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So you stay with us. Stay with us as we try to pass the Patients' Bill of Rights and the other things we've got on the plate now. And tell people the story, that we had a set of ideas, we had a core philosophy, and it has worked. And we do need to keep changing America, but we don't need to forget what brought us to this point; we need to build on it. With your help, we will.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:10 p.m. in the John Hay Room at the Hay Adams Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to John Merrigan, chair, Democratic Business Council.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner
February 8, 2000

Thank you so much. I am delighted to be back in this wonderful, wonderful old house that contains a lot of good ghosts. I want to thank Jim and Joe for hosting this event. I thank all of you for coming. Joe, I want to thank you for having my mother out to the track. My mother was convinced that heaven was a racetrack—[*laughter*]—where she would not have to run. [*Laughter*] And I am delighted to be here with you today.

I want to thank all my friends from Maryland for being here, particularly Lieutenant Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend and Senator Miller, Speaker Taylor, party chair Wayne Rogers, and all the others who are here. Maryland has been very good to me, to Hillary, and Al and Tipper Gore. It's been one of our best States in both '92 and '96, and also, thanks to truly outstanding leadership, a genuine laboratory for virtually every reform I have advocated for 7 years.

You know, one of the things that you have to constantly reconcile when you're President is, how do you apportion the President's time? And if I just—after a while, if I keep making announcements in the Rose Garden or in the Oval Office or in the White House, there's no picture there, or it's the same picture. So you want to go out, but you don't want to go too far, because otherwise you spend all day going to and from someplace, and you miss a day's work. Well, it was my great good fortune that I happened to be President at a time when Maryland was so superbly led that every good thing in America that was going on anywhere was also going on in Maryland. And I thank all of you for that.

I want to thank Ed Rendell and Joe Andrew and my longtime friend Andy Tobias for their willingness to come in and lead our party and try to get us through a very challenging election year, when we expect to be outspent but not outworked. And we know if we have enough money to get our message out, it won't matter if they have a little more. And I want to thank all of you for making them look a little more successful tonight. We're very grateful to you for that.

And I want to thank Donna Shalala for being here. She is the longest serving and, I believe, by far the most effective Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. Today we dealt with one of Donna's issues. I went out to the American Academy of Sciences and signed the first Presidential Executive order of the 21st century, banning genetic discrimination in employment and insurance of Federal employees, and endorsing legislation introduced by Senator Daschle in the Senate and Congresswoman Louise Slaughter from New York in the House to ban genetic discrimination in employment and insurance practices for all employees.

I sort of would like to take that as a little metaphor. That's a future issue, and it's thrilling to me. Why do we even have to worry about that? Because in just a little bit, we'll have an entire map of the sequencing of the human genome. We already know that broken genes and what they look like—that are high predictors of breast cancer. The good news about that is, pretty soon we'll have diagnostic techniques that will either be able to head off the cancer ever developing, with gene therapies that block the destructive development, or diagnose the cancer when it's just a few cells and not after

it has, as it did to my mother and so many others, gone too far.

So we're thinking about this incredible tomorrow. Reminiscent of, I might say, my '92 campaign song, the old Fleetwood Mac song "Don't Stop Thinking About Tomorrow," we actually have the luxury of thinking about these things. And it seems well within reach.

I just today, I ran into the chairman of General Motors at a nonpolitical event—I don't want to get him roped into our business—anyway, but I complimented him on the Detroit auto show and on the work that our administration has done under the leadership of the Vice President with the auto companies and the auto workers over the last 7 years in what we call the Partnership for a New Generation of Vehicles. We now have automobiles shown at the Detroit auto show—not small two-seaters; big, roomy four-seaters—that will get 70 to 80 or more miles a gallon, with fuel injection technology that also obviously dramatically reduces harmful emissions, including greenhouse gas emissions.

And we were talking about that, and I was explaining to him the work we're doing with scientists associated with the Department of Agriculture to increase the efficiency of creating ethanol or other fuels from biomass, not just corn but rice hulls, weeds, hay, anything. Right now, the real problem with that is that the conversion ratio is inefficient. And I don't want to get down into the weeds here, but I think you should understand it. [*Laughter*] In other words, the reason that it's a political issue—if you saw Iowa and you saw our candidates, the Vice President and Senator Bradley, arguing about who loved ethanol more—[*laughter*]—the reason that's a political issue is that ethanol really is an environmental net plus, but costs more. And it's not a huge net plus yet; that is, it takes about 7 gallons of gasoline to produce 8 gallons of ethanol.

The scientists there are working on the same sort of chemical discovery that led to the conversion of crude oil and gasoline. When that happens, they estimate that we'll be able to make 8 gallons of ethanol with one gallon of gasoline. And when you put that with a 70-mile-a-gallon car, you're getting 500 miles to the gallon of gasoline, and the whole future of the planet is changed. The whole future of our ability to deal with climate change and global warming is changed. Everything will change.

So we're dealing with all these real exciting things. And I think that's very good. But what I want to say to you, which has already been said by previous speakers, starting with Mayor Rendell, is the framework within which we will really, seriously pursue these great opportunities will be set by how the American people vote or, if they stay home, how they don't vote in the 2000 elections: Who will be President; who will be in the Senate; who will be in the House; who will be the Governor; what will be the shape of our decision? And it is a hugely important election.

I have spent the last 7 years trying to turn this country around, away from the difficult circumstances we face and the sort of defeatism and political gridlock and negative attitudes about Government that existed at that time. And we are on a roll. But what I want to say to you is, one of the most dangerous times for a great people can be when we're on a roll. Anybody in this room tonight who is over 30 years old can recall at least one time in your life when you got in trouble because you thought things were going so well that it didn't matter whether you concentrated or whether you worked, whether you took on a big challenge you had been meaning to take on. You could just sort of indulge yourself in the moment. There were really no consequences; everything's rocking along fine.

And what I want to say to you is, even though I'm immensely proud of the record that the Vice President and Hillary and Tipper and I, Donna Shalala, our whole administration has been a part of establishing, the whole purpose of it was to bring us to this moment so we could really deal with the big challenges of America in the new century. And a time like this maybe comes along once in a lifetime. And if people make the wrong decisions, or events intervene before they grab hold of their potential, everything can change.

So it really matters whether you have someone who is committed to maintaining our prosperity and bringing economic opportunity to poor people, poor places that haven't had it.

It really matters that—whether we elect people who understand that there are enormous pressures on working parents today to fulfill their responsibilities to their children and their responsibilities at work. And of all the advanced countries in the world, of all the things we do well, we do that less well than nearly any other

place. We need to do more to help people succeed at home and at work.

It really matters whether, now that we've gotten the crime rate down for 7 years in a row, we have someone as President and in the Congress who believes we can make America the safest big country in the world and is willing to keep working to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and away from children.

It matters whether we have someone who believes we can grow the economy and improve the environment. It matters whether we have someone who is committed to keeping America on the forefront of science and technology and to do it in a way that preserves our values by protecting our privacy. These things matter.

And if I might say, two things that we have done which were really different—quite apart from the fact that we had a specific economic policy, a specific crime policy, a specific welfare policy—they were different from previous administrations: We said, "We don't believe Government is the enemy anymore; we tried that for 12 years and it got us in one big ditch. But we don't believe Government is the solution to all our problems. We favor a Government of empowerment and enterprise that establishes the conditions and gives people the tools to solve their own problems." In other words, we had a positive and unifying notion of what our Government could be.

The second thing was that we said, "We don't want to demonize our opponents anymore, and we don't want them demonizing us." We are—we think the biggest problem in the world is that people are still unable to get along with those who are different from them. And they turn their differences into demonization, principally in racial, in religious, tribal ways, religious ways in the United States, in terms of hate crimes and all those ways and also against people because they're gay, and in this town, because people are of different political parties or have different philosophies. Differences of opinion are good; demonization is bad. Our administration knew the difference, and it has made a difference all over the world.

So now, we come to this moment in this house, so I want to tell you a story. It was my great good fortune to be friends with Averell Harriman and with Pamela Harriman. When she died at 77 in Paris by a swimming pool, she was our Ambassador to France, where she had gone as a young woman after World War II. When he was almost 90, I was spending the night with him one night in the residence next door. And he actually got up—Hillary was there, too—and he got up at 11:45 p.m.—he had already gone to bed—because we were up talking, and he was jealous that we were still up talking. He was 89 years old. So we got him into a conversation about what it was like representing President Roosevelt with Churchill and Stalin. And then, about that time, they also had hired a professor at Georgetown to work with Governor Harriman who had taught me international affairs when I was a student there. So this house has a lot of history to me.

I'd like you to think about this. You've talked about the first time I was around here was when I was in college, the last time we had an economic expansion this robust—that is, the one we just lapped—we just lapped the economic expansion from 1961 to 1969. When I graduated from high school in 1964, President Kennedy had been killed. But the country really had—contrary to all these people who now look back and say that's the beginning of America's long drift into cynicism—that's not true. The American people were heartbroken, but they united as I have never seen them, and they tried to rise above it. And they tried to support President Johnson, and they got—there was a whole new energy behind the civil rights movement and all the things we believe in.

So when I finished high school in '64, we had 3 percent unemployment, big growth, no inflation. Everybody thought we were going to be able to legally resolve our civil rights challenges through the Congress; we'd all do it in a peaceful, positive way. Vietnam was a distant place that we thought would be managed some way or another, and we knew we were standing up against communism. It was the right thing to do.

Four years later, when I graduated from Georgetown, in my last semester, Martin Luther King was killed; Senator Kennedy was killed; President Johnson announced he wouldn't run for reelection; Washington burned; and a politically divisive message called the Silent Majority, but really—the first time, getting into America—"America is divided between 'us' and 'them,'" carried the day.

I want you to know something. I'm not running for anything, but as an American, I have waited more than 30 years for my country once again to be in the position that we lost because

of the tragedies that happened in 1968, because of the riots in the streets, because of the breakdown of the economy, because we squandered our moment. And every one of you that's anywhere near my age who was moved to believe that we could make a difference by the heroes we lost 30 years ago, you must believe that this election—not '92, not '96—this election is the moment when America is back where we were when we lost our way.

Most people don't get a second chance in life as a people. And most of us who are still here are here only because we did get a few second chances. America cannot let this go. That's why you ought to be here and be here for our crowd all the way to November. And if somebody asks you why you're doing it, you tell them what I just told you: This is the chance of a lifetime, and we better make the most of it.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:29 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to James D'Orta and Joseph A. DeFrancis, dinner hosts; Maryland House of Delegates Speaker Casper R. Taylor, Jr.; Wayne L. Rogers, chairman, Maryland Democratic Party; and Edward G. Rendell, general chair, Joseph J. Andrew, national chair, and Andrew Tobias, treasurer, Democratic National Committee. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on Patients' Bill of Rights Legislation and an Exchange With Reporters

February 9, 2000

The President. Good morning. Before I leave, I'd like to say just a few words about the Patients' Bill of Rights legislation. A House and Senate conference will take it up beginning tomorrow. My message is simple and straightforward. Congress should seize this moment of opportunity to do what is right for the health of the American family, to seize this moment to stand with doctors, nurses, and patients, to restore trust and accountability in our health care system.

Last fall the House of Representatives passed by a large margin a strong, enforceable Patients' Bill of Rights. The legislation, sponsored by Congressmen Norwood and Dingell, says you have a right to the nearest emergency room care, the right to see a specialist, the right to know you can't be forced to switch doctors in the middle of treatment, the right to hold your health care plan accountable if it causes you or a loved one great harm, and it covers all Americans in all health plans.

Now this bill is in the hands of House and Senate conferees. It reflects the beliefs and represents the needs of the overwhelming majority of the American people, without regard to party. It has the endorsement of over 300 health care and consumer groups. It has the votes of 275 Members of the House of Representatives, including 68 Republicans. Although I remain concerned that the conferees on the bill do not share the majority's view, I believe, nevertheless, they have a clear responsibility to ratify these fundamental rights, to put politics aside and pass a strong, enforceable Patients' Bill of Rights.

Americans who are battling illnesses shouldn't have to battle insurance companies for the coverage they need. Passing a real Patients' Bill of Rights for all Americans in all health plans is a crucial step toward meeting our goal in the 21st century of assuring quality, affordable health care to all our citizens. I ask the House and Senate conferees to take the next vital step.

Thank you.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, what are you doing about the daily bombing of Lebanon?

The President. Well, let me say, we are doing our best to get the peace process back on track. I think it is clear that the bombing is a reaction to the deaths, in two separate instances, of Israeli soldiers. What we need to do is to stop the violence and start the peace process again. We're doing our best to get it started. And we're working very, very hard on it.