

Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Dinner in
Aventura, Florida
March 13, 1997

Thank you very much. I have these elaborate notes I just wrote out. [Laughter] I am so glad to be here. I believe Senator Graham and Lieutenant Governor MacKay and Senator Torricelli. I tried to get Bob to say that so many of you were glad he was here so you could hear someone speak without an accent. [Laughter] I believe this is the first time I have been to Florida to give a public speech since the election, and so let me begin by saying, thank you, thank you, thank you.

This has been a wonderful day for me. I began by going to North Carolina to speak to the North Carolina Legislature about education and welfare reform. And Governor Jim Hunt of North Carolina was the Governor of North Carolina in 1979, when Bob Graham was the Governor of Florida, and the Secretary of Education, Dick Riley, was the Governor of South Carolina, and I was the Governor of Arkansas. And we had all these wonderful ideas, and we were very young. And I have been friends with Bob and Adele for a long time, and I'm honored to be here in their behalf tonight.

I thank Senator Torricelli for being here. Senator Harkin, I thank him for coming. Lieutenant Governor MacKay, thank you very much. Somebody told me Bill Nelson was here. I don't know if he is or not, but if he's not, tell him I mentioned his name. And if he is, he'll know I did. [Laughter]

It's wonderful to see Elaine Bloom and Ron Silver again. And Dante, they told me you were 80 years old, but I don't believe it. It's just another one of your lies, the way politicians are. [Laughter] It looks good on you. It looks great on you. You should have been—they had this great story in the New York Times Sunday Magazine—I don't know if you saw it—about how old isn't old anymore. And it really was about, I hope, all of us. And I don't know anyone who is younger in heart and spirit than Dante Fascell.

Let me also say that I'm very proud of all of you who have helped Bob Graham and helped Buddy MacKay and helped a lot of us. And I'm proud of those of you who have helped

me and have stood with me. And I hope you're proud of it, too.

Well over a year ago, we had a meeting talking about the 1996 campaign. And a lot of these so-called experts said in this meeting in Washington that we had to target the States we won last time and just try to hold most of them, that we certainly couldn't expect to expand our base and we couldn't—I said, "Oh yes we can. There's two places we lost last time we're going to win this time." And they said, "Where?" And I said, "We're going to win in Arizona, where no Democrat has won since 1948." And they thought I had lost my mind. And I said, "We're going to win in Florida." And they said, "You're nuts." They said, "You know, Lawton Chiles won in Florida, but he has all that she-coon language and all that stuff"—or he-coon. [Laughter] And I said, "I can talk like that." They said, "Yeah, but they won't believe you anymore. You've been living in Washington 4 years." [Laughter]

And I said—I swear this is true—we had this big argument, and it was that great story about how Abraham Lincoln had a meeting of his Cabinet and the vote was seven to one. And he said that seven of them wanted to do one thing, and he wanted to do the other thing, and he said, "The ayes have it." [Laughter] "Seven no's, one 'I,' the I's have it." That's the way it was.

And I told them all—over a year before the election, I said, "Here's what's going to happen on election night. We will win Florida. And it's on the East Coast and it will come up early and they will gasp and they will say, 'This thing is over. Turn out the light.'" And that's exactly what happened, thanks to you, and I thank you for it. And I told them it was going to happen.

And it happened not just because of the campaign but because of the work that we were able to do together with Bob Graham and Governor Chiles and Lieutenant Governor MacKay and so many others, the work we were able to do with the Summit of the Americas, with moving the Southern Command, with dealing with the aftermath of the hurricane, with promoting the economy, with dealing the issues that so gripped us for 4 years on and off around our relations with Cuba and with the importance

of the Cuban-American community here, with the restoration work we have begun and that we intend to finish on the Everglades, and any number of other issues. This administration built a partnership with the people of Florida for the future, and you were good enough to reward us with your votes in November, and I am very, very grateful.

And let me say quickly, Bob Graham is very important to this country, not just to the Democratic Party but to the country. I have told many people this, so I'm not saying this out of school. I was a Governor forever. Most people thought that I just couldn't get a promotion—I was Governor forever. I was Governor in the seventies, Governor in the eighties, Governor in the nineties. I served with 150 people. And I found something to learn from all of them, and I enjoyed knowing them all. But if I had to name the 5 best Governors out of the 150 I served with, Bob Graham would be on the list and near the top.

You know what he's doing with all these little notes that he—you see him make all these little notes. I'm surprised Mitchell Berger hadn't quit supporting him. He's destroyed more trees with those note pads than any single person in America. [Laughter] But he'll be writing notes now before the thing's over. And there's probably vaults full of Graham's notebooks after all these years.

But I'll tell you what he's doing is—he's doing with those notes—is the same thing he's doing with his work days that he's done with such discipline and faithfulness over all these years. He has this crazy idea that politics is about more than words and rhetoric, it's about people and action and change and moving forward and making things better.

And there are lots of folks who can give good speeches but not so many people who can give good service along with good speeches. And Bob Graham is constantly striving to understand what is going on and where we ought to be going and how to put together what is going on with where we ought to be going. And he does it in a way that is almost unique in public life. And so I'm glad you're here for him, but I want you to know we need him. And I was afraid he wouldn't run for Senator again because Washington is—MacKay said, "So was I." [Laughter]

You might as well have a laugh here, because the further you get away from where people

live in American politics—now I gave you a laugh; now be serious. [Laughter] And this is serious. I was afraid he wouldn't run again, because the further you get away from where people live in American politics and the more distance there is between where you work and where people live and the more intermediaries there are between you and the people you represent, the more likely it is that words and rhetoric will matter more and deeds will matter less.

And I can say that as someone who was a Governor for many years of what my opponent in 1992 affectionately referred to as a "small Southern State," where people expected me to run my office like a country store. If somebody called up, they expected me to call them back; if somebody walked in, they expected to see me; if somebody had a problem, they expected me to deal with it. It was an action-oriented job. And you got graded at election time based on whether you actually produced anything or not.

And we have to struggle always in Washington against the temptation to make the day's work about ourselves and what we can say about each other in political parties and across the kind of rhetorical walls that exist there, instead of about you. And Bob Graham is a daily breath of fresh air, because he gets up every day, and he thinks about you and what he can do to change things for the better for you.

And he is an inspiration to everybody who really knows him, who understands after a few years of observation what the work days are about and what all those little notebooks are about. They're about a guy that does not want to live his life in vain and is not running to get a lot of votes just to have his ego stroked. He actually wants to use the power of the job he holds to change things for the better. And that is a great and good thing, and we need more of it in Washington, not less. And so you need to send him back.

The second point I want to make is that the results are fairly satisfactory for what we've been working on the last 4 years. We reversed trickle-down economics and installed an economic theory based on investment in our people, reducing the deficit, and expanding trade. And to show for it, the country has produced 11½ million jobs in 4 years for the first time in any Presidential term. Bob Graham cast the decisive vote

to make sure that we could pass that plan. And we did a good thing.

We reversed decades of social decline. We had the biggest drop in welfare rolls in the history of the country in the last 4 years, and in each of the last 4 years, the crime rate went down. We had a tough crime bill, and we had a sensible approach to welfare reform. We restored family and community at the center of our social policy with things like the family and medical leave law and the effort to deal with the damaging effects of advertising and selling and marketing tobacco to children.

We reasserted the leadership of the country in the cause for peace around the world. I don't know how many of you tonight came up to me and had detailed conversations with me about the Middle East peace process. I think it's a good thing that you can talk to your President about the Middle East peace process. I think it's a good thing that Monday, when we have the annual St. Patrick's Day celebration in the White House, that Irish-Americans, both Protestant and Catholic, will be able to talk to the President about the peace process in Northern Ireland.

I think it's a good thing that I am going to meet President Yeltsin in just a few days in Helsinki to talk about what we can do to build stronger relations with each other, to have a strong and united and free Europe, and to reduce the threat of nuclear war more. I think these are good things, and I'm glad that the United States is a leading force for peace and freedom and a better future for the world.

And I might say, I think it's a good thing that my supporters feel free to talk to me about issues relating to the United States and their relationships with Cuba, with the Middle East, with Northern Ireland, with the Everglades, or anything else you've got on your mind. That's the way the democratic system works, and I'm proud you're here and glad you talked to me about these things. I think it's one of your better programs.

And finally, let me say, I think we've resolved this fight over the role of Government and the role of our community in our common life. You don't hear any of that rhetoric we lived with through '95 and early '96 that the Government's inherently the enemy of the American people, that we're better off on our own, and that we don't have more in common than we do that divides us. And that's a good thing.

And so now, we're in a position to really build that bridge to the next century in the next 4 years. And that is the last thing I leave you with and the final point. We've got a lot left to do. We still have to balance the budget. We've got to fix this welfare reform law and stop punishing legal immigrants who through no fault of their own need and deserve the help of the United States as well as the State of Florida. You need it to keep from having your State budget go bankrupt. But it is the morally right thing to do, and I want you to help us get it done.

We have a lot to do around the world, but the last thing I want to say is, we have got to make education the most important domestic issue in this country in the next 4 years. I am striving to get every State in the country to agree that we should establish national standards first in reading and math and then expand it to other things in education. It's unbelievable to me; here we are in a global economy, and we've never had that. We have never had national education standards in America, as if somehow school boards with different student bodies could legislate differences in algebra or math or reading, and it's wrong. And we're going to do that. And we're going to open the doors of college to all Americans. And we're going to be able to go into the next century together because we're going to have the best educated citizens in the world, and that way, our diversity will be an asset instead of a liability. And I want every one of you committed to that.

The last thing I'll say is this. Democracy requires vigorous involvement by people, and you have been vigorously involved. Some of you apparently have been paying for it lately, but I appreciate it, and I hope that you will always be proud of what you did for me but, more importantly, for your country and for your children and for your grandchildren. And when you get involved in these races in the next 2 years, in 1998, and when you send Bob Graham to the Senate and you hold the Governor's office for someone who believes that we can grow Florida together and preserve the environment, even as we grow the economy and have a balanced and good and whole future, you'll be doing it not for yourselves primarily but for your children and your grandchildren.

And that's why this country is still around here after 220 years. A friend of mine who

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is a newspaper publisher from out West was in town the other day, and he was saying to me that he thought Abraham Lincoln and all of our forebears would be pretty happy if they looked at America now and saw that we had a vigorous, vital, two-party political system where people could participate, the country was doing well by any standard, our political system was cleaner than it was 30 years ago or 50 years ago or 100 years ago, and more importantly, our country was producing results for the people and for the future.

And that's what I want you to think about tomorrow when you wake up, determined to keep the people in office and elect people to

office that will make it so, and even better, for our children and our grandchildren.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:55 p.m. at Turnberry Isle Resort. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Lawton Chiles and Lt. Gov. Buddy MacKay of Florida; Senator Bob Graham's wife, Adele; Bill Nelson, Florida State insurance commissioner; Elaine Bloom, Florida State representative; Ron Silver, Florida State senator; Dante Fascell, former U.S. Representative; Mitchell W. Berger, finance chair, Florida State Democratic Party; and President Boris Yeltsin of Russia.

Remarks to the Saxophone Club in Miami, Florida

March 13, 1997

Thank you. Thank you, Buddy MacKay. Thank you, Elaine Bloom. I want to thank all the people here from the Saxophone Club, and Merry Morris and Mr. Berger, the co-chairs of tonight's event. I want to thank Ed Kia and his trio who played earlier, and Albita and John Secada and these wonderful musicians. They were fabulous at the Inaugural, and they were great here tonight. I only wish they had sung about 10 more minutes. I love that song.

Let me say, first and foremost, this is my first trip back to Florida since the election. It has been 60 years since a Democrat was re-elected President and 20 years since a Democrat carried the State of Florida in any election. And I came to say, more than anything else, thank you, thank you, thank you.

And it is true what Buddy MacKay said, my whole odyssey, the whole struggle that I have waged these long years, not just to be President but to change the direction of our country, got its first big boost in the State of Florida in December of 1991, in the straw poll. And Buddy was there, Elaine Bloom was there, and a number of others were, and we won it. And it was the beginning of a terrific personal adventure for Hillary and for me, but more importantly for a different direction for our country.

And I want all of you to be proud who are here at this Saxophone Club event. You know, the Saxophone Clubs really started with the

campaign of '92 with some young people who wanted to find a way for people who couldn't give a lot of money but wanted to give some money and work and to be a part of the political process and to be valued and to have their voices heard to do that. And that gave birth to these Saxophone Clubs. And they've spread all across the country now. And I always say, wherever I go, I don't want to do any kind of event unless we also have something for the Saxophone Club because I especially want to see the young people who come out to these events. And I want them to know that we're working every day for them and their future in Washington to make this country better in the years ahead. And I thank you for that.

I want all of you who have helped us these last few years to be proud of the fact that we have the lowest combined rates of unemployment and inflation in over 30 years, that we just had an economy that produced more jobs in one Presidential term than any before in history, that we've had 4 years of declining crime rates and the biggest reduction in welfare rolls in history, that our country is leading the world toward reducing the nuclear threat, dealing with the new threats of biological and chemical weapons, working for peace from the Middle East to Northern Ireland, working—I'm going to meet with President Yeltsin next week in Helsinki to try to work on making sure that Europe