

Statement on Maritime Legislation October 19, 1994

The American maritime industry plays an important role in our Nation's economy and security. Under Secretary Pena's leadership, we have made significant progress implementing a program that enhances the competitiveness of American shipyards in the international commercial market. But our work is not complete.

Congress still must act to ensure a maritime presence in the United States' vast international

trade. It must act to ensure that a fleet of U.S.-flag merchant ships, crewed by skilled American seafarers, stands ready to serve our country's economic and military sealift needs. The administration looks forward to working with the next Congress to enact legislation that achieves these important goals.

Remarks at a Dinner for Governor Mario Cuomo in New York City October 19, 1994

You've still got it, Mario. [*Laughter*]

Among the many things I admire about Governor Cuomo is his remarkable family. And here was his wife saying you should vote for him because he's strong and slim. Can you imagine what would happen to anybody else if someone got up and said, "You should vote for this person because he's got a good body"? I mean, it was great. [*Laughter*]

His son tells him today, Andrew says in the economic conference, "Don't speak very long, Dad." So Mario gets up and announces it and then gives his speech at twice the normal speed. [*Laughter*]

I watched him tonight, and I was thinking, why is this a race? Why is it even close?

I don't know how many of you saw my friend Ken Burns' magnificent series on baseball, but Mario was in it, and he hasn't seen it because he's been out campaigning. I'm not up, so I stay home and watch "Baseball"—[*laughter*—the only baseball we have right now. One of the things that is in this series is the scouting report from the Pittsburgh Pirates on the promising young center fielder from St. Johns. This is what the scout said about Mario Cuomo: "Potentially the best prospect on the club; could go all the way if he improves his hitting to the point of a respectable batting average. He's aggressive; he plays hard; he's intelligent, not easy to get to know but very well-liked by those who succeed in penetrating his shell." Let me tell you something, he's still the best prospect

on the club, and he ought to be sent back to the playing field. And his batting average is very, very good.

You know, when Mario was talking about how—all of his immigrant roots and doing all that, I just was virtually transported. I never get tired of thinking about that sort of thing about our country. In a much more blunt and less eloquent way, Boris Yeltsin said the same thing to me the other day when he was here—really, it was the time before last we were together. Yeltsin grew up in a house literally where the farm animals shared the living room with the children. He was in a very difficult way as a child, and he had read somewhere that I had once lived in a house without indoor plumbing. So about halfway through this banquet he looked at me one night and he said, "You know, guys like us don't get to be President very often." [*Laughter*] The truth is, guys like us do get to be President or Governor or other things in this country because this is a very great country, because we've had leaders like Mario Cuomo.

I've had a lot of time to think about this Governor's race in New York. You know, I admire your Governor so much, I like him so much, I feel that he is my real partner. I think that he has given you strong and disciplined and responsible leadership, and he's still full of new ideas and energy. But I also understand what the issues are.

You know, I was the Governor of my State for a good, long while, and I loved it better than anything. And my State was smaller, but it was the same sort of deal. My people had been there since about the time of the Civil War. I knew every country crossroads. I could still walk into counties and remember the percentage of the vote I got in 1974. Some people thought that was a character flaw, but I thought it showed I was good at math. [Laughter] And I want to tell you this story because it was told on me, but it's something every New Yorker ought to think about before this election.

You know, in rural States—and New York, by the way, is a big rural State with a huge agricultural sector—the State fair is about the biggest thing that happens. I'll tell you how big it is, the guy who was my chief cabinet officer left my administration and—well, he worked for my successor a while—and he left to become the head of the State fair. He got a promotion. [Laughter] It's a huge deal in a country place. And so I used to go out to the State fair every year and have a Governor's Day, and I'd just sit there. And people would come up and talk to me and say whatever was on their mind, which often burned my ears. And after I had completed my fourth term about—I had served three 2-year terms and one 4-year term—and I was trying to make up my mind whether I would run for 14 years and would serve longer than anybody ever had in my State. At the end of the Governor's Day, when I had heard all this stuff, this old fellow in overalls came up to me, clearly in about his seventies. He looked at me and he said, "Bill, are you going to run for Governor again?" I said, "I don't know. If I do, will you vote for me?" He said, "Yes, I guess I will. I always have." I said, "Well, aren't you sick of me after all these years?" He said, "No, but everybody else I know is." [Laughter] And I looked—I swear he did. And he said, "But," he said, "what do you expect? All you do is nag us to do better. You're on us day and night, talking about what we've got to do to get jobs, talking about what we've got to do to get schools, just nag, nag, nag." He said, "Nobody could live with that all the time." He said, "It just wears us out. But," he said, "you know something? I think it's beginning to work." That's what I want to tell you. It's beginning to work. Don't walk away from it when it is beginning to work.

We have a partnership now. In the last 21 months, New York State has over 110,000 new jobs; about a 1½ percent drop in the unemployment rate; 3.1 million families in this State protected by the family leave law; 2 million people eligible for lower interest college loans. Nine hundred thousand families got tax cuts because they work full time, they have kids in the house, they're just hovering above the poverty line; they shouldn't go into poverty. If people work and raise kids, they ought to be able to succeed as parents and workers. That has happened. There's a 20 percent increase in the number of kids in Head Start. You're going to get 6,100 police officers under the crime bill. That's what we can do.

But you know something? A President cannot do anything that changes the lives of people unless there are partners in the governorships, in the mayoralties, in the private sector, on every street, people who care about people, who know their people, and who will get things done. Now, that is why you should reelect this Governor. It is clear that we have a partnership that can make a difference for the people in New York.

A Governor is at his best or her best if the Governor embodies the real qualities of a State. When I see Mario Cuomo talking, I think that is New York. And I like it. And America likes it. You know, even his opponents could not have heard this speech tonight without wanting to kind of tighten their coats and sit up a little straighter and throw their shoulders back and be proud to be an American. And that's very important. So if a man has a good record, if he's got a good program for the future, if he understands how to get things done, and if he really knows his State, and if he embodies the character, the strength, the courage of the State, that's a pretty good ticket.

It's interesting today when we spoke at his conference on growth, I said something I was embarrassed I didn't know. There's a lot of things I don't know about your Governor. I was embarrassed I didn't know this. I said that no matter what the President did, no matter what the Governor did, no matter what the mayor does, no matter what the people who are supposed to be heads of great organizations do, we had to change the spirit of this country. And we had to challenge more people to take responsibility for their own children, their own friends, their own neighbors, or for somebody else's children or friends and neighbors if no

one else was doing it. And I said when I saw that transit policeman come home from the hospital after being so horribly beaten by those nine kids, I thought, what in the wide world were those kids doing on the street at that hour of the night? And why didn't somebody give them some better place to go to or try to teach them right from wrong or stand up for what was right and wrong? And then, when I saw today in the paper that there were two people who put their lives on the line to help that poor guy at the teller machine last night in New York, I thought, that's what this country's all about. And more people ought to do it.

Now, after I gave this speech where everybody was clapping, a friend of the Governor's came up and said, "He did the same thing 3 years ago. He got out and chased a criminal, trying to do the right thing." That is the sort of person he is, and he would do it again tonight. He would walk through a wall to do the right thing, and you ought to do the right thing and reelect him Governor.

You know, I had 17 pages of notes, and I came up here with this—because Mario already told you what I did the last 2 years. [Laughter]

I want to say something else, too, about this election. It's not just—the difficulty is not just that all the stuff we've been talking about. Why is there a sort of a tight anxiety-ridden negative mood in the country today, when we're plainly better off than we were 21 months ago? I mean, we have more jobs and a lower deficit; we've got a Government that's finally doing things for ordinary people, like middle-class college loans and family leave and immunizing all the kids in the country under the age of 2. We're moving toward peace and prosperity. We've had more advancements in trade in the last year than we have in 30 years. And we have all of the movements toward democracy and freedom that the United States has been involved in, supporting the election in South Africa, the peace process in Northern Ireland, what is going on in Haiti, what is going on in the Persian Gulf, and, of course, the incredible story of peace in the Middle East against all the odds. This is a good time, and we are plainly moving in the right direction. So what is the beef? Why is there this anxiety, this tension in the country? There are a number of reasons, but I'd like to tell you a few, because dealing with them may hold the key to how this election comes out and whether people can hear the song that your

Governor sang tonight, America's song, the song we always respond to when we're at our best.

First of all, we are dealing with the accumulation of enormous problems that have been ignored for a long time. All these social problems that we see that just tear our hearts out, when we see that 5-year-old kid hung out the window and dropped to die because he knew it was wrong to steal candy, that didn't happen overnight. This stuff has been developing for 30 years, for 30 years, what's happened to the families and the communities and the loss of hope and the vacuum that has been created. Drugs and gangs and guns, that stuff just fills a vacuum. There's a hole inside people's lives, and it just goes in there, because there's a vacuum just sucking it into people.

The economic anxieties people feel has been developing for 20 years, where most wage earners who earn hourly wages have not gotten a raise. The average working person is working a longer work week today than 20 years ago. And the global economy requires people to change jobs six or seven times in a lifetime. Those of us who have knowledge and skills and can learn new things and can stay on top and dance on our toes, well, we're pretty secure. Other people are just scared.

And for 12 years, we tried a different approach. We basically had—we were governed by people who tried to convince us that we should hold our Government in contempt, that the Government would mess up a one-car parade, and that we should just sit on the sidelines and let things happen. And it takes time to turn that around. And it takes time for people who have been disappointed a long time to scrape away all that and begin to feel as well as think again that things can be better.

And there's another big issue here: We are going through a period of historic change. At the end of the cold war, the changing of our economy, moving into a new century where all the rules will be different, I honestly believe, for the reasons Mario said, the 21st century will be America's best time. All this diversity we have—if we learn to enjoy it, celebrate it, reinforce it, it is our meal ticket to the future, because the world is a small place.

But every time we go through a period of change, our democracy is tested, because people's hopes and fears are at war. Think about your own life. Think about the first day you went to school, the first day you went off to

college, the day you got married, the day you had your first job. Think about only things that had more good than bad in them but were radically different—you were scared to death. One of those movies always work, where the guy walks down the aisle or the woman walks down the aisle and they say, “I don’t”—[laughter]—because everybody thinks about it, that’s why it works. And because anytime you put yourself on the line and try a new thing, it might not work, and it’s frightening.

So you fight this battle all the time inside, between hope and fear. Countries are the same way when they go through big changes. At the end of World War I, America had done a great thing. It was the first time we had ever gone abroad to fight for values and other people without our own existence being at risk. It was a great thing. It exhausted us. And what happened? We came home, and we shrunk up, and we had the rise of the Ku Klux Klan. We had the rise of the Red Scare. And we walked away from the rest of the world and brought on an international economic collapse that gave rise to fascism and nazism and brought the Second World War.

At the end of the Second World War, we didn’t do that. But there were lots of pressures to do the same thing, Joe McCarthy, the loyalty program, a Communist behind every bush. But we had strong leadership. It was tough. Harry Truman’s popularity was at 80 percent when he dropped the bomb and ended the Second World War. Two years later, when he sent national health insurance to Congress for the second time, it was at 36 percent by the time people got through working on it. All of the people in the 80-to-36 crowd, they all think he ought to be on Mount Rushmore. Well, I was in one of those families that was always part of the 36. We were always for him, and we know. I was raised being told about this. It was inevitable. People were afraid. Things were changing.

And now, you just think about what life’s like for the average American today and how they get their information and how they communicate about public things. What we have to do in the next 3 weeks all over the country is go out and say, “We’ve turned that situation around. The economy’s coming back. The government’s working for ordinary people. The world is more peaceful and secure. The opportunities are great. We have to vote our hopes

and not our fears. We have to vote for tomorrow, not yesterday.” That’s what we have to do. If on election morning in New York State, most people in this State wake up and the scales inside of them are tilted toward hope instead of fear, it will be a rout for Governor Cuomo. You know it, and I know it. That is our job.

Eleanor Roosevelt once said, “You know, you can spend a lot of time fighting the darkness, and there’s a lot of dark things to fight, but the quickest way to beat it is to flip the light switch on.” You think about that. You think about that.

What we need is more Americans who will go take up for the people that are getting mugged at the teller machine. What we need is more Americans who will put a hand on those little 5-year-old kids and give them somebody to look up to. What we need is more Americans who will reach out to those 10- or 11-year-old kids when they’re 5 so their hearts don’t turn to stone before it’s too late.

What we need is everybody saying that this is a very great country. If you have any doubt, if you have any doubt, just remember what happened last weekend when President Aristide went home to Haiti. President Aristide went home to Haiti, and all those people were holding those little old signs in the street that said “Thank you, America” in Creole, and they were looking at these young men and women in uniform, our kids who are black, white, brown, yellow, Lord only knows what. A lot of them are Haitian-American; we got every Haitian-American soldier we could find and sent them down there so somebody could speak Creole to those folks. It was unbelievable. And just look at their eyes, and they knew that this was a good country, standing for something good, doing something good, bringing out the best.

That’s the way of the rest of us have to be. In our minds, we have to put on a uniform every day. We have to say we are not going to let this country go down; we’re going up. And we are certainly not going to let this country go back; we’re going forward. And if we have that feeling, that spirit, then all the facts will fall into place. And our story will be credible. And our Governor will be reelected. He is a national treasure, but he really is New York’s treasure. Every one of you know. Every one of you know.

I kind of promised myself I wasn’t going to mention this, but I’m going to. Every one of

you know that he could have had another job with longer tenure. [Laughter] Every one of you know that he stayed here because he loves you, he loves that neighborhood he grew up in in Queens. He cannot imagine walking away from this fight until we have had a chance to do every last thing we can to give every kid in

this State a chance at a better future. You take care of it and make sure he's reelected.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:09 p.m. in the Imperial Ballroom at Sheraton Centre.

Interview With Marjorie Clapprod of WRKO Radio, Boston, Massachusetts

October 19, 1994

The President. Good morning, Marjorie.

Ms. Clapprod. How are you?

The President. Great. It's a beautiful day down here.

Ms. Clapprod. I've got to tell you something, sir. I have been waiting a long time on getting you on this program.

The President. Well, it's high time.

Ms. Clapprod. It is high time. I even went down for the big old Clinton watch when you were over on the Vineyard this summer, and I'm sorry I missed you. But we sort of feel like you've made Massachusetts your second home, so we're delighted you're coming on back.

The President. I'm glad to be back; looking forward to coming up there tomorrow.

Education

Ms. Clapprod. So let's talk about a couple of things. First of all, you need to know that all the kids over at Framingham High are looking forward to your coming down with Senator Kennedy. And let's talk about this education bill. Even Jack Anderson is calling you the education President.

The President. Well, we've worked very hard on education, and Senator Kennedy has had a lot to do with it. A lot of our education initiatives have not attracted a great deal of public notice, maybe because we've been successful in getting bipartisan support for them, for most of them, all but the college loan program. The program to provide middle class college loans at lower interest rates had no Republican support because we took on some organized interest groups. But all the others did. And it's a real tribute to Ted Kennedy because he got the ex-

pansion of Head Start in, he got the national service program in.

And this education act we're signing in Boston tomorrow, or in Framingham, has an incredible amount of good things in it. It's a dramatic reform in terms of putting more responsibility back on local school districts, giving them freedom from Federal rules and regulations but giving them very high standards to shoot for. It's a really—it's a very modern, exciting, and I think, effective piece of education legislation. I'm proud to be signing it.

Massachusetts Senatorial Campaign

Ms. Clapprod. Well, you know, Mr. President, Senator Kennedy is not only delighted to have you here signing that particular bill, but as you know, this is the toughest race the Senator has ever faced in 32 years. And for many of us in Massachusetts, we're surprised to know that nationally he is one of several seats that we're looking at that could be in very serious jeopardy. Your coming out here to help him will be bringing a message to Massachusetts voters that says what? How important is Senator Kennedy and his reelection to the completion of your agenda as you go back to Washington?

The President. He's terribly important to doing it. And he's important for some reasons that people, I think, may not be aware of in Massachusetts. I mean, the rap that his critics are saying is that, "Well, he's been there long enough. He's yesterday's politician." But I can tell you, I've been talking around here the last week, just asking people, and there is a general feeling here that of all the people in the Congress, Ted Kennedy is one of the four or five