Remarks at a Reception for Senatorial Candidate Alan Wheat in Kansas City, Missouri

September 24, 1994

Thank you very much, Governor Carnahan, for your leadership on so many fronts, on health care and welfare reform and for being a good friend and a good leader of this State. To you and Mrs. Carnahan, it's good to see you again. I have been here to Missouri and to Kansas City so much that the Governor and Mayor Cleaver told me that if I came one more time I would get a tax bill. [*Laughter*] But I have such a good time it might be worth it.

I'm honored to be here with your Mayor and Mrs. Cleaver. I thank him for his leadership on the crime bill especially. He made a real difference in the work that he and the other mayors did. I'm honored to be here with Chairman McCarthy, who will be an able replacement for Alan Wheat, and with all your other distinguished supporters of Alan Wheat and Yolanda.

I really wanted to come here tonight, and I hope you will give me a few moments to tell you why I think this is an important race to our country in terms of what it is I have been trying to do as your President.

Two years ago, I ran for President at a time in my life when I didn't really want to do it. I was having a wonderful time as Governor of your neighboring State. Things were going very well for me and for my wonderful family. Our friends, our work, everything, was just perfect. And it didn't look like much of a race. At the time when I entered the race the incumbent President was at 70-some percent approval. So I not only was disrupting a job that I loved and my family life and my friends and the routines and the rhythm of normal life out here in the heartland, but it looked like it was a fool's errand.

I did it for a pretty simple reason. I felt very strongly that our country was in trouble, that we were going in the wrong direction, and that we were coming apart when we ought to be coming together. I thought there was a serious chance that we would not go into the next century in a position to preserve the American dream for my daughter and for the children of this country.

I thought the leadership that the other party had provided in the White House had followed economic policies that were unfair, but more importantly didn't work, and talked about the social problems in this country in ways that divided us in order to get them votes and turn the Democrats into aliens, making voters feel that we didn't somehow share their values. But they didn't much do anything about the social problems of the country.

I thought both parties in Washington were guilty of being a little too partisan and used rhetoric, throwing at each other these words that we heard in sound bites on the evening news that didn't mean much to folks that are just living out here in the country, trying to make a living and raise their kids and deal with all the problems they face. And I thought we needed to take a new direction.

I believed strongly that we needed to try to form a new consensus in America about what the National Government ought to do; that no one felt in this global economy, where more and more of our future is determined by our competitive ability, that the Government could be a savior, as people once felt. But neither, clearly to me, could we afford to have a National Government that just sat on the sidelines and preached at us except when they were called into play for the special interests. And we were given these two different models of what the National Government ought to do, and neither one of them made any sense. We really needed somebody to go up there and bring common sense, common decency, compassion; say, "Hey, let's identify our problems, identify what the National Government has to do, and get after it. Let's be a good partner with the American people. Let's create opportunity where we can. Let's demand responsibility for the American people to do what they have to do. And let's recreate this American community, because when we're together, nothing can stop us." And I ran on that for President.

I ran against what had happened for 12 years, more division, more diversion, more distraction. The other crowd talked about the balanced budget amendment and quadrupled the debt. They told us how much they hated Government, and they hung on for all they were worth.

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[*Laughter*] A lot of the ones that bad-mouthed Government couldn't bear to live outside Washington, DC. They told us how terrible the Government was, and they kept drawing their check every month from the Government. [*Laughter*] They railed against taxes as if they were protecting the middle class, but middle class taxes went up and taxes went down on the wealthiest Americans. Inequality got worse, and we didn't have much of a policy.

I believed we could do better, so 2 years ago I set out to travel this country and try to prove it. Thanks to the leadership that I enjoyed here in our campaign in Missouri, and thanks to the fact that I had a lot of friends and roots here, and maybe because I was your neighbor, you gave me a resounding victory in that election. And I'm grateful for that.

Here's what this is all about right now. And I want you to listen to this because this is important. On the night I was elected President, with a 10-point margin in Missouri, let me ask you, if I had gotten up in my acceptance speech and I had said, "Folks, thank you for electing me. I'm going to keep my pledge to you to get this country moving again and to pull this country together again, and within 20 months we will have put our economic house in order with the biggest budget cutting in history, with the elimination of scores of Government programs; we will raise tax rates on only the top 1.2 percent of the people and ask them to pay the deficit down, but we'll give a tax break to 10 times that many people, 15 million working families who are raising children just above the poverty line, because we don't want them to go back into welfare, we want them to keep working; we'll make 90 percent of the small businesses in this country eligible for a tax cut; we will reduce the size of the Federal bureaucracy to its lowest point since John Kennedy was President; and we will have 3 years of deficit reduction for the first time since Harry Truman was President," if I had told you that on election night, you would not have believed it. But it has happened.

If I had told you on election night that within 20 months we would have done more to expand trade for American products than in any comparable time period in 35 years; that NAFTA would lead to a 17-percent increase in exports to Mexico and help to fuel the boom in the auto industry, adding more employees; that we would have a worldwide trade agreement, new initiatives in Asia, new initiatives in Latin America; that we would have a real effort for the first time in decades to rebuild our shipbuilding industry, our aerospace industry; that we would be converting defense industries into engines of commercial resurgence with a remarkable innovative, high-tech-oriented defense conversion program; if I had told you that we were going to do all that, that we would target the inner cities and the poor rural areas, not for Government handouts but for free enterprise with community development banks designed to put almost $5 billion in loans to people who can go into business for themselves, and help make the banks make money as well; and that all of this together would produce 4.3 million new jobs in 20 months, 8 months of manufacturing growth for the first time in a decade in a row, that for the first time in 9 years the United States would be voted the most productive country in the world, that there would be more than 115,000 new jobs in Missouri, tax cuts for 300,000 Missourians, with tax increases on only 21,000; if I had told you that, you would not have believed it. But it happened. It's so.

On top of all that, we have passed the most comprehensive education legislation in any comparable time period since 1965, increased the people in Head Start by 200,000. We're going to immunize 2 million kids; by 1996, all kids under the age of 2 will have their shots. We're going to have a national program to help States have apprenticeships for young people who don't go to college but do want to have good jobs. And we have reformed the student loan program so that already 20 million young Americans, including over 300,000 right here in Missouri, are eligible to refinance their college loans with lower fees, longer pay-out terms, lower interest rates. That is so. That has happened.

If I had said, after 7 years of gridlock in Washington we're going to pass the family and medical leave bill, giving 900,000 Missouri families the security of knowing that they can be successful parents and successful children, as well as successful workers because they won't lose their job if they have to take a little time off from work; that we would pass the Brady bill after 7 years of obstinate refusal, that the crime bill we pass would have every single element I pledged in the campaign—100,000 more police officers, that's a 20 percent increase of on-street police officers, 100,000 more jail cells for serious offenders, tougher penalties for vio-

lent offenders, prevention funds that work, and drug treatment funds, and drug education funds to keep these kids out of trouble in the first place, a ban on juvenile ownership of handguns and the assault weapons ban, and a ban that protects, contrary to what the NRA says, protects 650 hunting weapons by any encroachment by the Federal Government whatever, you would not have believed it. But that is exactly what has happened in the last 20 months.

All the while it has been the Republicans who say they hate Government; we've got too much Government. And all the while when they had it, Government got bigger and less responsive and less effective. But under the Democratic administration, we voted to reduce the size of the Federal bureaucracy by 270,000 over 6 years and to put all the money into paying for the crime bill to make people safer at the grassroots. Under this administration, we made the Emergency Management Agency go from the most unpopular to the most popular agency in the Federal Government. Ask Governor Carnahan and anybody that dealt with the horrible flood in the Federal Government.

I could keep you here all night doing this. But I want you to know the point. The point is, we have taken on tough issues that were important to the American people. We have brought real change, and we are moving in the right direction. We don't want to turn back now and give it back to the other people.

Of course, there is still work to do. We still have to find a way to control health care costs and provide health care security to all Americans. We can't go on. In just the last day or so, one of our major newspapers carried one more horrible article about how we were spending more on health care than any country in the world by light years, and we were losing coverage, and small businesses were going broke, and families were being left behind. I will never forget the million people who wrote to me and to my wife and said, "Help us. We need health care," or "We want to provide it for our employees," or "Somebody's got to give us a chance to buy it at affordable rates." Yes, we still have to do that.

Yes, we still have to pass welfare reform at the national level. But on our own, we've given 17 States, including Missouri, waivers to do what they can do at the grassroots level to move people from welfare to work. We've made a good beginning.

Yes, we have to pass campaign finance reform, lobby reform, a whole spate of environmental initiatives that are important to the future of this country. We still have to pass the world trade agreement in the Congress.

But look what's happened: The economy is stronger; the deficit is lower; the tax system is fairer; trade is greater. We are moving forward. We are doing it with an administration that is both diverse and excellent in terms of geography, race, gender, background. We are in a situation where working families, because of the initiatives we have taken, are going to be able to be more secure, more safer, in stronger communities.

That is the real record. Now, what is the problem? I'll tell you what the problem is. Number one, nobody knows it. Even you didn't know some of this stuff, right? [*Laughter*] You have no way to find out.

I saw an article the other day where some fellow had done a focus group with some people that voted for Mr. Perot in the last election, after my press conference, and they heard me reel off some of this. And they said, "You know, I never thought the President was dishonest, but I just don't believe that. That couldn't be true. We'd know it."

Well, it is true. And you don't know it because you can't find out in the fog that surrounds what we do. But it is true. And you must take that truth to the voters because it relates directly to why Alan Wheat should be a Senator.

Now, let's be honest. People have real reasons to still be frustrated and feel negatively about the Government. They still have problems. Many of these initiatives have passed, but people haven't felt them yet. The social problems we have in our country, the drugs, the breakdown of the family, the rising violence, they've been developing for 30 years. The problems working people are having, never getting a raise, even when they work harder, because of the global economy, they've been developing for 20 years.

The wrong-headed policies that Washington pursued were in place for 12 years, and all that anti-Government rhetoric and that negativism and that predisposition to believe the worst about anybody that shows up in Washington, DC, that's been developing for 12 years.

I have only been there 20 months, but we're going in the right direction, and we do not want to turn back now.

While we have been doing—more jobs, lower deficits, more trade, more opportunity, more education, more training, tougher crime bill, smaller Government—while we have been doing, they have been talking. And they are great at talking. And they have peddled fear and division and diversion with unconscionable distortion for so long they feel no guilt whatever in whatever they say. And they are good at it. They are good at it. Sam Rayburn once said, "Any old jackass can kick down a barn, but it takes a carpenter to build one." [*Laughter*] It also takes longer to build one than it does to kick one down.

While we've been saying yes to the American people—here's where Alan comes in. I wasn't in Washington a week before they started trying to turn me into one of them to all of you. I wasn't in Washington a week until one of the Republican leaders said to me, "You will not get one, single, solitary vote for your economic plan, no matter what you do to it—nothing." And so every one of them voted no when we gave the middle class a fair shake in that economic plan, cut taxes for 15 million working families. They did it because we asked the top 1.2 percent, including some of you in this room, to pay a little more. Every one of them voted no.

When we said, "Let's do something for the middle class for a change and reform this student loan program and give middle class families a break so they can borrow the money to go to college," every one of them voted no, every one. When we said, "You say you're the small business party. Let's lower taxes on 90 percent of the small businesses in this country by increasing their expensing provision by 70 percent," every one of them voted no, every one of them. When we said, "Let's reduce the size of the Federal Government," which we did first in that bill, every one of them voted no.

Then when we got to this crime bill, last year the crime bill passed with 95 votes in the Senate; 42 to 2, the Republicans voted for it. And it was a lot like the bill we ultimately passed—had a few more police officers, some more money for prisons. But remember that pork speech they gave you? You know how it works: They pass a bill; the House passes a bill; you put them together; the final bill comes back. Well, from the time they voted 42 to 2 for the crime bill until it came back, there was not a lot more money on an annual basis for prevention programs in there. In fact, in 4 of the years, there was less money than they had already voted for. And many of the programs in there for prevention had been cosponsored by Republicans. It was a total bipartisan effort last year before the election started. But when they got to talking instead of doing, and telling everybody how terrible we all were and how, you know, nothing was happening, and they saw it was helping them in the polls, they changed like that, and they went from 42 to 2 for it to 6 to 38 against it. And the six brave people who voted for it, including the person that Alan is trying to replace, were excoriated by their leaders for betraying the Republican Party who said that the party was far more important than bringing the crime rate down in America and saving people's lives.

Now, when we started this health care debate, there were 24 Republican Senators, 24, on a bill to provide coverage for health care for all Americans and to control costs. I didn't agree with the way they wanted to do it, but we had the same objective. They said, "We're for covering everybody, too. We want to control costs. Mr. President, we think we've got a better idea." I said, "This is wonderful. This is what I wanted to do. We'll have a bipartisan consensus. We'll work this through."

But then they got a memo from their political boss, not elected by anybody, who said, "You must defeat health care at all costs. You will give the Democrats too big a victory for the middle class, and we won't be able to keep middle class voters by scaring them about values and telling them the Democrats aren't like them. You must defeat it." So by the time the health care legislation got to the floor, how many Republicans in the Senate were still for universal coverage and controlled costs? Zero. It went from 24 to zero.

Now, that is what is going on there. We say yes; they say no. You hear conflict; conflict and defeat is what you hear. You don't know what has been done, and it's hard to assess responsibility. And I went there, folks—you remember—I went there saying both parties had been at fault in the past. We needed less partisanship, not more. I wanted to reach out my hand in this crime bill. I did reach out to the Republicans in the House and the Senate. And we got a few of them who were brave enough and good enough and cared enough about you to pass that thing.

But I am telling you, this is the most intense partisan atmosphere—and why? Because they think they are about to be rewarded for their obstreperous tactics. They believe they can sucker the American people into voting for what the American people are really against, which is too much partisanship, too much gridlock, too much special interest politics. And they believe they can do it because folks can't quite figure what's going on, and they can say, "We've got a Democrat in the White House and the Democrats in the House and the Senate have more than we do." Now, that is what is going on.

So Alan Wheat is important to Missouri. But he's important to the country, not because we will always agree, not because we will always agree but because he will show up for work in the morning. [*Laughter*] Too many of them show up for talk; or when their leaders say turn right instead of left, go back instead of forward, they say, "Yes, sir, tell me where to stand and when to walk." Now that is a fact. So I ask you to think about that.

The greatest Republican President, some of us think the greatest President we ever had, Mr. Lincoln, once said that you can fool all of the people some of the time, and you can fool some of the people all of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all the time. This election is going to test that proposition. I think Lincoln was right. You can't do it unless people don't know the facts. So I am asking you to do more than give money to Alan Wheat. I am asking you to go out and tell people the facts. They will peddle fear; we will peddle hope. They will say no, and we will say yes.

Harry Truman said, "America was not built on fear. It was built on courage, imagination, and an unbeatable determination to do the job at hand." The job at hand is just what it was 2 years ago, to get this country into the 21st century with a good future for our children, in a world that is more secure, more peaceful, and more democratic, and to do it by enabling all of us together to live up to the fullest of our God-given capacities. That is the job at hand.

We are doing the job at hand. Go tell the people of Missouri that, and send Alan Wheat to the Senate.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:24 p.m. at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Mel Carnahan of Missouri and his wife, Jean; Mayor Emanuel Cleaver II of Kansas City and his wife, Dianne; and Karen McCarthy, Democratic candidate for Congress. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at the Bethel A.M.E. Church in New York City

September 25, 1994

The President. Thank you so much.

[*At this point, the President was interrupted by the sound of a siren.*]

The President. That's my introduction there, you hear it? [*Laughter*] Pastor Mackey, thank you. Thank you very much. Pastor Mackey, first let me say on behalf of my family, we are glad to be here in this church with its great history going back to 1819, running the Underground Railroad to help people to freedom. I'm also glad to be here in this African Methodist Episcopal church because your church has a long history with my home State, Arkansas, and my hometown, Little Rock, where Bishop Allen came a long time ago as part of his effort to found this church. I also want to thank you, if I might, for just letting us come here and worship. And I would like to say that for Hillary and for Chelsea and for me, this has been a great morning. And I'm sure I can say that all three of us are very grateful to all of you just for letting us come in here and to be with you.

I got a good lesson out of the briefest sermon I've heard in a long time. [*Laughter*] And I got a good lesson out of one of the most beautiful songs I have heard in a long time. I loved all the music. You know, I like music and even as I get older and I can't sing quite in tune anymore—I heard that fine man singing, "Work