

Things are going so well because of all the hard work we have all done together. And they will continue to go well as long as—but only as long as—we continue to face the challenges of today and tomorrow. That is the major case for Gray Davis. You've given him a chance tonight to have a bigger bullhorn, to get his message out. Tomorrow you can give him a chance to have a lot more apostles, one on one, and in the end, that can be even more important.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:38 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to reception hosts Bruce and Janet Karatz; former White House Press Secretary James Brady and his wife, Sarah, chair, Handgun Control, Inc.; and Sidney Harman, chief executive officer, Harman International Industries, Inc.

Remarks at a Dinner for Lieutenant Governor Gray Davis of California in Los Angeles

August 11, 1998

Thank you. First of all, thank you for coming tonight. Thank you for making me feel so welcome. Many of you said especially kind things to me when I was going around and visiting with you, and I thank you for that.

I thank Jeffrey and Marilyn for now—now I have visited in all their residences. [*Laughter*] I'm three for three; I get to start on my second round now. And I thank them for having all of us in here in this beautiful and, for this sort of political event, rather cozy setting. I've enjoyed it very much.

We've been working all day, as Gray said, and you've probably heard about all the speeches you want to hear. I would just like to tell you a couple of things that are very much on my mind. First, I want to thank you and the people of California for giving me and Hillary and Al and Tipper Gore the chance to serve these last 5½ years and to play our role in this country's renaissance. I'm grateful for that. Second, I thank you for helping Gray Davis. I think he is a good man. I think he will be elected Governor if the people of California show up at the polls in November.

Thirdly, I want to ask you to just think about one thing briefly and seriously, and that is, okay, California is back, America is moving forward—Gray reeled off the statistics, you heard them—we're in the best shape we've been in a generation. Our economy is growing; our social problems are declining. What are we to do with this moment? And what does the race for Governor have to do with it? What does Senator Boxer's race have to do with it? Is it really

a good thing that a guy like Rob Reiner has put his neck on the line to put a proposition on the ballot to try to provide a better early beginning for our children? What does all this matter?

And it may seem self-evident, but it's not really. I mean, if you think about your own life, just go back over periods of your life, and you go through a really tough time—and just about all of us in this crowd have lived long enough to have had a few tough times—and then things get really good; what is the temptation? You want to say, "I had all these tough times and now things are going well for me, and I want to enjoy it. I want to kick back, relax, enjoy it, smell the roses." That's what people want to do, families want to do, businesses are inclined to do.

And the point I would like to make, that I think is so urgent when it comes to the decisions the voters will make here in California this November, is that we can't afford to do that now. We have to resist the temptation of saying these good times can let us be a little bit lazy, and say instead: The world is changing too fast; the challenges are still too profound; and we have an obligation to use these good times and the confidence they've given us to meet the long-term challenges of the future.

For me, it means we have to solve the problems of Social Security and Medicare before the baby boomers retire, so we can do it in a way that will provide dignity to my old age and our generation in a way that does not bankrupt our children and their ability to raise our

grandchildren. So even though it's election year, I'm against the Republican House proposal for a tax cut. We've had a deficit for 29 years; now we're going to have a surplus—I'd like to look at the black ink for a few months and take care of our kids' future before we squander it for political purposes. A good reason to vote to reelect Barbara Boxer—a good reason.

We have got to resolve this ambivalent feeling that—or these messages that America has sent out because of the votes, or lack of them, in Congress about whether we're prepared to continue to lead the world for peace and freedom and prosperity. We've got to pay our dues to the U.N., our debt to the International Monetary Fund; we've got to say we're proud of what we've done for peace in Northern Ireland, in Bosnia, in Haiti, what we're working on in the Middle East, the humanitarian disaster we want to avoid in Kosovo. We've got to say we're not going to let the terrorists back us down or get away with it in the wake of these horrible Embassy bombings in Africa. We have got to stand up for our leadership role in the world.

We have got to face big challenges here at home. Let me just reel some of them off; Gray talked about some of them. We've got the best system of college in the world. One of the major achievements of our administration is we've opened the door to college wider than ever before with tax credits and more scholarships and more work-study positions and the national service program, AmeriCorps, to let people earn college scholarship money. But nobody thinks we've got the best elementary and secondary system in the world. And it's too late to have a debate about what to do about it. But I'll tell you this: Every problem in American education has been solved by somebody somewhere, and there is no excuse for us not doing it everywhere. Now, that has to be done partly by the National Government, but largely at the State and local level. Which candidate for Governor do you really believe is more likely to make a contribution to that?

We've got to continue the fight to provide health care to all of our people. At the national level we need to pass a Patients' Bill of Rights to balance managed care with patient care and get the balance right. But when we passed the balanced budget bill, we made it possible for 5 million American kids to get health care, but we said the States had to figure out how to do it, here's the money. Which candidate for

Governor is more likely to see that more of California's children get decent health care?

We have to figure out a way to grow the economy while we preserve the environment. I hope all of you in this crowd believe that the phenomenon of global warming is real. It is. When I was out on the Monterey Peninsula a few weeks ago, I went out with some young marine biologists from Stanford, and we stood in the bay there and we looked at marine life there that just 20 years ago was no further north than 50 miles south of there. That's a phenomenal change in marine life because of the warming of the planet. But a lot of the environmental challenges of this State have to be met here in California. What candidate for Governor is more likely to help you meet the environmental challenges of the future and grow California's economy? I could go on and on and on.

The last thing I'd like to say is that one of the things that's made me proudest to be a Democrat in the last few years is that we have continued to stand for the proposition that this has to be one America; that all the lines that divide us, the lines of race and religion and income, all the other things that divide people in this society that have been used by people in political campaigns to drive wedges between us, that we have to overcome those things because what we have in common is more important than what divides us.

And I believe that California sends a signal to America because this State is so diverse. And the decision you make in the Governor's race here will have a lot to say about whether State politics continues to be a source of constant social division or whether you've got a Governor up there leading people to aspire to their better selves. And I don't think there's any question in your mind about which candidate is more likely to do that.

And let me say one last thing on an issue. When I come to California, it makes my heart leap with joy to see so much prosperity where once there was so many problems. And I'm very proud of the role that we have played in it. But I just want to remind you that politics is more than speeches at events like this. After the poetry of the campaign, as Governor Cuomo used to say, there is the prose of making decisions—and a lot of them hard and controversial, with tough choices and trade-offs.

Five years ago this month I presented to the Congress the economic plan that began the recovery of this country by driving the deficit down, driving interest rates down, driving investment up. The Republicans attacked it, characterized it unfairly as a tax increase on the whole American people, said it would be a disaster. And not a single, solitary Republican—after they have quadrupled the debt in 4 years—would step forward to vote for that plan. It passed by one vote in the House, one vote in the Senate. If one person had failed to be there, then the thing that set this whole recovery in motion would not have occurred.

Barbara Boxer won by about 47 percent of the vote in 1992. She could have taken a powder because she didn't have a majority going in. And she stood 7 feet tall and walked down the aisle and voted for the economic plan that we are now celebrating the consequences of in California and all over America. For that vote alone, I believe she deserves to be reelected in November, and I hope you will help her.

So let me ask you to go out here and talk about these things, talk about the issues that are on the ballot, talk about these candidates. You've given a much bigger bullhorn to Gray Davis by your contributions tonight, and that's very important. But it's important that the people you come in contact with, many of whom influence a lot of other people, understand that this is not a time for sitting around, because the world is changing too fast.

Let me just ask you this. If somebody told you 5 years ago when I became President—5½ years ago—that over the next 5½ years America will become the strongest economy in the world with the strongest economy in a generation here, and meanwhile the Japanese stock market will lose one-half of its value and Japan will not grow for 5 years, you would not have believed that, I bet. But that happened. I say that not to criticize the Japanese—they're a very

great people; they're brilliant; they're rich; they're strong; they're smart; and they'll be back—but to show you that you can never afford just to relax and stay with the established order of things. We have to keep doing what got us here.

When Hillary agreed to take over this celebration of the Millennium Project, she came up with this theme, "Honoring the past, and imagining the future." In a dynamic time, that's what we all have to do. Gray talked about honoring the past by doing the right things for the future. And that's what we represent.

If you look at the whole history of the country—Gray talked about "Saving Private Ryan." I told him one of my favorite parts of that movie was George Marshall reading Abraham Lincoln's letter to Mrs. Bixby, which I used to read every Memorial Day, because it captures what America is all about.

But I believe that the party I'm a part of and the candidates I'm supporting and the work we're trying to do embody the best of our past and the best hope for the future. Because what are we trying to do? We're trying to widen the circle of opportunity, deepen the reach of our freedom, strengthen the bonds of our community.

You've helped us to do that tonight. I hope tomorrow when you wake up you'll be proud you were here tonight. And I hope you'll want to talk to others about why we should not relax, we should thank God for the blessings we enjoy and do our best to preserve and spread them.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:10 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Jeffrey and Marilyn Katzenberg; film director Rob Reiner, founder, I Am Your Child campaign; and Mario Cuomo, former New York Governor.

Statement on Signing the Emergency Farm Financial Relief Act

August 12, 1998

Today I am signing into law S. 2344, the "Emergency Farm Financial Relief Act," which will allow farmers to receive their market transi-

tion payments earlier than usual. This legislation is necessary in a year marked by low crop prices, a series of natural disasters, and other financial