Bank, so we can make more loans to individuals who can start their own businesses or hire people to create an economy where very often there isn't one.

And, finally, let me say I am very pleased that LISC and the Enterprise Foundation have gotten another $250 million in corporate investments to help build affordable housing in New York City over the next 3 years. Thank you all very much.

Now, what does all this mean? I'll say it one more time. There is nothing that can be done for any neighborhood that people will not do for themselves. But people who are willing to do for themselves deserve a hand up; they deserve a partner; they deserve a Government committed to giving them the tools they need to succeed. That's what empowerment is. A lot of people think it's a buzzword; it is not a buzzword. Come to the South Bronx if you want to see empowerment. Go down these streets if you want to see empowerment. Look at the Mid-Bronx Desperadoes if you want to see empowerment. That is what it means. It is not some funny word; it's about people taking control of their lives and building a better future for their children. That's what we're going to do together.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:47 a.m. at the Madison Square Boys and Girls Club. In his remarks, he referred to Charlotte Gardens resident Carmen Ceballo, who introduced the President; Genevieve Brooks, deputy president, Burough of the Bronx; Paul S. Grogan, president and chief executive officer, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC); Deputy Mayor Randy M. Mastro of New York City; New York State Senator David Rosado; New York State Assemblyman Ruben Diaz, Jr.; and Ralph Porter, executive director, Mid-Bronx Desperadoes, a local community development corporation.

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Dinner in New York City

December 10, 1997

Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank Congressman Gephardt and Congressman Frost. Martin Frost is the most dogged person I know. Sometimes I show up at these events just to get him to stop calling me. [*Laughter*] Most of the time I show up because I want to be here.

I thank Congressman Pallone and Engel and Congressman Maloney, and I think Congresswoman Lowey is here now. I thank them all for their wonderful leadership. Hello, Nita.

I'd like to say a special word of appreciation to the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Andrew Cuomo, from New York, who is doing a brilliant job. And I want to talk more about that in a minute. I thank my friend, James Taylor, for coming here to sing tonight. Two of the truly great evenings in my family's life together, our family life, have come in no small measure because of James Taylor. When we were vacationing on Martha's Vineyard on two different occasions we went sailing off Martha's Vineyard, and James Taylor was a member of the crew. Now, it wasn't such a great thing watching him work the ropes and the sails although that's truly impressive. But when we got to a calm sea, he sang for us, and with the stars out and the moon out and the water calm, it's something that none of us will ever forget. And it was a great gift we cannot repay, but we thank you for being a good man and a good friend and a good citizen of this country.

Let me try to explain very briefly what I think is going on in this country now, and ask you to remember where we are now as compared with where we were in 1992. We had a stagnant economy, increasing inequality. We seemed to be drifting toward the future. And the operative philosophy in this country for 12 years had been that problems were to be talked about but not very much was to be done about them; the deficit was to be decried, but it was okay if it got bigger—you just tried to blame the other person; and that, essentially, Government was the problem so it should sit on the sidelines.

Now, that was the governing philosophy. And for it we had to show a $290 billion deficit, a high unemployment rate, and nothing done to address 20 years of wage stagnation in the middle class, a growing underclass, and a lot of profound challenges caused by the globalization of the economy and the society.

Could we grow the economy and improve the environment? Could we take advantage of trade to get more new high-wage jobs in America and retrain people who were dislocated quickly enough? Could we deal with what I think is maybe the most prominently mentioned complaint I hear all the time: the conflict that families increasing in all income levels make, that they don't feel they can do right by their job and spend enough time with their children? In short, could we get the benefits of the world toward which we were moving and meet the challenges?

It seemed to me that we certainly couldn't do that if we stayed with the economic policy, the social policy, or the philosophy of government that dominated the 12 years before I became President. And today, before I came here, I had one of those days that reminded me of why, when I was a young man, I wanted to be in public service, because along with former Congressman Garcia, who is out here, and a number of others, I went back to the Bronx. And I went to those streets that were featured when Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan walked the streets of the Bronx, and President Carter said it was devastating, and President Reagan said it reminded him of London during the Blitz.

Today it reminds me of the American dream, because of what people can do together when Government is neither a savior nor sitting on the sidelines, but a constructive partner with community leaders who want to build strong families and strong communities and safe streets and good schools and a bright future. That's what I saw in the Bronx today. Everybody in New York ought to be proud of it, and it ought to basically reinforce your determination that you're doing the right thing here tonight because that's the kind of America we want to build in every neighborhood in this country.

Does it matter who's in the Congress? Does it matter how they vote? You bet it does. By one vote in the Senate and one vote in the House—and the vote in the Senate was the Vice President's; as he always says, ''Whenever I vote we win,'' because he only gets to vote in the case of a tie; if someday we lose, I'll be in trouble, sure enough—[*laughter*]—we passed an economic plan that had reduced the deficit 92 percent before the balanced budget bill was passed last year—nearly 14 million new jobs in our economy, the lowest unemployment rate in 24 years, and the lowest crime rate in 24 years.

Mr. Gephardt mentioned the crime bill—does it matter? You bet it does. There were hardly any Republican votes for the crime bill. We had more in the House I think than the Senate in the end. Why? Because they did not want to offend people who said that we shouldn't keep assault weapons off the streets. There were people who said it wouldn't make any difference if we put another 100,000 police on the street, people who said it was a waste of your tax money for us to give children something to say yes to when they got out of school. But we know most juvenile crime is committed between 3 o'clock in the afternoon and 7 o'clock at night. Well, we got the lowest crime rate in 24 years. The Democrats were right, and those who fought them were wrong.

They said the economic plan would bring on a recession; it would be unfair; it was going to raise taxes on middle class people. They were wrong. We now have the evidence. You don't have to—this is not a matter of debate. And I would have to admit it if the reverse were true. I'd have to say I was wrong. Our position was right, and they were wrong. And I am tired of seeing them get rewarded at elections because they have more money or they can divide the American electorate in some better way. And you being here is going to give a chance to the American people to vote for the people who have been right about the last 5 years and who are right about America's future. And that's why you're here, and I'm glad to see you.

Now, let me give you another example: The air is cleaner; the water is cleaner; the food supply is safer; and there are fewer toxic waste dumps today than there were 5 years ago. And there is always a big debate—we had a huge debate. One of the reasons the Government got shut down in 1995 is that we Democrats thought we could continue to improve the economy and clean up the environment. And they said it was a nice thing to have a clean environment, but it was a burdensome economic impediment, and it was an ugly, big, old Government on everybody's shoulders.

Well, we have evidence now. This is no longer subject to serious debate. What is the subject of debate, what we should be debating is, what is the best way to combat global warming; what is the most efficient way to clean up these toxic waste dumps; what is the most health-conscious way to guarantee the safety of a food supply that inevitably will have more imported food? That's a debate worth having.

But to debate whether it is right to protect the integrity of the environment and to improve it and grow the economy—that debate is over. Our side has been proved right. We have 5 years of clear evidence. And I would like to see people who are committed to environmental protection and responsible growth voted into the House of Representatives next year. That's why I'm glad you're here, and I hope you will follow James Taylor and help us to do that. This is not a subject of debate.

We passed the family and medical leave law. There were a lot of Republicans who voted for that—I'll give them credit for that—far more Democrats. My predecessor had vetoed it twice. Why? Because their theology said—their theology said it's a nice thing if people can spend a little time with their new-born babies or if someone in their family gets sick, but we couldn't think of requiring it because it would hurt the economy and the economy is always the most important thing.

We said the most important thing in any society is raising healthy children and keeping families together. And when you permit people to do the right thing, when their parents are sick or their babies are born, you will make them stronger and healthier and happier, and they will be better in the workplace and it will help the economy to do the right thing about the family unit.

Well, there's no longer subject to serious doubt—we passed the family and medical leave law. We've had study after study after study; hardly anybody affected by it has reported any problem with it. We were right. I think we should expand it. I think people ought to get time off to go to regular parent-teacher conferences at the school. I think people ought to get time off if they have to take a parent or a child to a regular doctor's appointment. I think the more we can help people balance family and work the better off we're going to be. And I think the evidence is clear.

Now, let me move to—there is a second category of issues where Democrats and Republicans have voted for and against certain bills. I'd like to talk about them, because you can also see what matters there.

You look at this balanced budget bill. It's got the biggest increase in health care for children since 1965. We're going to get enough money to insure 5 million more children. Does anybody doubt which party in the bipartisan coalition in that balanced budget bill contributed that? This balanced budget bill contains the biggest increase in help for people that go on to college in 50 years, since the GI bill passed, a $1,500 a year tax credit for the first 2 years of college, tax credits for the third and fourth years for graduate schools, for workers who have to go back and get retraining. Does anybody doubt which party contributed that? Finishing our determination to double the amount of job training money we're giving to people who are dislocated or underemployed over the last 5 years—does anybody doubt which party contributed that? It matters. And we have been right about these issues. That's why I'm here.

We were right to take on the NRA. Even though they took some of our Members out, the light of American history will shine brightly on them.

We were right to take on the tobacco issue because it's the biggest public health problem in America, and it's illegal for kids to do. And if we get a bill out of the Congress that's a bipartisan bill, just remember, we ought to give credit to everybody who votes for it, Republican or Democrat, if it's a good bill—but remember how it got started. It never would have happened without the progressive party in this country taking it on.

And finally let me say, there are lots of challenges in the future like that. I think we ought to have a health care bill of rights. We put a commission together, a quality health care commission, more and more people in managed care plans. I think on balance they've done a lot more good than harm. But the more you lose control over your own life, the more you want to know you've got some protection, some recourse, some guarantee.

It's not just the cost; it's the quality and availability of health care that matter. So we put this coalition together, and we had health care providers and business people, employers, and consumers of health care on it. And they came up with this health care bill of rights.

The leader of the other party in the Senate says, it's a terrible thing because it's too much of an imposition on the people who are running the programs. I disagree. Big choice. Who is right about the future? Are we right, or are they right? Whether we can pass it or not depends on the Members of Congress. And it will affect the lives of millions of people.

Once we get these 5 million kids insured, what about the other kids that don't have health insurance? What about all these people that work all their lives, and they have to take early retirement in companies, and they lose their health insurance, and they can't get into the Medicare program because they're not old enough? What's going to happen to them? There are lots of other challenges out there. You have to decide; who do you trust to meet these challenges?

Look at our schools. What's the next big challenge here? We've got to guarantee that all of our kids get a world-class education. The Democratic Party is firmly on record in favor of high standards, more investment, a national testing program—voluntary—to see if the kids are meeting these standards, and then opening the doors of college to every kid in this country. If you want young people not to be trapped in dead-end jobs, they have to be able to get education for a lifetime. Who do you trust to give education for a lifetime?

Now, the things that our friends in the Republican Party used to say about us—they used to say we couldn't manage the economy. Now we've got almost 14 billion new jobs and the lowest unemployment rate in 24 years. They used to say we couldn't be trusted on crime; we were soft on crime. We have the lowest crime rate in 24 years. And if our Democratic juvenile justice approach passes, it will be lower still.

They used to say we couldn't be trusted on welfare. Look at the welfare reform bill. A lot of Democrats voted against it; a lot of them voted for it. But you know what's in that bill? We did not give in to their determination to take away health care and nutrition from kids. We've got $4 billion more in there for child care and $3 billion to give the poor neighborhoods, where there aren't enough private jobs for able-bodied people to go to work. Which party do you think made those contributions to that welfare reform bill?

These are important issues. They can't say that anymore. They used to say, well, we couldn't manage foreign policy, the national defense. This country is stronger and has made more contributions to peace and freedom in facing the security challenges of tomorrow than it was 5 years ago.

So I say to you we have a party we are proud of. And we are not ashamed that it is more progressive, that we believe we are one Nation, that we believe we have to come together across all the lines that divide us, that we believe in things like AmeriCorps and citizen service and people getting together and what I saw in the Bronx today. And if you want more of that, if you like what's happened in the last 5 years and you want more of it, you give me a few more of these folks, and you'll have it.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:20 p.m. in the Empire Room at the Waldorf Astoria. In his remarks, he referred to singer James Taylor.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Hispanic Gala in New York City

December 10, 1997

Thank you. I was—please, sit down—I was sitting over there when Hillary was talking, thinking how grateful I am that she wrote that wonderful book, ''It Takes A Village,'' and how many copies it sold, and how it embodies what we believe in. And then I was thinking that after we leave the White House, she could write another book and sell even more copies if the subject of the book was, ''all the things I wish I could have said all the times I introduced my husband.'' [*Laughter*] Thank you once more for refraining. [*Laughter*] Let me say to all of you—some