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Today the House has taken an important step for the kind of future I think we all want for our children, for an America that will be more prosperous and more secure, for a China that is more open to our products and more respectful of the rule of law at home and abroad. The House has spoken, and now the eyes of the world turn toward the United States Senate. I am confident it, too, will act swiftly to advance these interests.

I will be speaking with many Senators in the days ahead to ensure that we continue to move ahead to get this done as promptly as possible. This is one of the most important votes the Senate will face in this session. I hope we can build on our momentum on this issue and on other pressing priorities, as well.

I still believe the Congress can act to add voluntary prescription drug coverage to Medicare, to invest more in our children's education, to pass the legislation to invest in these American markets here at home, to pass the commonsense gun safety legislation, to raise the minimum wage.

Again, I thank the House, and I look forward to working with the Congress in the days ahead.

This is a good day for America. And 10 years from now we will look back on this day and be glad we did this. We will see that we have given ourselves a chance to build the kind of future we want. This is a good economic agreement because we get all the economic benefits of lowered tariffs and lowered access to the Chinese market. We get new protections against dumping of products in our own markets. What we have granted is full membership in the World Trade Organization, which brings China into a rule-based international system.

But I have said many times, and I'd just like to say once more, to me, the most important benefit of all is that we have given ourselves and the Chinese a chance—not a guarantee but a chance—to build a future in the Asia-Pacific region for the next 50 years very different from the last 50. We fought three wars in that part of the world. A lot of Americans died for freedom; a lot of sacrifice should not go unredeemed. We owe it to them, to their children, and to our children and grandchildren to give the world a chance to build a better and a different future. We have taken a big step toward giving them that chance today.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:03 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Public Law 106–200, the Trade and Development Act of 2000.

Remarks at the Democratic National Committee's "National Tribute to President Clinton"

May 24, 2000

Well, first of all, thank you, thank you very much. Let me tell you something—wait, turn this on. If you'd turn this on, they could hear me instead of them.

Now, I don't believe that it's corruption to take money to pass the Brady bill, instead of beat it; to pass the family and medical leave bill, so 21 million ordinary working people can take some time off when their babies are born and their parents are sick, instead of to beat it; to pass the Patients' Bill of Rights, instead of to beat it; to reduce the deficit and get rid of the debt, instead of keep giving big breaks to special interests. I don't think that is corruption. I think that's good for America. That's why we're here tonight; that's why you're here tonight. We made a difference, and I'm glad you're helping us to win the next election. Thank you.

Let me also say to all of you how grateful I am that you're here, how grateful I am for your support. I thank Ed and Joe and Loretta and Dennis and all their predecessors in the Democratic Party. I thank my good friends Dick Gephardt and Tom Daschle, who will be the leaders of their respective chambers after the election. I thank Terry McAuliffe for making sure we'll be able to stick out there and give our message to fight for our candidates and elect our President in the year 2000. Thank you, Terry, and thank all of you who helped tonight.

And I want to thank Al and Tipper and Hillary and all the others who were part of our team. All those things that were on that film—mostly they were just my face up there. We had a great team, the four of us; we had a great White House; we had a great Cabinet; we had all these great young people working for us who believed in what we were doing every day. To every one of you who had anything to do with any of the progress of this administration, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Now, I also want to thank my buddies from Sims and Lindsey's and the Rendezvous for bringing us barbecue so Al and I could feel at home tonight, and I hope you felt at home tonight with that barbecue. And besides that, we needed a backdrop for McAuliffe to do that comedy gig he did on the Republicans. So, thank you for bringing the barbecue. It was wonderful.

Now, I don't know about you, but I came here to hear the entertainment, not to hear the politicians speak. So, since I'm really grateful to you for your support, I'm going to spare you much of a speech. But I want to say just two or three things real seriously.

Number one, the election of 2000 is every bit as important as the elections of '92 and '96. And in some ways, we are handicapped by all those good things that were just recounted on the film. A lot of younger voters have even forgotten what the economy was like in 1992. A lot of people have forgotten that 7½, 8 years ago no one thought the deficit could be brought down, much less the budget balanced and the debt begin to be repaid. No one thought the crime rate could be bought down, the welfare rolls could be reduced, that the performance of our public schools would be increasing dramatically. No one believed that back in 1992.

Now, what is the problem? The question is, what are we going to do with our prosperity and with our social progress? And I would argue to all of you, just in one moment of seriousness tonight, that how a great nation handles its success can be an even sterner test of character than how it deals with adversity.

I have sort of mixed feelings looking at that film, actually. I watch myself get grayer and grayer and grayer. [*Laughter*] And I thought to myself, before I got into my second term here, I was always the youngest person who did everything. Now I'm up here in my old boots and my old jeans, and I'm just kind of an old gray-haired redneck trying to put in some good months here. [*Laughter*] But I've learned a few things earning those gray hairs.

And what I want to say to you is that if you believe, as I do, that it's just a test of our character that's as severe as any we've had, what are we going to do with our prosperity, then this election matters, and I'll tell you what I think we need.

We need to elect someone President who understands the future and knows how to take us there. We need to elect someone President who's actually made tough decisions and not just talked about it. And we need to elect people to the Senate and the House who supported us on our economic program, supported us when we brought the crime rate down, supported us when we cleaned up the environment and grew the economy at the same time, supported us when we protected the individual liberties of America, supported us when we said we could build one America across all the lines that divide us. That's what we need to do in the year 2000, looking toward tomorrow.

Terry has already said this. Ed has already said this. But I want you to know that not only as President but as something of an historian, there is no one in the history of the Vice Presidency who has ever, ever had remotely the positive impact on the lives and the future of the people of the United States as Al Gore has these last 7½ years. It's not even close—ever.

From casting the deciding vote on our economic plan in '93, to sticking up for us when we had to go into Haiti, into Bosnia, into Kosovo, to all the tough calls we made in helping to end the financial crises in the world, down to voting to close the gun show loophole and require child trigger locks, Al Gore has led the way.

Now, when you think about the future, what are the questions? Well, how are we going to get the country out of debt, keep the prosperity going, and give people who live in poor areas who have been left behind a chance to be part of our prosperity? How are we going to deal with the environmental challenges of global warming and grow the economy? How are we going to give all working people the security of access to health care and world-class education for their kids? How are we going to proceed in a world full of uncertainty, where you have to make complicated judgments about the

security threats out there and still try to build a better and brighter future based on trade, not conflict, based on lifting labor standards and environmental standards, not walking away from the human rights of the people of the world? How are we going to do these things?

The answer is, we ought to pick the person who is the best qualified person based on experience. We ought to pick the person who has proved that he makes good decisions based on lots of evidence. We ought to pick a person whose mind and heart have always been focused on the future that his children—now his grandchild—and all of our children ought to have. Al Gore should be, and with your help, will be, the next President of the United States of America.

Ladies and gentlemen, Vice President Al Gore.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 9:15 p.m. at the MCI Center. In his remarks, he referred to Edward G. Rendell, national chair, Joseph J. Andrew, national finance chair, Representative Loretta Sanchez, general cochair, Mayor Dennis W. Archer of Detroit, MI, general cochair, and Terence McAuliffe, former national finance chair, Democratic National Committee. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady, Vice President Gore, and Tipper Gore.

Remarks on Proposed Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit Legislation and an Exchange With Reporters

May 25, 2000

The President. Thank you very much. Senator Daschle, Congressman Gephardt, Members of the House and Senate leadership, and Secretary Shalala. Let me say how much I appreciated the meeting we had this morning and how much I support the agenda they outlined. I'd like to say a few words about it, myself. But before I do, I'd like to put it into some larger context of our overall strategy.

We just have some new evidence that our long-term strategy of fiscal discipline, investing in our people, and expanding opportunities for American markets' products around the world is working. Revised GDP figures released today confirm that our economy grew at 5.4 percent in the first quarter and that business investment soared by 25 percent. This strategy has now given us over 7 years of growth and investment, the longest economic expansion in history. We ought to stay on the path that got us here and continue to invest in our people and their future, as our leaders have outlined today.

Last month—I want to emphasize this—just last month the distinguished investment firm in New York of Goldman-Sachs estimated that that turnaround from record deficits to record surpluses has kept interest rates 2 full percentage points lower than they would have been without this strategy. Therefore, if we turn away from it and go back to the deficits, we can expect a corresponding rise in interest rates. A 2 percent cut in interest rates on home mortgages, car loans, college loans, credit card bills, has been an enormous, effective tax cut to the American people and has done a great deal to strengthen our economy.

That's why we feel so strongly that we should use this moment of unprecedented prosperity to lengthen the life and modernize Medicare with a prescription drug benefit, to strengthen Social Security, to invest in key priorities, especially education, to have a tax cut we can afford, and keep paying that debt down to keep those interest rates down.

Now, as you've heard already, we mostly discussed providing prescription drugs for America's seniors in that meeting. I want to thank these leaders for standing with us on this important issue. This is a show of unity and a demonstration of resolve. There is no reason that Congress cannot take the necessary steps to ensure that every older American has access to the lifesaving, life-enhancing prescription drugs they need.

Now, just a few weeks ago Senator Daschle and Congressman Gephardt came here to announce that the Democrats were united in a single strategy to provide these prescription