

July 30 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1994

to work for peace. And we've been working hard on that. Peace for our children—[*inaudible*].

After working hard on it for a year and a half, the President of Russia called me and told me that Russian troops would get out of Central and Eastern Europe for the first time since World War II, making the world more peaceful for these children here.

But I'm telling you, what we owe these kids is not just peace in the world but peace on our streets and peace of mind. That means we need to pass the crime bill. We need to provide health care for all Americans, and we need to do it now.

Let me say to you, I went to Washington hoping against hope and against all the evidence that I could work with people of both parties to make this country a better place. And I have done everything I could to overcome the kind

of inertia and opposition we have faced. And I just want you to know, if you like the fact that the American economy's recovering, if you like the fact that we're going to finally do something serious about crime, if you like the fact that after years we voted family leave, we voted for the Brady bill, we voted to make the American people safer, then you ought to keep these people in Congress and send Joel Hyatt to the Senate so we can do things, not stop things. This is a country that's can-do. And we're going to do if you put people in the Congress who believe in making America a better place.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:11 p.m. at Cleveland-Hopkins International Airport. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Reception for Joel Hyatt in Mayfield Heights, Ohio July 30, 1994

I'm delighted to be here with Joel and Susan and their two fine sons, who spoke so well and really said it all, and with Joel's mother, who must be so proud of him.

You know, if it hadn't been for my mother, I would never have been elected President, because there were plenty of elections I ran in where she and I were the only two people who thought I had a chance to win. [*Laughter*] Unfortunately, a time or two they were right, and we were wrong. [*Laughter*] But we just kept on going.

I'm delighted to be here with Senator and Mrs. Metzenbaum, and with all of you. I want to say a special word of thanks to attorney general Lee Fisher for his leadership on the fight against crime and for his leadership on behalf of the Clinton-Gore ticket. I also want to say a special word of thanks to the three Members of Congress that Joel mentioned, Tom Sawyer, Sherrod Brown, and Eric Fingerhut, without whom our economic program would not have passed and this country's economic direction would not have turned around. And I thank them so much.

You know, it's funny, I came to the Cleveland Airport—we're a little late because there were 500 people there when I landed, so I went around and shook hands with them—and I thought, what great passionate public issue will they be concerned about. I thought I knew America well enough, and sure enough, the first 15 people I shook hands with said, "Can't you do anything about the baseball strike?" [*Laughter*]

You know, as a lifelong fanatic baseball fan, I threw out the first pitch here. And I saw the Indians come out of nowhere, and they're doing so well. And in the other part of the State, by the way, the Cincinnati Reds are not doing bad, either. So for Ohio, perhaps more than any other place in America this year, we're really all happy that we're having the best baseball season in 4 years, and we hope we get a chance to see if those records can be broken and all that progress can be made.

But you know, I want to make a point about that. A couple of years ago, David Letterman had a funny top 10 list called "Suggested Slogans of the 1992 Democratic Convention." And one of his allegedly funny slogans was, "We're

the Cleveland Indians of politics.” [Laughter] Well, we got the last laugh, and now Cleveland might get the last laugh, as well.

I want to say a special word of thanks, too, to Senator Metzenbaum. Al Hunt, in the Wall Street Journal, who is sometimes acerbic, said the other day, and I quote, “Senator Metzenbaum is a persistent pain in the neck.” [Laughter] Now, wait, wait, he said, “As a result, thousands of little kids are likely to have a better life.” That was an article about Senator Metzenbaum’s adoption bill, a bill that I feel very strongly about, one of the few things that anybody in Congress has done besides given a speech to try to give more little kids a chance at a good life. And I really respect it. And I have told people who disagree with us on the issue of choice that if they’re really concerned about that issue, they ought to go see Howard Metzenbaum and saddle up and pass his bill in the Congress, so that we can offer real and meaningful adoption to more of our poor children in this country. I thank him for that, and I know you do, too.

Senator Biden pointed out last week at a big ceremony at the Justice Department, with hundreds and hundreds of police officers from all over the country, as we were celebrating the fact the Senate and the House had agreed to put this crime bill Joel talked about on the floor of the Congress next week, that the final negotiations were snagged in the early hours of the morning and that one man saved the entire bill by being willing to work out a last-minute compromise. And he said, that man was Howard Metzenbaum.

The thing I like about him is that he is always fighting. He doesn’t always win, but he always fights. And what we need in this country is not people who are always trying to win, or at least look like they’re winning, but people who are willing to fight.

I first knew about old Joel Hyatt back in Yale law school when he had already begun a program for undergraduates to teach inner-city kids. It’s still going on. It’s kind of like Hyatt Legal Services; it’s going to live behind him. Even after he goes to the Senate, I’m sure it will go on. And then when he and Susan started Hyatt Legal Services I thought it was a good idea, which made me sort of an iconoclast among lawyers. But it seemed to me that ordinary people ought to be able to go see a lawyer and get something fairly straightforward

done without having to take the shirt off their back or be scared to death.

And he did that. And I think that’s important, because it’s not just a mechanical service. It makes people think that the system can work for them. And believe me, if we could just make more than half the American people believe that this whole country could work for them again, we would do a very great deal indeed. And that’s what Joel did with Legal Services. That’s what he can help to do with the United States when you send him to the Senate.

Hillary and I have had a wonderful day today. We went to Independence, Missouri, to Harry Truman’s hometown. And we celebrated there the final leg of the effort to get national health reform and guaranteed health insurance for all Americans. We went there for a couple of reasons. First of all, Harry Truman tried three times, in 1945, 1947, and 1949, to get guaranteed health coverage for all Americans.

And it’s very interesting, all the people that were out there holding their signs and demonstrating against us today, they all think Harry Truman ought to be on Mount Rushmore. [Laughter] But I come from a family who was for him when he was alive. And I know that they’re the same folks that tried to kill all of his reform programs back then.

At the end of the Second World War, Harry Truman was at 80 percent in the public opinion polls. By the time he sent the health care reform to Congress for the second time, he had been driven down to 36 percent and was going lower because of all the hatred and venom and misinformation put out about him and his program. They said, “This is socialized Government, socialized medicine, big Government run amok.” Do you know what it was? He was asking for private health insurance for all Americans.

And we’re going through the same fight today, 50 years later. In the middle, President Johnson came 29 years ago this day—this exact day, President Johnson went to Independence, Missouri, to sign Medicare and to give Harry and Bess Truman Medicare cards numbers one and two. It took that long to guarantee health care to the elderly of this country. And I couldn’t help thinking, I wonder how many people out there today, with their right-wing extreme signs and all their harsh slogans, have parents who, thank God, are healthier because of Medicare and who have, therefore, avoided bankrupting their children because of Medicare?

I say that to make this point. There is something about this time that matters, that is far more important even than the specific things we are about, because we have come to the end of one era and we are starting another. And we have to decide again what kind of people we are and what we're going to do.

Every time in this country's history—and I won't go through the whole thing, but I do want to talk about this century, and some of you have seen even a little more of it than I have—every time we have come to the end of one era and started another, we have as a country been just like people are. When you have to make a big change you are filled with both hope and fear. You want to make the plunge and grow into a bigger, better person, but you have all kinds of reservations. And you wish somehow that you wouldn't have to make these changes.

At the end of World War I, the American people voted for normalcy in a President, whatever that is. It really meant, let's just do nothing. Let's come home, we draw up in the world and do nothing here. We are tired. We paid a lot in this war. We can't think about this stuff anymore. And so we had no direction, and we just sort of flailed around. And what happened? The Ku Klux Klan got a big foothold in America, went on the rise and promoted a lot of hate. And there was the first big Red scare alleging that there were Communists everywhere trying to run down America. And the world came apart at the seams. And we found ourselves thrown into a great depression and, ultimately, another world war.

And then at the end of World War II, we had a different sort of leader, Harry Truman, only 4 months as Vice President when he found himself President. He brought the war to a successful conclusion; passed the GI bill so that soldiers could come home and get an education, buy homes for their families; brought the deficit down; got the civilian economy going; established the Marshall plan and rebuilt Japan as well as Europe; and set in motion that whole system that enabled us to stand up to communism and win the cold war. And he was still in terrible trouble when he started running for reelection, because people said he was a radical, he was unfit, he was not good. Why? Because people were afraid. They had to put down one set of glasses through which they had viewed the world, and they hadn't been able to pick

up another set. Harry Truman was making that set of glasses, that framework in which we would all understand the world. But the American people did the right thing. They reelected him. And we enshrined those institutions that kept us going for four and a half decades and made us the great country that we are today.

Now we have won the cold war, and we are going into a new era without the great enemy of the Soviet Union to define our every move and with more competition than we ever thought we'd have for jobs and opportunity and the future. And we know the future can be bright and wonderful and various and exciting. But it's also frightening. And we are, as a people, vulnerable today to the most vicious kind of attacks on our own self-confidence and our best impulses. And you hear it every day. And so we are still unable to escape the almost biological nature of a great democracy at a time of change.

I ran for President because I believed that the American dream was in danger for my daughter; because I believed that the economy was going downhill, the deficit was going up, jobs were going down, investment was going down; because I believed that the country was coming apart, being divided by race, by religion, and in other ways, when we ought to be coming together and taking great joy in all the diversity of America; because I believed that Government no longer worked for ordinary people. And Presidents and other politicians found that they could stay most popular by saying things people wanted to hear and doing absolutely nothing, avoiding the tough problems that inevitably causes the kind of conflict we see today. And I saw nothing ahead for my country but trouble.

And so I asked for the chance to serve, and I want to thank you for it. I have loved every day of it. And the rougher it gets the better I like it because that's what we're here to do.

Now, but what I want to say to you tonight—this is a huge country; there are 250 million plus people here. There are billions of decisions every day. The President cannot do what America needs done alone. We need a Congress working for change, and we need people committed to change at the grassroots level. And we need people who keep their heads on straight and their hearts in line, working for a better and brighter America.

You know, when I offered up that economic program, people in the other party told me for

years that they just hated the deficit. I couldn't figure out why their Presidents kept proposing these big deficits, but they talked it down anyway. And I figured, surely we'll get some help. We got zero votes from the congressional Republicans for the economic plan. They said it would bring the country down. They said it was the ruination of America. They said it was the extension of tax-and-spend.

Here's what it was: It was \$255 billion in spending cuts. It was an income tax cut for half a million Ohio families, and a tax increase for only 47,000 who were asked to pay more to pay down the debt. And you know what it brought us? It brought us a reduction in Federal employment over the next 5 years of a quarter of a million, so that the Democrats, not the Republicans, will give you the smallest Federal Government that has existed in the United States since John Kennedy was President. And it has brought us 3 years in a row of reducing the Federal deficit for the first time since Harry Truman was President of the United States. That's what it did.

And what were the results of this: 3.8 million new jobs, 1½ percent drop in the unemployment rate, the largest number of new business starts last year of any year since World War II, with no inflation.

That's why Eric Fingerhut, Sherrod Brown, and Tom Sawyer, and everybody else in this congressional district and State who represent you in Congress, who put their necks on the line, deserve to be reelected: because they gave you this economy, they did something about the debt, and they did it in the midst of a vicious attack on their credibility and unbelievable misinformation. Where would we be today if we hadn't done it?

When I travel to other parts of the world, when I go to these meetings of the leaders of the big industrial nations and they say, "Your exports are growing faster than ours, your investments are growing faster than ours, your unemployment rate is lower than ours, your growth rate is higher than ours; how did you do it? How did you do it?"—I think of people like you that put me in and people like Congressman Brown, Congressman Sawyer, Congressman Fingerhut, and the others. We won by the narrowest of margins.

If Joel Hyatt's opponent had defeated Senator Glenn last time, the entire economic plan would have come crashing down and it would not have

passed, because we carried it by a single vote. This election matters.

In times of change where people are uncertain, the airways are full of misinformation and people do not know it matters whether you vote for people who have the courage to change and take on the tough problems and do the tough thing. What is in fashion today is talking tough and acting soft. I believe in what Teddy Roosevelt said—maybe the last great Republican President—talk soft, act tough. That's what we ought to do.

But there is reason for hope. We passed Family and Medical Leave to empower families to be successful workers and successful parents, after 7 years of gridlock and a couple of vetoes. We finally passed the Brady bill after 7 years, 7 years in which it could not be passed. We passed more legislation and had more agreements to expand our trade to generate jobs for Americans and for people in Ohio in the last year than in any year in the past 30 years. We passed more legislation to help States and localities and private businesses, retrain and educate people, for more Head Start international standards of excellence for our schools, to apprenticeships for the kids that don't go to college, to lower college loans, for interest rates on college loans—listen to this—for 20 million Americans, so that more people can afford to go to college from working class, middle class families.

Now, that's what we have been doing there. And if you don't know about that it's because others are more interested in other issues. But that is what we have been doing there. And we need doers in the United States Congress. There have been some issues on which we have received some bipartisan help, and for that I am very grateful. I would love it if it happened on ever issue. But when it comes to pivotal issues like health care, I can do no better than the distinguished Republican Congressman from Iowa, Fred Grandy, who complained the other day that the Republicans have been ordered not to cooperate with the administration to try to achieve our common goal of universal health care for all Americans. I don't care whether people are Republicans or Democrats. I don't even care how they're going to vote in the next election. I think they all ought to have health care, even if they ought to change their politics. This is not a political issue, it's an American issue. We cannot solve it without American doers in the United States Congress.

Now, let me say that I am, in spite of everything, full of hope. Look at the week the United States had this week: the King of Jordan, the Prime Minister of Israel, with strong support from the United States, coming to Washington to put an end to the state of war and to commit to create a full, decent, lasting peace between them after all these years of separation. After a year and a half of hard work on our part, the President of Russia notifies me that, yes, Russian troops will withdraw entirely from Central and Eastern Europe by August 31st. For the first time since the end of World War II there will be no Russian troops there. We will be a safer place. We confirmed a brilliant new Justice of the Supreme Court. We learned that our growth rate was 3.7 percent in the second quarter of this year. Our military swung into action in a courageous and bold way in Rwanda to help save the lives of the people there.

The United States had a good week last week. And the Congress voted out the crime bill. It will be on the floor this week: 100,000 police officers; "three strikes and you're out"; \$8 billion in prevention programs to give something to say yes to, not just something to say no to; an assault weapons ban; a ban on handgun possession by minors unless they're under the supervision of adults; and funds to make our schools safe so kids don't have to duck under their desks when the shooting starts. That's a big deal. And all that happened last week.

And for the first time in history, we now have on the floor of the Congress—the first time in history on the floor of both the Senate and House there are bills that would guarantee health care to all Americans.

And I want to say this, just this, in closing: We have been waiting 60 years through Presidents of both parties to try to figure out a way to cover every American. We are the only major country in the world that not only does not provide coverage for all American working families, we are going in reverse. Ten years ago 88 percent of our people were insured; today only 83 percent are. Five years ago, there were 5 million more Americans with health insurance than have it today. Five million Americans living and working in the United States of America today had health insurance 5 years ago and do not have it today.

And what's worse is we know what works. We know that the simplest, easiest thing to do is to ask employers and employees to share the

responsibility of buying private insurance. We know it works from looking at other countries. I just came back from Germany. I met with hundreds of military families who are coming home. The only issue they said was, "Mr. President, don't let us come home to an America without health care for our children. We've been covered in the military; we see how it works in Germany." In Germany, everybody pays; everybody's covered. It's a world-class health care system. They've got world-class pharmaceuticals. They spend 8½ percent of their income to cover everybody. We spend over 14 percent of our income to cover 83 percent and leave one in six Americans uncovered. I think we can do better.

But the best example is close to home. For 20 years, Hawaii, Hawaii has covered everybody. Now, if you've ever been to Hawaii, you know everything in Hawaii is more expensive than it is on the mainland, except health care, where small businesses pay rates that are 30 percent lower than any other place. Why? Because if everybody has to pay their fair share, if everybody has to pay their fair share, then you have everybody doing what's happened in this Cleveland business partnership here, where small businesses have been able to buy cheaper insurance. Insurance goes down for everybody, and coverage goes up.

If you just try to reform the insurance system, insurance rates go up if you put more sick people in; people stop covering, the pool gets smaller, and the rates go up again. Why should we not simply do what works?

And I want to close with this: This should not be a political thing. In 1971, the President of the United States, Richard Nixon and the man who is now the ranking Republican on the Senate Finance Committee, Senator Robert Packwood from Oregon, introduced a bill that required employers and employees to split the cost of health care to cover everybody. So I say to the Republicans in the Congress, let's have a bipartisan American solution. You go back to where Richard Nixon was 23 years ago. I'll meet you halfway, and we'll take care of the American people with people like Joel Hyatt in the Senate.

Thank you very much, and God bless you all.

Administration of William J. Clinton, 1994 / July 30

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:20 p.m. at the Landerhaven Country Club. In his remarks, he referred to television talk show host David Letterman.