

Remarks at a Unity '98 Luncheon *October 5, 1998*

Thank you very much. Let me begin by saying that we decided, Tom and Dick and I, after we found ourselves in the minority in 1995 and we were facing the Republican contract on America, that if we stayed together, that our policy positions could prevail and that what we wanted to do for the country would be much more difficult to do but that we could still get a lot of it done.

And we had that terrible experience of the Government shutdown in late '95 and '96. But after that, when the American people made their voices heard, we had a good election in '96. We had a balanced budget agreement, which closed the remaining 8 percent of the gap in balancing the budget, but importantly, should give us a balanced budget for years and years to come, with a lot of our priorities in it, including health care for 5 million kids and the widest opening of the doors of college since the GI bill. None of that would have happened if we hadn't worked together. And I could not have done any of it if it hadn't been for the Democrats in the House and the Senate. I think that's very important.

We are seeing the potential of a replay of that now, as we get closer and closer to the election and the feelings of the American people become apparent. In a few days I'll get a chance to sign a higher education bill which has a big drop in the interest rates on student loans and a program to provide mentors for inner-city kids in their junior high school years or middle school years that will include a guarantee of access to funds to go to college, if they stay out of trouble, stay in school, and learn.

These things would absolutely be impossible in the present array of Congress with the Republicans in the majority, if we weren't working together. So there is a substantive benefit to that.

Now, let me say, where we are now is a position that I think is virtually unprecedented in 150 years. In 150 years of American political history, the President's party in the midterm elections nearly always lose, and in the second term of the President, I don't think there's an exception. But we are on the verge of having

an exception, and I would like to tell you why, and why I think your investment is well made.

Normally, these midterm elections have a big fall-off in voter turnout. And that is the assumption and, indeed, what our opponents are literally working for and hoping for and praying for, because a lot of the people that vote for us would never be able to come into a home like this except to maybe serve lunch. And it's a big hassle for a lot of them to vote; you know, they have to worry about child care and the job and getting to vote and all that.

When I was in Philadelphia with Peter and others a couple of days ago, a friend of mine from New Jersey came over and brought me a survey that had just been done in New Jersey asking people if, in the current climate, they were more or less likely to vote in the midterm elections. Fifty percent said they were more likely; 10 percent said they were less likely. Fifty percent of the Republicans said they were more likely; 49 percent of the Democrats—I mean, 49 percent of the independents; 57 percent of the Democrats said they were more likely to go and vote.

So what is important for us is we don't have to run a negative campaign. All we have to do is say, you know, what their agenda is. Our agenda is, first of all, to see America lead in heading off this crisis in the global financial system, beginning with funding the International Monetary Fund contribution so we can keep the economy going at home. Secondly, don't spend the surplus now on a tax cut just before the election or right after the election; save the Social Security system first. Thirdly, continue education as our first investment priority. Fourthly, pass this HMO bill of rights, which, interestingly enough, has more than three-quarters support of the American people without regard to party—it's a uniform issue across the board—which they killed. And then, obviously, the other things that we believe in, including protecting the environment as we continue to grow the economy.

But if we run on the strength of the economy and our responsibility in the world economy to keep America's economy strong, on the education issue, on the saving Social Security first,

these issues are very, very powerful, and they stand in stark contrast to the evident priorities of the majority in Congress.

So we actually have a chance to do something never before done here, but it will not happen unless, first of all, we stay together and, secondly, we have enough funds to get our message out. We don't have to have as much money as they do. We'll never have as much money as they do. But we have a chance to do something literally without precedent in 20th century American political history, just by doing the right thing. It's not even complicated. We just have to stand up there and fight for what is evidently in the interest of the American people.

And that is what your investment will be used to do. And they'll do it right. I've never seen the Democrats more well focused on how to do this business and how to be there in the last 10 days of the election when very often—and to give you an example, in 1996, when we picked up several House seats and lost two Senate seats in what was a very bad rotation for us—the next three rotations, by the way, are good for us in the Senate elections. We've had three that were terrible, in terms of we always had more seats up than they did; we had more people retiring than they did. But in '96, when we picked up a few House seats,

lost two Senate seats, we were outspent in the close races the last 10 days, near as I can tell, 4 to one, or more. That will give you an idea of the level of disadvantage here, and it also might explain why they killed campaign finance reform this year. But we can do this. And we can do it simply by doing what is right for America. It's not a complicated strategy. There's no twist and turn to it. It's very straightforward and, I think, self-evident.

So I feel good about where we are, good about where we're going, and very grateful to all of you, because the American people need stability and strength and a clear message on this economic issue, on the education issue, on the Social Security issue. And I think if we give it to them, we're going to be just fine, and it's going to be quite surprising to a lot of the pundits. But none of it would be possible if you weren't willing to come here today and do your part and then some, and we're very grateful.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:20 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Thomas A. Daschle and Representative Richard A. Gephardt. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on the Legislative Agenda *October 5, 1998*

Good afternoon. From the beginning of our efforts to create the economic renaissance America now enjoys, Congressman Gephardt and Senator Daschle have been tireless in working for that change. Especially in these last few weeks as the congressional session has entered its crucial final stage and the political season has intensified, these two leaders have stood above the crowd in their constant efforts to elevate progress over partisanship.

I realize that the calendar says the election is just a month away. The calendar also says it is now 8 months since I sent the Congress a budget, 5 months since the legal deadline for Congress to pass a budget resolution. And as all of you know, the fiscal year ended last week. Yet so far, Congress has sent me only 2 of

13 appropriations bills necessary to keep our Government running. On Friday the temporary spending measure I signed will run out. I want to work with Congress to get this important work done. There is still time for real achievement, still time for progress over partisanship.

That is why today I stand with Representative Gephardt and Senator Daschle to call on the congressional majority. Time is running short. Congress has important work left to do. Pass the necessary spending bills to keep the Government running; save Social Security for future generations; ensure a quality education for all our children; protect America from the global economic turmoil—these are the priorities of the American people, and they must be the