

Jan. 22 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 2000

The more cases we win, the more criminals we convict, the clearer the message becomes: Medicare fraud is a serious crime with serious consequences.

Though our efforts are stronger than ever, Medicare contractors still pay false claims totaling in the billions. That is simply unacceptable. So today I'm announcing a new initiative to crack down on fraud and abuse in Medicare. My balanced budget for 2001 will create a team of Medicare fraud fighters—one in the office of every Medicare contractor in America—and take other new steps to ensure that our response to fraud is coordinated and quick. The budget also funds new technologies to track false claims.

I urge Congress to make these investments and to give Medicare the authority to bid competitively for contractors who administer the

program, as well as for services provided directly to beneficiaries.

Medicare is vital to the health of our Nation. It's too important ever to be compromised. If we take these steps to reform and strengthen Medicare, and if we modernize it with a voluntary prescription drug benefit, then we will adapt a program that has worked in the past to the needs of the future.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 12:26 p.m. on January 21 at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, CA, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on January 22. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 21 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Luncheon in Los Angeles, California

January 22, 2000

Thank you very much. I am, first of all, delighted to be here. I want to thank Irwin and Lynne for putting this luncheon together on short notice, and I thank all of you for coming. I thank Gray and Sharon Davis for being here to share this moment with us and for their long-time friendship not only to the Deutchs but to Hillary and me.

The first person who told me that Gray Davis was the most underrated politician in America was my wife. [*Laughter*] She's got a pretty good feel for those things. And I congratulate you on your success, and even more on the substance of what you have fought for and achieved. It's one thing to win elections and be popular; it's another thing to do the right things. You're doing the right things now. I admire you, and I thank you for it. It's very important.

I thank Joel Hyatt for becoming one of our co-finance chairs. A lot of you don't know him as well as I do because he hasn't been in California very long. But he founded a remarkable company called Hyatt Legal Services, which swept the Northeast and provided affordable legal services for real people, many of whom could never afford to come to an event like this, and made him a famous character because

he was on television all the time. And he was also prominent in Ohio Democratic politics, where his father-in-law, Howard Metzenbaum, was our United States Senator. And he is a wonderful guy. So he's out here now, and I want you to take care of him. Make him look good by helping him raise money for the Democratic Party.

I want to thank Jane Harman for being willing to serve in Congress again and for being there before. Our economic plan in 1993, which passed by a single vote in both Houses—or, as the Vice President says, "Whenever I vote, we win"—[*laughter*]—but it passed by a single vote in both Houses, really sparked this astonishing economic recovery we've had. And so there's a real sense in which Jane Harman can say, "If it hadn't been for me, it wouldn't have happened." [*Laughter*] And I think she is one of the ablest people that I have served with, with the Congress, and one who most embodies the philosophy that I have tried to get our party and our country to embrace. So thank you, Jane Harman, for being willing to do this.

And of course, I want to thank the Women's Leadership Forum for this and for all the countless events we've had around the country, mobilizing a whole group of people, many of whom never have been involved in national political affairs before. So thank you, and thank all of you for coming.

Now, I want to just make a couple of points about what has previously been said by Janice and Mayor Rendell, who we're very lucky to have, because he was a fabulous mayor of Philadelphia and always made sure the Clinton-Gore ticket carried Pennsylvania, which is a not inconsiderably important thing in the business we're in. [Laughter]

Number one, I am very grateful for the chance that Hillary and I and the Vice President and Mrs. Gore have had to serve these last 7 years. I celebrated my seventh anniversary as President the day before yesterday, and I'm very grateful for that and for the progress that our country has made. I am grateful that it's about more than economics. Our country is beginning to come together more. We have the lowest female unemployment rate in 40 years; the lowest minority unemployment rate ever recorded; the lowest single-parent household poverty rate in 46 years; the lowest overall poverty rate in more than 20 years; the highest homeownership in history; cleaner air, cleaner water, safer food. We tripled the number of toxic waste sites we cleaned up from the previous 12 years. We set aside more land—a lot of you mentioned that to me today—we set aside more land in perpetuity to protect, in the continental United States, than any administration in our history except those of Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt.

Over 20 million people have taken advantage of the family and medical leave law, take a little time off from work without losing their jobs to take care of a newborn or a sick parent. About 5 million people have now claimed the HOPE scholarship tax credit that's designed to open the doors of college to all Americans for at least 2 years. We've had about half a million people haven't been able to buy handguns because they have criminal backgrounds, because of the Brady bill. A lot of people are alive because of that. And I could go on. Ninety percent of our kids were immunized against serious childhood diseases for the first time in the history of the United States. And our country has been a force for peace and freedom around

the world, from Bosnia and Kosovo to Northern Ireland, to the Middle East, to our efforts to try to help African nations resolve their difficulties. And I could just go on and on. I am very grateful for where we are now, especially when I remember where we were in 1992. And I hope that's one of the reasons you're here today.

But the second thing I would like to say is that in my lifetime, which thankfully continues to lengthen—even though I don't like it—[laughter]—I tell this story all the time. A 6-year-old girl was one of the—a friend of ours spent some time with us over Thanksgiving weekend. He brought his kids up there. They've got four little kids, and the second youngest is a 6-year-old girl. And she looked up at me and she says, "Well, how old are you, anyway?" [Laughter] And I said, "Well, I'm 53." And she said, "Oh, that's a lot." [Laughter] The kid should be in the movies. [Laughter]

And it is, but it gives you the benefit of memory. In February, next month, in just a few days, this will become the longest economic expansion in the history of the United States, including those which, for example, embraced the Second World War, when we had to be fully mobilized. Nothing like this has ever happened before. Part of it is the explosion in information technology, much of which came out of California. Part of it is our success in exporting our culture and ideas around the world, a lot of which comes out of California. But part of it is the environment and conditions and tools we established when we changed the whole direction of the country and got us out of debt, and still continued to invest more in education and in making our streets safer and our air cleaner and our children healthier.

Now, in my lifetime we have never had the following conditions all in the same place at the same time. We have never had so much economic progress, social progress, political self-confidence as a nation—I say "political," as citizens we're pretty confident—with the absence of an overwhelming or paralyzing domestic crisis or foreign threat. We'll always have security threats, but there is nothing—this is not the cold war; this is not the Vietnam war. This never happened. The last time we had an economy that in the terms of that age was about this good was in the early sixties, and it came apart with riots in the streets and the paying for the Vietnam war, paying for it in cash and paying

for it in blood and politics. We have never had a time like this.

One of my friends said to me this morning when we were talking, he said, "You know, the problem is, things are going along so well, nobody wants to talk about this; people aren't really obsessed with this election." And I guess what I want to say to you is, you should be, because there is an enormous opportunity here and therefore an enormous responsibility to make the most of what is truly a magic moment that coincidentally fits with the changing of the century and the millennium. But I'm just telling you that a time like this doesn't come along very often, where all the social indicators are getting better; the economy is booming and becoming more widely shared; we are not paralyzed by a domestic crisis or a foreign threat; we have the ability to chart the future of our dreams for our children. That's what this election is all about.

If the whole 20th century could be fairly characterized as the triumph of freedom over depression and want, over nazism and fascism, over communism, then the question for the 20th century would be whether that freedom is wisely used. For the first time in all history, more than half the people of the world live under governments of their own choosing. But over a billion people in this old world live on less than \$2 a day. There are a lot of challenges out there.

So I say to you, you know, I'm not running for anything. The reason I'm here is because I worked like crazy to turn this country around, to make sure people believed America could work, just so we would be in this position and it would be an era of colossal proportions. If we treated this like an ordinary election, a ho-hum deal—how many times—everybody in this room who is over 30 can cite at least one time in your life when you got in trouble and made big mistakes because you thought things were going so well that you didn't have to think about tomorrow. You didn't have to make any tough decisions; you could be sort of self-indulgent; you could get distracted because everything is going so well, nothing could go wrong. If you live long enough, that will happen to you; that's human nature. [Laughter] It's just a question of whether you live long enough. Sooner or later everybody makes that mistake in some way or another.

Well, countries are no different from individuals and families and businesses. So the test is whether freedom will be wisely used. What will we make of this magic moment?

Gray said we've taken some issues off the table for the Republicans. I think there is a reason for that. Until 1992, the political debate was always an either/or proposition in Washington. There was a Democratic proposition, a Republican proposition, a liberal proposition, a conservative proposition. And everybody got put in their little boxes, and they lobbed their verbal bombshells across the great divide at each other. Nothing ever happened, but at least we could understand who the players were. The only problem was, nobody lived like that, the way Washington talked.

And so we said, the Vice President and I did, "Look, give us a chance, and we won't say Government is the problem or the solution. We'll say the Government should be the partner of the American people, if the role of Government is to establish the conditions and give people the tools to make the most of their own lives. We won't say that Government can guarantee opportunity to everybody, but we'll say Government should provide opportunity to every responsible citizen, that you have to do your part. And we will say that we should have a community of all Americans." And it's worked. So that's the first point I want to make. It's worked.

But all it's done is to bring us to the point now where we can face these big challenges. I'll just mention a few of them. We're going to double the number of people over 65 in the next 30 years. I hope to be one of them. [Laughter] At present retirement rates, there will only be two people working for every one person drawing Social Security. Are we going to save Social Security and Medicare and add a prescription drug benefit for the 75 percent of the seniors who can't afford it themselves, or not? Big question. And how are we going to do it to make sure that when the baby boomers retire, we don't bankrupt our kids and their ability to raise our grandkids? Huge question.

Example number two. We have the largest number—Los Angeles knows this—we have the largest number of schoolchildren in our history and the most diverse. The good news is that in an increasingly globalized society, it means America is the best positioned big country in

the world for tomorrow. This diversity is our meal ticket to tomorrow, but only if we can figure out how to make sure these ever more diverse kids all get a world-class education. No one has ever done it before; no other society has ever had to do it before. Universal educational opportunity for people, without regard to race or income in this kind of environment—no one has ever tried to do anything of this dimension before.

Example number three. We've got the lowest crime rate in 30 years, and that's good. But anybody who believes America is safe enough, please stand. Just the accidental death rate of children by guns in this country—just the accidental death rate of children by guns—I want you all to listen to this—is 9 times higher than the accidental gun death rate of the next 25 largest industrial economies combined.

So I say, we now know—you know, in '92 a lot of people didn't believe the crime rate would ever go down again. So we got a lower crime rate. We know we can do this—sensible gun legislation, preventive things, get the kids involved in positive things, put enough police on the street—do the things that work. I think as a nation we ought to set a goal that America is going to be the safest big country in the world in the next 10 years, and we're going to keep going until we do it so that every child can feel safe again. We can do this. You don't have to doubt it anymore.

Now, those are just three examples. And I could give you lots more. I'll give you just one or two more, just so you can think about it. America grew rich in an industrial economy and is now becoming even wealthier in a post-industrial, information-technology economy. The industrial economy was powered by energy, translated into electricity, primarily, and into gasoline. It made factories work, moved cars and trucks around, made trains run, with the help of coal—coal and oil, turned into these things.

Now, in the industrial economy, in order to get richer you had to burn more energy. And if the energy you burned was based on oil and coal, you put into the air more greenhouse gases. That's what causes global warming, a big issue in the world today and huge for your children and grandchildren. I believe America is in a position to prove that for the first time in history a country can grow rich and build a middle class and actually improve the environment and put fewer greenhouse gases into the

atmosphere, because the economy has changed, the technology has changed. And that's very important for your kids. Do you know why? Because until climate change came along, every environmental problem was reversible.

So, for example, a lot of us who used to go to Japan, 20, 25 years ago, can remember when workers in Japan would wear masks, surgical masks to work, riding their bicycles. And now the air is cleaner than it is in many American cities, in Tokyo. That's just one example. Every environmental problem was reversible. A lot of you remember when you could strike a match on a Great Lake in America and start a fire—[laughter]—and a lot of them are very clean now, though we've got a new initiative to do even more. The climate change, it's reversible, but not for a long time. Once that stuff gets in the air, it hangs around and continues to warm the climate for 100 years.

So we've got to figure out how to prove, not only to Americans but to people all over the world, that I'm right—[laughter]—you can grow the economy, get rich, and improve the environment. The Detroit auto show this year has four-seater cars that will be commercially available very soon, get 70 and 80 miles a gallon. There is a modest income housing project in the Inland Empire, not far from here, built in cooperation with HUD, the Energy Department, and the Home Builders a couple years ago. I went out there for the announcement, and we told these lower income working people if they moved into this housing project, because we had new lighting that was more efficient, new insulation that was more efficient, and glass that let in more heat—that kept out more heat and cold and let in more light, that their power bills would go down an average of 40 percent. They've gone down an average of 65 percent.

If you've been following the Presidential campaign, you know in Iowa there is a lot of talk about ethanol. And that's because people grow corn. But let me tell you what the big issue is. The big issue is, today you can make ethanol efficiently but not real efficiently. It just takes about 7 gallons of gasoline to make about 8 gallons of ethanol. That's why there's a fight about it. But scientists, in projects funded by us, are on the verge of breaking the chemical barriers to the efficient transformation of not just corn but all kinds of biomass—rice hulls, field grasses—into fuel. When that happens, it will have the same impact that turning crude

oil into gasoline had 100 years ago. And you will be able to make 8 gallons of biomass fuel with one gallon of gasoline. Which means that, in effect, when you get the next generation of cars, if they run on ethanol, you'll be getting the equivalent of 500 miles a gallon.

This is going to happen within your lifetime. Within just a few years, young mothers will bring home their babies from the hospital with genetic maps that will tell them all the possible things that can go right and wrong in their lives and how to plan to lengthen and strengthen their children's lives. And most of my friends in the medical field that study this believe that early in the new century young mothers will bring home babies with a life expectancy of 100 years. In America today, people over 65 have a life expectancy, on average, of 83. So this is an exciting time. But you can see, we've got all these new challenges. And I'll just mention one last one.

I know you all maybe get tired of me talking about this, but I think it is the supreme irony of our age that we're talking about unlocking the mysteries of the human gene and finding out what's in the black holes in the universe and driving cars that get 100 miles a gallon. But the biggest problem of human nature is the oldest problem of human society: people's fear of people who are different from them. You think about it. What have we done with the end of the cold war? What has it wrought? It's like it took this big old lid, this metal lid off all these long-simmering, festering fears and hatreds all around the world. So you've got Bosnia, Kosovo, Rwanda, trouble again brewing in Burundi and Africa. You've got, obviously, the Middle East and Northern Ireland. You've got less well known ethnic and religious conflicts in western China, a long way from CNN coverage—all over the world.

And here in America you have this upsurge of hate crimes: James Byrd in Texas, Matthew Shepard in Wyoming, the Jewish community school here in Los Angeles, and then the Filipino postal worker who was murdered. And then the guy who went on a rampage who said he belonged to a church in the Middle West that believed not in God but did believe in white supremacy, so he kills an African-American basketball coach, a young Korean Christian coming out of school, and a bunch of other people, just because they were the wrong ethnic or racial or religious group.

And it's very interesting, isn't it, that all these really ugly, primitive things and the dominant problems of—are the world's inability to get rid of things come from the fact that we have a tendency, first of all, to be afraid of people who are different from us. Then we distrust them, and then it's not a big step to dehumanize them, and then once you do that, you can justify killing them. It's a sort of a slippery slope. And this trust thing is such a problem. I don't know how many times we've been right up to the edge in a lot of these peace processes I've worked in the last 7 years, and then some hang-nail will develop. And when you strip away all the rhetoric, it is, "I just don't know; I don't know if I can hold hands with this person and jump off this diving board." [Laughter]

And I want you to think about that. Because I believe building one America, whether it's in specific things like passing the "Employment and Non-Discrimination Act" or the "Hate Crimes Act" or just demonstrating that we can work together across the lines that divide us, in some ways is more important than all the other stuff that I've worked on. The American people nearly always get it right. This is a great country with a bunch of brainpower and a bunch of energy and a bunch of wealth. And the truth is, if we can get this right, if we can figure out how to let go of all of our accumulated resentments, we're going to do just fine.

So, number one, the country is better than it was 7 years ago. And it's not an accident. And it has something to do with the fact that we did the right things. Number two, we should be thinking about the big challenges before us—and they are significant—and not be dumb enough to think we can relax and sleep our way through this election season.

And the last point I want to make is this, not in any hateful way. There is a significant difference between the two parties and the two candidates, which will manifest itself in all kinds of ways. The next President—I appointed two members to the Supreme Court; in all probability, the next President will appoint more. And you saw the headline Mayor Rendell held up. There is absolutely no question in my mind that whether *Roe v. Wade* is preserved or scrapped depends on what happens in the Presidential race, and to pretend otherwise is naive in the extreme. It's not whether your compassion is good or bad; it's what you believe. And

we ought to tell the American people what we really believe and let them decide.

And I appreciate Governor Bush being candid enough to say he didn't believe in *Roe v. Wade*. In another article a couple weeks ago, he said the two Justices on the Supreme Court he most admired were Justices Scalia and Clarence Thomas. I think this is good. [Laughter] No, no, this is a good thing. People should say what they think. And we shouldn't be hateful about it; we shouldn't be mean; we don't have to get in the—but we should make sure that everybody knows where everybody else is coming from in this deal. And it's not helpful to go around with your head in the sand and pretend that there are no consequences here.

I believe we ought to get this country out of debt for the first time since 1835. I think one of the reasons we're cooking right along here is that we've gone from running up debt to paying debt off. We've even paid some of our debt off early this year, for the first time in history, ever. And that keeps interest rates down lower for the rest of you and enables us to have more broadly shared access to capital and to keep things going. So even though I am a Democrat, I'm going to recommend at the State of the Union we spend more money on education and health care, the environment. I want to keep running some surpluses and keep paying this debt down and not fool with the Social Security portion of the surplus so we can get out of debt for the first time.

If we adopt the tax cut that the leading candidate in the other party has proposed, it won't happen. And all of us will get money out of it; I mean, you'll all be happy for a month or two. But it's a bad deal. We won't have the money we need to continue to improve education, and we will not be able to manage this economic situation, and we will never get this

country out of debt over the next 10 to 15 years. So there are real consequences here.

So again I say, I'm glad you're here. But when you leave here, I want you to leave with a renewed sense of citizen activism. I want it to be beyond writing checks. And if somebody asks you how come you were there, I want you to be able to tell them, "Number one, it's better than it was 7 years ago, and they had specific ideas, and they implemented them, and it worked. Number two, we've got to think about what the big challenges of the future are. And number three, there is a real difference between the two parties." And we don't have to be bad-mouthing each other and throwing rocks at each other and saying terrible things about each other. We can just have an honest discussion about that. That's one thing I do hope our new self-confidence will allow us to have, a less acrimonious, less hateful election, but it should be no less intense. So I ask you all of that.

You know, most of us have been blessed, or we wouldn't be here today. Our grandchildren's generation should never forgive us if we walk away from our responsibility to do what is necessary in this millennial election, so that they will be living the future of their dreams.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:35 a.m. in the Grille Room at the Regency Club. In his remarks, he referred to brunch hosts Irwin and Lynne Deutch; Gov. Gray Davis of California and his wife, Sharon; Joel Hyatt, finance cochair, and Edward G. Rendell, general chair, Democratic National Committee; former Rep. Jane Harman of California; Janice Griffin, national chair, Women's Leadership Forum; and Gov. George W. Bush of Texas. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks Announcing the Equal Pay Initiative *January 24, 2000*

Thank you. Well, first of all, I think Sharon was a little apprehensive coming out here because she doesn't do public speaking for a living. But I thought she was magnificent, and I thank her for it. I want to thank Secretary Herman

for her leadership on this issue and Secretary Shalala and our EEOC Chair, Ida Castro, who is here.

We have a number of Members of Congress who are here, and I would like to acknowledge