

can go to college. Every baby in this country I want to be able to go to college.

We have to figure out a way when the Vice President and I—when our generation retires, the so-called baby boomers, we provide for a system that preserves our retirement, guarantees it for the 20 and 30-year-olds today, and doesn't bankrupt you. We can do that, if you'll help us do it, next year.

And the last thing I want to say is this, and in some ways this may be more important than anything else. America—look at this crowd here today. Look at you. Look at each other. Now, we've got people who are young and not so young. [Laughter] We have people who are in wheelchairs and people who may play varsity athletics. We have people from every conceivable racial and ethnic group here in what you used to think of as homogeneous Champaign-Urbana. Why is that? Because America is changing. We're becoming more and more and more diverse.

Now, a lot of the time that Al Gore and I spend working for you, we're out there worrying about these ethnic problems in Bosnia, or religious and ethnic differences in the Middle East, or old hatreds in Ireland, or tribal warfare in Africa. And we still see examples of horrible discrimination from time to time in America. But you know, just look around this room. This is our meal ticket to the future, our diversity and sharing values, believing in each other, believing in the fundamental unity of human nature. That's our meal ticket to the future. You can make one America. And I want you to help us make one America for a new century.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:41 p.m. in Gymnasium 1 of the Intramural Physical Education Building.

Remarks to an Overflow Crowd at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana
January 28, 1998

Thank you. First of all, thank you for coming, and thank you for waiting. I'm sorry you had to wait so long. [Applause] Thank you.

I want to thank Secretary Riley and the Vice President, and I also want to thank you

Congressman, Congressman Tom Ewing, for coming along with me. Let's give him a big hand. [Applause]

We have had an incredible day at the University of Illinois—an incredible day. You know, this is the third meeting we've been to. You had to sit through the other two, didn't you? Is that okay? [Applause]

This reminds me—I hate to give the same speech over, but once I went to a concert where Tina Turner sang—you all know who Tina Turner is—and at the end of the concert, after singing all her new songs, she started to sing her first hit, "Proud Mary." And the crowd started clapping, and she said, "I have been singing this song for 25 years, but it gets better every time I do it."

But I'm not going to give you the whole dose again. I want to just make two points very briefly. Number one, the Vice President and I and our administration, we've worked very hard these last 5 years to get America in good shape, to have this country work again for ordinary people. And I think you can see, from the condition of the economy and from the fact that we're making real progress on our social problems and from our work in the world at large, that we're making that kind of progress.

Now is the time we need to be thinking about what the 21st century will look like for all the young people here. And that means a commitment to education for everybody, all the way through college. It means a commitment to the idea that we can preserve and improve our environment while we grow the economy. It means a commitment to the idea that we can reform Social Security so that the big baby boom generation, that I'm the oldest member of, can retire without putting unfair burdens on those of you who are younger and your children.

And it means that we can find a way in our increasingly diverse country to come together, across all the lines that divide us, into one America, because in a global society, believe you me, a great democracy like ours that can accommodate people of every race, every background, every religion, and still be bound together by shared values is the most blessed place on Earth.

Our best days are ahead of us as a nation. And we are here today to ask you to stand

with us in that fight, to imagine that kind of future and to be a part of it. And I am very grateful to you for coming out.

Thank you, and God bless you. I want to go shake hands. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:04 p.m. in Gymnasium 2 of the Intramural Physical Education Building.

Remarks in La Crosse, Wisconsin

January 28, 1998

Thank you so much. Thank you for the warm welcome—the “warm” welcome. [Laughter] Thank you for being here in great numbers and with great enthusiasm. Thank you for sending Ron Kind to Congress. He’s a fine man, and he represents you well. Thank you, Attorney General Doyle. Thank you, Mayor Medinger. Thank you, Secretary Riley, for all you do. Thank you, Mr. Vice President, for getting our blood running—[laughter]—and for your magnificent leadership. And thank you, Lee and Ruth Mathison, for reminding us what’s best about the United States of America. Didn’t they do a good job? Let’s give them another hand. [Applause]

Were any of you here back in 1992, when the Vice President and I came on the bus? [Applause] I remember we had been on the road 18 hours. We got into the Days Inn about 2 o’clock. I could barely speak, and I was bone tired. But the people that were there for us on that night, giving us high fives, making us feel at home, make it a wonderful memory, and it feels good to be back in God’s country tonight. And I thank you so much for being here.

The Vice President and I even got to speak on the Clinton Street Bridge. And I remember that.

You’ve heard everybody talk already about the blessings our country enjoys, and I am grateful for that. I’m grateful for the chance that I had last night to outline the state of the Union and to talk about the future. I’m grateful that we really have opened the doors of college education to all Americans for the first time. And I hope everybody here who is a young person knows that because of the tax cuts and the scholarships and the grants

and the work-study program and the Ameri-Corps program, you ought to go out and tell everybody they can go to college now, and they never have to worry about that again.

But I want to thank you for what you’re doing here to make America work from the ground up, to make America work together to give our kids a better future. I can’t mention all the local heroes behind me today, but I want to mention one, Jerry Freimark, who has worked with businesses and students to help students in rural areas gain the skills necessary for 21st century careers in banking and finance by learning over interactive TV.

You know, we forget sometimes that people in small towns and rural areas have the same right to the 21st century future everybody else does. And I want you to know that Al Gore and I will never forget that.

But tonight I don’t want to talk about that. I want to talk very briefly about that future, because to me the most important thing we’ve done in the last 5 years is just to try to make America work again for ordinary people, so that we can be free to imagine the 21st century and we can be free to build it.

In 1962, President Kennedy said, “The time to repair the roof is when the sun is shining.” And I couldn’t say that any better tonight. I’m grateful that we have—almost have—a balanced budget. We’re going to get one this year or next year. I’m proposing one for next year, and I think it will be balanced before the year is out.

Now, let’s talk about what we’re going to do. And I just want to mention two or three things. I want all of you to think about this and be involved in it. First of all, it’s projected we’re going to have a big surplus, cumulative, over the next 4 or 5 years; we haven’t had one in 30 years. Naturally enough, people are thinking, well, let’s cut taxes or let’s spend the money, even though we’ve still got a debt we’ve piled up that’s quite considerable. What I want to do is to say, before we spend any of that surplus, let’s make sure that we have saved the Social Security system so we don’t bankrupt our children when the baby boomers retire.

Now, this is a place of community. I can look around—here’s a couple who have been married 51 years, still working, with kids. I