America or Asia, which I think is very important.

So they'll say, ''Well, our tax is bigger than your tax cut.'' You ever heard those arguments when you were a kid, you know, the sixth grade? [*Laughter*] ''My daddy drives a bigger car than your daddy does.'' And if that's the argument, we don't do very well. If that's the argument, why are you here? Most of you should be over there with them.

But you know life is fleeting. This is the opportunity of a lifetime. We have never had an opportunity like this, none of us in our political lifetime. And we have these big, looming challenges: how to keep the economy going, how to deal with the aging of America, how to deal with the needs of all of our children for a world-class education. And we've got a way to deal with them now. And we have proved that if we deal with them, the economy will be stronger, and we'll all do better.

So I hope you'll say, ''The second reason I'm there is they're having a big debate in Washington about what to do with this prosperity, and I agree with the Democrats. I think we ought to deal with the long-term challenges of this country.''

And the final thing is, I think the real difference between us is how we define community in America. Some Republicans obviously are very harsh and negative; some are very soothing and nice, and they like to get everybody together. There are all kinds of reasons. I don't like this personal attack business, but the question is, do you believe that each and every person in this country is important to our common success, and do you believe that each and every person in this country should have a right to be treated with dignity? And how do you define that?

Is the American community all those people who say they believe in the same things, or is it all of us who are responsible citizens who are entitled to be treated in a certain way and have a certain set of opportunities? I'll just give you two or three examples where there is almost a complete difference of opinion in the modern parties today, from the left to the right in the Democratic Party and from the left to the right in the Republican Party.

Almost all of us are for the Patients' Bill of Rights. Almost all of them supported killing it in the Congress. Why? The health insurance companies say it will raise your health insurance premiums if your doctor says you need to see a specialist, and they can't stop it; if you get to go to the nearest emergency room; if you get to keep your doctor during the course of treatment even if you change your HMO provider. I think we're right and they're wrong. Even they say it only raises your insurance premiums $2 a month. I think it's worth $2 a month to give people the security of a decent health care system.

But all of them, from top to bottom, were against it, just about. We got a handful of votes.

I believe we ought to control—close the gun show loophole. We did the Brady bill—I remember when we did pass the Brady bill, they said, oh, this was the end of the world. They beat a bunch of our House Members in '94 over the Brady bill and the assault weapons ban, and they said, oh, the hunters were going to all lose their weapons. And I remember going back to New Hampshire in '96—now, by the way, 400,000 people with criminal backgrounds have not gotten a handgun because of the Brady bill. And I remember talking to all of these hunters in New Hampshire, saying, ''You beat a Congressman in '94 here because he voted for the Brady bill. And he did that because I asked him to. So if there is a single hunter here that has been inconvenienced in your hunting, I want you to vote against me, too. But if you haven't, they didn't tell you the truth, and you need to get even.'' Our victory margin in New Hampshire went from one to 13.

People knew they were being sold a bill of goods, once they saw it. So now we come along and say, but there are still a lot of criminals buying guns at these gun shows and urban flea markets, and let's do a background check there. And well, you would think it was the most burdensome thing that we had ever come up with. So our crowd said, ''Let's do it,'' and their crowd said, ''Let's don't.''

How do you define community? What does it really mean to say, ''I think it's worth a lot to keep every kid we can keep alive,

a lot.'' You don't see—I told somebody—you never hear anybody anymore complain about going through an airport metal detector, saying, ''I really resent this; my constitutional right to travel is being infringed.'' [*Laughter*] You're laughing, but you know, there was a lot of apprehension when we started this. All you had to do was think about your plane being hijacked.

But we ought to think—we ought to support this because we should think about not just ourselves being the victims; we should think about our neighbors being the victims.

We're in Colorado. Our hearts were broken by Columbine. I was elated by those 90 kids from Colorado who came, Republicans, Democrats, Christians, Jews, Asians, Hispanics, African-Americans—all kinds of people—90 kids from Colorado descended on the Congress last week, asking them, what in the living heck had happened to them? Had they forgotten about Columbine? Where was their gun safety legislation? It was fabulous. It was fabulous.

But what I want to say to you is, what we forget is 13 kids get gunned down in this country every day. It's worth to us—we should go to a little trouble to try to keep more of them alive. That's what community means to me. We should go to a little trouble to try to keep more of them alive.

So I just give you those examples. There are a lot more. The hates crime legislation—from top to bottom on their side, there's not a handful of them who want us to pass the hates crime bill that explicitly protects gays. Well, I think we should. I think about that Matthew Shepard out in Wyoming and his fine family; I think about the friends that we all have. Haven't we learned that we have nothing to fear from law-abiding citizens who are different from ourselves, as long as we treat them with dignity and respect, whatever their differences are, whether they're religious or whatever? I think this is a big deal. It's part of the way we define community.

I never will forget the first conversation I ever had about this with one of Evan's colleagues, Senator Chuck Robb from Virginia, represents a very conservative State, President Johnson's son-in-law. I believe he saw more combat than any Vietnam veteran in the United States Congress. Distinguished Marine combat veteran in Vietnam. He looked at me without blinking an eye, and he said, ''I am for this.'' And he said, ''I am for anything.'' He said, ''I served with people who risked their life for this country, who were gay, and we ought to give them the protections every other citizen gets.'' And to me, that's part of community.

Let me just close with this story. Some of you have heard this before, but I was on the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota recently, with the chairman of the Oglala Sioux, the tribe of Crazy Horse. And the new chairman's name is Harold Salway. He was in the White House with 19 of the tribal chieftains from the high plains to talk about their terrible economic and social problems, which are a stain on this country, I might add, that we have to do something about.

And at the end of the meeting—Lynn Cutler is smiling; she was there, and she's heard me tell the story—there was not a dry eye in the place and no one could breathe when Harold Salway stood up, and he said, ''Before we go, I want to tell you that we are for your position in Kosovo.'' Keep in mind, these people represent the poorest Indians in America; they come to see me; they tell me they want to say, we're for your position in Kosovo. And he said, ''You see, we know a little about ethnic cleansing.'' He said, ''My great-grandfather was killed at Wounded Knee.'' But he said, ''This is America. I had two uncles. One was on the beach at Normandy; one was the first Native American fighter pilot in the history of the U.S. military. And here today their nephew is with the President of the United States.'' He said, ''I only have one son. He means more to me than anything. But I would be proud to have him wear the uniform of my country to fight against ethnic cleansing in Kosovo.''

Community. Why do we fight for peace in the Middle East? Why do we work for it in Northern Ireland? Why do we ask people to stop* killing each other in Africa? Why do we try to get the American people to look at the interdependent nature of the world? Why do all of you who are quite comfortable believe that these young people who have served us today ought to all be able to go

* White House correction.