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Statement on the Tentative Agreement Between the United Auto Workers and General Motors

November 2, 1996

I congratulate and applaud the United Auto Workers and General Motors for putting in the intense effort and long hours that led to this tentative agreement. Their hard work and ultimate success are a tribute to our system of collective bargaining. They have proven once again that when labor and management work together, they make our businesses, our working families, and our economy stronger. I am very hopeful that the tentative agreement will be ratified and that the outstanding local issues will quickly be resolved so that everyone can get back to work.

Remarks in New Orleans, Louisiana

November 2, 1996

The President. Can you hear me in the back? [*Applause*] Wave your hands. Look back there. What a great crowd we have tonight. Thank you, New Orleans, for coming out. Thank you for your support. Thank you for the little song down here. Let's thank these fine young men who sang the national anthem again. They were great, the students who are here.

Reverend Morton, Mr. Mayor, thank you for making me feel so welcome here. Thank you for your exceptional leadership. Thank you for taking up for the children of New Orleans and trying to make them safer when the Sun goes down. I appreciate that.

My good friend Congressman Jefferson, thank you for being there with me in the dark days as well as the bright ones. Representative Cleo Fields, thank you for your service in the Congress, your support for me and Mary Landrieu and all of our other candidates. And thank you especially for going all over America to mobilize young people to vote to reelect Bill Clinton and Al Gore. Thank you, sir. My great friend John Breaux, to whom I owe so much—if you support John Breaux, as I think you do, you will elect Mary Landrieu just to keep a smile on John's face. I don't believe I could bear the thought of seeing what it's going to be like for John. [*Laughter*]

Ladies and gentlemen, I have come here tonight with a heart full of gratitude to all of you for giving me the chance to serve as President, for giving me the chance to do what has been done in the last 4 years, and to ask you to keep America on the right track to the 21st century and to help me build that bridge that we can all walk across together. Will you do that? [*Applause*]

It is hard to believe, on the banks of this great river that has seen so much history, that the United States is about to elect the last President of the 20th century and the first President of the 21st century. But we are. We are about to do something even more important, for in this election and the race for the Senate and other races all across America we are going to decide just how we're going into that 21st century: whether there will be a bridge to the future or a bridge to the past; whether there will be a bridge that we all walk across together, where we try to help each other make the most of our own lives, or whether we'll say, "You're on your own"; whether we will rise up as one people seeking common ground, or whether we will give in to the old politics of division that has bedeviled people of Louisiana and Arkansas and our whole region for too long in the past.

Now, that is what is really at issue here. We know what works. Four years ago, everyone except the people in my own home State and the Louisianians that lived near the border took me on faith. I said we would create more opportunity and insist on more responsibility, that we'd pull closer together in an American community, and everybody would have a place and a role to play. But you took me on faith. Now we know what works.

We have 10.7 million more jobs than we had 4 years ago. The deficit has gone down by 63 percent all 4 years for the first time in the 20th century. Our exports out of the Port of New Orleans and elsewhere are at an all-time high. More than half the new jobs are in high-wage categories. Wages are going up again for the first time in a very long time. We've had a 27-year—a 27-year—best combined rates of unemployment and inflation. You have to go all the way back to 1968—that's 28 years, isn't it? You weren't even born. That's the best it's been since you've been alive. We had the biggest drop in inequality among working people, more people sharing in the bounty of America in 28 years, the biggest drop in childhood poverty in 20 years, the lowest rate in poverty among our senior citizens ever recorded. We are moving in the right direction. We don't need a change; we need to bear down.

We have more children in Head Start. We've got a better college loan program that costs students less and gives them more opportunities to repay it as a percentage of their income, a 20-year high in Pell grant scholarships, the AmeriCorps program giving young people a chance to serve and earn money for college. We've got a 10-year low in the crime rate. We have 2 million fewer people on welfare and a 50 percent increase in child support payments. We are moving in the right direction right across the board. We need to bear down and do more.

Now, in the face of this my opponent would have you believe that the world is coming to an end. It was announced yesterday that we had—or the day before—we had 210,000 new jobs last month alone. And his response was, "This is the worst economy in 20 years." Now, wait a minute, it's not all bad. Just 2 weeks ago, he said we had the worst economy in 100 years. That's the best argument I've heard for my reelection. Who else do you know could make up 80 years in 2 weeks? We're moving in the right direction toward the 21st century. But we are moving in the right direction because we're doing a lot of things together—together.

I appreciate so many things that have been said tonight, but I come here to tell you that I am not solely responsible for the good economic news or the declining crime rates or the declining welfare rolls, but we have played a role. And that is the issue. So many of our friends on the other side, and especially people way on over there like Mary Landrieu's opponent, they don't believe there is much of anything we should do together. But I believe there are.

And the great thing about this election for you is that the choice is so clear and the consequences are so great. So you have to decide in the President's race and in the Senate race, do you want to balance the budget and have a targeted tax cut for education and childrearing and protect Medicare and Medicaid for folks with disabilities and poor children, our seniors in nursing homes? And do you want to protect our ability to have clean air and clean water and clean ground and a safe future? [*Applause*] And do you want to protect our investments in education and technology and our future? [*Applause*]

Well, then you just have one choice, because if you go the other way, you'll get a very different future: blowing a hole in the deficit, increasing interest rates, weakening the economy, bigger cuts than those that I vetoed.

Audience member. That's why we've got you! [*Laughter*]

The President. You're good. Keep going. [*Laughter*]

I think one of the most important things we have been able to do is to help more people, millions of people, fulfill their obligations to their children and to their workplace. When we passed the family and medical leave law, my opponent said it would hurt the economy. He said it was terrible. He tried to kill it. But we passed it.

Well, now we know; 3½ years later, 12 million families have taken a little time off for the birth of a baby or the illness of a family member, and they didn't lose their jobs. And what have we had: 10.7 million new jobs and record numbers of new small businesses. We were right. Their approach was wrong. We should help each other make the most of our own lives. We should help people succeed at home and at work. We ought to let people take some time off to go see the teachers of their children twice a year and take their kids to the doctor as well. When people earn overtime, if somebody in the family is sick, they ought to be able to decide whether to take the overtime in money or take it in time at home taking care of their families. We have to help people succeed at home and at work.

We ought to continue to support the safe and drug-free schools program so people will be in our schools telling our children early, before it's too late, that drugs are wrong, illegal, they can kill you. I support that. They tried to cut it in half, and they'll try again unless you have somebody like Mary Landrieu who believes our kids are entitled to be kept out of trouble in the first place and saved for a better, brighter future.

We are in the middle of a great national effort to try to stop the big tobacco companies from marketing and distributing tobacco illegally to our children. Three thousand kids start smoking every day illegally, and 1,000 will die sooner because of it. We are trying to stop it. That is not done yet. My opponent opposes that. The election will determine whether we see that through. We are supporting people like your mayor all over the country and working to support projects like the curfews and school uniform projects and anything else that will help keep our kids in a safer way.

We're trying to put 100,000 police on the street. We've only funded half of them. Our opponent opposed that. Then they abolished it in the budget that I vetoed. Then they tried to cut it again. Now, the crime rate is coming down every year in part because we have more people walking the streets in uniforms working with their neighbors, working with the kids, preventing crime from happening. Why in the wide world anybody would want to stop it is beyond me. I guess that's why every major law enforcement organization in America for the first time supported Bill Clinton and Al Gore for reelection. If you want to keep that going, support people like Mary Landrieu who believe we should have community policing and safer streets and futures for all of our children.

We want a future in which we grow the economy and clean the environment. We've taken millions of tons of chemicals out of our air, set aside unprecedented lands for national preservation, raised the standards of food safety, raised the standards for drinking water purity, and cleaned up more toxic waste dumps in 3 years than they did in 12. But there's still 10 million kids in this country living within 4 miles of a toxic waste site, and if you'll help us, we'll clean up 500 more in the next 4 years so that we'll be living next to parks, not poison.

But your vote will decide, for they had a very different view. They wanted to change the law and say the polluters don't have to pay anymore for what they do; the taxpayers should pick up the whole tab—never mind that all the money wasn't there, we might never get around to cleaning up a lot of these dumps. You have to decide.

And there is no decision more important than the one you'll make with regard to the education of our children and our adults in the future. I'm glad there are so many young people here, because this election is about you. Now, what is their program? Well, when they had a chance, they cut Head Start and they cut student loans and they voted to eliminate the Department of Education. And when I vetoed their budget, they said they believed in it so much they shut the Government down. And they said, "Oh, John Breaux and Cleo Fields and Bill Jefferson and President Clinton, they just love the Government; they'd never let it get shut down"—all their rhetoric, you know. And you know what I told them? "I hate to see you shut this Government down; I hate to see you hurt the Federal employees; I hate to see you interrupt essential services. But I would far prefer to see the American people hurt for 20 or 30 days than to see them hurt for 20 or 30 years. I'm not going to sign this budget; it will not be the law of the land, because I don't believe families who happen to have family members who are living in wheelchairs should be denied Medicaid and the right to have a middle class lifestyle and because I don't believe we should cut college scholarships and loans."

What's our program for the future? What's our program for the future? I want to ask you to help me do this. Now, you think about the future. We are living in a time where the winds of change are not just blowing on the Mississippi, they're blowing everywhere in the world. We're having dramatic changes in the way we work and live and relate to the rest of the world. That's how New Orleans can increase exports 30 percent in one year. The world's not growing 30 percent economically in a year. New Orleans—the people who work here are taking the work of Americans and finding new opportunities exploding all over the world. When I became President, 3 million people were making a living by working at home every day. Today, 12 million are. By the year 2000, 30 million will be.

In the last 4 years, we've discovered two genes that lead to breast cancer. We may be

able not only to cure but to prevent breast cancer because of the research that we're doing there. In the past few months, for the first time, laboratory animals with their spines severed have had movement in their lower legs by nerve transplants to their spine from other parts of their bodies. We may be able to see people get up and walk that thought they'd never be able to do it again. We are literally bursting the frontiers of knowledge.

Their education program is to abolish the Department of Education——

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. ——and cut funding to our public schools. My education program: 200,000 more work-study places for young people in college; get a million volunteers, including 100,000 college students on work-study, to teach every young person in this country to read a book by the time that he or she is 8 years old; hook up every classroom in a Louisiana school, no matter how poor the district is, to the information superhighway so all our kids can get access to world-class learning for the first time in history; and open the doors of college education to all Americans. Will you help us do that? Will you help Mary Landrieu have a vote in the Senate to do that? [*Applause*]

Think of it, folks, in just 4 years, we can make 2 years of education after high school as universal as a high school diploma is today simply by saying you can deduct, dollar for dollar, on your taxes the cost of a typical community college tuition; all you have to do is show up and make your grades and do your work. I want to give a $10,000 tax deduction per year for the cost of any college tuition after high school for people of any age. Will you help us do that? [*Applause*]

Now, again I say, you want to know what the differences are between the efforts I'm making and the efforts that Senator Dole is earnestly and honestly pursuing? I don't like all these personal attacks. I think it's just kind of a political deal. We just honestly disagree. The difference in my position and his, the difference in Mary Landrieu's and her opponent is that if you look at the family leave law; if you look at the 100,000 police on the street; if you look at the Brady bill, which kept 60,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers and now will keep people who beat up their spouses and their kids from getting handguns; if you look at our new college loan program; if you look at the targeted tax cuts for college, we believe that we're a better, stronger country when we work together to help each other have not a guarantee but the tools to make the most of their own lives. They believe you're better off on your own. You have to decide. Will you stand with us? Will you fight with us? Will you build that bridge to the 21st century with us? [*Applause*] We need you, Louisiana.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:08 p.m. at Woldenberg Park. In his remarks, he referred to vocal group As Yet; Bishop Paul Morton of St. Stephen's Full Gospel Baptist Church, who gave the invocation; Mayor Marc H. Morial of New Orleans; and Mary Landrieu, Louisiana senatorial candidate.

Remarks at Saint Paul's A.M.E. Church in Tampa, Florida

November 3, 1996

Thank you very much. I feel good today; do you? [*Applause*] Thank you, Reverend Washington; Presiding Elder Reverend Andrews; Governor Chiles; Congressman and Mrs. Gibbons; our fine congressional candidate, Jim Davis, welcome, sir. We're proud of you. To my other friends who have joined us in this church today, and to all of you, thank you for making us feel so welcome here in the house of the Lord.

I was sort of tired when I came in, and I got into the music, and then we started singing about the little shack by the railroad track—[*laughter*]—and I said a lot of us in this house of God have lived in a little shack by the railroad track. And we did have a good time. My grandfather used to joke with me that if we didn't have any better sense than to know we were poor, we could have a good time. [*Laughter*] And we're having a good time today.