

Americans will be at particular risk because private insurance is often unavailable to them or very, very expensive.

The plan doesn't ensure that seniors will be able to use the local pharmacist they trust. Insurance companies have already said this model won't work. It benefits the companies who make the drugs, not the older Americans who need to take the drugs.

There is a better way. I propose giving all our seniors the option of a prescription drug benefit through Medicare, wherever they live, however sick they may be. My plan would be affordable and dependable and give every senior equal coverage.

Because our economy is so strong and because we worked hard to put the Medicare Trust Fund back on sound footing, we have the money to do this now and do it right. We should use a part of our hard-earned budget surplus to meet America's most pressing priorities, like paying down the national debt, strengthening Medicare, and providing a prescription drug benefit.

That's why next week I will propose using the surplus to improve my plan. I will unveil specific protections for catastrophic drug expenses to ensure that no senior pays more than \$4,000 in prescription drugs and keeping premiums at \$25 a month. And I'll propose making that benefit in the full prescription drug initiative available in 2002, instead of 2003. To do that, I'll ask Congress to add about \$58 billion to our funding for Medicare over the next 10 years.

Providing a voluntary prescription drug benefit is only one of the challenges we must face to keep Medicare healthy for generations to come. We also have to increase payments to hospitals, teaching facilities, home health care agencies, and other providers, to make sure Medicare patients get high-quality care. Earlier

this week, I proposed that we use \$40 billion of the surplus to do that.

We should also follow Vice President Gore's proposal to take Medicare off budget, like Social Security, so that the Medicare taxes you pay cannot be diverted for irresponsible tax cuts or other Government spending that could lead us back to the bad old days of deficits and give us higher interest rates. This will protect Medicare and make a major contribution toward paying down the debt. And I propose using the savings from debt reduction to extend the life of the Medicare Trust Fund through at least 2030, when the number of Medicare people will be double what it is today.

We're fortunate—very fortunate—to live in a time of budget surpluses and remarkable prosperity, but we didn't get there by accident. We maintained our fiscal discipline, invested in our people, made good on the commitments that matter most. We can't let up now. And we have few responsibilities more important than helping our older Americans live out their lives with quality and in dignity.

We have the opportunity to meet that responsibility with a straightforward plan that all seniors can buy into. We have growing bipartisan agreement in the Senate that this is the way to go.

I hope as we mark the 50th anniversary of the Korean war tomorrow, we'll remember that a generation of Americans who did not let us, their children and grandchildren, down. And in return, we owe it not to let them down.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:45 p.m. on June 23 at a private residence in Los Angeles, CA, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on June 24. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 23 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Remarks to the Democratic National Convention 2000 Host Committee Breakfast in Los Angeles

June 24, 2000

Thank you very much, Mr. Mayor. And Nancy, thank you for having us in your home. Since you said I had done pretty well for a

young fellow from Arkansas, I can't resist—I have a lot of friends here, but I cannot resist the temptation at this apt moment in history

to introduce another contribution that my State made to your success: Mr. Derek Fisher of the Los Angeles Lakers. I was watching one of the Lakers games, actually, one of the games against Portland. And Derek comes in at the end, steals the ball five or six times, and confuses everybody. And somebody says, "God, that guy is aggressive." I said, "If you come from Arkansas, you have to be." [Laughter] It's just sort of our deal. You did us proud, and congratulations.

I want to thank the host committee, every one of you. And I thank my good friend Terry McAuliffe. And I thank Secretary Daley—I don't know why I'm thanking Secretary Daley for leaving my administration; he was doing such a great job. But he's doing—it's a very important thing for us to continue our work, and I thank him for taking over the leadership of the Vice President's campaign.

I want to thank Joe Andrew and all the people here from the Democratic Party and recognize two of my very old friends, Henry and Mary Alice Cisneros. Thank you for the help you've given us on the convention, and thank you for being my friends, and congratulations on being new grandparents—most important thing. They will shamelessly show you the pictures if you ask. [Laughter]

I also want to congratulate Governor Roy Romer on his new job here in Los Angeles and thank him. When this was announced, I told—Hillary and I were talking. I said, "This is really what Romer's always wanted to do. He's the only guy I ever knew who ran for Governor and served 12 years just so he could be a school superintendent." [Laughter] But you could go all the way across the country and not find a single human being who wants to do the right thing by our children and prove that our schools can work for all kids more than Roy Romer.

And what I want to tell all of you is, I've been in a lot of Los Angeles schools, and I've been in some that are working very, very well, indeed. And I've been all across this country, and when several of us who are involved in this—and Secretary Riley and I, we go back to the seventies; we were involved in school reform. And Hillary and I rewrote all the school standards in Arkansas nearly 20 years ago now. There was a long period of time when everybody thought they knew what the answer was to failing schools and how to help kids in poor neighborhoods, sometimes in very difficult fam-

ily situations, or just people whose first language was not English, learn up to world-class standards. But the truth is we didn't know as much for a long time as we thought we did.

That's not true anymore, and we now have—this is the most exciting and important time in modern American history to be involved in the education of children from kindergarten to the 12th grade, for two reasons. One is, for 2 years we've had, for the first time, a group of schoolchildren bigger than the baby boom generation. It's the biggest group of kids ever in school. And those of us among the baby boomers, which are basically people today between the ages of 36 and 54 years old, we were the biggest group of people ever in school until this crowd. And this group is far, far more diverse racially, ethnically, religiously, culturally—much more diverse. So, obviously it's important—self-evidently.

But the second thing you need to know is, we actually do know how to provide excellence in education to all kinds of children in all kinds of circumstances. And so now the question is how to replicate what works somewhere everywhere. But there's no excuse anymore; we really do know how to do it.

I was in a school in Spanish Harlem the other day, appearing on the "Today Show" for the VH1 music-in-schools program. Some of you may have seen it, where I tried to help VH1 get instruments donated, money donated to start school music programs again, because a lot of them were lost in the schools over the last 20 years, along with, I might add, the physical education programs for people not involved in team sports.

And so, we were working on it. And in this school, I met this magnificent principal. Now 2 years ago, this grade school, P.S. 96 in Spanish Harlem in New York, had 80 percent of the kids—80 percent—reading and doing math below grade level—2 years ago. Today, 74 percent of them are doing reading and math at or above grade level—in 2 years.

I was in this little school in Kentucky the other day in this real poor area, where more than half the kids are on free or reduced lunches. Four years ago, it was supposed to be one of the worst schools in Kentucky. Today, it's one of the top 10 or 20 grade schools in the entire State. Listen to this; in 3 years this is what they did. They went from 12 percent of the kids reading at or above grade level to

57 percent; from 5 percent of the kids doing math at or above grade level to 70 percent; from zero percent of the kids doing science at or above grade level to two-thirds—3 years. And I can tell you there are hundreds of stories like this.

So I want all of you to support your school system. We need to put this beyond partisan politics; we need to put this beyond everything else. But you do need to know that it can happen. And I have seen it with my own eyes in every conceivable different kind of circumstance. It can happen, and you can do it.

Now, in 1991, before I had decided to run for President, as chairman of the Democratic Leadership Council, I came to Los Angeles to look at an anticrime program. And they had arranged for a young student who came from the East but who was studying out here in California, named Sean Landress, to drive me around. You might be interested to know he subsequently went to divinity school, got a graduate degree, studied in Romania, talked about how to rebuild the economies of central and eastern Europe. He's a remarkable young man. He was 20 years old at the time and had been in school at Columbia in New York.

So we're driving across Los Angeles on one of these beautiful days, when I then did not have the benefit of not having to stop for the traffic. [Laughter] So this 20-year-old young guy that I'd never met before looks at me, he says, "Well, let's get right down to it. Cut it out. Are you going to run for President or not?" I'd never seen this kid before in my life. I said, "Well, I don't know. Maybe." He said, "Well, if you do, here's what your theme song ought to be." [Laughter] So he puts this tape in the tape deck—we didn't have CD players in cars back then—and it's Fleetwood Mac's "Don't Stop Thinking About Tomorrow."

And so we asked them later if we could do—I said, "That's sounds pretty good." So I decided to run for President, and I asked Fleetwood Mac, and whoever we contacted had the same attitude that President Bush used to express, that I was just a Governor from a small southern State; why should I use their song? [Laughter] I was so naive I thought that was a compliment, being a Governor, and I still do. But anyway, eventually we found them, the Fleetwood Mac people, and they said okay, so that became the theme song of the '92 campaign.

And I just want to pick up on something Terry said about Los Angeles. The best elections are always about the future. No matter how good a job you've done, they're always about the future.

I remember once when I was trying to decide whether to run for my fifth term as Governor in Arkansas, I went out to the State Fair. And I used to have a booth at the State Fair, and I'd just sit there and talk to people, anybody that wanted to come up. And everybody in the State comes to the State Fair, in a little State like that.

This old boy in overalls came up to me, and he said, "Bill, are you going to run for another term?" And I said, "Well, I don't know. If I do, will you vote for me?" He said, "Yes, I guess I will. I always have." And I said, "Well, aren't you sick of me after all this time?" He said, "No, but everybody else I know is." [Laughter] And I got kind of hurt. I said, "Well, don't they think I've done a good job?" He said, "Oh, yeah, they think you've done a good job, but you did draw a paycheck every 2 weeks didn't you?" He said, "That's what we hired you to do, a good job." [Laughter]

And so I say that to make this point. I think the record of our administration is a relevant consideration in this election but mostly because it's evidence of whether we will keep the commitments we make to the American people, or whether the Vice President will, and what we will do in the future.

But one reason I wanted to be in the millennial year in Los Angeles is that you do represent the future. And you've got all the challenges and all the opportunities of the future within 20 miles of where we're having breakfast today. And that's what I want you to help us show America. I want America to see the future, the diversity, the youth, the vibrancy, the technology, the creativity, the whole 9 yards.

I'm a little superstitious about things, and I'm—one of the things I'm happy about is the Lakers won in the Staples Center. And 4 years ago, we met in Chicago right after the Bulls won in the United Center. So I think if we can just keep this basketball-Democratic Party partnership going, we're in pretty good shape. [Laughter]

But I hope you will think about this. Many of you, in ways that you can't even imagine now, will come in contact with people from other States, people from other countries, the

thousands of people that will be here for the media. And I hope that you will say that, because the thing that's most important to me right now—and I admit it's self-serving—but the thing that's most important for me right now is that the American people make the right decision in trying to figure out what this election is about.

My experience in life is that a lot of you get—the answers you get sometimes depend on the questions you ask. So when people say, “Well, who do you think's going to win this or that other election?” I often say, “Well, what's the election about?” What the election's about depends on—will determine in large measure who wins.

And we've got this enormous opportunity now to give America a gift, which is an honestly positive election, not a saccharine election, not a “let's all just kind of wander through in a fog” election, but an election that is a genuine debate about the future of the country, at the time of the greatest prosperity and social progress we have enjoyed in my lifetime, with the absence of dramatic internal crises or external threats. And a time like this comes along once in 50 years, sometimes once in 100 years. And I think it is a very stern test of the judgment and character of the American people, what we do with this moment of prosperity.

You know, when I came here in '92—you heard the mayor talking about it—I mean the economy was in the tank. You'd had riots in Los Angeles. The people in Washington were—had what I call the combat mentality. “I've got an idea. You've got an idea. Let's fight. Maybe we'll both get on the evening news.” [Laughter] And people didn't worry about what was going to happen.

So it was—to be fair, you didn't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out we needed a new economic policy, a new social policy, and a new way of doing politics. And we brought our ideas to the table, and thankfully, they worked out pretty well for America. And I am very grateful for the chance I have had to serve.

But I, too, think this election is about tomorrow. And I've worked as hard as I could to help turn this country around, and I'm very proud of where we are. And I'm proud of the Vice President for running, and I'm very proud of my wife for running for the Senate in New York, and I'm proud of all these people who

want to keep doing, keep the direction going that we have worked on.

But for you, whether you are a Republican or a Democrat, what you should want now is for the American people to come out of Los Angeles—because it will be the second convention—thinking this is great, the country's in great shape, and we now have the opportunity and the responsibility to chart a course for the future, to think about the big issues.

Now, I'll just mention some of them: What are you going to do when all of us baby boomers retire and there's only two people working for every one person on Social Security? What are you going to do to make sure all these kids do get a world-class education? What are you going to do to deal with the fact that we have a lot of people that have jobs in America today who still can barely pay their bills and have a hard time raising their children, because our country does less than other countries to help people balance work and childrearing?

What are we going to do about the fact that global warming is real? These environmental challenges are real, and we have to find a way to grow the economy and improve the environment at the same time. What are you going to do about the fact that we still do have hate crimes in America? We had kids shot at a Jewish community center here; a Filipino postal worker killed—clearly, the person who went after him thought he had a two-fer, an Asian and a Federal Government employee; a former basketball coach at Northwestern, an African-American man killed by a fanatic in the Midwest who then went and shot a young Korean Christian as he walked out of his church. The guy said he didn't believe in God, but he did believe in white supremacy, and he belonged to a church that elevated it. So we still have these.

How are we going to build one America? How are we going to build a global economy that has a human face, that gives everybody a chance to participate? How are we going to make sure that the people and places who have not fully been part of our economic recovery get a chance to share in the prosperity? That helps the economy grow and keeps the recovery going.

What's your position about what we should do with this projected surplus? They now say the projected surplus will be huge—I'm going to talk about it the day after tomorrow. And the Republicans say we should spend way over

half of it in a tax cut and spend the rest of it on the cost of partially privatizing Social Security and building a missile defense scheme and other things, and it will materialize.

We say—even though I think our economic policy has produced this happy projection—that we shouldn't spend our money before it materializes, that we ought to save a good portion of it, pay down the debt, keep interest rates down, protect Medicare, and give a tax cut, but keep it within bounds in case all this money doesn't come in. Because once you cut taxes, if we don't have this projected surplus, we'll be back in the soup—old deficits, old interest rates, California 1991–1992.

Anyway, these are big issues. And when you're getting ready to do a convention you think about, well, who's going to do the party; what is the entertainment; how are we going to work out the security; what are we going to do if all the people who think the global economy is terrible show up and demonstrate? You've got all these practical problems to work out. But what I want you to remember is, how they're worked out and the spirit in which you work them out and what you say to people you come in contact with will determine what people think of Los Angeles but also what people think the election is about right now.

I trust the American people to get it right; nearly always, they get it right. Otherwise we wouldn't be around here after over 200 years. If the alternatives are clear and they have time enough to digest it and hear both sides, they nearly always make the right decision. And what my mission is going to be is to make sure people understand this is a very big election, that we have an enormous responsibility to deal with

the big challenges and opportunities facing the country, that there are dramatic differences between the two parties and we don't have to badmouth our opponents to say that—that we can just say, let's lay the differences out there, and you decide what you want for the future of America.

And Los Angeles can help us do that. You can embody the future and clarify the choices to be made. And you can do it and have a heck of a good time doing it. I told the staff at the convention yesterday, I've been to every Democratic Convention since 1972; makes me feel kind of old. And what I think is important is that there be competence, a sense of mission, a sense of energy, and a sense of joy and pride. Our country has got a lot to be proud of; this State and this community have a lot to be proud of. I want you to have a good time. I want you to help everybody else have a good time. But never let people forget, it's still important to think about tomorrow.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:10 a.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Richard J. Riordan of Los Angeles, and his wife, Nancy Daly Riordan; William M. Daley, general chair, Gore 2000; Terence McAuliffe, chair, Democratic National Convention Committee 2000; Joseph J. Andrew, national chair, and Los Angeles Unified School District Superintendent Roy Romer, former general chair, Democratic National Committee; former Housing and Urban Development Secretary Henry G. Cisneros and his wife, Mary Alice; and Victor Lopez, principal, Joseph C. Lanzetta School (Public School 96), New York City.

Remarks at a Brunch for Senator Dianne Feinstein in Los Angeles June 24, 2000

Thank you very much. I'm delighted to be here. I always try to show up on Dianne's birthday. [Laughter] I was just thinking, one time in 1994 I made an appearance in northern California for Senator Feinstein, and she didn't come—[laughter]—because she had to stay back and vote in the Senate. So I was sort of her surrogate. And I was talking about that the other

day, and Hillary said, "Well, if you did it for her, you can do it for me." [Laughter] So now I've started—now we're actually doing it on purpose in her election, so we'll see. [Laughter] I hope the results are just as good, and I'm inclined to think they will be. [Applause] Thank you.