AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

Remarks at a Reception for the Sons of Italy Foundation
May 21, 1998

Thank you very much. I thought they were all talking, so I made them come up here. [*Laughter*] But I thank Secretary Cuomo and Paul Polo and Phil Piccigallo for making me feel so welcome. I got here in time to hear Steve Forbes talking, and I appreciate his warming the crowd up. [*Laughter*] That's the most high-class warm-up act I've had this year. [*Laughter*]

Ambassador Foglietta, Ambassador Salleo; Regis Philbin, thank you for welcoming me; and to my good friend, Tony Bennett, welcome. I'd like to also congratulate tonight's honoree, Philip Guarascio, and thank all of you for giving me a chance to come by and share a few moments of your 10th anniversary.

For over 90 years, the Sons of Italy has been a community organization in the truest sense. For 10 years, you've given out this National Education and Leadership Award, finding what I think is one of the very finest ways you could ever express your pride and your ethnic heritage and your devotion to the next generation.

I asked before I came on the stage if I could have an opportunity to personally congratulate the scholarship recipients here tonight, and I hope that I can do this, because they, after all, represent not only your commitment but all our futures.

The Italian-American tradition of work and family, faith and community is just as alive today as it was when the Sons of Italy first began to meet. As President, I have tried to pursue policies that embody those values, values that led so many Italian-American families to such great success in America.

We've got a lot to be thankful for tonight: the lowest unemployment in 28 years; the lowest welfare rolls in 27 years; the lowest inflation in 32 years. But we all know that we've got a lot to do and that we can't stop until we can see the values that embody the Sons of Italy alive and well in every neighborhood in America. I'd like to say a special word of thanks to Secretary Cuomo for his extraordinary work in trying to make sure that we get that done.

I'm told that tonight everybody who is here can claim to be Italian. I see my favorite Italian with an Irish name, Senator Leahy, out here. [*Laughter*] It's shameless. He's the only man I know who can show up at every Irish and every Italian event, claim to be one of you, and always be telling the truth. It seems an unfair advantage even in America. [*Laughter*]

Tonight I know you're also celebrating the life of Frank Sinatra. I had, as one of the many perks of becoming President, the chance to get to know Frank Sinatra a little and to appreciate on a personal level what people all over the world appreciated in his music and his movies. I think it's important tonight, because of what you stand for, to note that while we have lost his remarkable voice, we have also lost a generous spirit of a man who raised more than a billion dollars for charity and left a lot as well, and really did, as I said a couple of days ago, always manage to do it his way.

I want to thank you for everything you do, but especially, in closing, I want to say that, if you look ahead to the 21st century, we will be living in an economy that is increasingly based on ideas, but our ability to take advantage of it will rest more and more on the strength, the depth, and the character of our soul, on whether we can learn to live together across all the lines that divide us to find a home among people who aren't exactly like us but, down deep inside, have more in common with us than what divides us.

Tomorrow, in the land of my ancestors, Ireland and Northern Ireland, the people will be voting on whether to discard decades of war and hundreds of years of conflict to chart a new path for peace for their children. We are working hard to preserve a peace in Bosnia among people of different religious traditions. We see on the Indian subcontinent new tensions among people of different religious and ethnic groups. We struggle still to make peace in the Middle East at a time when computers have made instantaneous the transfer of money and information and ideas across the globe.

If we are to make the most of the education that you have worked so hard to give to the children of Italian immigrants, then we truly must work just as hard to embody the values by which you have lived and through which

you have found a true home in the United States.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:42 p.m. in the National Building Museum. In his remarks, he referred to Paul S. Polo, president, and Philip R. Piccigallo, national executive director, Sons of Italy Foundation; Malcolm S. (Steve) Forbes, Jr., publisher, Forbes magazine; Thomas M. Foglietta, U.S. Ambassador to Italy; Ferdinando Salleo, Italian Ambassador to the United States; entertainer Regis Philbin, who introduced the President; singer Tony Bennett; and Philip Guarascio, vice president and general manager, advertising and marketing, North American Division, General Motors Corporation.

Commencement Address at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland

May 22, 1998

Thank you. Thank you very much. Secretary Dalton, thank you for your generous introduction and your dedicated service. Admiral Larson, thank you. Admiral Johnson, General Krulak, Admiral Ryan, Board of Visitors Chair Byron; to the faculty and staff of the Academy; distinguished guests; to proud parents and family members, and especially to the brigade of midshipmen: I am honored to be here today. And pursuant to longstanding tradition, I bring with me a small gift. I hereby free all midshipmen who are on restriction for minor conduct offenses. [*Applause*] There was so much enthusiasm, I wonder if you heard the word "minor" offenses. [*Laughter*]

You know, the President has the signal honor of addressing all of our service academies serially, one after the other in appropriate order. This is the second time I have had the great honor of being here at the Naval Academy. But I began to worry about my sense of timing. I mean, what can you say to graduating midshipmen in a year when the most famous ship on Earth is again the *Titanic?* [*Laughter*] But then I learned this is a totally, almost blindly confident bunch. After all, over in King Hall you eat cannonballs. [*Laughter*] Now, for those of you who don't know what they are, they're not the ones Francis Scott Key saw flying over Fort McHenry; they're just huge apple dumplings. Nonetheless, they require a lot of confidence. [*Laughter*]

I will try to be relatively brief today. I was given only one instruction: I should not take as long as your class took to scale Herndon Monument. Now, at 4 hours and 5 minutes, the slowest time in recorded history, I have a lot of leeway. [*Laughter*]

But you have more than made up for it. You have done great things, succeeding in a rigorous academic environment, trained to be superb officers. You have done extraordinary volunteer work, for which I am personally very grateful. In basketball, you made it to the NCAA's for the second time in a row. You defeated Army in football last year. In fact, you were 26 and 6 against teams from Army this year. And while I must remain neutral in these things—[*laughter*]—I salute your accomplishments. [*Laughter*]

Let me also join the remarks that Secretary Dalton made in congratulating your Superintendent. Admiral Larson has performed remarkable service as an aviator, submarine commander, Commander in Chief in the Pacific, twice at the helm of the Academy. I got to know him well when he was our Commander in Chief in the Pacific. I came to appreciate more than I otherwise ever could have his unique blend of intelligence and insight and character and passionate devotion to duty.

In view of the incident on the Indian subcontinent in the last few days, I think it's important for the historical record to note that the first senior official of the United States who told me that there was a serious potential problem there and we had better get ready for it was Admiral Chuck Larson, several years ago.

When I asked him to return to the Academy, I thought it was almost too much, and then I realized it might have been too little, for he loves this Academy so much this is hardly tough duty. He met all its challenges. He taught you