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Finally tonight, I propose the largest ever investment in our civil rights laws for enforcement, because no American should be subjected to discrimination in finding a home, getting a job, going to school, or securing a loan. Protections in law should be protections in fact.

Last February, because I thought this was so important, I created the White House Office of One America to promote racial reconciliation. That's what one of my personal heroes, Hank Aaron, has done all his life. From his days as our all-time home run king to his recent acts of healing, he has always brought people together. We should follow his example, and we're honored to have him with us tonight. Stand up, Hank Aaron. [*Applause*]

I just want to say one more thing about this, and I want every one of you to think about this the next time you get mad at one of your colleagues on the other side of the aisle. This fall, at the White House, Hillary had one of her millennium dinners, and we had this very distinguished scientist there, who is an expert in this whole work in the human genome. And he said that we are all, regardless of race, genetically 99.9 percent the same.

Now, you may find that uncomfortable when you look around here. [*Laughter*] But it is worth remembering. We can laugh about this, but you think about it. Modern science has confirmed what ancient faiths have always taught: the most important fact of life is our common humanity. Therefore, we should do more than just tolerate our diversity; we should honor it and celebrate it.

My fellow Americans, every time I prepare for the State of the Union, I approach it with hope and expectation and excitement for our Nation. But tonight is very special, because we stand on the mountaintop of a new millennium. Behind us we can look back and see the great expanse of American achievement, and before us we can see even greater, grander frontiers of possibility. We should, all of us, be filled with gratitude and humility for our present progress and prosperity. We should be filled with awe and joy at what lies over the horizon. And we should be filled with absolute determination to make the most of it.

You know, when the Framers finished crafting our Constitution in Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin stood in Independence Hall, and he reflected on the carving of the Sun that was on the back of a chair he saw. The Sun was low on the horizon. So he said this—he said, "I've often wondered whether that Sun was rising or setting. Today," Franklin said, "I have the happiness to know it's a rising Sun." Today, because each succeeding generation of Americans has kept the fire of freedom burning brightly, lighting those frontiers of possibility, we all still bask in the glow and the warmth of Mr. Franklin's rising Sun.

After 224 years, the American revolution continues. We remain a new nation. And as long as our dreams outweigh our memories, America will be forever young. That is our destiny. And this is our moment.

Thank you, God bless you, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:18 p.m. in the House Chamber of the Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Rev. Jesse Jackson, founder and president, Rainbow/PUSH Coalition; President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro); President Andres Pastrana of Colombia; Pope John Paul II; and Eric Lander, director, Whitehead Institute/MIT Center for Genome Research, who spoke at the eighth White House Millennium Evening.

Remarks to a United States Conference of Mayors Breakfast Reception

January 28, 2000

Thank you, and good morning, and welcome to the White House. I hope most of you are more awake than I am. [*Laughter*] But I will try—I had some remarks here that said that I wanted to amplify on my remarks last night, and I don't think that I will use that word. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank my good friend Wellington Webb—talking about getting 81 percent of the vote in Denver. You know, Denver has that

sort of characteristic western independence. I always thought if anybody was in a position to get that much vote, there would be enough to say "None of the above" to keep that from happening. [*Laughter*] So it's quite a tribute to him.

Mayor Coles, Mayor Morial. I want to thank Mayor Scholz from Quincy, Illinois. He is hosting me when we leave here. And there are 20,000 people in the cold out there, so you can be sure I'll give a shorter speech today.

I want to thank the members of the administration who are here, Secretary Slater and Secretary Cuomo, General McCaffrey, Mickey Ibarra. I want to thank Ben Johnson from our Office of One America, Lynn Cutler, and there may be many others here. But we love having the mayors here, because this is sort of a grassroots operation.

And one of the things that I really worked hard to do—one of my mayors and my neighbor and friend, Pat Hays, from North Little Rock, Arkansas, is here. You know, to be Governor of Arkansas is like being mayor of kind of a nice size city. [*Laughter*] People accept—they expect you to run the store. And when they show up, they expect you to be there. And when they call, they expect you to return the call. And if they've got a problem, they expect you to send somebody to see to it. And if you don't, pretty soon you're looking for another job. [*Laughter*]

We've really tried to create an atmosphere around here where all the people who work here, particularly people who never worked for elected officials before—the White House really wouldn't function without all these bright young people that come here and work, but many of them have not had the opportunity ever before in their lives to work for elected officials. And we try to make sure that they all remember, no matter what's going on around here, for whom we're working and what our mission is. And so when you come here and talk to us, it reminds us of that, and we're grateful.

I have so many friends in this group. I can't help mentioning one, because he was a former member of my Cabinet, Lee Brown, the mayor of Houston. I'm glad to see you, and thank you for all you did for me and all you're doing for Houston.

I wanted to just make a couple of points briefly today. First, I wanted to mention some of the things that were mentioned in the State of the Union. Secretary Slater talked about high-speed rail, airline traffic—you know, I am committed, more than anything else, to improving commercial airline traffic this year, because in a year I'll be on it. [*Laughter*] And I want you to know I am on the job here. I probe every person who comes to see me about, was there a delay, was there a cancellation. You know, I am on this case. [*Laughter*]

I want to make in a nutshell the point I tried to make last night, when I quoted that wonderful line from President Theodore Roosevelt at the beginning of the last century, that young people with a future always take the long look ahead. We have all this good economic news. This morning we got some more good news, that our economy grew at an annual rate of 5.8 percent in the last 3 months of 1999. That's the fourth year in a row we've had growth of over 4 percent, with inflation the lowest in 30 years, 7 years of consecutive double-digit business investment growth. That's the longest investment growth on record. So this unbelievable recovery marches on.

Now, for everybody in this room that's more or less my age or a little older—you know, I was talking to some of my friends last night after the speech, and I said, "Look, the reason I feel so passionately that we should, A, take the long look ahead, and really say to ourselves, 'This country's in good shape now. What do we know now, right now, are the inevitable challenges and the great opportunities facing us over the next 10, 20, 30 years, and why don't we now set the goal of meeting them, and then outline a plan to get there?' "

So I was reminding people last night. I said, "You know, when I finished high school in 1964, we had—the country had been through President Kennedy's death, and it was very traumatic. But we still had very low unemployment. We had very good growth. We had almost no inflation. We still thought we could deal with the civil rights needs and demands and imperatives of our country in an orderly and legal way and the country wouldn't come apart. And you know, we had this sense that we could get there."

And within 2 or 3 years, the country was coming apart at the seams. A President, Lyndon Johnson, who passionately believed in civil rights, found his ability to make advances crippled by the controversies he faced over the war in Vietnam abroad and the civil rights crisis at home. And our country then went from turmoil

to turmoil to turmoil. And it's taken us 35 years to get an economy that is, frankly, even better than it was then, to have the advances we have in building our one America, and to be in this position again.

Now, anybody that's ever lived long enough knows two things: Number one, no condition, good or bad in life, lasts forever; that makes life interesting and challenging. The principle of surprise is always there. And when you pass an opportunity, you don't know how long you're going to have to wait for it to come around again. And the second thing that anybody that's over 30 years old has learned, one way or another, is that sometimes you make the worst mistakes in life when you think things are going along so well you don't have to worry about what you're doing, where you're going, whether to plan, and whether to make hard decisions—nobody who's lived any length of years who can't remember a time in personal, family, business, or public life, when mistakes were made and opportunities were missed because things were going well.

And that's why I tried to speak to the American people with such passion last night. We have waited a long time for our country to be in a position, because of our prosperity, to reach across party lines and regional and racial and all the other lines that divide us, to try to say, "Okay, here we go. We're starting a new century. Now, it doesn't matter whether you're a Republican or a Democrat. We are going to double the number of people over 65 in the next 30 years, and a lot of us hope to be among them. You can't avoid that. It doesn't matter what your politics are. We've got the largest group of kids we ever had; they're from the most diverse backgrounds they've ever been. It's a meal ticket to the future if they all get an education, and if we can get rid of poverty among our kids." And I could go on and on.

That's what I was trying to say last night. That is what you live every day. You get hired to show up and do something. But the further away you move from the grassroots, the more likely politics is to shift from deeds to words, partly because we're such a long way away from people we're trying to support and to empower. So you mayors, you can make a difference here. We don't want to miss this moment.

And as I said last night, something else that you all know: No great goal is reached in a single step, but if you take steps toward that goal, you make a lot of progress.

You all remember the story of the guy that had a mild heart attack, and it made him kind of goofy. And he went to the doctor, and the doctor said, "You think you could walk 3 miles a day and get well? You know, you could really help yourself a lot." And he said, "Well, I'll sure try." So he called him in a week, and he said, "Well, Doc, I made it for a whole week. I walked 3 miles every day." And he said, "But, honestly, I don't know what to do." And he said, "Why?" And he said, "Well, I'm 21 miles from home, and I don't know anybody here." [*Laughter*] You get a long way going step by step.

So I want you to think about that today. And very briefly, let me ask your help on one or two things. I know that you saw the President of Colombia, who used to be one of your colleagues, and I'm sure General McCaffrey has talked to you about that, so I won't deal with that. But let me just mention one or two things.

We've got to take this school construction issue seriously. Now, there is some—to be fair, there's more than politics here. Some Members of the Congress are genuinely reluctant to see the United States Government get involved in this issue because it has always been a State and local issue, and for some of our States, including mine when I was Governor, an entirely local issue. And we were—I think we had the third highest percentage of our school budget funded at the State—of any State in the country when I was Governor.

But the problem is you've got these kids that are just pouring out of a lot of these schools. I've been to schools with a dozen trailers—a dozen—outside. You've got all these other schools, literally—I've been to schools that were too decrepit to wire for the Internet. And what I would like to do is to really see us jump-start this effort. And I know—you know what always happens. If we put some money in, then others are encouraged, and more people do it, and you get this thing going. And basically, to be able to do these kind of more urgent repairs on 5,000 schools a year and then actually build or dramatically modernize 6,000 others, it would spark a whole wave of this across the country.

There's lots of evidence that young children, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds, get a very bad signal if they show up at a school where the windows are broken or they have

to be boarded over, and it's dark, and the paint is always peeling, and they can't get what other kids can do. I think this is a big deal, and I'd like to ask you to help us on that. I also hope—[*applause*]—thank you.

I feel very strongly that it's—we're going to keep wiring these classrooms, and a lot of you have benefited from the E-rate program. But we've got to do more to train the teachers, because we've got to make sure we can make the most of it. That's very important. I hope you'll help me—I know this is quite popular in most of your communities—once again, double the after-school and the summer school programs. It makes a big difference.

And if you have one of these GEAR UP programs in your community, you know that it's working quite well. We send college students in to mentor middle school kids who are disadvantaged, at risk, and we not only mentor them, we begin to tell them when they're 12, 13, 14 years old, what the present package of student aid is so they all know. A lot of these kids have no other earthly idea all the things that have been done in the last 5 years to increase scholarships and loans and work-study programs and all this. If we can actually convince them that the money will be there for them to go, that's a powerful incentive for them to learn more and to stay in school and begin to aspire, to take their own long look ahead. So I want to ask you to help us on that.

Secondly, I ask you to help us pass this new markets legislation and to increase the number of empowerment zones and to increase the EITC. One of the things that I didn't mention last night—I think that Secretary Cuomo has pioneered so many good things, but one thing I want to mention in particular are these housing vouchers that we use to help low income people move closer to their place of work. We've now done 110,000 of them; in this budget we can more than double that. And I'd like to ask your help on that.

Now, there are a lot of other things, and I'm sure Andrew went over the things in the HUD initiative, but there are a lot of great things that we can do to be better partners with you. But there are some things you can also do to be good partners with us; I'll just mention two. Because, again, we have a chance to dramatically cut poverty in America among our children. Child poverty is at a 21-year low; we can get it much, much lower. It's still unconscionably high in America.

And I'd just like to mention two things, if I might. Number one, we have a ton of working people in America who are eligible for the earned-income tax credit who don't know it and don't claim it. Mayor Daley has launched an outreach program in Chicago because last year in Illinois he found in the State that $300 million in these credits went unclaimed to low income working people. Try it. See if you can get the data for your community, and let these working people know that they can do it.

The second thing I'd like to say is, we set up the Children's Health Insurance Program to be designed and run by the States in the 1997 Balanced Budget Act. So it took us a while to get it up and going, but last year we went from 1 to 2 million kids enrolled in a year. It took us a year and a half to get up to a million, and it was very frustrating, but now these programs are kicking in and we're up to 2 million. The money is there to insure 5 million kids.

You heard me say last night that I wanted to follow the Vice President's suggestion to let the working parents of these low income kids buy into the program. But they'll never get there if they don't have their kids enrolled in the first place, and they don't know that. So anything you can do, with all the organization and mechanisms and outreach that you have, to help us to get the enrollment in the CHIP program up, I would be profoundly grateful. It's very important. We've got to go from 2 to 5 million kids. If we go from 2 to 5 million kids, then you're looking at about 6½ million parents, we estimate, that we could enroll. And if we got that many enrolled, we'd have a quarter of all the uninsured in America would be covered by insurance. It would be a dramatic achievement.

But it is in the nature of these things that you've got to reach out and do the enrollment. And because we're a free and open society and a very mobile one, these things tend to be difficult.

I also hope that you can convince—we found in State after State that there are a lot of working people who somehow feel that this would signal that they were going on welfare or going back to welfare, and they don't want to do that. And we need to send the right kind of signal out here about what this is, that these things

were done by their National Government because they want to work. And if they want to work, they're entitled to raise their children out of poverty and to have these basic supports.

There's also a bigger problem in enrollment in many places where people whose first language is not English. And the mayors are in a unique position to help us with that. So I would ask you to, when you go home, think about whether you can—you know, get the information from either the Federal or the State Governments on enrollment in the child health program and in the EITC, and whether there's anything you can do to alert more of your people to their eligibility and get them to claim it. I think it would be a very good thing.

Third thing I want to say—I've got to do this, because I blew it twice last night—we are going to build more livable communities. [*Laughter*] That was weird. In my whole life, I've never mispronounced that word before last night. [*Laughter*] See what I'm saying? The element of surprise is always there. [*Laughter*]

Denver's done a lot of work on the livable community issue with regard to brownfields, cleaning up around Stapleton Airport. And this is an issue, in different ways, for most of you. So again, I ask you to help us pass this. This is the sort of thing that really ought to be not a partisan issue either. So many communities are worried about preserving some sense of balance and harmony in transportation and saving some green space as development proceeds apace, or overcoming some environmental eyesore. And so I would like to ask you to help. I think it's very important.

Last night I also proposed to create a permanent endowment to protect lands across the country as part of our lands legacy initiative. Half the fund would be dedicated to State and local conservation efforts, and we would have a—listen to this—a tenfold increase in the Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery program and a significant increase for our Urban and Community Forestry program. This is very important to me.

When Rodney and I were back home in Arkansas and we had terrible economic problems in the Mississippi Delta, we picked the 11 hardest hit counties, and we spent endless hours out there doing grassroots meetings. It was astonishing the number of little towns that said to us, "Yes, we're having trouble economically, but we're most worried about our kids. Can't you give us some help with recreation?" And we developed this sort of basic blueprint plan for little city parks that even very, very small towns could build. And we set up this—what would today look like a tiny grant program. And we were flooded with all these—I mean little towns, 200 people, 300 people, 500 people, you know—asking for this money, because they had nothing to do for their children.

So this urban initiative is a very important part of this lands legacy matter to me, because in the biggest urban neighborhoods, you still have the same issue. And parents want their children to have something positive to do, even before they want another job in the neighborhood. So I hope you'll help me pass this. And again, this is something that I hope will be way beyond partisanship this year. It's a small part of the budget, with a big benefit for your folks back home.

Wellington mentioned the crime initiative. We know the Brady bill works. We know it does. The gun death rate is at a 30-year low, criminal gun death rate—30-year low. And we need to extend it to check at the gun shows, which occur mostly in rural areas and the urban flea markets, where people who couldn't get a gun at a registered store can get it. We do need to strengthen enforcement, because about one percent of our gun dealers do most of the damage to the law, insofar as gun dealers are doing it.

And we need to add the 50,000 more police. You know, you all have done a wonderful job with this community policing program, and I thank you for it. We're coming back with another 50,000, and we're going to try to get the second round of appropriations for it this year. And we're trying to concentrate these forces in the areas of highest crime.

But I will say again, you know, when I got here—and this is not me; this is all of you who did this, all we tried to do was give you the tools to do it, but—if I had come here 7 years ago and given a speech to you and said, "Look, here's what my goal is: we're going to make America the safest big country in the world," you would have said, "That poor deluded guy. We're in for a long ride"—[*laughter*]—because people weren't even sure we could make the crime go down, much less stay down. But we've had 7 years in a row now, and it keeps going down, because you know what to do. Your police departments know what to do. You know what to do. And if you know

what to do and if we've proved we can get crime down, then we don't have any excuse to stop until this country's the safest big country in the world. So I ask you to help us with that.

And finally I want to make a serious remark, although I was more serious than you know about the airline remark I made earlier. [*Laughter*] I want you to help us get these investments in advanced transportation technology. What I said last night was true. A lot of you probably read about the cars at the Detroit auto show that are getting 70 and 80 miles a gallon, dual-fuel cars, direct fuel-injection engines. They're using more and more composite materials to design cars now that are 500 to 1,000 pounds lighter but do the same on damage tests as steel cars. It's a remarkable thing.

And it is true—I wanted to explain what I said last night—this biofuel issue, not just ethanol made from corn, but you'll soon see fuels can be made from rice hulls and other agricultural byproducts or even grass fields. And essentially, what these scientists—the problem now is that the conversion ratio is not great: It takes 7 gallons of gasoline to make 8 gallons of ethanol. I mean, you're ahead but not much. And they're working on breaking the chemical barriers to efficient conversion, which was how we got gasoline from crude oil. It's the same sort of thing. The scientists that are working on this estimate that pretty soon they'll have a breakthrough that will allow them to make 8 gallons of ethanol or other biofuel with 1 gallon of gasoline. Now, if you've got a car getting 70 miles a gallon, that means you're getting 560 miles a gallon, if it can run on ethanol.

So we have a chance to completely rewrite the transportation future of America, to dramatically reduce the one-third of our greenhouse gases that come out of transportation and do it without some crippling regulation or some astronomical tax. But we've got to have the money to do this research.

We built a—well, we worked with the Home Builders, Andrew, and with the Energy Department and others, to build a housing development, the Inland Empire in San Bernardino, right on the rail line coming out of L.A. And we told—for very low income working people, we said, "If you buy a house here, we will guarantee you that your average power bills will be 40 percent lower than they would in a house of the same size anywhere else." And after 2 years, the average power bills are down 65 percent, because of the new lighting, because of the new windows, because of the new insulation. I mean, this thing is going—but we've got to have the money to do the research.

So that's a long way from being mayor, funding somebody's research, but it will change your lives and your ability to do your job if you'll help us. And it's especially important in high-speed rail. I do think, for reasons I don't entirely understand—maybe people have been caught in traffic jams—we've got a little more support for it than we did when I showed up here. I mean, I had Members of Congress come up to me and say, "You're from Arkansas. Why do you care about high-speed rail?" And I said, "Well, I might want to go somewhere else someday." [*Laughter*] "I might want to travel around." But really, we're getting more support. And I ask you for your help on this.

Finally, let me say—a couple of you mentioned this to me going through the line, so I just want to reiterate. For the last several States of the Union, I always save whatever I have to say about one America until the end because it's the most important to me. And if somebody said to me today, "Well, Mr. President, your time is up on this Earth, and you're not going to get to finish, but we'll give you one wish," I wouldn't wish for the continued economic expansion; I wouldn't wish for even giving everybody health insurance or anything. I'd wish to make America one America, because the American people will figure out how to solve everything else if we can have the right kind of relations toward one another.

You heard me tell that story—I got the Congress to laughing last night when I referred to what Dr. Lander, the distinguished geneticist from Harvard, said about all people being genetically 99.9 percent the same. I just want to give you one more thing to think about because we've got a pretty diverse group here. Ladner said that not only are we 99.9 percent the same, but that if you were to take 100 people each and 4 different race groups—like 100 African-Americans, 100 Hispanics, 100 Irish, 100 Jewish-Americans—the genetic differences among individuals within the group are greater than the genetic differences between the groups as a whole.

I mean, it's really quite stunning. The different skin color, the different characteristics that we've all developed over many thousands

of years for all kinds of reasons are literally contained in one-tenth of 1 percent of our genetic make-up. And it's a statistic that I've put out there on purpose, because I think you could tell—the Members of Congress, a lot of them, were shocked to hear that. [*Laughter*] They thought there was a Republican gene and a Democratic gene. [*Laughter*] And whichever party they were in, they were glad they got the right chip, you know. [*Laughter*]

And so I hope—you can make a lot of jokes out of this, and you can have a lot of fun with it, and the more you laugh, the more you get it. [*Laughter*]

So I ask you to remember that and to remember that you have people in this White House who believe in you and what you're doing, wish you well, and want to help.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Wellington E. Webb of Denver, CO; Mayor H. Brent Coles of Boise, ID; Mayor Marc H. Morial of New Orleans, LA; Mayor Charles W. Scholz of Quincy, IL; Mayor Patrick Henry Hays of North Little Rock, AR; Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago, IL; President Andres Pastrana of Colombia; and Eric Lander, director, Whitehead Institute/MIT Center for Genome Research.

Remarks to the Community in Quincy, Illinois

January 28, 2000

Thank you very much. I think I should begin by thanking you all for waiting in this cold weather all morning. Your welcome to me has been so warm, I don't care what it's doing outside; inside, it still feels like Florida to me here. I thank you very much.

I want to begin by thanking your mayor, who flew in here with me today; and your fine Congressman, Lane Evans; our two United States Senators, Senator Durbin and Senator Fitzgerald; Congressman Shimkus; Congressman Hulshof. Thank you all for being here. Let's give them a big hand here today. [*Applause*] Didn't Kayt do a good job? [*Applause*] All I can tell you is that when I was her age, I could not have given a speech anywhere near that good; so she's well on her way.

I want to thank all the people that gave us our music: the Quincy High School Band, the Quincy Park Band, the Quincy Notre Dame Marching Band. Thank you all very much. I want to thank all the people who are here today who represent State and local government and the people of this community, the police officers, business leaders, day care providers, AmeriCorps members, and other public servants, the students, the teachers, all represented up on this stage today. And of course, "Mr. Quincy" there, thank you very much, sir, for being here.

Ladies and gentlemen, last night when I gave the State of the Union Address, I was fulfilling a requirement of the United States Constitution that requires the President to report every year on the state of the Union. Then I wanted to come out today to the heartland of America to say what that was all about. Maybe we ought to change the Constitution, Senators and Congressmen, to require the President to come to Quincy the day after the State of the Union Address every year.

You know, I never will forget the night I actually did talk to the mayor and Senator Paul Simon, who was not pretending to be me, and you were going through that horrible flood. And I monitored your progress, and this community became a symbol of hope and what people can do when they pull together. I loved hearing the mayor today again recount the rich heritage of your city, the Lincoln-Douglas debate, the Underground Railroad, the sanctuary offered so long ago to those fleeing religious persecution.

I loved driving here from the airport today and remembering the bus tour that Vice President Gore and Hillary and Tipper and I took in 1992 through so much of this part of America, and I saw so many of the same pictures all along the way: young children out with their signs; people saying, "My birthday's August the