

June 23 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1997

Statement on the Death of Betty Shabazz

June 23, 1997

Hillary and I were saddened to learn of the passing of Betty Shabazz earlier today. She devoted a long career to education and to uplifting

women and children. She was also a loving mother. Our prayers are with her family in this hour of grief.

Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Reception in Los Angeles

June 23, 1997

The President. Thank you very much. Just a minute, I have to ask Senator Boxer a question. [Laughter] She said, "You don't really have to say anything, it's just"—

Senator Barbara Boxer. No, I didn't, I said we want you to. [Laughter]

The President. She said, "I've been up here working for you for an hour, keeping the crowd"—[laughter]—I was back there working for her for an hour. [Laughter]

Ladies and gentlemen, in the interest of campaign reform and full disclosure—[laughter]—the real reason I'm here is that Barbara Boxer's first grandchild is my second nephew; it's just a family thing. [Laughter] It doesn't have anything to do with party or loyalty or agreement or anything. That's not true. I mean, it's true, but it's not the reason I'm here. [Laughter]

I'm so glad to see all of you here. I'm glad to see this enthusiasm for the person who is clearly the most enthusiastic member of the United States Senate. I'll tell you something, if the best Democrats in every State where there's a Senate race where we don't have a seat woke up tomorrow with a combination of Barbara Boxer's enthusiasm, self-confidence, and courage, we would win the Senate in a walk in 1998.

And I want to thank you for being here for her for a lot of reasons, but I would like to just emphasize two or three. I know Barbara gave her speech, and I know essentially what she said, even though I was in there working for her, but I want to remind you of a couple of things. When I took office in 1993, this State was not in good shape. Even more importantly, the politics of our country was dominated essentially by rhetorical and ideological name-calling,

and the whole drive of every election was basically to see how people could be divided in a way that advantaged the candidate who was trying to do the dividing. And most people just thought, well, it just doesn't matter. No one can seriously assert that now.

I said, if you'll give me a chance to serve, and you give her a chance to serve, we'll change the economic direction of this country and this State. We'll get rid of trickle-down economics. We'll replace it with an invest-and-grow strategy. We'll cut the deficit, invest in our kids and our future, invest in the environment and technology and medical research, still reduce the deficit. We'll expand our trade around the world. And we'll be stronger.

And when Barbara Boxer cast the decisive vote for my economic program in 1993—it passed by one vote, including the Vice President—as he said, "Whenever I vote, we win." [Laughter] I mean, the things that our friends on the other side said were just unbelievable. They said the sky would fall, the end of the world was here, nothing good would ever happen in America again. And we now know what happened. This is not a matter of dispute anymore.

Five years later, we have over 12 million new jobs, the lowest unemployment rate in 24 years, the lowest inflation in 30 years. The stock market has more than doubled. And something that's very important to us as Democrats, because you contribute to come here in large measure on behalf of those who cannot afford to be here: We've had the biggest decline in inequity among working people in over 30 years—in over 30 years. And none of that would have happened if California had sent Barbara

Boxer's opponent to the Senate in 1993, because we would have been one vote short. None of it would have happened. And I could go through example after example after example of that. So I say to you, for the following reasons, you must make sure she wins again.

Number one, she was right when you needed it, and California's back, and that's important. Number two, she always sticks up for what she believes in, and she's the same every day. She's the same in public and in private. She has integrity in the best sense: Her mind and her spirit and her words are always in the same place at the same time. And we need more of that in public life. And third, and maybe most important, as Bob Torricelli said earlier today and may have said here before I got here, she is really the greatest spirit in the Senate. And let me tell you something, after all this time I've spent in Washington, I still remember back before I moved there when I had a life. [Laughter] And, you know, back where people of different parties spent more time figuring out how they could work together than how they could bad-mouth each other, back where people were hired to be mayors and Governors and they were evaluated based on whether they got results, not how well they could keep people torn up and upset all the time.

And that's what I tried to bring to this country. And it's amazing. There are people in Washington—I think that it really makes them sad that America's doing so well. They wake up every day trying to think of some way to put us down, this whole country, and get us back to being angry and mad with one another. And I just keep trying to get everybody to look on the bright side and go forward. She is exhibit A. Barbara Boxer is exhibit A.

And if you think about the kind of challenges we're facing for the future, with all the things that are going well here, we still have some significant challenges. Can we really do what we need to do with the environment and still grow the economy? Yes, but we'll have to work together and be in the right frame of mind so we can have honorable, principled, and honest compromises.

Can we really find a way to stop talking about and actually do something about the real and physical isolation of the poorest of our children who have not been touched one whit by this recovery? Yes, but not if we think we can win elections by quick slogans instead of actually

doing something about it and not if we think we can do it as one party or one small group, instead of as an American commitment.

Can we really become the world's first truly great multiracial democracy where no race is a majority? That's about to happen here in a generation, about to happen here in California within 3 to 5 years. Yes, we can, but only if we have a certain largeness of spirit where we respect our honest differences of opinion, where we relish our diversity, but where we know underneath our basic humanity unites us and is more important than anything that divides us.

Now, when this election develops and the people that run against Barbara Boxer try to turn her into some kind of cardboard cookie cutout of who she really is and try to sort of perform reverse plastic surgery on her, you remember that when California was in need, she was there. You remember that every day she is up there actually getting things done. And remember most of all, she has the sort of spirit, quite apart from any vote on any issue, that is the precondition of America finishing the job of preparing this country for the 21st century and giving all our children the chance to live out their dreams and getting people to be responsible and to serve their communities and to be good citizens and bringing us together as one community.

California will send a signal to America about whether we can do what we need to do in the 21st century because you are already largely there, in ways that are all positive and ways that are somewhat negative. And you have to decide how you will approach what is left to be done. And I'm telling you, this country needs somebody in the United States Senate like Barbara Boxer, somebody who no matter how tough it gets, won't wilt; somebody who will be the same every day; and somebody who will treat her adversaries with dignity and decency and will wake up in a positive frame of mind, because that is a precondition for solving any problem that is fundamentally a human problem. And most of the problems we have left start as an affair of the heart.

So stick with her. I'm glad you're here for the kickoff. I want you to be there in the middle. And I want you to be there at the end. And I want to see you on television celebrating on election night.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:05 p.m. at the Beverly Hilton Hotel.

Remarks at a Saxophone Club Reception in Los Angeles June 23, 1997

The President. I thought he was going to say, "When the son of a migrant farmworker can introduce the redneck grandson of poor dirt farmers"—[laughter]—that's what I thought he was going to say.

Paul Rodriguez. The Secret Service cut that joke out. [Laughter]

The President. They take all our fun away. Thank you, Kevin. Thank you, Paul. Thank you, Campbell Brothers. Thank you, Bennett Kelley, for all your work on the Saxophone Club. I thank Lieutenant Governor Gray Davis and Congressman Brad Sherman, who were here earlier. And I thank all of you for being here.

I love the Saxophone Club. I love it. I love the idea that we've given so many people who never were in the political process before a chance to be a part of it and to help to forge your own future. I like the fact that most of the people who are in the Saxophone Club are a lot younger than I am. [Laughter] That's not true—I don't like that. [Laughter] But I do like the fact that people who have most of their days in front of them and who have a great stake in what we're doing believe enough in this to be a part of this.

You know, I was just thinking today coming out here to California how wildly different things are here than they were just 5 years ago. And I was thinking how profoundly grateful I feel to all of you for the fact that California voted for me twice, to all of you for the support you've given the policies that we have enacted, to all of you for helping to make it possible for Al Gore and Hillary and me and all of us in our administration to do things that have helped to get the unemployment rate below 5 percent for the first time in 24 years, to get the inflation rate to its lowest point in 30 years, to make America the number one exporter in the world again—and for a Democrat something that's very important—have the biggest decline in inequality among working people in over 30

years. I'm proud of that. And thank you for that.

I'm proud of the fact that we had the biggest drop in crime in 36 years, the biggest drop in the welfare rolls in history. I'm proud of the fact that we've cleaned up more toxic waste dumps in 4 years than they did in the previous 12, and we're going to clean up 500 more next time. I'm proud of that.

I'm proud of the fact that I was able, thanks to you, to get a balanced budget agreement which will have the biggest increase in health care coverage for America's children since Medicaid was enacted in 1965 and the biggest increase in investment for excellence in education in 35 years. And for the first time, if we pass this budget consistent with the agreement, we'll be able to say to every child in this country—

Audience member. What about the NEA?

The President. I'll get to that. [Laughter] We'll be able to say to every child in this country, when they're 10 years old, you will be able to go to college. You will be able to go to college. That's a big deal.

I'm proud of the fact that you've made it possible for us to pursue a policy that says that we can grow the economy and preserve the environment, that we can go forward together, that we don't have to do things like target the NEA or the National Endowment for the Humanities. I never could figure out why we'd want to get rid of spending \$150 million a year, which is a small amount of a \$1.5 trillion budget, to bring the arts and the humanities to people all across the country, in little byroads, who wouldn't have it otherwise, or to give young artists the chance to fulfill their God-given abilities. I think it's a pretty good investment.

But more than anything else, I'm proud of you. Just look around this crowd tonight. Nine days ago I had the opportunity to come to the University of California at San Diego and give a speech that was very important to me. I had been wanting to talk about it for a long time, asking the American people to join me in a