

Oct. 3 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1994

Remarks at a Victory Dinner for Senator Charles S. Robb in Vienna,
Virginia
October 3, 1994

Thank you so much for that wonderful welcome. Thank you, Senator Robb, and thank you, Lynda, for the years of friendship and the years of service, the years of wise counsel and the years of shared joy, and all the rest of it that goes along with this work.

Congressman Moran and Congressman Scott, I'm delighted to see you here tonight. Lieutenant Governor Beyer, you gave a magnificent talk, and I thank you for what you said about your Senator and your President. I'm sure neither of us will ever forget it. Thank you, Mark Warner, for your work here. And Senator, I think one of your colleagues is here; I think Senator Daschle is here from South Dakota. Are you here? Stand up. *[Applause]* Thank you.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is a special day for me and for Hillary and for our family and close friends. It was 3 years ago today that I announced my candidacy for President. I was trying today, in the midst of meeting with the Vice Premier of China and the Foreign Minister of Israel and the Crown Prince of Jordan and dealing with a lot of our domestic issues, I was trying hard to remember exactly how I felt on October 3, 1991, in front of the Old State House in Little Rock. I know one thing: My mama was the only person there who thought I had a chance to win. And I don't think she was so sure. *[Laughter]* The incumbent President was at over 70 percent approval in all the polls, and most people thought it was a fool's errand. But I thought that the race was worth making, no matter what the outcome, because at least I would never have to explain to my child why I didn't do my part to sound the alarm about what I thought was going on in America.

It was all part, really, of what I had been working on for several years before I ran for President, part of a political heritage that I shared with people like Chuck Robb and Tom Daschle, who's from South Dakota, a place that makes Arkansas look like a metropolitan center. *[Laughter]* I say that to make this point: Several years ago Chuck and I and a number of others helped to found a group called the Democratic Leadership Council, after the Democrats just

kept on getting beat in the Presidential race. We did it with two goals in mind, and both of them are important and both of them bear directly on the choices Americans face in this election and especially on the choice Americans have here in Virginia.

The first thing we wanted to do was to broaden the base and change the rhetoric and the substance of a lot of the policies of the Democratic Party. We thought we had been typecast too much as the big Government, pro-tax, Government-can-solve-all-the-problems party. We needed to broaden our base and prove that we could spend tax money with discipline, grow the economy, be tough on crime, and bring the American people together across regional and racial and party lines, and move the country forward. Instead of always having a left-right argument, in a time of transition you need to be moving ahead.

The second thing we wanted to do is equally important. We wanted to challenge people in the other party to do the same thing. We were sick and tired of seeing the other party be rewarded in national elections primarily for their ability to talk rather than to act, primarily for their ability to turn us into aliens instead of tell the people of the country what they were for. And they are very good at that, I know.

And so we began to work on that. And to me, that's what the 1992 campaign was all about. I knew at the end of the cold war, we were in danger of squandering our opportunities, of not meeting the challenges of the 21st century, of raising the first generation of children not to do better than their parents. I also felt then, and I feel even more strongly today, that the best days of this country are still before us; this is by far the strongest country in the world; that if we can learn how to live together in harmony and take responsibility for our problems and listen to each other instead of scream at each other, we can take our challenges one by one and take this country into the next century with the greatest era of peace and prosperity and opportunity for all our people the world has ever known.

We face in this election many dilemmas. But there are two we can't do anything about except to address. The first is one to which Senator Robb alluded. We are living in a time of historic change. The cold war is over. Shimon Peres, the brilliant Foreign Minister of Israel, said to me today, he said, "It is a great challenge you face, Mr. President, in foreign policy, where the American people have to now stop thinking about the threat of immediate destruction and start thinking responsibly about just dealing with their problems, because if you don't deal with your problems, then eventually your security will be threatened again."

Similarly here at home, we have to deal with the realities of a new global economy where what we earn depends largely on what we learn; where the average 18-year-old will change jobs six times in a lifetime; and where, with all of our strengths, we still have to confront a bewildering array of problems. And whenever a country goes through a period of change, it's just like when a person goes through a period of change. I ask each of you tonight to think about that when you think about the state of the American people's mind in this election. Think about the first day you ever went to school or the first day you went to college or the first day you showed up for your first job or the first day you started your first business or the day you got married or the day your first child was born. Those are all good things, but I'll bet you anything you were scared to death, if you were really thinking about it.

And these are good things. If you think about the other challenges you faced—were you going to get fired, were you going to go broke, what was it like in the line of fire, what was it like when you had your first crisis in your family—whenever you go through a period of great change, inside you, hope and fear are at war. It's almost as if you had a big scale inside, and every day hope and fear—hope would be one side, fear would be on the other, and every day they'd be in a little bit different balance until you actually get through the period of change and things level out.

That is where we are today. And we are at midcourse in this term the American people gave me, where we have made a terrific start on our country's problems but a lot of people have not felt it yet. That is compounded today by the fact that the other party, being relieved of power in the Presidency, has gone back to

what it does best, which is to talk instead of do, to blame instead of to assume responsibility, to divide instead of unite, to play on fear instead of hope. So they try to turn the President or the Senator from Virginia into an alien in the minds of ordinary voters and hope they can clog the information channels enough so that that will guarantee that in the scales inside us all, fear will outweigh hope on election day, and we will actually do that which we do not wish to do: We will make a choice which will undermine the very path which we wish to walk.

Now, I have to tell you, folks, we have done a lot of things in the last 20 months. It doesn't solve all the problems, but we've made a good start. We have made a good start. And I ask you to see this Senate race not just in the terms that Mr. Robb presented them but in these terms. We have had 30 years of social problems building up in this country: the breakdown of the family, the rise of crime, the rise of drugs, the rise of gangs, the loss of opportunity in many of our inner cities and our rural areas, a whole generation of children being raised without the kind of discipline and love they needed to grow up to be productive citizens. For 30 years that has been coming.

We have had 20 years of serious economic problems where, when the economy was booming or when it was sinking, wages of hourly wage earners tended to be stagnant, and people had to change jobs more and more, and those who would work hard but didn't have high levels of skills were having to struggle just to hold on to their income. That has been developing for 20 years.

We had 12 years where we tried it their way, where they talked tough but acted soft, where they tried to pretend to be so strong—and they were very good at it—but they just really told us what we wanted to hear. They cursed the deficit and quadrupled the debt. They lambasted Government, but they didn't shrink it; they got all their friends in Government jobs as quick as they could. They talked about investment and free enterprise, but they tried to spur economic growth by massive deficit spending instead of by investment and productivity.

We have had 20 months to deal with 30 years of social problems, 20 years of economic problems, and 12 years of trickle-down. And here is what has happened in 20 months: We have made a good start on the economy; we have made a good start on crime; we have made

a good start on making Government work for ordinary Americans. Our economic strategy involved bringing the deficit down, increasing investment in education and training and new technologies, expanding trade, and trying to empower individuals and communities to grow.

You tell me how it's worked. We've had more trade expansion in the last year and a half than in any comparable period in 35 years. The economic plan for which Chuck Robb has been criticized for voting had \$255 billion in spending cuts; the biggest deficit reduction package in history; a tax increase, a rate increase, yes, on the top 1.2 percent of the American people, including most of you in this room, and I thank you for staying here. [Laughter] But you can take some pride in knowing that every red cent went to reduce the deficit, not for new spending.

That economic plan also made 90 percent of the small businesses in this country eligible for a tax cut. It made 15 million working families, including 330,000 working families in Virginia who were working hard, raising children, and still hovering just above the poverty line, eligible for an income tax cut so that they would never have any incentive to give up work and go into welfare, and so instead we would reward their being good parents and good workers.

That's what that plan did. That plan made 20 million Americans eligible for lower interest, longer repayment on their college loan so that no young person again should ever decline to go to college because of the cost, because now if you want, you can pay back that loan over 25 years as a percentage of your income with a lower interest rate than used to be available. That's what that economic plan did, 600,000 people in Virginia alone eligible for that. That is what Chuck Robb pleads guilty to voting for.

Now, what did they say would happen if we passed our plan? They said the sky would fall. They said the economy would come to an end. All their leaders in the United States Senate said the deficit would go up, the economy would go down, things would be terrible. That is what they said. And what has happened: 4.3 million new jobs in 20 months, 93 percent of them in the private sector; 3 years of deficit reduction in a row for the first time since Harry Truman was President; the United States was rated number one of all the countries in the world in productivity by the annual vote of international economists for the first time in 9 years; and

after they have cursed the Government, lo and behold, it was the Democrats that shrunk the Government. There are 70,000 fewer people working for the Federal establishment than there were on the day I was inaugurated. And under our law, there will be 270,000 fewer 4 years from now. That is our record, and it is a good start.

And 100 percent of them voted against it. That was their response. I was told the first week I came here—I came here with the philosophy I just explained; Chuck Robb, we had this philosophy. He lost his position on a budget committee because he was for bigger deficit reduction. He wasn't some clone of the Democratic establishment; he stood up to everybody. Even when I presented this program, he said, "Well, I'll vote for it, but you ought to cut it more." That was our philosophy.

You know what I was told the first week I got here by the leader of the other party in the Senate? "Well, you'll have to pass this without a single Republican vote. In either House you won't get a vote. And it doesn't matter how you change it, because we want to be in a position to condemn you if you fail. And if you succeed, we will obscure it by just reminding people that you raised taxes. And even if you just raised them on the wealthiest Americans, we'll convince everybody you did it to everybody." That's what I was told the first week I got here. I said, what happened to all this bipartisan cooperation? What happened to this 90-day honeymoon I was promised? What happened to all these words that I kept hearing? But we did it anyway, and we made a good beginning. We made a good beginning.

Now we come to the crime bill. Everybody says it's the biggest problem in America. The crime bill puts 100,000 police on the street; builds 100,000 jail cells to hold violent criminals; has the power to remake communities with community-based—not bureaucracies—community-based programs to prevent crime from occurring in the first place, that the law enforcement community of this country demanded be in that crime bill. It did ban assault weapons. And it did pass, in spite of the brutal efforts of leaders in the other party to defeat it.

Now, here's what you may not remember. When they talked about Chuck Robb and the assault weapons ban—let me just remind you of something. Late last year this crime bill, in only a slightly different form, passed 95 to 4,

and the Republicans voted for it 42 to 2 in the United States Senate. It had the assault weapons ban in it. It had prevention programs in it. The only reason it didn't cost quite as much is it was a 4½-year bill instead of a 6-year bill. But in all the years that this crime bill has in common with the bill that was passed last year, they voted for a bill that had more prevention funds per year in it than the one they voted against. And they called it "pork"—the funds, the programs they had already voted for, the programs many of them had cosponsored. It went from 42 to 2 for, to 6 to 38 against. Why? Because they were told that the job they had to do in the Senate was no longer to lower the crime rate in America, to make the American people safer; the job they had to do was to defeat the Democratic President and the Democrats in Congress. That is not what I came to Washington to do; I came to try to help you be safer.

But we've still made a good start on crime. And we've made a good start in making Government work for ordinary people. I already mentioned we passed a bill to reduce the size of the Federal Government by 270,000 and give all the money back to local communities to fight crime. We're bringing the deficit down. We're making Government work again in all kinds of interesting ways. The Small Business Administration finally has a director in Erskine Bowles, whom I just brought into the White House, but for the last 2 years—he spent his whole life starting small businesses. So, lo and behold, he wasn't a politician over there, like what you usually have; he was a guy who was used to starting small businesses. So, now, you can go to the SBA, and if you want a loan, you can fill out a one-page form instead of one that's 100 pages long, and you get an answer in 3 days, yes or no. That's not the Government that started it.

I'm about to sign a procurement bill that will put an end to \$10 ashtrays and \$80 hammers and all that stuff you've been hearing about. You may not have heard about it because it passed quietly, but we passed a bill that will reform all the purchasing practices of the Government. The things, in other words, that people who were alienated from Government and who voted for Ross Perot wanted, we are doing.

I supported campaign finance reform. I supported lobby reform. I support the bill that's in the Senate now that would require Congress

to live under the laws it imposes on the private sector. It's already passed the House; let them pass it in the Senate now. But you ask Senator Daschle or Senator Robb what happened to campaign finance reform. People who don't want us to have a bill killed it.

Now—so, you have a choice. We made a good start on economic recovery, on crime, making Government work for ordinary people. Is there a lot to be done? You bet there is. Is the answer to go back to trickle-down economics? They now have a plan. We now know that in addition to being obstructionists, if you give them enough votes, they've got a plan. And what's the plan? The same thing they did before, tell them what they want to hear but act tough doing it, so nobody catches you being soft.

You know, the mature thing to do if you're taking responsibility for your family, your kids, your business, or your country is just to tell people what has to be done and take a deep breath and get about doing it. And it's never quite as hard or as difficult or as painful as you think it's going to be. That is what we are doing.

Now, after 3 years of deficit reduction, for the first time since '48, after robust job growth, after the weakest job growth since the Great Depression, their crowd has now given us a trillion dollars' worth of unfunded promises, which they call a Contract With America. Folks, it's a contract on America. They have put out a contract on the deficit. They have put out a contract on Medicare. They have put out a contract on ever paying for the crime bill. But they're going to promise you everything. "We're going to have a balanced budget amendment, but we're going to cut everybody's taxes. And we're going to spend more on defense; we're going to start Star Wars up again. Don't worry, we'll do it." Hey, I heard that before. They quadrupled the debt, reduced their investment in America, and nearly drove this country into the ditch. And I don't think we want to do it again.

So you've got a clear choice, and you have to decide. You have to decide: What do you believe in? And here in Virginia, you have this stark, graphic example of how really good they are at making down, up; up, down; square, round; and turning us into aliens. I will tell you, they are better than we are at this. They are. They have turned me into an alien with a lot of voters in Virginia so I can be in the

ads. But that is a true ad, that I'd rather have Robb in the Senate. I knew if they ran enough ads, they'd finally run one that was true. That's true.

But what I want to say to you is that the people of this State are good people, but they are just like the rest of the country. We're going through this period of change, and change is hard. And we all are for change in general, and then we're all against it in particular, as soon as it requires any rigor at all or when it takes time to wait for.

That's another thing that makes politics really hard today. Look at the way we communicate: these pounding messages—right?—the 30-second ads, a trauma on the news every night, the dynamics of how we get our information.

Now, Don Beyer said it the best, he said, "Everything that really counts in life takes time." Everything that you really care about in life takes time. But we're not given much time to digest here, to digest; we just have all this stuff crammed at us in a time of uncertainty and change. And the other guys are better talkers. I've been busy up here doing. And since they gave up all doing and didn't want to work with me, they had more time to talk. And mercy, they're good at it. And they've got plenty of money to do it.

So we now have a stark choice. We're clearly making progress on the economy, on crime, on making the Government work for ordinary people, clearly. We clearly have a long way to go. Is the answer to turn around and do what failed us before? That is the choice we're being given. And here, you have a little extra gloss on it. Here, it is more stark.

So I know how you feel, because you showed up and you made this contribution to Chuck Robb. But what I want to tell you is that your contribution, as much as I appreciate it, is not enough, because you cannot give \$20 million. And the voters in Virginia can only vote on what they know, just like voters everywhere. You don't want them to wake up a year from now, saying, "Oh, my goodness, what have I done?" There have to be enough who will make the right decision now.

That's what happened to Mr. Truman in '48, by the way. A lot of people have forgotten this. You know, if you took a poll today, everybody wants Harry Truman on Mount Rushmore. But I came from one of those families who was for him when he was still alive. And I'm telling

you, those of you who are old enough to remember that know that he just barely won that race and that he was a figure of positive change in a difficult time. And he fought, and enough Americans listened to him to stay the course and enable our country to be a responsible power in the world, to stand up to the cold war, to rebuild Europe and Japan, and to build the middle class in this country, because we made the right decision.

That's the decision you're being called upon to make. You cannot walk out of this fundraiser and say, "I have done my part for Chuck Robb." You cannot do it.

Chuck Robb has served you well and honorably as a Lieutenant Governor, as a Governor, as a Senator. I have known him a long time. He has stood—I'm proud of what he did in the Marine Corps and in the war, and I can't believe anyone would ever question it, but I'm really proud of what he's done in public life since he's been back home, too. And you should be, too.

And I know it is easy when things are tough and you're frustrated to say, "Just throw them out if they're in. Let me see if I can't find something I don't like about them and X them off." But this is a choice. This is a choice. And I know this man. I have seen him work year-in and year-out with very high standards of discipline and integrity, standing up and taking unpopular positions. I know what he did as Governor. I know what he's done as Senator. And the idea that they could be trying to turn him into some sort of space alien who is from the far left, when he has done something that they talked about but never did—fight for lower deficits, fight for a more responsible economic policy, and fight for the future of Virginia and America—is a travesty, and you must not allow it to happen. You must not. You must not allow it to happen.

Now, I'm going to tell you something, folks—just stand right there, because I'm finishing. Don't even sit down; I'm nearly done, and it won't encourage me to go on. Just stand right there. [Laughter] I want you to think about this. Every one of you knows somebody else you can call. You know somebody else you can talk to. There's somebody at work. There's somebody in your civic club. There's somebody you spend your time on the weekends with. There's somebody you meet at the school meeting. There's somebody you can talk to, somebody whose

scales are going up and down between hope and fear. And you can tell them that this is about going forward, not going back. It's about assuming responsibility, not pointing the finger of blame. It's about bringing people together, not dividing them. It's about playing to our hopes, not our fears. That is what you have to do. You cannot let Chuck and Lynda and the people that work in the campaign headquarters do it all, and say, "I've paid for the television ads. I quit." That is not enough.

And I want every one of you to pledge to yourselves tonight that if you want this country

to keep turning around and you want your children to reap the benefits of the 21st century and you want to do right by your country in this period of change, the way our forebears did at the end of World War II, you will send Chuck Robb back to the Senate.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:20 p.m. at the Sheraton Premiere. In his remarks, he referred to Mark Warner, Virginia Democratic Party chairman.

Remarks Welcoming President Nelson Mandela of South Africa *October 4, 1994*

President Mandela, members of the South African delegation, distinguished guests, my fellow Americans, we are here to welcome Nelson Mandela back to the United States, but first, to the United States as the President of his nation.

Now, all over the world, there are three words which spoken together express the triumph of freedom, democracy, and hope for the future. They are "President Nelson Mandela." In you, sir, we see proof that the human spirit can never be crushed. For a half century, you pursued your ideals, keeping your promise never to surrender, risking all, despite danger. For 27 years, we watched you from your prison cell inspire millions of your people with your spirit and your words. And when you emerged, instead of retribution for past wrongs, you sought peace and freedom and equality for your people.

You are living proof that the forces of justice and reconciliation can bridge any divide. Every day, you teach the world that those who build triumph over those who tear down, that those who unite can actually prevail over those who would divide. Your presence here and the growth of a new South Africa are stern rebukes to both the destroyers and the cynics of this world.

The struggle in South Africa has always had a special place in the heart of America. For after all, we fought our own most terrible war here in our own land over slavery. And our own civil rights movement has taken strength

and inspiration from and given aid to your fight for liberty. Americans take great pride in the role we played in helping to overturn apartheid and in supporting the free elections which produced your Presidency.

Now we are working with you to build the new South Africa. The challenges you face, poverty, joblessness, homelessness, the despair born of long years of deprivation, are as large as they are difficult. But we know you will forge ahead, and we know that we here in the United States will also be better for your progress. For a thriving South Africa, spurring greater prosperity throughout the region, opening new markets, that makes us more prosperous, too. And a stable and democratic South Africa, working with its neighbors to restore and maintain the peace, that makes us more secure as well.

And perhaps most important of all, in this age of ethnic, religious, and racial strife the world over, you can be our partner, and together our two nations can show the world that true strength is found when we come together despite our differences. We know and you know that diversity and progress can go hand-in-hand, indeed, that they must do so if we are to give all our people the chance to fulfill their God-given potential.

Mr. President, you have brought forth a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to equality. Today the American people welcome you here, and we salute your stunning achievement. We pledge, as you have pledged, that