

Remarks at the Democratic Governors Association Dinner January 31, 1994

Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Governor Bayh, Father Malloy, Chairman Wilhelm. I want to begin by just congratulating Governor Bayh and your dinner committee, Bob and the others and Katie Whelan, on this wonderful evening in which you have raised \$2 million to continue the work of changing our country for the better.

I was outside in the holding room looking at Evan Bayh introducing me, and I thought to myself, was I ever that young? [*Laughter*] Three years ago Roy Romer invited all of the Democratic Governors up to Colorado so we could powwow about the coming Presidential election. And we all talked and emoted and said everything we had to say, and as usual, Ned Ray McWherter just sat there and didn't say a word—[*laughter*]—looking like a cross between a country sage and the Grand Old Opry's Buddha. And all of a sudden, he said, "You know something, we need to nominate somebody in '92 that's a new face, that's younger, got a head full of hair and a bunch of new ideas." And I got all puffed up, and he said, "Go get that Bayh boy and put him in there." [*Laughter*]

I am so glad to see all of you here. I enjoyed my time with the Governors this morning and will again tomorrow. And I've enjoyed having the chance to visit with so many of you. I'd like to, before I say anything else, just say a personal word of thanks to my former colleagues who are leaving the statehouses this year:

My good friend John Waihee from Hawaii, who headed our campaign out there last year—it was our first Western States victory—and who lives in a State that has proved now for many years you can actually have a comprehensive, affordable health care system that covers everybody, something the Republicans don't believe can be done.

Governor Cece Andrus of Idaho, the only person along with Bruce King and me, the three of us, the only remaining survivors who actually served as Governors in the seventies, the eighties, and the nineties. I will miss him enormously and his wisdom.

Joan Finney, who leaves after 20 years in statewide office and led an awful lot of fights

out there. And I want to thank her for a lot of things but especially for being a source of personal encouragement to me in the last year. Thank you, Joan, and good luck, and God bless you.

I want to say a special word of appreciation to one of my neighboring Governors now, William Donald Schaefer of Maryland, who has done a lot of things, been more outspoken than me. But don't you ever forget this: In addition to helping revitalize and rebuild Baltimore, he was out there fighting to do something sane and strong about guns a long time before it was popular. He was on the cutting edge of change.

My friend and neighbor David Walters of Oklahoma, who I saw take over that State when it was in terrible shape financially. When the price of oil collapsed, it was good for the rest of us, but it was awful for Oklahoma and for Texas. And I saw them make improvements in education and turn their economy around, redo the entire budget, thanks to David's leadership. And his friendship and cooperation with me when I was his neighbor is something I will never forget, and I thank you, David.

I'd like to say a special word of appreciation, too, to my friend and colleague Barbara Roberts, the Governor of Oregon, who has had more difficult, courageous stands on more issues, she has had more things to face than anybody. And she had one of those catch-22 situations where the voters said, "We're going to do away with one form of funding and leave it to you, Barbara, to figure out how to pick up the pieces." And she did it with good cheer, without ever complaining, and with a great deal of courage. She is a real example, I think, not only for women officeholders but for all elected officials everywhere, and I thank her for that.

Finally, I don't know if he's here tonight, but I have to say a word of awe-inspired respect for Bob Casey of Pennsylvania for his personal courage and his record as Governor. I thought when he got sick that if anybody could ever come back, he could. He is tough as a boot, but he loves his State. And he said once that he knew he would be elected Governor of Pennsylvania on his fourth try because he was more

like Pennsylvania than anybody else running. That's a compliment to him and a compliment to Pennsylvania.

And finally, I want to thank my neighbor and friend whom I made fun of, but who has been my counselor for many years now, who's calmed me when I was excited and lifted me up when I was down. Ned Ray McWherter is one of the finest people I've ever met, and I thank him. And I'm certainly going to miss him as a Governor.

Now I want to mention two other people. You know, I used to be chairman of the DGA, but I couldn't raise this much money. [*Laughter*] But when I was chairman 5 years ago, we had just lost our third straight Presidential election, and people said, well, the Democratic Party is on its way out. And there were two people who ran for office in that year who proved them wrong, Doug Wilder and Jim Florio. And what they did to win is something we would do well to remember even though we have the White House and a good record in 1994, and that is, they waged tough, outsider, aggressive, pro-change campaigns. And when they got in, they were as good as their words. Both of them brought extraordinary discipline to their budgets under difficult circumstances, and they will be thanked for it for a long time to come, and especially in New Jersey, which was in terrible budget shape when Jim Florio took over. Both of them fought for tougher and more responsible laws affecting guns in their respective States, successfully. Both of them fought for a brighter future. And I know that we all wish for them a bright future. They gave it to their States, and we hope that they get it in turn.

Finally, I want to say a special word of thanks to the DGA's treasurer for a long time now, my friend Bob Farmer, one of the first people who signed on to my Presidential campaign. And Bob Farmer could talk an owl out of a tree if he made up his mind to do it. He could raise \$1 million at a convention of bankrupts if he made up his mind to do it. [*Laughter*] And he's been working hard for the DGA for a long time now. And I know that as we go into this very vigorous and challenging election year with 36 seats up, that every person in this room joins me in our appreciation, our gratitude, our support, and our friendship for the years and years of work that Bob Farmer has given to the Democratic Governors. And I thank you very much, Bob.

Ladies and gentlemen, this has been an invigorating year. It's been full of challenge and change. And many, many times I have felt that I was fighting a war on two or three fronts, not only a war to change the policies of the Government but to change the attitudes of the people who live in this city about what is possible, in an environment that I found, frankly, pretty negative when I got here and one always vulnerable to being sidetracked by some political distraction, always vulnerable to being sidetracked by what is negative, to playing to people's fears instead of their hopes, to assuming the worst instead of working for the best.

I was raised to believe that most people are good people—if you give them a chance, they'll do the right thing—and that ordinary people will do extraordinary things if they're just given the opportunity to do it. I tried to put together a government of people who felt the same way, who looked like America, who shared the experiences of America, and who could work with people at the grassroots to do that. And after a year in which we have a lot of things we can be proud of—and I thank the Democratic Committee for that fine film that was just shown—the American people are beginning to believe it, too: that we really can change things, that politics is for producing things, not for posturing, that it really is for moving forward and bringing people together.

I ran for this job for three reasons. One is I thought we were going in the wrong direction economically, and I wanted to revitalize the country. The second is I was convinced we were coming apart as a people when we ought to be coming together and that unless we worked to rebuild our sense of common community and our grassroots communities and our families, our sense of togetherness, we could never be what we ought to be. And finally, I did it because I wanted to restore faith in the political system. I wanted the political system to work for the people of this country instead of having it work the other way around. And I think in the last year, we have made major strides in all three areas.

As my colleague and the best—I would argue that history will record—the best Vice President in the history of the Republic, Al Gore, said, "What should be up is up, and what should be down is down." [*Laughter*] But if we want to keep what should be up, up and what should be down, down, then the Democratic Governors

need to be up in '94. We need to win these seats.

I am convinced that the yearning of the American people to see a responsive, change-oriented, open political system, that that appetite has not been satisfied; it has only been barely whetted. The American people think, well, we've made a good start, but we've got a long way to go. And you know as well as I do that the things that I'm trying to do up here cannot be done by the President and the Congress alone. I see many Members of Congress here tonight, and I am delighted to see them here making common cause with you.

If you think about what it is we seek to do in reviving the economy, or totally reorganizing our job training program so that people who lose their jobs can constantly be retrained for the jobs of the future, or developing a health care system that will be more efficient and more effective and provide comprehensive benefits to all Americans, or reforming the welfare system, or having a crime bill that is both tough and smart—none of these things can really be done in ways that change the lives of the American people unless the people who occupy the statehouses are committed to that change, unless they think every day about what they can do to change the lives of the people who live and work in their States.

I was raised to believe that public service can be a noble profession and that people who work in it and give themselves to it and spend themselves completely in the attempt to achieve great things are doing the work of citizenship in a profoundly important way and should be bound to, not divided from, the rest of the American people. That is the spirit that the Democratic Party has to bring not only to national politics but also to every one of these governorships. And if we can do that, we will not only win the governorships in 1994, we will be able to continue to change the country. And

that is how we will be judged in 1996 and beyond: Are we doing what we said we would do? We have a bigger burden to bear than our adversaries, because we don't enjoy getting up every morning and saying no to family leave, no to motor voter, no to meaningful deficit reduction, no, no, no. We want to say yes, we believe we can do better. And our burden must be borne by you.

I've told a lot of people that in many ways being Governor was the best job anybody could ever have. And I want to thank you again, all of you who have been my colleagues over the years, for your friendship, your wisdom, your support, and your continuing insights. It's easy for us up here in Washington to get out of touch with what's going on in the heartland, and we depend upon you to keep us in touch. But we're glad to be here; I am, this association is, the national Democratic Party is, Members of Congress who are here are. We're glad to be here to support the efforts of the people who want the statehouses to be the people's houses. The White House belongs to the people of this country tonight a lot more than it has in many years in the past, and we are going to keep working together until we do what we promised to do in 1992.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:08 p.m. at the Omni Shoreham Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Evan Bayh of Indiana; Edward A. Malloy, former president, University of Notre Dame; David Wilhelm, chairman, Democratic National Committee; Bob Rose, dinner chairman; Katie Whelan, executive director, Democratic Governors Association; Gov. Roy Romer of Colorado; Gov. Ned Ray McWherter of Tennessee; Gov. Bruce King of New Mexico; Gov. Joan Finney of Kansas; and Gov. L. Douglas Wilder of Virginia.

Remarks to the American Hospital Association

February 1, 1994

Thank you very much. Thank you, Dick, and thank you, Carolyn. And thank you also for bringing my tea out here. The Hospital Associa-

tion is giving care to the President for his sick voice today. [*Laughter*] I thank you.