

Aug. 20 / Administration of George Bush, 1992

The President has decided that he will not disapprove this decision. The President is grateful to the arbitrator for his work in resolving this dispute.

Remarks Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Houston

August 20, 1992

The President. Thank you all very much. Thank you, thank you very much. And I am proud to receive and I am honored to accept your nomination for President of the United States.

May I thank my dear friend and our great leader, Bob Dole, for that wonderful introduction.

Let me say this: This nomination's not for me alone. It is for the ideas, principles, and values that we stand for.

My job has been made easier by a leader who's taken a lot of unfair criticism with grace and humor, the Vice President of the United States, Dan Quayle. And I am very grateful to him.

I want to talk tonight about the sharp choice that I intend to offer Americans this fall, a choice between different agendas, different directions, and yes, a choice about the character of the man you want to lead this Nation. I know that Americans have many questions about our economy, about our country's future, even questions about me. I'll answer them tonight.

First, I feel great. And I am heartened by the polls, the ones that say that I look better in my jogging shorts than the Governor of Arkansas.

Four years ago, I spoke about missions for my life and for our country. I spoke of one urgent mission, defending our security and promoting the American ideal abroad.

Just pause for a moment to reflect on what we've done. Germany is united, and a slab of the Berlin Wall sits right outside this Astrodome. Arabs and Israelis now sit face to face and talk peace, and every hostage held in Lebanon is free. The conflict in El Salvador is over, and free elections brought democracy to Nicaragua. Black and white South Africans cheered each other at the Olympics. The Soviet Union can only

be found in history books. The captive nations of Eastern Europe and the Baltics are captive no more. And today on the rural streets of Poland, merchants sell cans of air labeled "the last breath of communism."

If I had stood before you 4 years ago and described this as the world we would help to build, you would have said, "George Bush, you must have been smoking something, and you must have inhaled."

This convention is the first at which an American President can say the cold war is over, and freedom finished first.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. We have a lot to be proud of, a lot. Some want to rewrite history, want to skip over the struggle, claim the outcome was inevitable. And while the U.S. postwar strategy was largely bipartisan, the fact remains that the liberal McGovern wing of the other party, including my opponent, consistently made the wrong choices. In the seventies, they wanted a hollow army. We wanted a strong fighting force. In the eighties—and you remember this one—in the eighties, they wanted a nuclear freeze, and we insisted on peace through strength. From Angola to Central America, they said, "Let's negotiate, deliberate, procrastinate." We said, "Just stand up for freedom." Now the cold war is over, and they claim, "Hey, we were with you all the way."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. You know, their behavior reminds me of the old con man's advice to the new kid. He said, "Son, if you're being run out of town, just get out in front and make it look like a parade."

Well, make no mistake: The demise of communism wasn't a sure thing. It took the strong leadership of Presidents from both parties, including Republicans like Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan.

Without their vision and the support of the American people, the Soviet Union would be a strong superpower today, and we'd be facing a nuclear threat tonight.

My opponents say I spend too much time on foreign policy, as if it didn't matter that schoolchildren once hid under their desks in drills to prepare for nuclear war. I saw the chance to rid our children's dreams of the nuclear nightmare, and I did. Over the past 4 years, more people have breathed the fresh air of freedom than in all of human history. I saw a chance to help, and I did. These were the two defining opportunities not of a year, not of a decade, but of an entire span of human history. I seized those opportunities for our kids and our grandkids, and I make no apologies for that.

Now, the Soviet bear may be gone, but there are still wolves in the woods. We saw that when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. The Mideast might have become a nuclear powder keg, our energy supplies held hostage. So we did what was right and what was necessary. We destroyed a threat, freed a people, and locked a tyrant in the prison of his own country.

What about the leader of the Arkansas National Guard, the man who hopes to be Commander in Chief? Well, I bit the bullet, and he bit his nails. Listen to this now. Two days after Congress followed my lead, my opponent said this, and I quote directly: "I guess I would have voted with the majority if it was a close vote. But I agree with the arguments the minority made." Now, sounds to me like his policy can be summed up by a road sign he's probably seen on his bus tour, "Slippery When Wet."

Look, this is serious business. Think about the impact of our foreign policy failures the last time the Democrats controlled both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue: gas lines, grain embargoes, American hostages blindfolded.

There will be more foreign policy challenges like Kuwait in the next 4 years, terrorists and aggressors to stand up to, dangerous weapons to be controlled and destroyed. Freedom's fight is not finished. I look forward to being the first President to visit a free, democratic Cuba. Who will lead the world in the face of these challenges? Not my opponent. In his acceptance

speech he devoted just 65 seconds to telling us about the world.

Then he said that America was, and I quote again—I want to be fair and factual—I quote, being "ridiculed" everywhere. Well, tell that to the people around the world, for whom America is still a dream. Tell that to leaders around the world, from whom America commands respect. Ridiculed? Tell that to the men and women of Desert Storm.

Audience members. U.S.A! U.S.A! U.S.A!

The President. Let me just make an aside comment here because of what you've been reading in the paper. This is a political year, but there's a lot of danger in the world. You can be sure I will never let politics interfere with a foreign policy decision. Forget the election; I will do right, what is right for the national security of the United States of America, and that is a pledge from my heart.

Fifty years ago this summer, I was 18 years of age. I see some young people in the audience tonight, and I remember how I felt in those days. I believed deeply in this country, and we were faced with a world war. So I made a decision to go off and fight a battle much different from political battles.

I was scared, but I was willing. I was young, but I was ready. I had barely lived when I began to watch men die. I began to see the special place of America in the world. I began to see, even then, that the world would become a much smaller place, and faraway places could become more and more like America.

Fifty years later, after change of almost Biblical proportions, we know that when freedom grows, America grows. Just as a strong America means a safer world, we have learned that a safer world means a stronger America.

This election is about change. But that's not unusual, because the American revolution is never ending. Today, the pace of change is accelerating. We face new opportunities and new challenges. The question is: Who do you trust to make change work for you?

Audience members. George Bush! George Bush! George Bush!

The President. My opponent says America is a nation in decline. Of our economy, he says we are somewhere on the list beneath Germany, heading south toward Sri Lanka. Well, don't let anyone tell you that America is second-rate, especially somebody running for President.

Maybe he hasn't heard that we are still the world's largest economy. No other nation sells more outside its borders. The Germans, the British, the Japanese can't touch the productivity of you, the American worker and the American farmer. My opponent won't mention that. He won't remind you that interest rates are the lowest they've been in 20 years, and millions of Americans have refinanced their homes. You just won't hear that inflation, the thief of the middle class, has been locked in a maximum security prison.

You don't hear much about this good news because the media also tends to focus only on the bad. When the Berlin Wall fell, I half expected to see a headline, "Wall Falls, Three Border Guards Lose Jobs." [Laughter] And underneath, it probably says, "Clinton Blames Bush." [Laughter]

You don't hear a lot about progress in America. So let me tell you about some good things we've done together.

Just two weeks ago, all three nations of North America agreed to trade freely from Manitoba to Mexico. This will bring good jobs to Main Street, U.S.A.

We passed the Americans with Disabilities Act, bringing 43 million people into the economic mainstream. I must say, it's about time.

Our children will breathe easier because of our new clean air pact.

We are rebuilding our roads, providing jobs for more than half a million Americans.

We passed a child care law, and we took a stand for family values by saying that when it comes to raising children, Government doesn't know best; parents know best.

I have fought against prejudice and anti-Semitism all my life. I am proud that we strengthened our civil rights laws, and we did it without resorting to quotas.

One more thing of vital importance to all: Today, cocaine use has fallen by 60 percent among young people. To the teenagers, the parents, and the volunteers who are

helping us battle the scourge of drugs in America, we say, thank you; thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Do I want to do more? You bet. Nothing hurts me more than to meet with soldiers home from the Persian Gulf who can't find a job or workers who have a job but worry that the next day will bring a pink slip. And what about parents who scrape and struggle to send their kids to college, only to find them back living at home because they can't get work.

The world is in transition, and we are feeling that transition in our homes. The defining challenge of the nineties is to win the economic competition, to win the peace. We must be a military superpower, an economic superpower, and an export superpower.

In this election, you'll hear two versions of how to do this. Theirs is to look inward and protect what we already have. Ours is to look forward, to open new markets, prepare our people to compete, to restore our social fabric, to save and invest so we can win.

We believe that now that the world looks more like America, it's time for America to look more like herself. And so we offer a philosophy that puts faith in the individual, not the bureaucracy; a philosophy that empowers people to do their best, so America can be at its best. In a world that is safer and freer, this is how we will build an America that is stronger, safer, and more secure.

We start with a simple fact: Government is too big and spends too much.

I have asked Congress to put a lid on mandatory spending, except Social Security. I've proposed doing away with over 200 programs and 4,000 wasteful projects and to freeze all other spending.

The gridlock Democrat Congress said no. *Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

The President. So, beginning tonight, I will enforce the spending freeze on my own. If Congress sends me a bill spending more than I asked for in my budget, I will veto it fast, veto it fast, faster than copies of Millie's book sold.

Now, Congress won't cut spending, but refuses to give the President the power to

eliminate pork-barrel projects that waste your money. Forty-three Governors have that power. So I ask you, the American people: Give me a Congress that will give me the line-item veto.

Let me tell you about a recent battle fought with the Congress, a battle in which I was aided by Bob Michel and his troops, and Bob Dole and his. This spring, I worked day and night to get two-thirds of the House Members to approve a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. We almost had it, but we lost by just nine votes. Now, listen how. Just before the vote, the liberal leaders of the Congress convinced 12 Members who cosponsored the bill to switch sides and vote no. Keep in mind, they voted against a bill they had already put their names on. Something fishy is going on.

And look at my opponent on this issue. Look at my opponent. He says he's for balanced budgets. But he came out against the amendment. He's like that on a lot of issues, first on one side, then the other. He's been spotted in more places than Elvis Presley.

After all these years, Congress has become pretty creative at finding ways to waste your money. So we need to be just as creative at finding ways to stop them. I have a brandnew idea. Taxpayers should be given the right to check a box on their tax returns so that up to 10 percent of their payments can go for one purpose alone: to reduce the national debt.

But we also need to make sure that Congress doesn't just turn around and borrow more money to spend more money. So I will require that for every tax dollar set aside to cut the debt, the ceilings on spending will be cut by an equal amount. That way, we will cut both debt and spending and take a whack out of the budget deficit.

My feelings about big government come from my experience; I spent half my adult life in the private sector. My opponent has a different experience; he's been in government nearly all his life. His passion to expand government knows no bounds.

He's already proposed, and listen to this carefully, he has already proposed \$220 billion in new spending, along with the biggest tax increase in history, \$150 billion. And that's just to start.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He says he wants to tax the rich. But folks, he defines rich as anyone who has a job. [*Laughter*]

You've heard of the separations of powers. Well, my opponent practices a different theory: the power of separations. Government has the power to separate you from your wallet. [*Laughter*]

Now let me say this: When it comes to taxes, I've learned the hard way. There's an old saying, "Good judgment comes from experience, and experience comes from bad judgment." Two years ago, I made a bad call on the Democrats tax increase. I underestimated Congress' addiction to taxes. With my back against the wall, I agreed to a hard bargain: One tax increase one time in return for the toughest spending limits ever.

Well, it was a mistake to go along with the Democratic tax increase, and I admit it. But here's the question for the American people. Who do you trust in this election? The candidate who's raised taxes one time and regrets it, or the other candidate who raised taxes and fees 128 times and enjoyed it every time?

Audience members. Viva Bush! Viva Bush! Viva Bush!

The President. Thank you very much.

Audience members. Hit 'em again! Hit 'em again, harder, harder! Hit 'em again! Hit 'em again, harder, harder!

The President. When the new Congress convenes next January, I will propose to further reduce taxes across the board, provided we pay for these cuts with specific spending reductions that I consider appropriate, so that we do not increase the deficit. I will also continue to fight to increase the personal exemption and to create jobs by winning a cut in capital gains taxes.

That will especially help small businesses. You know, they create—small businesses—they create two-thirds of the new jobs in America. But my opponent's plan for small business is clear, present, and dangerous. Beside new income taxes, his plan will lead to a new payroll tax to pay for a Government takeover of health care and another new tax to pay for training. That is just the beginning.

If he gets his way, hardware stores across America will have a new sign up, "Closed for despair." I guess you'd say his plan really is "Elvis economics." America will be checking into the "Heartbreak Hotel."

I believe that small business needs relief from taxation, regulation, and litigation. And thus, I will extend for one year the freeze on paperwork and unnecessary Federal regulation that I imposed last winter. There is no reason that Federal regulations should live longer than my friend George Burns. I will issue an order to get rid of any rule whose time has come and gone.

I see something happening in our towns and in our neighborhoods. Sharp lawyers are running wild. Doctors are afraid to practice medicine, and some moms and pops won't even coach Little League any more. We must sue each other less and care for each other more. I am fighting to reform our legal system, to put an end to crazy lawsuits. If that means climbing into the ring with the trial lawyers, well, let me just say, round one starts tonight.

After all, my opponent's campaign is being backed by practically every trial lawyer who ever wore a tasseled loafer. He's not in the ring with them; he's in the tank.

There are other things we need to do to get our economy up to speed, prepare our kids for the next century. We must have new incentives for research and new training for workers. Small businesses need capital and credit, and defense workers need new jobs. I have a plan to provide affordable health care for every American, controlling costs by cutting paperwork and lawsuits and expanding coverage to the poorest of the poor.

We do not need my opponent's plan for a massive Government takeover of health care, which would ration care and deny you the right to choose a doctor. Who wants health care with a system with the efficiency of the House post office and the compassion of the KGB?

What about our schools? What about our schools? My opponent and I both want to change the way our kids learn. He wants to change our schools a little bit, and I want to change them a lot. Take the issue of whether parents should be able to choose the best school for their kids. My opponent

says that's okay, as long as the school is run by government. And I say every parent and child should have a real choice of schools, public, private, or religious.

So we have a clear choice to fix our problems. Do we turn to the tattered blanket of bureaucracy that other nations are tossing away? Or do we give our people the freedom and incentives to build security for themselves?

Here's what I'm fighting for: Open markets for American products; lower Government spending; tax relief; opportunities for small business; legal and health reform; job training; and new schools built on competition, ready for the 21st century.

Now, okay, why are these proposals not in effect today? Only one reason: the gridlock Democratic Congress.

Audience members. Clean your House! Clean your House! Clean your House!

The President. A very good idea, a very good idea.

Now, I know Americans are tired of the blame game, tired of people in Washington acting like they're candidates for the next episode of "American Gladiators." I don't like it, either. Neither should you. But the truth is the truth. Our policies have not failed. They haven't even been tried.

Americans want jobs, and on January 28th, I put before Congress a plan to create jobs. If it'd been passed back then, 500,000 more Americans would be at work right now. But in a Nation that demands action, Congress has become the master of inaction.

It wasn't always this way. I heard President Ford tonight. I served in Congress 22 years ago, under him. And back then, we cooperated. We didn't get personal. We put the people above everything else. Heck, we didn't even own blow dryers back in those days.

At my first Inauguration, I said that people didn't send us to bicker. I extended my hand, and I think the American people know this, I extended my hand to the congressional leaders, the Democratic leaders, and they bit it.

The House leadership has not changed in 38 years. It is a body caught in a hopelessly

tangled web of PAC's, perks, privileges, partnership, and paralysis. Every day, Congress puts politics ahead of principle and above progress.

Now, let me give you just one example: February 20th, 1991. It was at the height of the Gulf war. On that very same day, I asked American pilots to risk their lives to fly missions over Baghdad. I also wanted to strengthen our economic security for the future. So that very same day, I introduced a new domestic energy strategy which would cut our dependence on foreign oil by 7 million barrels a day.

How many days did it take to win the Gulf war? Forty-three. How many did it take Congress to pass a national energy strategy? Five hundred and thirty-two, and still counting. I have ridden stationary bikes that can move faster than the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate, controlled by the Democrat leadership.

Audience members. Hit 'em again! Hit 'em again, harder, harder! Hit 'em again! Hit 'em again, harder, harder!

The President. Okay. All right. You wait. I'm fixing to.

Where does my opponent stand with Congress? Well, up in New York at their convention, they kept the congressional leaders away from the podium, hid them away. They didn't want America to hear from the people who really make the decisions. They hid them for a very good reason, because the American people would recognize a dangerous combination: a rubber-check Congress and a rubber-stamp President.

Governor Clinton and Congress know that you've caught on to their lingo. They know when they say "spending," you say "uh-oh." So now they have a new word, "investment." They want to "invest" \$220 billion more of your money, but I want you to keep it.

Governor Clinton and Congress want to put through the largest tax increase in history, but I will not let that happen. Governor Clinton and Congress don't want kids to have the option of praying in school, but I do. Clinton and Congress don't want to close legal loopholes and keep criminals behind bars, but I will. Clinton and Con-

gress will stock the judiciary with liberal judges who write laws they can't get approved by the voters.

Governor Clinton even says that Mario Cuomo belongs on the Supreme Court. [*Laughter*] Wait a minute, though. No, wait. Maybe not a bad idea. If you believe in judicial restraint, you probably ought to be happy. After all, the good Governor of New York can't make up his mind between chocolate and vanilla at Baskin Robbins. He's there, we won't have another court decision for 35 years, and maybe that's all right, too.

Are my opponent and Congress really in cahoots? Look at one important question: Should we limit the terms of Congress?

Audience members. Yes.

The President. Governor Clinton says no. Congress says no. I say yes.

We tried this—look, we tried this once before, combining the Democratic Governor of a small southern State with a very liberal Vice President and a Democratic Congress. America does not need Carter II. We do not want to take America back to those days of malaise. But Americans want to know: Where's proof that we will have better days in Washington?

I'll give you 150 reasons. That's how many Members of Congress are expected to leave Washington this year. Some are tainted by scandal; the voters have bounced them the way they bounced their own checks. But others are good Members, Republican and Democrat, and they agree with me. The place just doesn't work anymore.

One hundred-fifty new Members, from both parties, will be coming to Washington this fall. Every one will have a fresh view of America's future.

I pledge today to the American people, immediately after this election, I will meet with every one of these Members, before they get attacked by the PAC's, overwhelmed by their staffs, and cornered by some camera crew. I will lay out my case for change, change that matters, real change that makes a difference, change that is right for America.

You see, there is a yearning in America, a feeling that maybe it's time to get back to our roots. Sure we must change, but some

values are timeless. I believe in families that stick together, fathers who stick around. I happen to believe very deeply in the worth of each individual human being, born or unborn. I believe in teaching our kids the difference between what's wrong and what's right, teaching them respect for hard work and to love their neighbors. I believe that America will always have a special place in God's heart, as long as He has a special place in ours. Maybe that's why I've always believed that patriotism is not just another point of view.

There are times in every young person's life when God introduces you to yourself. I remember such a time. It was back many years ago, when I stood watch at 4 a.m. up on the bridge of a submarine, the United States *Finback*, U.S.S. *Finback*. And I would stand there and look out on the blackness of the sky, broken only by the sparkling stars above. And I would think about friends I lost, a country I loved, and about a girl named Barbara. I remember those nights as clearly as any in my life.

You know, you can see things from up there that other people don't see. You can see storm clouds rise and then disappear, the first hint of the sun over the horizon, and the first outline of the shore far away.

Now, I know that Americans are uneasy today. There is anxious talk around our kitchen tables. But from where I stand, I see not America's sunset but a sunrise.

The world changes for which we've sacrificed for a generation have finally come to pass, and with them a rare and unprecedented opportunity to pass the sweet cup of prosperity around our American table.

Are we up to it? I know we are. As I travel our land, I meet veterans who once worked the turrets of a tank and can now master the keyboards of high-tech economy. I see teachers blessed with the incredible American capacity for innovation who are teaching our children a new way to learn for a new century. I meet parents, some working two jobs with hectic schedules, who

still find new ways to teach old values to steady their kids in a turbulent world.

I take heart from what is happening in America, not from those who profess a new passion for government but from those with an old and enduring faith in the human potential, those who understand that the genius of America is our capacity for rebirth and renewal. America is the land where the sun is always peeking over the horizon.

Tonight I appeal to that unyielding, undying, undeniable American spirit. I ask you to consider, now that the entire world is moving our way, why would we want to go back their way? I ask not just for your support for my agenda but for your commitment to renew and rebuild our Nation by shaking up the one institution that has withstood change for over four decades. Join me in rolling away the roadblock at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, so that in the next 4 years, we will match our accomplishments outside by building a stronger, safer, more secure America inside.

Forty-four years ago in another age of uncertainty a different President embarked on a similar mission. His name was Harry S Truman. As he stood before his party to accept their nomination, Harry Truman knew the freedom I know this evening, the freedom to talk about what's right for America, and let the chips fall where they may.

Harry Truman said this: This is more than a political call to arms. Give me your help, not to win votes alone, but to win this new crusade and keep America safe and secure for its own people.

Well, tonight I say to you: Join me in our new crusade, to reap the rewards of our global victory, to win the peace, so that we may make America safer and stronger for all our people.

May God bless you, and may God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much.

Note: The President spoke at 9:20 p.m. at the Houston Astrodome.