

our documents, our artifacts, our monuments. We must do better in preserving the past and in building new buildings and monuments which capture our vision of the future, the enduring commitment we have to our freedom, and the public space that makes community more possible and reminds us of our common humanity across all the lines that divide us.

That is what this building will do. I hope at this moment of great prosperity and optimism for the United States, we will use the example of this project to redouble our determination to build great buildings and dream big dreams for the future.

Again, I want to thank all of you who never gave up on this ambitious project. I want to urge you never to give up on it until it is com-

pletely finished. And on behalf of Senator Moynihan, Senator D'Amato, myself, and all others who will be out of office when it is finally done, I hope you'll invite us to the building dedication.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:55 a.m. at the James A. Farley Building. In his remarks, he referred to Charles A. Gargano, chairman of the board, Pennsylvania Station Redevelopment Corporation; Gov. George E. Pataki of New York; architect David Childs; Peter F. Vallone, New York City council speaker; Mark Green, New York City public advocate; former Senator Alfonse M. D'Amato; and Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan's wife, Elizabeth.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Luncheon in New York City May 19, 1999

Thank you very much. First of all, I want to say a real thank you to Jack and to Phyllis for having us here. I've been in their home in New Jersey; I've never been here before, and I wanted to come. And as you can see from the pictures on the wall, the Vice President has been here. [*Laughter*] And I've been rather jealous of this. [*Laughter*] To say this is an interesting house would be an understatement. [*Laughter*] And I'm just delighted to be here. And I thank them for opening their home to us.

I also want to thank Gerry Ferraro for being here. And Congressman Kostmayer, thank you for being here. And I want to thank Joe Andrew and Beth Dozoretz and Fran Katz and everybody at the DNC for the work they've done.

You know, Joe and I, we just finished a western swing; Joe and Beth and I, we've been out on the west coast. And about every time he got up to introduce me, he said, "You know, we're going to win every election from the White House to dogcatcher." And I keep pointing out to him that that is not such a great distance. [*Laughter*] He acts like that's such an encompassing term, you know. He hasn't been paying attention to Washington lately. [*Laughter*]

But let me say, I just came—a lot of you know this, but I just came from a remarkable event with Senator Moynihan and the Governor and a lot of the transportation authorities here. We announced new plans for the new Penn Station and the old Farley Post Office Building. And a lot of you—you probably saw, the last day or 2, the New York Times had a nice piece on the architectural plans and what was going to be done. But this is something that Pat Moynihan talked to me about way back in '93. And I also announced that we were going to put \$60 million in our budget over the next 3 years to help pay more of the Federal share to build this. But I wanted to sort of use it as a metaphor for the point I want to make here.

For whatever reason, I think nearly everybody who has been involved in this project has been captured by the idea of it. And most everybody with any sense of the past at all deeply regrets the fact that the old Penn Station was destroyed, and with it a lot of memories of New York and a magnificent architectural creation.

And so anyway, this little project, it was like a lot of Pat Moynihan's ideas. It was a little bit ahead of its time, and it took a while to catch hold. But I signed on early and told him to just call me back when there was something to do.

And so slowly it sort of picked up steam, and people kind of got together. So we announced it today, and everybody felt so good about it. And I was trying to think to myself why they felt so good about it. I think it's because it captures the past, and it also throws people into the future in a way they feel good about, because beautiful public spaces really help us to build a community across all the lines that divide us; maybe because nearly everybody alive can remember sometime in his or her life, maybe when we were all much younger and had more free time, when we were sitting in a train station just watching people go by, felt free and kind of elevated by it.

But I say that because, to me, what I've tried to do for the United States is to give us a sense that we could meet all our challenges but that we had to meet them together. That meant that everybody had a role to play and some citizen responsibility. It also means that with all of our diversity, which ought to be celebrated, not just tolerated but celebrated, we have to realize that what binds us together is even more important.

And the story of the last 6 years has been an effort to try to take the ideas that I developed over a long period of time and that I developed a belief in, and that I talked to the American people about in '92 and again in '96, and turn those ideas into policies that then could be made real in the lives of the American people.

And I'm very grateful for the good things that have happened in this country. But I came here today to say to you that for whatever role I played in it, I think the far more important contributing factor was that we had the right ideas, rooted in the right vision of America, and we had a good team, and we showed up for work every day—[laughter]—and we intend to continue doing it down to the last day.

That elicited a few laughs, but anybody that's ever watched any national capital in politics knows that it's no small achievement to get your team to show up for work every day, because an enormous amount of time and energy is always devoted to trying to divide your team and distract them and wonder who's dropping the dime on whom in the morning paper, so they won't work. Instead, they'll spend all their time calling each other names or being torn up and upset or worrying about something other than the people's business.

So I am here today because for whatever role I have played in this, I know the most important thing was that we had the right vision and the right ideas, and we brought teamwork, and we showed up for work every day. And we need to keep doing that.

And America needs to make that decision again. And every time you give the people a chance to have a referendum on whether they want politics to be about politicians and the politics of personal destruction or whether they want it to be about people and progress and unity, they always make the right choice. But you have to put the choice before them, which means we need good candidates and they have to be adequately financed, and we have to keep the message out there.

The other point I'd like to make rather briefly is that I think it's quite important for us, even though we have now reached a point where Presidential elections almost take 2 years, which I think is wrong—I actually—I announced in October of '91, 13 months before the election. And that was a short campaign. I waged a short campaign. But I think it's very important, particularly for the Democrats, because we have been the party of vision and progress and of trying to pull the country together and not drive wedges among the people—it's particularly important for us to keep working, to keep working, to keep producing.

There are things which won't wait until 2001. For example, Jack mentioned that we'd balanced the budget, and we now have the biggest surplus ever. I have offered the Congress a plan that would save Social Security and Medicare and actually pay the publicly held debt of the United States down to its lowest point since before World War I in 15 years.

Now, why do I think that's a good idea? Because I think it will keep interest rates lower and investment higher and create more jobs and raise incomes. It will also make us relatively less dependent on international capital markets at a time when I am doing my very best to stabilize them, so we don't have another Asian financial crisis, and we don't have to worry about spending an enormous amount of money to keep it from spreading to Brazil or all the things that those of you in finance know we have been working on the last 2 years.

But I can't say for sure what will happen 10 years from now. I can say for sure, 10 years from now, that if we have a terrible recession

and we have to deficit spend, it will be a lot better to do it if we've got a much lower debt base than we have. I can say for sure that if there's another round of global turmoil 10 years from now, we'll be much more immune to it if we've got a smaller debt and our interest rate structures are smaller.

So these are important things. We need to do them now. We don't need to be waiting around. We need to continue our efforts at educational excellence. Today I introduced a bill into Congress—I announced it just before I came up here—every 5 years we have to reauthorize the general bill by which we give Federal money to public schools in New York and everywhere else. It's called the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. By and large, this money is given to help schools that have a lot of poor kids or a lot of kids whose first language is not English or a lot of kids who have special needs—disabilities—their targeted aid. And a lot of it is given to provide for other kind of special purposes, technology in the schools and things like that.

None of it, however, is related to results. I have been working for 6 years to get everybody to embrace the idea that we had to have standards and accountability, and we ought to do a better job making sure teachers know the subjects they're teaching and all this. But we've never really been able to move these standards into the schools. So it's basically—whether they're being observed or not is a function of the character of the local leadership or the commitment of the local political leadership or the State leadership.

We now have a chance to actually change the way schools work. If we say, okay, for the next 5 years we're going to take all the research that has been done and take the uncontestable findings and make the pursuit of those findings a condition of the money—no social promotion but don't say the kids are failures; give them all summer school or after-school programs—this works. Identify the schools that are failing and turn them around or close them down, let the kids go some place else. Have charter schools, have districtwide school choice. Do something to give the kids other choices.

Those are just a couple of examples of the kinds of things that I think we have to do. We also—I have to tell you, though, it's not—the Federal Government and others are going to have to find a way to put more money into

teaching because we're going to have a 2-million teacher shortage the next decade, with more kids coming into the schools.

Now, we already have too many teachers out there teaching science and math courses, especially, for which they have not been academically prepared and in which they, themselves, have not passed performance exams. So it's all very well—we've got to invest more money in this, and we've got to be more flexible about getting people into teaching, in all kinds of ways, that actually know the subjects we expect them to teach.

So these are some of the things that are in this bill. I think this is quite important. This could have a lot to do with what America looks like 10 years from now. If we can't give—everybody knows we've got the best higher education system in the world and, relatively speaking, a higher percentage of people going into colleges than other countries. No one seriously believes that we're giving all of our kids the best elementary and secondary education in the world. And until we can do that, we won't be able to take full advantage of this astonishing diversity in our student body.

And I think this is, by the way, a huge asset for us in the global economy, to have all these kids from all these different countries. Just go to the New York school system and look. This is a big deal. This is a plus, not a minus. This is a good thing in a global society to have this but only if we can give these kids a chance to learn what they need to know to do well in the world they will become adults in.

Let me just mention one or two other things. The aftermath—Hillary and I are going out to Littleton, Colorado, tomorrow. And the aftermath of that shooting, I think, has had an even more profound impact on the country than all the school shootings last year did. And you can see it by what is happening in the Congress now. I think there is finally a feeling that it's time for everybody to stop making excuses; it's time for everybody to stop trying to place blame and instead just basically say, "I would like to assume whatever my share of responsibility is for giving a safe childhood back to our children."

And there's something for the gun people, the entertainment people, and the Government people to do. There's also something for the school people and the parents to do, and the

kids, themselves. But I would just like to make a couple of points.

Number one, the American people can take a lot of pride in the fact that in the United States Senate—that would never have passed any reasonable gun control on a bet 6 months ago—over 70 Senators last night voted to impose child trigger locks on the gun manufacturers. They voted to raise the age of handgun ownership to 21. And they voted on—I don't like the bill they voted for because it's got too many loopholes, but at least they're moving toward closing the gun show loophole.

The Speaker of the House yesterday came out for closing the gun show loophole and for raising the gun ownership age to 21. This is good. The Democrats who have been for this for years should reach out the hand across the aisle and say, "Look, this is good."

We've come a long way since 1994 when one of the principal reasons we lost the House of Representatives in the '94 election was the lobbying of the NRA against our Members who voted for the crime bill, with the Brady bill and the assault weapons ban. Ask the gentleman from Pennsylvania; he knows. We lost at least a dozen and perhaps as many as 20 seats solely because of this. This is a different country than it was then.

And the grieving of the American people for these children and the recognition that these two young men, who had gone to such a dark place in their own minds, had a Tec-9 and were making bombs, large numbers of them, I think it really registered on people. And we have a chance, therefore, to do something good.

While I was in California last weekend, I told the entertainment community I thought that they should stop advertising what is violent that might be shown to kids who couldn't see the movies or rent the movies or the video games; that the advertising—people who are exposed to the advertising ought to be rated in the same way that the people who are exposed to the underlying product, and that the whole rating system ought to be reevaluated in terms of gratuitous violence.

Now, this doesn't mean that the people that manufacture guns or the people that manufacture movies or video games are personally responsible for anything. But it does mean—we know this—we know that kids are spending more time on their own, less unsupervised time, that their parents, when they're with them, are

more tired because they're often working two jobs, than at any previous time. We know this. And therefore, we know that there will be more of them who will be vulnerable.

And if that is true and you have easier access to guns and explosives, on the one hand, and on the other hand, you have now over 300 studies that say that sustained exposure to violence—and the average 18-year-old has now seen 40,000 televised murders on movies or TV or a video screen—40,000—and we know that the vulnerable among us are made more vulnerable, then the whole mixture is a caldron out of which some dramatically terrible things will happen.

And you don't have to blame anybody personally for this, but we all have to say, "Look, we've got to do something about this." Then I think there has to be a national grassroots campaign in every community involving religious institutions and schools and other groups patterned on what the Mothers and Students Against Drunk Driving did, patterned on the national anti-teen-pregnancy campaign—grass-roots, value-based, personal contact with all these kids to try to really dramatically reduce this. And believe me, it can be done.

The last thing I'd like to say is, I've been in a lot of schools and there are—some schools do better than others with counseling programs, with peer mediation programs, with intervention programs that ultimately lead to mental health for the kids who need it, and also with just trying to set an environment in which people are encouraged to be in groups, but the groups are not encouraged to look down on one another and provoke social discord. I mean, there's a lot that can be done in the schools by the students.

And finally—a person came up to me the other day—everybody says, we need to do more to try to make it easier for parents not to lose touch with their kids. And anybody who has ever raised a child through adolescence knows that it's an interesting challenge. I mean, you want your child to become independent, to have space, to begin even to have things that aren't necessarily shared with you. But you don't want to lose the connecting cord.

And we have—it's interesting, isn't it, that we think we should get help in education and instruction and support for everything from losing weight to improving our athletic skills, to figuring out how to use a computer to how to make money in the stock market. And yet,

we don't think anybody ought to have instruction in the most important things in life. And this grassroots campaign ought to be out there helping parents to deal with the challenge of having their children come of age and get that independence they're entitled to without severing the cord that they don't want severed. This is a big deal.

And you know, our family and Al and Tipper Gore, we've worked on a lot of these issues for years and years and years. And we're going to spend a lot of time on this in the next 18 months.

The last thing I'd like to say—I'd like to say just a word about the world, because people are so interested, especially in the crisis in Kosovo now. We have tried in the last 6 years to be a force for peace, from Northern Ireland to the Middle East to Bosnia. We've tried to be a force for reducing the threat of weapons of mass destruction, and we've made a lot of progress in that and for standing up against terrorism and the emerging threats of biological and chemical weapons in the hands of organized criminals or terrorists. We've worked on all that. And we've tried to expand global prosperity through trade initiatives.

But I think it's ironic—and Jack said it at lunch, he said, "It's interesting to me, in this great, modern world we live in, we still can't figure out what to do about genocide"—since that's what World War II was really about. And I think if you think about what characterizes the modern age in a positive sense—an explosion of technology, especially in the telecommunications area; computer science increasingly being merged with the biological sciences, so that when the human genome project is completed we'll be able to get a map of—the genetic map of ourselves and our children and our grandchildren, and it should move us very rapidly over the next 15 years to another dramatic increase in life expectancy. So that's the first thing, this explosion of technology and its immersion with telecommunications and with the biological sciences.

And then the second thing is the world getting closer together, national borders becoming more porous, the interconnections of people becoming closer. Isn't it ironic when we're dreaming of our children all learning how to speak different languages, having E-mail pen pals in Asia and Africa and Latin America, and all this sort of interesting stuff that we want to dream

about, that the number one problem we're facing in the world today is the incredible, durable persistence of the oldest demon of human society, the fear of people who are different from us. And the fear leads to loathing. The loathing leads to dehumanization. The dehumanization leads to the justification of killing. And the justification of killing then often leads to the justification of systematic killing, based on racial or ethnic or religious difference.

But it is the oldest problem of human society. And it is a true irony that when we—I look at these young people here, and I think: Gosh, the world they'll live in 30 years from now will be full of things that I can't even imagine. Will they really be burdened by this primordial madness that manifested itself in Bosnia or in the little villages of Rwanda, where 700,000 people at least were hacked to death in a hundred days, in a country not a colonial creation, those people had been living together for 500 years, or Bosnia, where a quarter of a million people died, and 2½ million people were made prisoners, and mosques were burned, and libraries and museums were burned up, and books were destroyed that were priceless—or what's going on in Kosovo?

Will the people of Northern Ireland take the last step that's still hanging them up to make peace? Will the evident desire of the voters in Israel for peace and security find a concrete expression in the next few months?

The biggest problem to all of it is when it gets right down to the lick log, it's hard to hold hands with somebody who's really different from you and jump off into a common future. It's hard.

And I know a lot of people that question what I have done and how I have done it in Kosovo. All I can tell you is I'm convinced that I've done the right thing in the best available way. And one of the things you hire a President to do is to think about all the implications of all the options that are available. But I would far rather be here today answering the questions that I have to answer to the American people and to the press about what we have done and why we have done it and how we have done it, than I would like to be here today asking you to contribute money to our party and to our cause if I were sitting on my hands and letting those people be butchered and thrown out of their homes and plundered and their records erased.

And I think the fact—it's amazing to me how many American Jews have told me they support what we are doing for Kosovar Muslims. It is a great thing. It is something special. We have no territorial ambitions there. We have no economic ambitions there. We, in fact, are going to have to spend more money to help them rebuild the area and build it higher than it was. What we want is for our children to be able to live in the world where they can maximize the explosion of technology and maximize the openness of borders, and you cannot do that in a world where you're worried about being blown up by a terrorist who is driven by ethnic, religious, or racial hatred.

That is what this is about. It's very much in our security interests to do this. But it's because of the world toward which we're going. If this were 1950, it wouldn't be. The world we're going to live in does not need a Europe consumed, even at its edge in southeastern Europe, by this kind of hatred.

Let me just close with this story. I've been telling this for 5 days now, but I was overwhelmed last week. I had an experience which to me embodies the best in this country. Last week, at the request of our leader in the Senate, Senator Daschle, and the other four Democratic Senators from North and South Dakota and Montana, we hosted in the White House a meeting of 19 Native American tribal leaders from the upper plains States.

They are the poorest of all of our Indian tribes. And most of them don't have any gambling. They don't have any population density. And it's long way from here to there, so they don't get a lot of new investment. And they haven't been part of this great booming economy. They haven't noticed that the stock market went from 3,200 to 11,000 in the last 6½ years. It just totally escaped them. I mean, they haven't felt this.

So they came to the White House. And the first thing they did was, they said, well, now—and we met in the Roosevelt Room, which is a room that some of you have been in—it's commemorated, basically dedicated to Franklin and Eleanor and Theodore Roosevelt. And Theodore Roosevelt's Nobel Peace Prize is on the mantelpiece there, which he got for helping to end the Russo-Japanese War in 1905.

So they say, "Well, can we get all this stuff out of here and sit in a circle? That's our custom." So we get the table out, and everybody

is sitting in a circle. And a lot of Cabinet members were there. And their spokesperson was a 6'6" tribal chief named Tex Hall—not exactly your Native American name, but anyway, that's his name. [Laughter] So he gets up and speaks, and then everybody speaks, and they talked about the education concerns and the health care and the economic concerns. And I came in about midway through the meeting; they all were talking. So at the end, Chief Hall, he stands up again, and he said, "I want to tell you something." He said, "There's something else we want to do before we go." He said, "We have a proclamation here we have signed, supporting what you are doing in Kosovo"—representing the poorest Americans, right, and the first Americans. He said, "You see, Mr. President, we know something about ethnic cleansing. And our country has made a lot of progress, and here we are today, and we think we should stand up against it."

And then this other young man said that he wanted to speak. And he represented one of the tribes in South Dakota. He wasn't very tall, and he had this beautiful piece of Indian jewelry on around his neck, silver jewelry. And he said this—you think about this when you leave here today, about what kind of country you want in the 21st century—he said, "Mr. President, I had two uncles. One of them was on the beach at Normandy. The other was the first Native American fighter pilot in the history of the American military. My great-great-grandfather was slaughtered by the 7th Cavalry at Wounded Knee," he said, "and here I am in the White House." He said, "We have come a long way from my great-great-grandfather to my uncles to this day. I have only one son, and he means more to me than anything. I would be proud for him to go and fight against ethnic cleansing in Kosovo." He said, "We know what is right now." And you could not hear anyone breathe in that room.

I ask you to think about that. This is a different country than it was 6½ years ago. It needs to be a different country 6½ years from now. We have still so much to do. But if you made me choose one thing I could do in the next nearly 2 years I've got left, it would be to bring the American people closer together, not to give up our fights and our disagreements and our arguments but to just remember this is quite an extraordinary place. We have had quite a journey. We have a lot to do at home

and abroad, and we'll be able to do it if we don't forget that what binds us together is more important than all the things that divide us.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:55 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to luncheon hosts Jack and Phyllis Rosen; former Vice Presidential candidate Geraldine A. Ferraro; former Congressman Peter H. Kostmayer; Joseph

J. Andrew, national chair, Beth Dozoretz, national finance chair, and Fran Katz, national finance director, Democratic National Committee; Gov. George E. Pataki of New York; Columbine High School gunmen Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold; Tex Hall, chairman of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation (the Three Affiliated Tribes); and Gregg Bourland, chairman, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe.

Statement on Proposed Legislation To Improve Work Incentives for Persons With Disabilities

May 19, 1999

I commend the House Commerce Committee for its overwhelming bipartisan support for the "Work Incentives Improvement Act" today. By unanimously endorsing this legislation, the committee has taken an important step towards removing significant barriers to work for one of our Nation's most significant untapped resources—millions of people with disabilities. The committee's action, under the leadership of Chairman Bliley and Congressman Dingell, parallels the overwhelmingly bipartisan support that the Roth/Moynihan/Jeffords/Kennedy version of this legislation received from the Senate Finance Committee.

Americans with disabilities can and do bring tremendous energy and talent to the American workforce, but the unemployment rate for all working-age adults with disabilities is nearly 75 percent. One of the most glaring problems is

that people with disabilities frequently become ineligible for Medicaid or Medicare if they go back to work. This puts people with disabilities in the untenable position of choosing between health care coverage and work. The "Work Incentives Improvement Act" would improve job opportunities for people with disabilities by increasing access to health care and employment services.

Justin Dart, one of the foremost leaders of the disability community, has said that the "Work Incentives Improvement Act" is "one of the boldest since the landmark passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act." As I indicated in my State of the Union Address, I could not agree more with him. I urge Speaker Hastert and Majority Leader Lott to move promptly to schedule votes on this important and long overdue legislation.

Memorandum on Assessment of Space Launch Vehicles

May 19, 1999

Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense

Subject: Assessment of Space Launch Vehicles

Our national space transportation capabilities are critical to the overall strength and stability of our commercial, civil, and national security space sectors.

As we enter the 21st century, reliable access to space will be more important than ever in

accomplishing our national goals. It is vitally important that we fully understand the root causes behind the recent launch vehicle failures and take corrective action. Therefore, I request that you, in coordination with the Director of Central Intelligence and the Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), provide me with an interim report in 90 days and a final report in 180 days on the