings have been kept.

So today I call upon the Senate to fulfill its constitutional duty to fill these vacancies. The intimidation, the delay, the shrill voices must stop so the unbroken legacy of our strong, independent judiciary can continue for generations to come. This age demands that we work together in bipartisan fashion, and the American people deserve no less, especially when it comes to enforcing their rights, enforcing the law, and protecting the Constitution.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 6 p.m. on September 26 in the Presidential Suite of the Westin Oaks Galleria Hotel in Houston, TX, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on September 27.

Remarks at the Hot Springs High School Ultimate Class Reunion in Hot Springs, Arkansas

September 27, 1997

Thank you very much. What a beautiful day. What a beautiful setting. I want to thank all of you for being here. I thank my dear friend David Pryor for his introduction, for continuing to play golf with me. [*Laughter*] And I forgive him for leaving Washington. It is a poorer place for his absence. He's served us so well there, and he graced the United States.

Thank you, Congressman Dickey, for being here today and for reaching across party lines, always with personal kindness, and I might say, always to stick up for our beloved State when it's under assault. We thank you for that.

Thank you, Governor McMath, who was a hero of my childhood, a hero of my young manhood, and he's still my hero. I'd like to be able to give a talk like that today. [*Laughter*] I was just over visiting with my 86-year-old aunt who graduated a year ahead of Sid McMath at Hot Springs High School; she was class of 1930. And I said, "Aunt Janet, do you want to come on over to the high school?" She said, "No, I don't get around all that well, and I've heard you give a lot of speeches." And I said, "Well it's not just me. It's David Pryor and Jay Dickey, and the mayor will be there." And I said "Oh, Sid McMath is going to be there." And she said, "My God, he's the best-looking man and the best speaker I ever heard in my life." [*Laughter*] She said, "I'll be there." [*Laughter*] I don't know whether she's here or not, but she said she was coming.

I thank Governor McMath. I grew up as a child here living on the stories of how the GI's came home from World War II and took over the city government and the county government and cleaned it up and moved it forward. And I remember how Governor McMath stuck by Harry Truman when he was the first President who really advocated equal rights for all Americans, and he integrated the military, and he said we were going to have to get along together and go forward together. And it is in that tradition, I think, that so many of us try to serve. So I'm glad to see him.

And I want to say a special word of thanks to Helen Selig for being willing to run for mayor and serve as mayor of our hometown, because you have been unbelievable. Thank you so much. We thank you.

I thank David and Keeley for being willing cochair this effort. Asking people for money is always a thankless effort, but they've made it about as attractive as you could make it, I think, today. If you haven't been through here, I hope you will go.

I want to thank all the members of my class who asked me to get involved in this, but especially the people who were my leaders so often when we were in high school: Phil Jamison, Jim French, and Carolyn