

I know they're working hard to make peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians. We even have the Greeks and the Turks talking about Cyprus. We've got all kinds of things going.

And for all of the hate crimes and terrible things that have happened in America, we're not bedeviled like that, but it's still there under the surface. One of our major newspapers today had two breathtaking pictures, side-by-side, on the front page of the young soldier that was beaten to death and the other young soldier that was convicted of killing him. He was beaten to death because he was gay.

And you know, I'm not running for anything; I'm just telling you I felt as a human being. I looked at that and my heart ached for that young man whose life was extinguished. Then my heart ached for the young man whose life was ruined, because somewhere along the way people taught him—you're not born feeling this way—people taught him that it was okay to dehumanize that other young person, who wore the uniform of his country. Both of them have committed to die for this country if I send them some place, God forbid, which might cost them their lives. And yet, that happened.

So I say to you, not to bring you down but to lift you up, the reason I am working as hard as I can to be a good President, the reason I'm here with you, besides to thank you, the reason I feel as strongly as I do about the Vice President and all of our campaigns for the Sen-

ate and the House is that we may never have this chance again. And we have to make the most of it. And we owe it to the American people to get out there and get our message out, stand up, fight, show up for them every day. Never forget that the people we're really fighting for are the people that served our food here tonight and their children. And countless other people who will never have a chance to come to an event like this.

And I'm telling you, if you do what you know to do next year and you tell people what the record is and what we stand for, then we'll have a great 14 months, and we'll have a great celebration in November of 2000.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:30 p.m. in the Grand Ballroom at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Joseph J. Andrew, national chair, and Mayor Edward G. Rendell of Philadelphia, general chair, Democratic National Committee; dinner cochairs Loretta Bowen, director of political affairs, Communications Workers of America, John F. Cooke, president, the Disney Channel, Carol Pensky, former treasurer, Democratic National Committee, and John Merrigan, cochair, Democratic Business Council; Walter Shorenstein, president, Shorenstein Company LP; and former Senator George J. Mitchell, who chaired the multiparty talks in Northern Ireland.

Remarks to the Chamber of Commerce in Little Rock, Arkansas

December 10, 1999

Thank you. Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you, Shelby; and thank you, Joe, for your leadership. They've both been friends of mine a long time, and it's good to see this chamber so well led. And thank you, Joe, for your pledge of support.

Congratulations to Bob and to Beverly on the well-deserved award. I'm delighted to be up here with Dr. Reed and Jesse and Janet, and to be here with all of you. I thank Senator Pryor and Congressman Snyder for joining me, and Mayor Dailey. I think our speaker, Bob Johnson, is here, and I was accompanied this

morning by Secretary Riley, the Secretary of Education, from Washington, and Rodney Slater, the Secretary of Transportation. I thank them for coming with me.

I want to thank you for this award. Herschel Friday was a friend of mine. I was sitting here, racing through my mind, over all the things he asked me to do over the 12 years I was Governor, all the time there was one more emergency at Oak Lawn Park, which he and I had a vested interest in. I don't know if Beth Friday is here, but I want to thank them both for their friendship, and thank you for this

award. And Beth, if you're here, I love you, and I'm glad to see you. Thank you.

I also want to thank the Philander Smith choir. You know, whenever I have to take a trip, I stay up late the night before, and I try to get all the work done that I might have done in the office if I had stayed there. I talked to Hillary last night for the last time about 1 o'clock in the morning. She said to tell you hello, and she's doing well, and Chelsea's doing fine.

But anyway, when I got up this morning, I was a little tired. I walked in here, and I heard the Philander choir singing, and I'm ready to speak now. [Laughter]

U.S Military Aircraft Tragedies

Let me say something I'm sure a lot of you know, but this is my first opportunity to speak to the press today. I want to express my profound sadness for the crash of the C-130 that flew out of the Little Rock Air Force Base, crashed in Kuwait last night with—96 people were on board; 3 were killed; 21 were injured. They were trying to land in terrible, terrible weather. And I thank them for their service, and I extend my deepest condolences to the families of those who were lost.

We also lost a helicopter off the coast of San Diego yesterday with 18 people aboard; 11 were recovered safely. We have not recovered the other seven, and our thoughts and prayers are with them. I say this just to make a simple point, that you might mention the next time you see someone in uniform. We do not have to be at war for that to be dangerous work. Most people have no earthly idea how dangerous it is to fly those fast planes and to fire those powerful weapons and to undergo the rigorous training that they have to undergo.

We are richly repaid for it. We didn't lose a single pilot in combat in the action in Kosovo, but it is inherently dangerous work. So when you see some people from the air base, thank them for putting their lives on the line for the rest of us every day.

Chamber of Commerce

Shelby mentioned a couple of times that I have worked very closely with this chamber for a long time. I don't know how many times I went to your old building trying to hustle some business for the greater Little Rock area or deal with some issue that was before us in common.

I think you picked the right changes; there are big—I mean, the right theme. There are big changes coming. And the pace of change will only accelerate in the years ahead. I love the logo. I asked Shelby who designed the logo, and he told me, and congratulations to you.

I think that what I would like to do today is to talk a little about the library and, first, a little about the last 7 years and the next 14 months that I have left to serve as your President. I want to begin by thanking the people of Arkansas who gave me the chance to serve for a dozen years as Governor, without which I could never have become President, who gave me the chance to learn over those dozen years what makes things really work, which is very often not what dominates the headline, the time, and the energy and the emotions of people in Washington.

I want to thank those who serve in this administration. We have been so blessed. I want to begin by mentioning Mack McLarty, who came down with me today. He was my first Chief of Staff; he oversaw the passage, by a single vote in both Houses, of the '93 economic plan, which was the single most important thing that gave us this economic boom, that got rid of that deficit, that drove the interest rates down, and got investment up in this country. He also oversaw the passage of NAFTA, the Brady bill, the family and medical leave law, and set in motion a teamwork that, according to one Harvard scholar, he said I had the most loyal Cabinet since Thomas Jefferson's second administration. That is in no small measure because of the leadership that Mack McLarty gave to the White House in those early days. And I thank him for it, and equally, for his later work as our Special Envoy to Latin America, where we have reestablished ties that had been too long neglected with so many countries.

I want to thank Secretary Slater, who is here with me today; James Lee Witt, the most popular FEMA Director in the history of the country; Bob Nash; Bruce Lindsey; Nancy Herrreich, who came down with me today; Mel French, our Protocol Ambassador; Janis Kearney; Carl Whillock, who came with me today, the farmers' advocate in the Department of Agriculture; Mike Gaines now runs the Federal Parole Commission; my scheduler, Stephanie Streett; Carol Rasco, my former Domestic Policy Adviser, now runs the national America Reads program, has over a thousand colleges in America with young

people volunteering to go into the grade schools and make sure every child can read independently by the age of 8; Brady Anderson from Helena—a lot of you know him—is now the Director of the Agency for International Development, the most important agency in the Federal Government in dealing with the poor countries of the world; Craig Smith was my political director and had a number of other important jobs in the White House—probably the least political person to work with us from any State; Hershel Gober, the Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs; young Kris Engskov from Berryville is here with me today. I first met him when he was 4 years old. Now he's my personal aide. So between Kris and Nancy, at least Arkansas still runs most of my life.

There are literally scores of others I might mention from our State who have come to Washington, who are never noted in the press but who serve with real distinction, and I am grateful for them. And you should be proud of them.

Now let me just take a minute to sort of walk back through memory lane. In October of 1991, when I declared for President on the steps of the old State House, I did it because I became convinced that there was a limit to what Arkansas could do unless America changed direction and because I really felt that our country had an enormous potential to make the most of these big changes we've been talking about.

But it was a time of economic distress, social decline, deep political division, and the whole enterprise of Government had been profoundly discredited. It's almost impossible to remember what it was like just a few short years ago.

I felt, based on what I had learned working with you, that the country ought to work more like we tried to work. Yes, we'd have our political differences; yes, we'd fight at election time; sometimes, we'd fight in-between; but that we ought to have a unifying theory of the public's business. And so I asked the American people to give me a chance, along with Vice President Gore, to implement a vision of opportunity for every responsible American, to challenge every citizen to be responsible, and to build a community that involved all of our people in a world where America was still the leading force for peace and freedom and prosperity.

And we battled through the politics; we battled through a whole flurry of special interests; we battled through our fair share of mistakes;

but we never forgot who we were working for or what the mission was. And I hope that all of you, without whom I would never have become President, can take some pride in the results.

We have the longest peacetime expansion in our history. In February it will become the longest economic expansion ever, including that which embraced World War II. We have the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 30 years, the lowest poverty rates in 20 years, the highest homeownership in history. We have the lowest African-American and Hispanic unemployment rates ever recorded, the lowest female unemployment rate in 40 years, the lowest poverty rate among single-parent households in 46 years, the first back-to-back balanced budgets and surpluses in 42 years, and the Federal Government is now the smallest it's been in 37 years. It worked, and I thank you.

Along the way, the society got stronger. We have the lowest crime rate in 25 years, and I might add the Brady bill background checks stopped 470,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers who shouldn't have gotten handguns from buying them, and not single Arkansan missed a day in the deer woods because of it.

About 20 million people have taken advantage of the family and medical leave law. I meant to ask Secretary Riley and forgot to, how many millions, but as many millions of young people are now getting the HOPE scholarship, the \$1,500 tax credit, which effectively makes community college available for 100 percent of the people in America today.

Ninety percent of our kids are immunized against serious childhood diseases. In 1994, when the Vice President and I said we wanted to connect all our classrooms and schools to the Internet, 3 percent of our classrooms and 14 percent of our schools had some Internet connection. Today, over 50 percent of our classrooms and over 80 percent of our schools are connected, and we'll be over 90 percent in the new millennium.

This is changing the nature of opportunity in America. I also know that something that's been very interesting here that the Governor and others have been interested in this State is providing health insurance to children. There are 2 million more children with health insurance under the Child Health Insurance Partnership we formed with the States in the Balanced

Budget Act of 1997, something that's very important to Hillary. In the last budget, we provided funds to help the hospitals who are unduly burdened by the Medicare cuts and provide special funds to train young doctors at children's hospitals throughout America, something that will really help the Arkansas Children's Hospital here, and we're very proud of that.

While the economy got better, the air got cleaner; the water got cleaner. We set aside more land in protected areas than any administration in the entire history of the country except those of Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt. And here's something you might like to know that you deserve more credit for, the people do, than our particular administration, although we have accelerated it quite a bit: The United States, in the production of the volume of waste of all kinds, whether it's what you throw away in the garbage at home or in industrial prospects, is at a 20-year low, even though we have 50 million more people than we had 20 years ago. We are the number one recycling nation in the entire world now, and you can be proud of that.

We've also had 150,000 young people serve our communities in AmeriCorps, like those I met just down the block from the Governor's mansion when the terrible tornado whipped through Little Rock not very long ago.

America has been able to be a force for peace and prosperity in the world. We've had over 270 trade agreements. We just saw another successful move in our long efforts to bring peace to Northern Ireland. I announced a couple of days ago that the Israelis and the Syrians would come back to the United States next week, after 4 long years of not talking, to try to finish the work of making a lasting peace in the Middle East. That's a pretty good Christmas legacy to give, and I'm thrilled about that.

We have worked to make our children safer from the kind of problems that will dominate the 21st century: the ethnic and racial cleansing and religious cleansing you saw in Bosnia and Kosovo; the presence of terrorism and the threat of weapons of mass destruction. And I can say to you today, after 7 years, I am grateful that I've had the chance to serve. I am more convinced than I was when I went there that we had the right mission with the right ideas. And I am absolutely convinced that I never would have been able to do what I have done to play my part in this remarkable renaissance if I

hadn't had the dozen years I had working with all of you as Governor. And I thank you for that.

Now I'd also like to say that I get a little nervous when I get awards. Normally, I don't think Presidents should get awards, at least when they're alive. [Laughter] I mean, the job is honor enough. Although, I must say, I like this one. I'm going to put it up in the White House. But I think it's important to remember that a significant chunk of the time that I have been given to serve is still out there.

They said we wouldn't get anything done this year, and then at the end of the budget session we had 100,000 more teachers to bring smaller classes to the early grades; we had 50,000 more police to keep the crime rate coming down; we had 60,000 housing vouchers to help people move from welfare to work and find a place to live, to keep the welfare rolls coming down; we doubled the amount of funds for after-school programs, something that's really important to increase learning and keep our kids off the street when they may not have any adult supervision.

For the first time I got the Congress to give me some money to give States to identify schools that are failing and turn them around or shut them down, something I think is very important.

There are a lot of things I tried to do I didn't pass: the Patients' Bill of Rights, the minimum wage, the hate crimes legislation, aid for school construction. I'll try to get them next year.

I think Arkansas has done well in these last 7 years. You know, the whole time I was Governor, we went through that terrible time in the eighties when we had a bicoastal economy and the country looked like it was doing well, but the middle of the country wasn't. And then we had the recession that everybody suffered through. Not a single month—I had one month the whole time I was Governor, until 1992 when I ran for President, only one month when our unemployment rate was below the national average. Then it got down below the national average in 1992 because, I think, of the accumulated efforts that a lot of us made over many years. In 1992 we ranked first or second—I never saw the final figures—in job growth in the entire country.

But the unemployment rate was 6.7 percent when I took office, and it's 4.3 percent today

here. And in many other ways I think you've done well. I could mention some specific things, but I'd like to talk about the general things.

The average Arkansas family now has \$25,000 less Federal debt than you would have had if we hadn't passed the economic plan in '93 and the Balanced Budget Act in '97. The average family in this State and throughout the country, paying a home mortgage, has interest costs that are about \$2,000 a year lower. The average car payment or college loan payment is about \$200 a year lower. This had made a difference in real people's lives.

And as I look at the next 14 months, and as you as citizens look at the coming election season, I just want to ask you, without regard to your party, to think about this: What are we going to do with our prosperity?

Over Thanksgiving, Hillary and I gathered up everybody in our flung families we could; we brought them all in, and then after Thanksgiving, we had some more friends come in to Camp David and had a bunch of little kids there. I just love having them all around, my two nephews and a bunch of other little kids. And this 6-year-old girl looked at me—on Saturday after Thanksgiving—she looked at me and she said, "Now, Mr. President, how old are you, really?" [Laughter] And I said, "I'm 53." And she said, "That's a lot." [Laughter] And regrettably, I had to agree with her.

Here's what I want to say about that. In my lifetime, in those 53 years, there has never been another time, not one, when our country had this level of economic prosperity, this level of social progress, this level of national self-confidence, with the absence of a crisis at home or a threat from abroad. Never.

Now, a lot of us who are old enough to remember the 1960's, remember how good the economy was in the early sixties in the country, and how it was torn apart because of our inability to fully integrate the civil rights challenge at home and deal with Vietnam abroad. This has never happened before.

So the question before us is, what are we going to do with it? And as a citizen, I care about that as well as a President. I think there is a heavy responsibility on us, not just the President and the Congress and not just people in Government but the whole country. We have never had this happen, and you know as well as I do that nothing lasts forever. It keeps you

going through the tough times, but it's important to remember in the good times.

Here we are, on the edge of a new millennium with the first opportunity in our lifetime as a country to really shape the future of our dreams for our children. And I hope and pray that I can devote every waking minute of the last 14 months of my Presidency and that the American people will devote their energies and concentration in their own lives and their vote as citizens to making a decision based on shouldering the responsibility to shape that future for our children. And that means big changes. What are they? I'll just mention three or four and end with what I'm going to do when I leave you today.

Number one, we've got to deal with the aging of America. The number of people over 65 is going to double in the next 30 years. I hope to be one of them. It's going to double in the next 30 years. That will be two people working for every one person drawing Social Security. Social Security Trust Fund is projected to run out of money in 2034.

The Medicare Trust Fund, when I took office, was scheduled to run out of money this year. We've pushed it back to 2015 now. We've got to do something about this. Now, let me say there is a big difference of opinion about whether—between the two parties about whether Medicare—I mean Social Security should have individual accounts, and if so, how should they be designed, and should we partially or completely privatize the system. And most Republicans think we should do some of that, and most Democrats think we shouldn't.

But let me just tell you one little simple thing: If we took the interest savings we have from paying down the national debt because we're not spending the Social Security surplus anymore, if we just took the interest savings and put it back in the Trust Fund, we could put that Trust Fund out to 2050, which would take us out beyond the life expectancy of almost 100 percent of the baby boomers, after which the demographics start to get better again.

Now, we've got the money to do that now. We don't have to raise your taxes. We don't have to stop spending money on anything else. We don't have to do anything. It'll never be this easy again. And believe me, it hasn't been this easy for our predecessors, and we ought to do this.

On Medicare, we ought to make some structural reforms that will put some more life into the Medicare Trust Fund, take it out over 20 years. We ought to let people over 55 and under 65 buy into it. It doesn't cost the Treasury any money, and you know, there's tons of people in this country who retire at 55 now, and then something happens to them; they're not covered by a health insurance policy at work anymore; and they can't get any health insurance. It's a huge problem.

And we ought to provide a voluntary prescription drug benefit, because 75 percent of the seniors in this country cannot afford the drug regimen their doctors say they need. So I think we ought to do that.

Now, number two, we ought to recognize that more and more parents are working and do more to help balance work and family. I gave the States the option to use their workers' compensation and their unemployment compensation funds if they wanted to, to experiment with paid family leave. There are lots of other things that can be done, but you know, only 10 percent of the people in the country eligible for Federal assistance for child care are getting it, and I've increased child care funding by 70 percent. And a lot of people go to work every day, really worrying about whether their kids are in quality child care facilities. And it's a big problem.

The family and medical leave law has been a godsend, but I think we ought to broaden it some. And of course, we have to be sensitive not to hurt the economy. But if you want people to succeed at work, they can't be eaten up inside worrying about their kids, whether they're all right.

If you have to make a choice, we lose before we start, because the most important job of any society is raising children. It is still the most important job of any society, including ours, and we forget that at our peril. So we've got to find a way, since all parents either want to work or have to work, just about, at least the majority, we've got to find the way to balance these things better.

The third thing we have to do, I think, is to work even harder to give every child a world-class education. We have the largest and most diverse student body in history—the first time—in the last 2 years we've got a student body bigger than the baby boom generation. And they are going to do great if we give them the tools to do it. I don't want to keep you here all

morning, and you know how I like to pontificate about education, so I won't do that. But you need to make that a factor in your decisions, just as I make it a factor in mine.

The next thing we need to do is to find better ways to balance the preservation of the economy and the preservation of the environment. A big thing has happened in the last 5 to 10 years that most people don't believe has happened. It is now possible to grow the economy and reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. That's a fancy way of saying you don't necessarily have to burn more coal and oil and put it out in the atmosphere to get rich. Most people don't believe it, but it's true.

The Agriculture Department had a seminar the other day on biomass fuels, ethanol being the most prominent one now. Right now, it's a problem. It takes 7 gallons of gasoline to make 8 gallons of ethanol, so the conversion ratio is not too good. They're very, very close to coming up with the technology to make 8 gallons of ethanol with one gallon of gasoline. When that happens, it will change the future of America.

In the next year or so, you're going to be able to buy cars that get 70 to 80 miles a gallon with fuel injection engines, some that are blended. They start off on electricity, then go to gasoline, then go back to electricity, and it's just the beginning. You can get windows in houses now that keep out 5 times as much heat or cold and let in 5 times as much light. You can buy lamps that just in the life of the lamp, will save one ton of greenhouse gas emissions.

With the changes in the White House we have made in the last 6 years, just in the White House, we've taken the equivalent of 700 cars off the highways. This is a big deal, and it is not a question of, in the popular vernacular, hugging trees or growing the economy; it's a question of how to do the self-interested thing, which is to improve the environment and the economy at the same time, and I predict to you it will be a major, major focus for the next 20 years.

The last thing I'd like to mention very briefly is this, because it really applies to Arkansas: We have to find a way to keep the economy going and then to bring the benefits of the economy to the people in places who haven't been a part of this prosperity. And I just want to mention three things. Number one, first things first; we've got to keep paying down this

debt. If we stay on the track we're on now, just on the budget path that came out of this last budget session, this country will be out of debt in 15 years for the first time since 1835.

Now, what does that mean? What does that mean? Well, let's take ALLTEL—doing reasonably well. We passed the Telecommunications Act. It's led already to hundreds of thousands of high-wage jobs at great, high-tech companies. If the country's out of debt and we're not borrowing money, that means there's more money for everybody else to borrow. That means lower interest rates for business loans, faster expansion, more jobs, higher incomes. It means the average family pays less for home mortgages and car payments and college loans. This is a big deal. It's a progressive thing to do.

The second thing we ought to do is work through and keep working at it until we reach a national consensus on this trade issue. If you watched the so-called battle in Seattle, you know that I said I understood why some of the people in the streets wanted to make sure the concerns of working people and the environment were taken account of in trade. But I think they're dead wrong to believe that you can walk away from trade.

Let me tell you, this country is better off today because for 50 years we have worked harder and harder and harder to integrate the global economy. And yes, if we buy stuff that's made somewhere else, it's very sensitive in Arkansas, because we were—50 years ago our per capita income was only 56 percent of the national average. So we had a lot of low-wage workers. And sure, if we buy stuff made somewhere else, where people don't have the incomes we do, it puts more pressure on our low-wage workers. But it also creates a lot more high-wage jobs.

And the answer is to give everybody lifetime training and to have the kind of environment where you can get the kind of investments to give good jobs to everybody. But we are better off both economically and in terms of our security because, for 50 years, we have continued to expand trade.

And if you don't believe it, just look at all the places in the world that are in trouble. You know that problem we've had in Bosnia and Kosovo I had to send the military to solve. Do you seriously believe we would have had to go to war in the Balkans if their per capita income were not the lowest in Europe? If it were the

highest in Europe, would they be fooling around with each other; would they care whether they were Muslims or Orthodox Christians or Roman Catholics if they were all well-educated and they were used to working together and they had more in common than driving them apart?

Or in the Middle East, one of the problems is the abject poverty of the Palestinians. And one of the problems for the Israelis is the limits on their growth because they've got to spend so much on defense. If we were in better shape there economically and everybody were more integrated, don't you think we'd be closer to peace? Do you think people would still be fighting there?

And I'm very proud of the role that I played in the Irish peace process and the role America played and the role George Mitchell played. But let me tell you something. One big reason they made peace in Ireland is that the Republic of Ireland had the fastest growing economy in Europe. A lot of American companies were shipping data processing—raw files to be processed over to Northern Ireland every day and flying them back, and all these kids were growing up saying, "Hey, that's the future we want. We've got to let this other stuff go."

So we have got to—you've got to help me on this. As Americans, we have got to form a new consensus between business and labor and the environmental community and everybody else that allows us to continue to expand trade. And we ought to put China in the World Trade Organization. It's good for our farmers, good for our manufacturers, good for our investors, and it will make a safer world for our children and our grandchildren. It's a big deal. And I hope you will help me do that as well.

Finally, we ought to give people the same incentives to invest in poor areas in America, like the Arkansas Delta, we give them to invest in poor areas in Latin America or Asia or Africa. And I'm very proud of the fact that this Congress supported my position to relieve the debt of world's poorest nations. I want Americans to invest in poor countries. I believe if you lift people out of poverty, you minimize their profound and primitive racial and ethnic and religious hatreds, and you give them something to live for and look forward to when they get up in the morning. But our people deserve the same thing.

Let me ask you this, again: If we don't do this now, if we can't bring more entrepreneurs

and more investment and more jobs to the poorest counties in this State and in our neighboring States and in Appalachia and in upstate New York and rural New England, which is pretty depressed, or on the Indian reservations—the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, the unemployment today is 73 percent—and if we can't figure out something to do about this now, when in the world will we ever get around to it?

And when I leave you, I'm going over to West Memphis and to Earle and announce that I'm going to propose in my new budget more than \$110 million to create a Delta regional authority. This will be new investment to fund a bill sponsored by Representative Blanche Lambert Lincoln and—Senator Lincoln and Representative Marion Berry, supported by Congressman Snyder and the entire Arkansas delegation. I think we'll have big bipartisan support for this. We've got to do something about this.

I headed that Delta Commission more than a decade ago. Maybe the time wasn't right; maybe the economy was too tough. We're in good shape now. If we can't bring opportunity to these people in our State and Nation—I'm telling you I've been there. People are dying to go to work. And intelligence is evenly distributed; education is not, but intelligence is. We can get this done now. And I ask for your support for that.

Now because I believe this is a time of big changes, to use your theme, and because I believe these big questions can't possibly be resolved, when I come home to build the library and my policy center, I want to deal with a lot of these big questions: How do you close the digital divide and use these high-tech advances to benefit every American? How do you create good jobs and a clean environment? How do you leave behind the ethnic and religious hatreds, the other kind of hatred that is manifested in hate crimes in America and the tribal slaughters in Africa and all the wars in between? How do you create genuine economic opportunity and empowerment for people who have been poor a very long time?

These are the questions, the kinds of questions that I intend to work on down to the last hour of the last day of my Presidency, and the kind of questions that will be central to me when I come home to build the library and the policy center.

I'd like to begin by just thanking all of you who have supported this. I thank the mayor, the city board of directors and staff, and I'm sorry for the heat you've taken, but it will be a good investment. I thank Paul Harvel and the greater Little Rock chamber. I thank Shelby and Joe and the Downtown Partnership. I thank Dr. Alan Sugg and the university system. I thank Skip Rutherford for being my point person down here; all of you who have worked on this.

From the day I was elected President, I was determined that when it was over, I would try to use this library and policy center not only to continue my own interests and passions but to give something back to this State and this community that have given so much to me. Like I said over and over again, if it hadn't been for you, I never would have had the chance to serve. And if it hadn't been for the experiences you gave me and the lessons I learned, I wouldn't have been prepared to serve at this moment in our history.

So I want to make some dreams come true here in Little Rock. This library can be an energizing force in the life of the city and the broader community. It will attract people from all across the Nation and all across the world. Lots of visitors and lots of people from business and labor and the nonprofit groups in government and journalism.

It can play an important role in the growth and development of greater Little Rock and all of central Arkansas. I am determined that it will be, first, a beautiful place. The site is wonderful, and so will the building be. It will be architecturally important, and it will be state of the art, environmentally and technologically.

I've talked to Dr. Sugg and the university about starting a graduate program in public policy—that's what they want to do—to prepare more of our young people for careers in public service. And I also want to develop partnerships with corporations all across America to bring their young executives here, to get them to agree to let their young people take a little time off to be in public service without being prejudiced in their rise up the corporate hierarchy.

Let me tell you, there is a program called the White House Fellowships—you may know about it—and we just give a few every year, enough for all the Cabinet Secretaries and one for me, one for a couple of other people in the White House. Hundreds of people apply

for them—hundreds—and hundreds get turned down who would be about as good as the handful, the less than 20 we select every year. And so I got this idea.

Now, I realized how dependent we were on the White House Fellows, what fabulous work they did, what great ideas they gave. And think of it, if every company of any size would establish a policy that every year, one or two or three people, depending on the size of the company, could take a year off to serve in State Government, to serve in local government, to serve in the Federal Government, in Washington or at the regional level, to have the experience of government and then come back to the company and continue that career, we could change the nature of government, the quality of the ideas, the quality of the work, and the quality of the partnership.

And we could end a lot of the kind of battles that we've seen here over too many decades. So this is one of the things that I hope we can do, thanks to Dr. Sugg and his leadership on the education issue.

I want to try to find some ways to, as I said over and over, to help to bridge the racial and other divides in our society and throughout the world. I want to bring here people from Northern Ireland and the Middle East and Bosnia and Kosovo. I want people to see members of these different African tribes. I'll never forget being in Rwanda after they killed over three-quarters of a million people in a 100 days with machetes in a tribal war, and Rwanda had been a coherent country for about 500 years.

I talked to a woman, a beautiful woman—Hillary and I were sitting there talking to her—all dressed up in her fine native dress. And I listened to this wonderful woman, who was still a young woman, talk to me about how her neighbors had turned her in as a member of the other ethnic group, along with her husband and her six children, and how they had come after them with these machetes, and how she was convinced she was going to die. And she woke up covered in blood, and saw her husband and her six children dead around her, all because they were from another tribe. And that would be enough to break most of us, but this woman was devoting her life to trying to help other people let it go and get beyond it.

We could, in this State, in this place, become a beacon of hope for those kind of people. We

could train people in societies where these problems exist to get rid of them.

I think it is truly amazing, at a time when we're talking about uncovering the mysteries of the human genome, when a lot of my friends in the profession believe that sometime early in the next century newborn babies will come home from the hospital with a life expectancy of 100 years, when we'll probably find out what's in the black holes in the universe, and we're talking about all this stuff, you know, that the biggest problem of human society is the oldest one: We're still scared of people that are different from us, and we've got to find a way to let it go.

I want to do more on education. I want to do more on all these issues I mentioned. I also want this library to be a great place of history, and I want to make it interactive, especially for our children, with the latest technologies. I want to help our children and our grandchildren understand the times and the forces that took me to the White House and that I tried to shape and move forward, and then I want them to understand how that relates to tomorrow.

I want this to be a museum but not a mausoleum. I want it to be a place with a lot of touch and involvement and learning. I want to give our young people a window on the new millennium. And I want them to believe when they walk out of there, based on the story of my life and the people we tried to help, that every one of them also has a chance to make their own history.

These are the things I want to do with the library here in Little Rock, not only to glimpse the future but to shape it and share it with our neighbors and our families.

So I say to all of you, again, thanks for helping me get here; thanks for giving us a great 7 years, and thanks for your support of the future. But remember, the most important thing of all is your theme is right: Big changes are coming. It's the only time in our lifetimes we've ever had a chance to make the most of them, and we'd better do it.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:15 a.m. in Governors Halls 2 and 3 at the Statehouse Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Shelby Woods, outgoing chairman of the board, Joe Ford, incoming chairman of the board, Paul Harvel,

president, Jesse Mason, education chairman, and Janet Jones, former chairman of the board, Greater Little Rock Chamber of Commerce; Bob Russell, winner of the chamber's Pinnacle Award, and his wife, Beverly; Mayor Jim Dailey of Little Rock; Speaker Bob Johnson, Arkansas House of Representatives; Trudy Reed, president, Philander Smith College; former Senator David H. Pryor; Carl Whillock, Special Assistant to the President, Department of Agriculture; Carol Rasco, Director, America Reads Challenge, Department of

Education; Beth Friday, widow of Herschel Friday, former chairman of the board, Greater Little Rock Chamber of Commerce; former Senator George J. Mitchell, who chaired the multiparty talks in Northern Ireland; Alan Sugg, president, University of Arkansas; and Skip Rutherford, executive vice president and director of public policy, Cranford Johnson Robinson Woods. Prior to his remarks, the President received the Herschel H. Friday Award.

Remarks to the Community in West Memphis, Arkansas

December 10, 1999

Thank you. Was she great or what? Let's give her another hand. [Applause] She was unbelievable. That's great.

Well, to Dr. Glen Fenter and your board chairman, my longtime friend Alex Coulter; and to Sandy and all the students from the college and all the faculty members, thank you. Thank you for being exhibit A for the new economy in eastern Arkansas.

Mayor Johnson, Judge Williams, Representative Jones, Representative Steele, I think I speak for all of us when I say we are delighted to be here. I want to thank Lieutenant Governor Rockefeller and the other people from State government who came over to be with us. I thank Secretary Riley for coming down with us; and my longtime friend Carl Whillock, who I'll say a little more about in a minute; and Rodney Slater, who I'll say a little more about in a minute.

I also would like to thank this White House staff who have heard me say now 5,000 times, we have to do more for the Delta. My Deputy Chief of Staff, Maria Echaveste; Lynn Cutler; Lisa Kountoupes, it is their job to monitor everything the Federal Government does that might, in their wildest imagination, have a positive effect on Arkansas and the other States in the Delta. And I thank them.

But I want to say a special word of thanks to Senator Blanche Lambert Lincoln and to Marion Berry who, long before he was a Congressman, was the farmers' advocate in our administration in Washington, and long before he did that, he used to host all of us at the Gillette

coon suppers. [Laughter] That's my ultimate trump card with every Congressman or Senator from every other State in America who tells me they know more about rural America than I do. I say, "Well, how many coon suppers have you been to?" [Laughter] I haven't lost an argument in 7 years up there. [Laughter]

You have absolutely no idea the amount of time and effort and the passion that these two people have put in to trying to help eastern Arkansas and the Delta. You cannot imagine. They have been magnificent. I deal with Members of Congress from all across America. I deal with people who are really good at what they do. There is nobody—nobody—who has done a better job standing up for the people they represent than Blanche Lambert Lincoln and Marion Berry.

I may have a little trouble getting through this speech today. First, I'm a little tired. I talked to Hillary last—about 1 o'clock last night, and we talked three times between 11 and 1. And she was kind of jealous that I was coming down here. And I want you to know she's doing great, and I'm proud of her for what she's doing, and my daughter is doing great.

I woke up early this morning and started thinking about what I wanted to say. It's a little harder now. I look out in this crowd, and I know half of you by your first names. There's old Bobby Glover sitting there, gave me the first contribution I got when I ran for attorney general in 1976. You could have stopped this whole thing if you hadn't done that. [Laughter]