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a new century, a new millennium, but also a profoundly different time in human affairs and standing at this point not only as the world's only superpower but one that is free of external threat and internal economic crisis, which means we have an opportunity almost unique in our history to think about not only what we need to do for our people today and tomorrow but what America needs 20 years from now, 50 years from now.

That is the sort of thing that people who were here before us thought about at the end of World War II, and the decisions they made gave us 50 pretty good years as Americans. Tuesday night, when I speak in the State of the Union Address, I'm going to ask the Congress to cross party lines with each other and with me and to think about how we can build the next 50 years for America, how we can bring about true excellence and complete opportunity in education, how we can finish the job of welfare reform so that everyone we are now requiring to work genuinely has the chance to work, how we can meet the other challenges that are before us. Many of them involve the leadership, the initiative, the strength, and steadiness of our Nation's Governors.

And so I pledge to you to continue the partnership we've had, to try to deepen it, to try to enrich it, and beginning tomorrow, to try to continue to listen to you and to your concerns and to hear your advice. This has been a good 4 years for America. I look forward to the next 4. And I look forward to our continued partnership.

The National Governors' Association has been a unique and immensely valuable institution for the United States because it gives the Governors a chance, without regard to their regional and political differences, to reach common positions for the people of their States and to bring those positions not only to life in their States but also to bring them to Washington, where it's too often easy to forget about the real lives of real people out in the country. I know you will be doing that here, and I hope together we will be advancing those lives for 4 more years.

I now ask you to join me in a toast to our partnership, to the Governors, and especially to Governor and Mrs. Miller and to Governor and Mrs. Voinovich.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:50 p.m. on the State Floor at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Bob Miller of Nevada, chairman, and Gov. George V. Voinovich of Ohio, vice chairman, National Governors' Association; Governor Miller's wife, Shirley; and Governor Voinovich's wife, Janet.

Remarks at the National Governors' Association Meeting

February 3, 1997

Good morning. Governor Miller, Governor Voinovich; good morning to all the Governors who are here. It was wonderful to see all of you last night, and I'm glad to welcome you back to the White House.

This is an unusual opportunity for our country and for every State. The Nation is strong; we are at peace; we have extraordinary prosperity. But we know we're living through a time of great change in the way we work, in the way we live, the way we relate to each other, that there are significant challenges which if not faced will have destructive consequences for our Nation in the years ahead. So as we stand on the edge of this new century and this profoundly new era, we have a unique opportunity and a common responsibility, which is to take action together to try to prepare this country not just for the next 4 years but for the next 50 years.

In the State of the Union Address tomorrow night, I'm going to lay out the challenges that I see not only for the President and the Congress but also for the States and local communities and private citizens. Because there will be a great deal in that speech about the States and the issues of education and welfare reform and other issues of common concern, I want to invite any of you who can stay, to stay tomorrow night and to come into the Chamber of the Capitol and sit as a group, as many as would like to stay, and be there at the State of the Union Address.

I know that many of you have concerns about welfare reform or Medicaid spending or education, the environment, transportation. I'm looking forward to addressing those concerns, beginning today at this meeting but also every day for the next 4 years. I want every one of you to feel that you can

always call this White House and that you will have someone, even if we don't always agree, who understands your concerns and will do his best to address them. And I thank you.

Mr. Chairman.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:50 a.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Remarks at the Democratic Governors Association Dinner

February 3, 1997

Thank you. Thank you, Governor Dean, for that wonderful introduction. And I thank the orchestra for playing me in. [*Laughter*] Thank you, Governor Rossello, for your leadership here in the DGA. And to our DNC General Chair, Governor Roy Romer, thank you for agreeing to do that. I hope it made the Democratic Governors feel better; it sure made me feel better when you did it. Our Democratic National Chairman, Steve Grossman, thank you for being here tonight. And thank you, Santita, for singing again. You got me in a good humor before I had to come out and speak.

You all know that the Vice President is coming over later. I'm just the warmup act. [*Laughter*] But that's probably as it should be. At least that's what he asked me to say right before I left the White House. [*Laughter*] I thank you for understanding why I can't be here all evening. As you know, the State of the Union is tomorrow night, and I hope that the Governors who are here will be staying for it. We have a place for all of you.

It's a very different city than it was a year ago. A year ago, we had a cold wave and a cold wave in politics so bad that it shut the Government down. And the American people had something to say about it in the months ahead after that and then definitively in November. And it's a lot warmer outside this year than it was last year. And I like it.

All of you know that I have been deeply indebted to my own experience as a Governor and to the Democratic Governors for many of the ideas that we have brought to bear over the last 4 years. Our country has produced 11.2 million jobs for the first time in history in a 4-year Presidential administration. We have—crime has come down in every year. The welfare rolls have dropped by 2¼ million, the largest amount in history. Inequality among working people has started back down again, after a 20-year increase, with particular drops for single parents working to support their children, the elderly, and African-Americans.

In the last 4 years, thanks to the work that we have done together, we have, first of all, reversed our country's addiction to supply-side economics and substituted for it an economics based on investing in people, expanding trade, reducing the deficit, and ultimately balancing the budget in the right way.

We have restored the family and community as the centerpiece of our social agenda with initiatives like the family and medical leave law, which we celebrated the fourth anniversary of just this week and which I hope to expand in this coming session of the Congress, and I hope you will help me do that.

When it comes to crime and welfare, we replaced rhetoric with action, and that's why results have flowed. We have redefined the role of the Government. No longer do the American people believe, and no longer are they being told, that Government is the enemy. They know that the role of Government is to be our partner to give us the tools to solve our problems and to create the conditions in which Americans can flourish.

And finally, we have reaffirmed the importance of our national community. No longer is it commonplace in our national politics to see victory come from dividing Americans by race, by gender, or in any other way. And I'm proud of that, perhaps proudest of all that we have rebuked the people who want to divide us as a nation. That's what the Democratic Party is all about.

In the next 4 years—well, you have to wait until tomorrow night to hear about that. [*Laughter*] But let me say that in the next 4 years, I will still depend upon the Democratic Governors for your ideas; two of them you know I have embraced with particular vigor: the HOPE scholarship, pioneered by Governor Zell Miller in Georgia, and the idea of providing national certification to the most excellent teachers in America, pioneered by Governor Jim Hunt in North Carolina. I thank you both for that.