

From the Persian Gulf to the Americas, from Korea to Kosovo, you are protecting the freedom so many Americans gave their lives for in this century and helping to build a safer world for the next century.

We ask a lot from our Armed Forces, and we owe you a lot in return, especially at a moment of such great challenge to our service men and women around the world. I am determined to work with Congress to give you the equipment and training you need and the pay and quality of life you deserve. The security you have given us supports our strong economy—

we must ensure that you and your families share its benefits. So on this Armed Forces Day, all Americans join me in gratitude for your service to our Nation.

NOTE: The President's remarks were recorded at 3:31 p.m. on May 14 in the library at the Rainier Club in Seattle, WA, for later broadcast. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 15. These remarks were also made available on the White House Press Office Radio Actuality Line.

Statement on the Observance of Armed Forces Day, 1999 May 15, 1999

The first Armed Forces Day was celebrated in 1950, to acknowledge the debt all Americans owed to the courageous men and women who had fought a great war for freedom. Our nation has changed a great deal over the last half century, but our debt to the Armed Forces remains as great as ever. Each year, Armed Forces Day gives us an important chance to pause and remember the service and sacrifice that keeps our nation in the vanguard of freedom. On behalf of all Americans, I thank the men and women of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard for all they do to keep our nation strong and secure.

Today, the world's prayers are with the people suffering the horrors of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo and with the brave Americans and allies coming to their aid. But Kosovo is only one of many places our armed forces are making a difference. From the Persian Gulf to the

Americas, from Korea to the Mediterranean, our men and women in uniform are superbly performing their mission: deterring war, protecting the freedom so many Americans gave their lives for in this century, and creating confidence that the next century will be more peaceful than the last.

Every time I meet with our servicemen and women, I am inspired by their patriotism, skill, and selfless dedication to the ideals that make this nation great. America is proud of the greatest force for freedom the world has ever known.

On this Armed Forces Day, all Americans join me in gratitude for their service to our nation.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this statement.

Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial and Congressional Campaign Committees Dinner in Beverly Hills, California May 15, 1999

I have never before had the honor of being the warmup act for Andrea Bocelli, but I will. I will do my best. [*Laughter*] I want to—and if I sing a little, you will just have to—[*laughter*]. I want to say first of all how grateful I am

to all of you for being here, especially to the chairs and the cochairs of the dinner and, of course, to David and Steven and Jeffrey. I want to thank my leaders, Senator Daschle and Congressman Gephardt. I was looking at them up

here. We knew each other, of course, before I was elected, but not so well as we do today. And I can tell you that it is a joy and an honor every day to work with them. They are people that we can really be proud of.

And I have seen them in far less comfortable circumstances than we find ourselves tonight, and they are what they seem to be, and they're always there for the American people.

I'd like to thank Governor Davis and Sharon for coming. I'm thrilled by his success and was honored to be asked to campaign here a time or two last year.

And I want to echo what has already been said about Senator Feinstein and Senator Boxer. They are on the forefront of this still ongoing and yet unfolding struggle to protect our children on the gun issues, and I want you to give them a big boost tonight and a lot of support, because it's been pretty tough there, although the American people did a great job in turning some of those votes around last week.

I'd like to thank Senator Torricelli for being here. It's his unhappy, or sometimes happy, duty to go around and try to make sure that we've got someone to actually run for all these Senate seats and take on some very tough fights. I thank Congressman Kennedy and your Congressmen, Henry Waxman and Brad Sherman, for being here. And Mayor Levin gave me a gift from the city tonight, so I'm delighted to be here. *[Laughter]*

And I'm glad to be here in, as far as I know, the only beneficial product to the Teapot Dome Scandal here—this beautiful place.

Most of what needs to be said has already been said, but I would like to try to put a few things in perspective, talk a little bit about some of the events of the present that are of great concern to people.

When I came to California in 1991 and early '92, this was a very different place in a different country. People were divided and confused and drifting and frustrated. And I believed very strongly it was because we had no overriding vision for our future, no strategy to achieve it, no way, therefore, of pulling the American people together and getting us pointed in the right direction. And that's really why I got in the race for the President.

It was not the easiest of races. I was laughing with Goldie Hawn tonight because I remember her being in the Biltmore in Los Angeles on June 2, 1992, when I was nominated for Presi-

dent, really officially. I won in California and New Jersey and Ohio that night, so it was clear that I had enough votes to be nominated. And all the stories were the exit polls showing that Ross Perot was really in first place, and I was in third place. I say that to caution you about reading too much into any polls. *[Laughter]*

But I knew something, I thought, about the American people, about where we were at this moment in our history and where I thought we ought to go. Just 6 weeks later there had been a complete reversal in the polls, and thank the good Lord, they stayed that way through November, and the people of California were very good to me and to Al Gore and to our families and our administration, twice. And I am very, very thankful.

What I want you to do—you know what all the individual issues are, but what I want you to think about tonight, just for a minute, before we hear a magnificent performer and before you go home and you go back to your lives tomorrow and the days ahead, is what you would say to people if they asked you why you came tonight. You could say, "Well, Geffen made me." *[Laughter]* Or there's a lot of things you could say. But I hope you will have some really good answers.

I guess the first thing I'd like to say to you is, obviously, this is a fundraiser for the Congress. It's not for me. I can't run anymore. And I'm here because I believe very strongly that the people you just saw should lead the majorities in the House and Senate; because while I am very grateful for the opportunity I have been given to serve the American people as President and for whatever role I was able to play in this remarkable economic turnaround and the big drop in crime and welfare and the improvements in almost all the indicators of social health—the lowest minority unemployment in history, the highest homeownership—all the things that are moving in the right direction, I'm grateful that we've had a chance to be a force for peace and freedom around the world. What I want you to understand is, first, most of what we have done could not have been done, had it not been for the support I received from the Democrats in the Congress. Second, most of what we stopped could not have been stopped, had it not been for their support. And third and most important, what we did grew out of a vision of 21st century America as a

place where there is opportunity for every responsible citizen, where we celebrate our differences but we come together in one community, and a place that can still lead the world for peace and freedom and prosperity, and out of a willingness to think in different ways about the future, to break out of the old vices that were paralyzing Washington.

We believe, for example, that we can reward successful entrepreneurs, like many of you in this audience, and still expand the middle class and give poor people a chance to make it. We believe we can grow the economy and improve the environment. We believe we have an obligation to help people succeed not just at work but also at home, because raising children is the most important job of any society.

We believe these things. We believe that we can have a quality and excellence and high standards and accountability in education. We believe we can be a force for peace in the world and still stand up if we have to, against ethnic cleansing and weapons of mass destruction and terrorism.

And the work of the last 6 years has largely been our combined efforts to take these ideas and that vision and hammer them into specific proposals. It's what animates our efforts today to deal with the aging of America, with the reforms of Social Security and Medicare, doing something about long-term care, helping people to do more to save for their own retirement.

It's what's driving me now that we have a big surplus instead of a huge deficit to say that we ought to deal with Social Security in a way that pays down the debt for the first time in anybody's memory, so that 17 years from now, we could actually have the smallest debt this country's had since before World War I, which will mean for our children lower interest rates, a stronger economy, less dependent on the vagaries of the world economy.

We believe that we have to continue to improve the environment in ways that are tangible. I'm proud of the fact that the air is cleaner, the water is cleaner, and we set aside more land than any administration except those of the two Roosevelts, in our term, but we have a lot more to do. And this environmental issue will continue to dominate public concern for at least another 30 to 40 years. So we still have more to do.

But what I want to say to you is, those of you who are here because you've helped me

through thick and thin for all these long years, this did not happen by accident, nor did it happen just because I was President. It happened because we had the right vision and the right ideas, and we worked to make them real. And it couldn't be done without the help of the people who have spoken before me and what they represent, and they deserve the chance to be in the majority so that we can see these ideas fully implemented in the beginning of the 21st century. That is what I want you to think about when you leave here tonight.

Let me say, in spite of all the good news, most Americans have been sobered in the last several days because of the terrible tragedy at Littleton and the ongoing conflict in Kosovo. And I would like to say to you that I think how we respond to both of these will say a lot about what kind of country we have for years to come.

And I believe that the ideas that I've tried to infuse into all of our work ought to be looked at against the backdrop of these two issues. I do think—you heard Dick Gephardt talking about what the person who lost a child at Littleton said, "Don't let my child die in vain." I do believe that, even more than all the terrible tragedies that happened last year, because of the sheer scope and power of this event, it touched a deep nerve in America that has profoundly opened up our country to a serious examination of what it would take to give our children a safer childhood.

And last Monday I had a lot of people from every sector of our society into the White House, with Hillary and Al and Tipper, to talk about how we could have a national campaign against children's violence in the same way that we have seen other national campaigns prevail in the past. And what I'd like to say is—what I've pleaded with people to do is not to make this chapter 57 in the ongoing American culture war saga.

You know, if the house next door here were burning down, we'd probably all be willing to go over there and help put the fire out. And think how absurd it would be if Norm looked at David and said, "I'm not going to help put the fire out because it's your fault you left your car running outside the house, and its sparks from the fumes caused the fire." And David said, "Norm, if you'd quit smoking years ago, you wouldn't have put a cigarette over in the yard, and that's what caused the fire." And so

everybody gets in a fight about who's at fault here, and we let the house burn down—that is a dumb thing to do.

This is far more important. We can't let those children have perished in vain. And I don't know—you know, probably a lot of you are like me. I have watched the parents of these children being interviewed. I have seen the school people. I have seen some of the wounded children. I have been, on the whole, profoundly moved and impressed by these people, by the depth of their faith and their conviction and their genuine striving to understand and go beyond this.

So for me, I think we ought to—since I think what happens to our kids is more important than whether the house next door burns down, I think we ought to have the same attitude. We ought to say, “Okay, I'm showing up for work. Tell me what I can do.” And I believe that we have to do more to help parents do their job, whether it's better child care or family leave programs or, literally, people helping people understand that your kids can become strangers in your own home.

And I agree with what has already been said. It is a fact that most parents in America spend far less time with their children today than they used to spend. That is not free. That's why I say, we will never be the society we want in the new century until we better balance work and family.

I think we have to help the schools do more. I was in a fabulous school in Alexandria, Virginia, the other day—that's the most culturally diverse school district in America now, just across the river from the White House—where they have peer mediation programs and counseling services and mental health services and a 1-800 anonymous hotline that if one kid calls and says, “I'm worried” about another one, they know it will be followed up on, and they know they will be kept anonymous. We have to do those kinds of things. We have to give every school the ability to protect our children better.

I think the people in the gun business ought to come to the table and help us. And I want to say one thing that wasn't mentioned, that I'm very proud of, is that the gun manufacturers, who for years sided always with the NRA and always opposed all these measures, have changed. And every one of you who believes that it's a good thing that we raise the handgun ownership age to 21 and that we close the loop-

hole—and Senator Feinstein's assault weapons bill, so now we can stop these big ammunition clips from coming in—it's never had any purpose, anyway.

We can also thank the gun manufacturers who supported the legislation this time in Congress and had the kind of civic responsibility that we need more from every American. I appreciate that.

Now, we've still got a lot of work to do. We've got to do background checks on explosives. We've got to get this gun show loophole closed in the right way. And I'm going to watch it pretty close, because unlike most Americans, I've actually been to a lot of these gun shows. It was part of my job description at one time when I was Governor of Arkansas. And I enjoyed them greatly, but they ought to have background checks, and they ought not to have loopholes.

So that's a big part of it. I also believe—let's talk about the entertainment issue. You know, I think the—here's the way I look at this. It's like the NRA can say, “Guns don't kill people, people do.” That's true, but people with guns kill more people than people without them. And we're the only country in the world that has no reasonable restrictions. There are now over 300 studies that show that sustained lifetime, week-in and week-out, night-in and night-out, exposure to indiscriminate violence through various media outlets over a period of time makes people less sensitive both to violence and to the consequences of violence.

Now, for most kids, it won't make any difference. But if you have a society where we have already positive—there are more kids who are spending less time with their folks and less time being connected to somebody that they know they're the most important person in the world to, and if that same society has those same kids having easier access to weapons, then desensitizing them will be more likely to push those that are vulnerable into destructive behavior.

Now, that doesn't make anybody who makes any movie or any video game or any television program a bad person or personally responsible with one show for a disastrous outcome. There's no call for finger-pointing here, but we just look around and we know that all these things go together, starting with the raw material that you've got more kids who are more isolated, some of them in their own homes, strangers.

So I would like to say, first, like I said about the gun manufacturers, it ought to be put in the record that the entertainment industry for 6 years has worked with Al Gore and me and with our administration on the V-chip, the television rating system, the video game rating system, the screening technologies that the video people—the Internet people have worked with us to try to help parents screen inappropriate material away from their kids on the Internet.

Today in my radio address, I said there were two or three other things—I had been studying this and listening—that I think ought to be done. I think that if young people can't see certain kinds of movies, then they shouldn't see the advertisement for the movies if the advertisement has the same stuff that caused the movie to be rated as inappropriate. And that's something I think the entertainment industry can look at and ought to look at very seriously, that the advertising ought to be consistent with the rating in terms of the audience that receives it.

I also think there's a lot of evidence that these ratings are regularly ignored, not by you but by the people who actually sell or rent the video tapes or the video games or run the movie theaters. And the rating system ought to be used by checking ID's. And finally, I believe in light of the most recent research, it would be a very good thing if the industry would reexamine the nature of the rating system, especially the PG-13 as it relates to violence, not because anybody is willfully doing something that they know is going to hurt somebody, not because any one television program or video game or movie will do it, but because we know that by the time a person becomes 18 in America, he or she has seen about 40,000 killings, and because we have a higher percentage of vulnerable people.

But we are determined to do this as a family. When we were at the White House, we sat around a big old table, and everybody was there, and everybody was asking, "What can I do?" And I say again to the Congress, this is not the time to let any interest group control doing things that are common sense. How in the world we can let somebody buy a gun at a gun shop that they can't get in a gun shop because they've got a criminal background is beyond me. And this is a classic example—to go back to what my leaders said earlier—the people of Florida, not the most liberal State in America, voted last November, 72 percent to close the gun

show loophole with no ifs, ands, or buts, no wrinkles or curlicues or subterfuge.

So I say this is a time for all of us to do this. And how we deal with this, and whether we really come up with a kind of grassroots national campaign, like the campaign that Mothers and Students Against Drunk Driving launched that precipitously lowered deaths from drunk driving in America, like the effort that has been made that has precipitously lowered the teen pregnancy rate, like the grassroots effort business made that led to 10,000 business people hiring over 400,000 people off welfare—how we do this will have a lot to say about whether we're really going to build one community.

But there are other things we ought to do, too. And let me come back to Kosovo and talk about—you say, "Well, what's that got to do with this?" Well, first of all, all the studies, the reports indicate that these young men who were involved in this terrible tragedy at Littleton felt like they were a disrespected group and felt like they had to find some other groups to look down on or hate, the athletes, the minorities in the school.

And in Kosovo what you see and what you saw in Bosnia is people who have been ethnically cleansed. That's a sort of sterilized word for being systematically killed, uprooted, raped, having your property records destroyed, having your mosques and your museums and your libraries destroyed, having an effort to basically eradicate your existence.

But it's very interesting. Don't you find it ironic—especially those of you—I was talking to Steven the other day about my library, and we were talking about whether we could have some virtual reality effects in my library in the museum, you know. Sometimes I feel like I'm living in virtual reality, so I'm highly interested in this. *[Laughter]* This is the kind of thing you guys think about when you think about the 21st century, you know? Our kids are all on the Internet, and the human genome secrets have all been unlocked, and we all live to be 135, and we whiz around the world in safe airplanes that never have wrecks. And we'll be driving on the Los Angeles freeways, and there won't be any more traffic jams because all our cars will be computer programmed and directed and everything will be managed just fine. This is the exciting—and our kids will all have pen pals in Mongolia and Zimbabwe and Bolivia and

every place around the world. Technology will bring us together, and there will be a new golden age. That's our sort of image for our children in the 21st century.

Don't you think it is ironic that here we are in the last year of this millennium and that image is threatened by the oldest demon of human society, the hatred of the other? It starts as fear of the other, goes to hatred of the other, goes to dehumanization of the other, goes to killing of the other. Don't you think that's interesting? I mean, these people in Kosovo, they're not fighting over who gets the right to show the latest Hollywood movie in the theaters in Pristina. In Rwanda, they weren't killing each other over who got the latest software package. They're talking about how they worship God and what their ethnic group is, what real or imagined slights they have against one another as groups. And we are not free of it here.

I was in Texas the other day meeting with the daughter of James Byrd, the African-American who was dragged to death in Texas. The other night, I went to the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights dinner in Washington and recognized the mother of Matthew Shepard, the young man who was killed in Wyoming because he was gay. So America's got some work to do here, too. We ought to pass the "Hate Crimes Act" and the "Employment Non-Discrimination Act," and we ought to—to show that we understand this.

But let me say, how we respond to Kosovo will determine what kind of world we're going to live in. I think all of you who know me know that I have worked for peace, that I deplore violence, that I have been heartbroken by the people who have been innocents in this battle who have perished.

You know, I'd a lot rather be in Northern Ireland giving speeches to my people about how they ought to put all their guns down. I want to go back and work on peace in the Middle East. I don't even think that we can intervene in all the ethnic conflicts in the world. We're not asking everybody to get along. We can't even ask them not to fight. But if we cannot stand, after the lessons of the 20th century, against the systematic killing of people and their uprooting because of their religion or their race or their ethnicity, then what kind of world are we leaving to our children?

You know, I had a wonderful day today. I spent the day with my daughter today, and

Hillary just got back from Macedonia. That's where she was in the refugee camps. And so we called her, and then we got lonesome, and we'd call her again. The three of us were talking about all this. And she was talking to me about these people and how they have lost everything and how they have loved ones they don't even know what happened to. There are tens of thousands of people who are unaccounted for. Nobody knows what happened to them. And she talked about this little girl that was holding her hand while she was speaking. The little girl had no idea what she was saying, just holding her hand.

I saw them in Germany when I was there, the young women and the Muslim families—where rape is an even worse thing than it is in our culture—saying, "I want to talk to you, but these are things I cannot discuss in my family." A 15-year-old boy stood up and said, "I cannot talk about Kosovo," and sat down and started crying.

I ask you to think about this. What Europe and the United States is doing, what we are now engaging the Russians in trying to do—we're not trying to redraw the map of Europe. We're not playing some power game. I don't want to control anybody's life. All I want to do is to create a world in which we do not idly turn away from systematic bigotry based on hatred of the other that leads to mass killing. And I believe, as difficult as all the questions are I have to answer here—God, I grieve for those Chinese people that were killed in that horrible mistake that was made. As difficult as all the questions I have to answer, I would rather answer these questions than answer the question of, why am I having a good time in Los Angeles tonight and we have not lifted a finger to help those people? That is the question I would have no answer to. I would have no answer to that.

They are a part of our community. If you want a world that will really be fit for your children to live in, if you want the benefits of the modern world, we need at home the philosophy the Democratic Party has brought that we're going to have all these benefits; we're not going to leave anybody behind if we can help it. We're certainly not going to leave anybody behind that's willing to work to be a part of it. But even more, we have to build a sense of community, where we not only tolerate each other, we actually relish our differences. And

we can have the security to relish them and make our lives more interesting because underneath we know that what binds us together is a whole lot more important than what's different about us.

And I want to close with this story. Tom Daschle told you that we had these tribal leaders come to the White House. And he didn't tell you the whole story.

We had the heads of 19 Indian tribes from the high northern plains, from the two Dakotas and Montana. They asked for a meeting at the White House through Senator Daschle and his colleagues. And then they came into the Roosevelt Room at the White House, which is in honor of Teddy, Franklin, and Eleanor Roosevelt, and Teddy Roosevelt's Nobel Peace Prize is hanging on the mantelpiece.

And so the tribal leaders said, "Well, could we sit in a circle? That is our custom." So we sat in a circle. And each in their turn, they stood up and said, "Well, here's what we'd like to have help on. Here's our education concerns, our health care concerns, our economic concerns." And I came into the middle of the meeting, listened to it all. It was just fascinating.

Then at the end, the guy who was sort of their main spokesman, the tribal leader, whose name was Tex Hall, interestingly enough, stood up and said, "Well, there's one other thing we want to do." He said, "Mr. President, we want to talk to you about Kosovo." He said, "You see, we know something about ethnic cleansing. And our country has come a long way. And we believe what you are doing is right. And so the chiefs have signed this proclamation supporting it."

And then at the end of the room, another young man who was a tribal leader stood up, and he said, "I would like to speak." He had

this beautiful silver necklace on. And he was very dignified, and he said, "Mr. President," he said, "I had two uncles. One landed on the beach at Normandy. One was the first Native American fighter pilot in the United States military." He said, "My great-great-grandfather was slaughtered by the 7th Cavalry at Wounded Knee." He said, "We have come a long way from my great-great-grandfather's time, to my uncles' time, to this time." He said, "I have only one son, and I love him more than life. But I would be honored if he went to Kosovo to stand up for the human rights of people who are different from the majority."

That is the journey America has made. That is the journey I hope we can help the world to make. And if we do, you will take care of the rest of our challenges.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:20 p.m. in the Courtyard at the Greystone Mansion. In his remarks, he referred to event cohosts David Geffen, Steven Spielberg, and Jeffrey Katzenberg, founders, DreamWorks SKG studios; Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli; Gov. Gray Davis of California and his wife, Sharon; Senator Robert G. Torricelli, chair, Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee; Representative Patrick J. Kennedy, chair, Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee; Mayor Sandra J. Levin of Culver City, CA; actress Goldie Hawn; Norm Pattiz, chair and chief executive officer, Act III Productions; Renee Mullins, daughter of murder victim James Byrd, Jr.; Judy Shepard, mother of murder victim Matthew Shepard; Tex Hall, chairman of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation (the Three Affiliated Tribes); and Gregg Bourland, chairman, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Luncheon in San Diego, California

May 16, 1999

Thank you very much. I was hoping that no one in California had heard that joke I told. [Laughter] They liked it in Albany, however. [Laughter]

Let me say to Irwin and Joan, first of all, I want to thank you for opening this wonderful home and for giving me a tour of the art and a tour of your family. [Laughter] What a wonderful, big, beautiful group they are. And I