

Remarks at a Democratic Dinner in Coral Gables April 29, 1996

Thank you very much, Lieutenant Governor MacKay and Senator Dodd. Thank you, Marvin Rosen, for leaving Florida for so much of the time to help me and the Democratic Party return to victory in November. I thank Howard Glicken and Larry Hawkins and Mitch Berger and M.J. Parker and all others who worked to organize this phenomenally successful dinner to-night.

And I want to thank all of you for coming here and for giving us your support in our fight to make sure that America takes the right road into the 21st century.

My fellow Americans, this is a very different race than it was in 1992. In 1992 when I ran for President, I did it because I really felt that the country had no animating vision, that we did not understand as a people the changes we were going through and where we wanted to come out on the other end. We had no strategy for achieving it. And I sought to bring that contribution to that campaign. And I think the American people basically saw that race as status quo versus change.

Now this is a very different circumstance. We now have two very different visions of change before the American people. And the American people don't have to guess; they really know what those visions are. There is no option; when we vote now in 1996 we will be voting to take a certain path right into the 21st century. The only question is which road we decide to walk. There has been a lot of talk over the last couple of years about what we Democrats stand for, whether it is clear, what is the difference between the two parties. Does it matter anymore?

Well, I can tell you this: My belief is that we are going through a period of change in this country as profound as any we've endured in 100 years, since we moved from farm to factory, from country to city. We are now moving from the cold war into the global economy in an ever more global society. We celebrated that here in Miami a couple of years ago at the Summit of the Americas.

We are moving into an economy in which all forms of endeavor, including agriculture and industry, are dominated by technology and information. If you were to come home to Arkansas

with me at planting time or harvesting time, you would see farmers riding around in their machinery with computer screens, often working with software they prepared themselves to do the work that they now do.

And we've changed so much the way we work, and in the course of that, the way we live, that we are moving into a time of almost unbelievable possibility but also significant disruption. That is the fact of the time in which we live.

When I became President, I had a very clear idea, which I want to restate to you, of what I think we ought to be working for. We ought to be working for an America in which every person, without regard to their race or their gender or how they start out in life, should have the chance to live up to their dreams if they're willing to work for it. We ought to be working for an America in which all the incredible diversity in this country is the source of our strength, not a source of division and weakness, because we have shared values and because we respect the honest differences among us. And we ought to stop using politics as a way of dividing the American people and start uniting them again. And we ought to be working for an America that is still the world's leading source of inspiration and strength and support for peace and freedom and democracy and security and prosperity. Those are the things that we ought to do.

Now, a lot of that work has to be done by all of you in your private capacities. And we know in this new world of information technology and lightning change, big centralized bureaucracies are not as important as they once were, including the big centralized bureaucracy of the National Government. But that does not mean we do not need a Government in Washington and a spirit in Washington and a presence in the White House committed to those three ideas, that everybody should be able to live out their dreams if they'll work for it, that we ought to be coming together, not being driven apart, and that we must continue to be the world's strongest force for peace and freedom and democracy. That is what has driven me for these 3½ years.

So I say to you, we have—our friends in the Republican Party have condemned the Government and talked about how bad it is. And they say that it's the source of all of our problems, but it was the Democrats who reduced the size of Government so that now in Washington, DC, the United States Government is the smallest that it's been since 1965. They condemned heavy-handed Federal regulation, but we have gotten rid of more regulations than they did. We have given more authority to State and local governments than they ever did; ask Lieutenant Governor MacKay. There are over one million fewer families on welfare today than there were the day I took office because we've given 40 States the power to have welfare reform, to move people from welfare to work.

But when the great crisis over the budget came, and the power of Congress and the majority was used to shut the Government down because I wouldn't go along and Senator Dodd wouldn't go along and the Members of our party wouldn't go along with doing things to Medicare which were unconscionable and unnecessary to save the program; with walking away from a Medicaid program that not only provides care for poor children and pregnant women but also for middle class families with children with disabilities and with parents in nursing homes; with an absolute evisceration of the environmental protection policy of the country, which had been for 25 years a bipartisan policy, shared by Republicans and Democrats until that time; and with a reduction in our commitment to education at a time when what you can earn is more tied to what you can learn than at any time in our history—we said no.

We said there is a national responsibility. There is a national responsibility for putting 100,000 police on the street. There's a national responsibility for helping schools to be drug-free and to be safe. There is a national responsibility for, in other words, growing the economy, expanding opportunity, helping the American people, coming together and maintaining the leadership of the United States of America. That is what this choice is all about in 1996: Which road are we going to walk into the future?

There's a lot of talk about the word "empowerment." And I used it a lot in 1992 and long before I decided to run for President. I believe in it. To use the words of my friend James Carville—and Larry Hawkins said everybody in America ought to read James Carville's

book, "We're Right and They're Wrong," so I'll flack for it tonight. But Carville said, "You know, people criticize the Democrats for giving people fish when we ought to be teaching them to fish, but our opponents want to drain the pond."

Now, what does that mean? That means if people can be taught to fish, it's a lot better than giving them fish. That means no one should get anything if they can do for themselves. But it also means don't drain the pond.

Empowerment means more than giving people a choice. The great French writer Victor Hugo once observed that the rich and poor are equally free to spend the night under the bridge. Empowerment means not only having the choice but having the capacity to exercise the choice. That's why we're for education and safe streets and a clean environment and a strong economic policy and a strong foreign policy.

Now, sometimes we reach agreement. And when we do, I'm happy. If you think about the good things that have happened in the last year and a half—and I'll just mention some. I signed a budget bill last week that protects education and the environment and our major economic programs and reduces the deficit so that now we'll have 4 years of deficit reduction and I'll keep my commitment to you: We will cut the deficit by more than half in just 4 years. We did that.

And I signed a very tough antiterrorism bill which will give us the tools we need to kick terrorists out of the country when we find them here from other countries; to kick people out of this country when they come here and raise money for terrorists, which is wrong; to do more to prevent terrorist incidents and to catch terrorists when they commit terrorism. We passed that bill. That was a good thing.

Just a few weeks ago I signed a telecommunications bill which will create at a minimum hundreds of thousands of very high wage jobs in the next few years.

What do all those things have in common? They were passed by a Congress overwhelmingly working in a bipartisan fashion, putting aside the labels and the ideologies and the extremism of the past and the recent past and working together for the practical benefit of all Americans. When we have done that, we do just fine.

In this budget bill, Congress gave me the authority to do something that I did this after-

noon. I want to tell you about it. I've been very concerned about this dramatic, although apparently temporary, rise in the price of gasoline at the pumps. It affects the take-home pay of working people who have to commute to work. It offers a great problem for tourism centers like Florida. We're about to get into the high driving season, and if gasoline is 20 percent higher, there are not going to be as many people driving as far to do whatever it is they're going to do this summer.

So today I instructed the Secretary of Energy to immediately begin the orderly sale of about 12 million barrels of our Nation's strategic petroleum reserve to try to moderate the price of fuel. And I've also asked Secretary O'Leary to report back to me within 45 days about all the elements that caused this sudden burst in the gasoline prices to determine whether it is likely to be short-term or long-term, what the likely impact on our economy would be.

Now I say that in this context. The Congress gave me explicit authority to do that, and I applaud them for doing it. What is unique about it? Well, we stopped all these partisan wars and rolled up our sleeves and sat down and said, "What would be a good thing to do for America?" Not which party can gain the advantage, not can we put the President in a corner and threaten to shut the Government down, but what would be good for America? It would be good to reduce the deficit and increase our investment in education, the growth of the economy, the protection of the environment. And, oh by the way, here's some authority to release barrels of oil from the strategic petroleum reserves.

I say that because I want to follow up on something that Senator Dodd said and Lieutenant Governor MacKay said. This is a very great country. We need two strong parties. There are plenty of differences between us. But when the most extreme position dominates a party's governing so that governing is less important than making a point, even if the point requires you to shut the Government down, then we have gone too far.

Now, the same thing is true on the issues before us. And I want to talk a little more about where we go from here. But there are two great issues still before us. We could solve them both and make the American people much better off.

We've now adopted a budget, 6 months late, for the remainder of this year. I would have happily signed it on the first day of this year, the very first day of this fiscal year. We have not yet adopted a balanced budget plan, but we have identified savings in common to both the Republican and Democratic plans that are more than enough to balance the budget, provide a modest tax cut, and still protect Medicare, Medicaid, and our investments in education and the environment and economic development and in reducing the crime rate and violence in this country. We could do all that. The question is, will we?

The answer is, depends upon whether the majority in Congress decides to play politics a long time before the November election or will it go back and work with me in good faith to pass the right sort of balanced budget plan for America. That's what we ought to do. There's plenty of time for the elections after the conventions this summer. Let's go back to work and give the American people the balanced budget plan they deserve.

There's another big issue that will tell a big tale about where we're going now. That's the so-called Kassebaum-Kennedy bill, a bipartisan bill that passed the Senate last week—listen to this—100 to zero. You say, "Well, if anything got 100 votes, could it have any significance?" You bet it does. You know what it does? The Kassebaum-Kennedy bill says that you cannot lose your health insurance. If you change jobs or lose your job, you can still keep it. It says that you cannot be denied the right to purchase health insurance just because somebody in your family has been sick. It can provide immediate help in health security to millions of Americans who are self-employed, who are working in small businesses, who are working for businesses that may go broke or that may have to lay them off for a while. It can make a huge difference. That's why it passed 100 to nothing. It's a very big deal.

But the version of the bill in the House, it didn't pass by 435 to zero in the House. Why? Because there are all these other things in the bill that are extremely controversial, not necessary to protect the health care interest of American families, and designed basically to jam those who don't agree with them into voting for them and me into signing them in order to get the good things of the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill.

So watch this. Why don't we take the things we disagree with and throw them into the fall election, and let's have it part of all the debates? But why don't we pass Kennedy-Kassebaum pure and clear, 100 to nothing, one more time for the American people? That's what we ought to do.

If you ask me to say in a sentence, "Mr. President, what is the role of the President and the Government in Washington as we move into this new era," I would say it is to give citizens, families, and communities the ability they need to meet their challenges and seize their opportunities and make the most of their own lives and to do it not with big, centralized bureaucracies but with whatever it takes to forge the kind of partnership that will genuinely empower people, genuinely empower people to do that, and to maintain our commitment abroad for security, peace, freedom, and democracy.

Let's just take a few simple issues. The issue of education. Today I was here announcing the new National Drug Control Strategy at a school that has no guns, no violence, and no drugs for the last 2 years. Now, that was done by the people at the school, the principal, the parents, the teachers, the kids; they deserve the credit for that. The National Government will never be able to replace that magic and shouldn't try. But we should make sure that every school has the resources to provide what needs to be provided to be safe and drug-free. And that's why I fought to save the safe and drug-free schools act.

Well, let's take another issue. One of the news magazines this week has the cover—the news magazine—how expensive it is to send a child to college, \$1,000 a month. That won't touch it for some of you, depending on where your children go. But we know that every young person in America ought to have the opportunity to go to college. That's why we worked so hard to totally redesign the student loan program, so that anybody could borrow money to go to college and pay it back as a percentage of the income they earn from whatever job they get, so that no child should ever drop out of school because of the burden of the money that has to be borrowed. That's important, and we should keep that.

That is why I've asked the Congress to invest more money in college scholarships and college loans, and why I said to them, "If we're going to give families a tax cut in this country, let's

give them a deduction for the cost of college tuition." It would be the best money we ever spent in terms of a tax incentive.

Let me take a controversial issue that always gets me a few demonstrators when I come to Florida. We have very different views in Washington about the environment, although now those views are quickly being blurred as we come toward election day. Here's what I believe. I think Teddy Roosevelt, our first great environmental President and a Republican, was right. I believe that we cannot preserve the American economy unless we have a system for sustaining our natural resources, our land, our air, our water, our trees, our species. That's what I believe.

I believe you can't preserve the very idea of American democracy unless people at least have some ability to preserve the nature, the heritage that they grow up around. I believe you can't maintain the integrity of the democracy of this country if millions of kids live within a couple of blocks of a toxic waste dump and cities have no devices to clean up the environmental pollution of former eras when we didn't know what we were doing. That's what I believe.

I believe Florida will not be able to sustain the population growth that is coming unless you find a way to save the Everglades. That's what I believe. And I believe your Nation has a responsibility to help you. I think it is a national treasure, as well as a local treasure. I believe there are a lot of good people in the sugar industry; there are a lot of good people who have worked hard in that. I believe that many of those companies are doing a better job today with conservation practices than they were doing just a few years ago. I know that is true. All these things are true.

The question is, who is going to pay what in order to save the Everglades? I believe that we can find a way to sustain the economy of Florida in the short run while we move to preserve it in the long run and while we preserve one of the globe's most precious natural resources. We have to save the Everglades. That's what I believe, and I think the National Government has a responsibility to do that.

I believe that we did the right thing to take action in Washington to try to reduce the hazards of young people beginning to smoke cigarettes. Three thousand kids illegally begin to smoke every day, and a thousand of them will die early because of it. And it is wrong, and

we ought to stop it. That is what we are trying to do, but it is very controversial.

I believe we did the right thing in Washington to pass the Brady bill, but it was very controversial. All I know is there are 60,000 people with criminal records who were unable to buy handguns in the last 2 years and to go out and victimize other people because that law was on the books. It was the right thing to do.

You have to ask yourself, what do you believe? None of this had to do with a big, centralized bureaucracy, but I believe we were doing the right things. And as you look ahead, there will be more that has to be done to protect the environment, to invest in education and technology and the growth of the economy, to continue to reach out to the rest of the world with broader commitments to free and fair trade.

And we also have to stand up for freedom. I know a lot of the things that I have done in foreign policy have been controversial, but you know, one of the things that I see, and I wish every one of you could see, is that when I leave the borders of the United States, I am no longer just Bill Clinton or the President. I become all of you, the symbol of America. It is the greatest honor you can imagine.

And I know that there are things that if we don't do them they won't be done. That's why we stood up for peace in Bosnia. That's why we took the initiative to try to bring peace in Northern Ireland, working with the Irish and the British Governments. That's why we have worked so hard for so long in the Middle East and why the Secretary of State was there to try to bring an end to the violence between Lebanon and Israel. And that's why I signed the Helms-Burton bill and why I am working for a free Cuba.

Now, the problem with our involvement around the world is that most everybody can find something they like about that—you hear the different sources of cheers there—but what I want to convince you of is that the general principle is right, too. Think about what the world will be like 20 or 30 years from now. The United States may not have the same dominance we have now. I'm convinced we'll be the strongest country in the world, but others will grow richer. Others will exercise influence. What we do now in this critical period, coming out of the cold war and moving into a global economy and a global society, will have a profound

impact on whether other great countries stand up for peace and freedom, whether other great countries define their greatness in terms of whether they can help people live their own lives or whether they can dominate people just because they're smaller and weaker.

And because no one believes we wish to dominate anyone and our purpose for peace and freedom and prosperity and democracy is so clear, we are able to do things that no other country can do now. And I believe we are safer because of it. There are no nuclear missiles pointed at America's children for the first time since the dawn of the nuclear age. We are working to reduce that threat more every day.

We have cooperation from other countries in fighting terrorism at home and abroad. And I can tell you, if you look at terrorism, the drug threat, organized crime, money laundering, if you look at the proliferation of dangerous weapons, every one of these things requires the United States to lead and cooperate, and they will affect how your children and your grandchildren live and what kind of future we have in the 21st century.

So I ask you all, when you go into the next few months—I thank you for your financial contributions. I am profoundly grateful. We will spend the money well. Marvin Rosen will make sure we spend the money well. But every one of you who can be here tonight is here because you have accomplished something in your own life. You will be listened to. There are people who look to you. There are people who will listen to what you have to say and care what you think and care how you feel about your country. And I'm telling you, the American people have to decide how we're going into the 21st century. There is no status quo option. And you don't have to guess about our views; we now have almost 2 years where the leaders of the two parties and their philosophies have become clear. And that is a great good fortune.

I believe that it's clear that we did what we said we'd do in 1992. We have cut the deficit in half, 8½ million new jobs, a new commitment to invest in our people and our future and our communities. We did that. I believe in Florida you can see it. The unemployment rate is 2 percent lower. We brought the Summit of the Americas here. We brought SOUTHCOM here. We have a commitment here to help people do what they can to deal with the challenges you face today.

It is clear that we have a record. But the far more important thing is, this is a record to build on, not to sit on. We have created jobs, but we haven't raised everybody's income. We have to do more to allow people who are working for a living to be able to generate lifetime education, lifetime access to health care, and develop a pension they can carry around with them, too, if they move from job to job.

We have done a lot of things to try to bring the American people together and to bring down the crime rate and to reestablish a common national commitment to the preservation of our environment, but there is a lot more to do. We have done a lot of things to do things to make the Government work better and to be smaller and less burdensome to you, but Lord knows there is more to do. And we have taken a stand for America's role in the world. We dare not adopt the easy, short-term, but short-sighted isolationist position that others have advocated.

So I ask you—I thank you for what you have done here tonight, but it's a long time between now and November. So I ask you to take every opportunity you can to be good citizens between

now and then. Talk with your friends and your neighbors and your coworkers. Engage people over coffee. Visit with them on the weekends when you run into them wherever they are and say, "You know, this is an election about America's future. This is an election which will determine what kind of country we're going to be in the 21st century. This is an election which will determine what our children and our grandchildren will live like. And this is an election in which I have taken a stand that I want to tell you about." That's what I want you to do. If you do, it will be fine.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:48 p.m. at the Biltmore Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Marvin Rosen, national finance chairman, Democratic National Committee; Howard Glickin, chairman of the board, The Americas Group; Larry Hawkins, Dade County commissioner; Mitchell W. Berger, president and founder, Berger & Davis, P.A.; and M.J. Parker, president and CEO, Engineering Services, Inc. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks on Signing the Israel-United States Counterterrorism Cooperation Accord and an Exchange With Reporters

April 30, 1996

The President. Good afternoon, Mr. Prime Minister and members of the Israeli and American delegations, ladies and gentlemen. For the past 3 years, Israel and the United States have worked hand in hand to advance the peace process in the Middle East. Today, with this U.S.-Israel Counterterrorism Cooperation Accord, we strengthen our partnership to stop the enemies of peace.

With every new step along the path to peace, its enemies grow more and more desperate. They know a new day is dawning in the Middle East, that the vast majority of its people want to enjoy the blessings of a normal life. Their answer, more violence and terror, more bullets and bombs, may seem senseless, but it is the product of cold calculation. By murdering innocent people, they aim to kill the growing hope for peace itself.

We will not do what the enemies of peace want. We will not let our anger turn us away from the pursuit of peace in the Middle East. Maintaining our resolve for peace does not mean, however, turning the other cheek. We must do everything in our power to stop the killing and bring the terrorists to justice. That is the only way to give those who have chosen peace the confidence they need that they have made the right choice and the courage to keep moving forward.

This agreement does just that by deepening the cooperation between our two countries in the fight against terrorism. Prime Minister Peres and I worked on it during my visit to Israel last month, in the wake of a terrible string of suicide bombings. Now we have agreed upon areas for greater cooperation, on information sharing, on research and development, on train-