

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Federal Agency
Climate Change Programs and Activities
March 15, 2000

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

In accordance with section 568(b) of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2000, as contained in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2000 (Public Law 106-113), I transmit herewith an account of all Federal agency climate change programs and activities. This report includes both domestic and international programs and activities related to climate change, and contains data on both spending and performance goals.

As the comprehensive nature of this report indicates, my Administration believes that climate change presents one of the premier challenges that America—and the world—will face in this new century. Informed by sound science and based on prudent measures, I believe it is critical that the Federal Government provide leadership to address this serious challenge and to act on behalf of our citizens and future gen-

erations. Our action plan, as detailed in this report, features numerous investments in scientific research, in proven public-private partnerships, and in efforts to promote new and developing technologies and practices that will not only reduce greenhouse gases, but will provide significant new economic opportunities and savings for American businesses and consumers.

I appreciate the interest of the Congress in this important issue and in our efforts to address it. I urge the Congress to fully support these initiatives and to join my Administration in meeting the challenge of climate change.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Albert Gore, Jr., President of the Senate.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in Baltimore,
Maryland
March 15, 2000

Thank you very much. Peter, Mrs. Angelos, thank you for this incredible evening. Thank you all for coming and for your support. Thank you, Governor, for the kind words you said and for the great work you're doing in Maryland to try to protect people from gun violence. And I want to say, I agree with you; you do have the best Lieutenant Governor in the United States in Maryland. Thank you, Kathleen, thank you very much. And I'm something of an expert on that subject, having served as a Governor for a dozen years, served with 150 different Governors. And I think—it's amazing to me how many times the team of Glendening and Kathleen Kennedy Townsend have put Maryland first in all kinds of reforms, from education to what's good for children to community service, and now in your attempts to do everything you can to protect your children from violence. And you

should be very proud of this. This State is very, very well-governed, and I'm grateful to you.

I want to thank the other leaders who have come here: your State treasurer; your secretary of state; speaker of the house, who invited me to come back to address the delegates one last time before I leave. That's good. When people come up to me and start thanking me for what I've done, I feel like it's a eulogy, and I have to pinch myself to make sure I'm still alive. [*Laughter*] I'm always kind of surprised anybody wants me to show up anymore. [*Laughter*] So I thank you very much for that.

President Dixon, Commissioner Daniels, I thank all of you for being here. I want to say a special word of appreciation to the Congress Members who are here, Ben Cardin and Elijah Cummings, who have been great friends and allies of ours throughout these last 7 years. I thank you. And Peter Franchot, thank you for

your support. And Pete Rawlings, before he was the head of your fortunes with his legislative position, we used to work together on the education commission of the State. And whenever I needed somebody who'd stand up and say I was right when I was challenging people to change 15 years ago, he was there. And I thank you for that.

Mayor D'Alesandro came up to me tonight, and he said—you may know that his sister is Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, and one of the ablest people in the Congress—he came up to me tonight and said, “Well, I want you to know there's life after politics.” [Laughter] For which I thanked him. [Laughter] And I hope I'll be around to see the evidence. [Laughter]

And I want to thank Dr. Richardson, the president of Morgan State. I want to acknowledge him. Morgan State gave me an honorary degree a couple years ago, and I got to speak there. It's the only commencement I've ever attended where there were five different musical selections, and every one was better than the one before. You've got a lot to be proud of, having that fine institution here.

Mr. Mayor, I want to thank you and Katie for coming out to meet me at Fort McHenry and standing in the wind. And I'm glad the Irish saved Baltimore. [Laughter] I wish the same could be said of Washington—[laughter]—which the British did burn. And every night when I go home to the White House, there's a big block we've left unpainted that still has the burn marks from where the British assaulted it in 1814, and I always—periodically, at least, I remind the people who work with me just to be humble because you never can tell what's coming up the river there. [Laughter] And generally in life, that's a good lesson to remember. [Laughter]

I'm thrilled by your election. I enjoyed working with your predecessor, Kurt Schmoke. I was jealous when you got over 90 percent of the vote. I couldn't get over 90 percent of the vote if my name were the only one on the ballot. [Laughter]

And I am, particularly in this week, profoundly grateful for what you said about Ireland. My people are from Fermanagh, in County Armagh, which is right on the border of Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. And I have a little watercolor in the Residence at the White House of the oldest known residence of my mother's people, the Cassidys. It's an early 18th

century farmhouse which still is in existence. I've never been able to trace my roots, beyond speculation, back before that. And it has been a great honor. And we're having a little trouble in Ireland now, but we're working through it, and I think it's going to be all right. And if it hadn't been for the Irish-American community, the United States never would have been able to do that. And so it means a lot to me that you said that tonight, and I thank you for that.

I want to finally, by way of introduction, beyond thanking Ed Rendell for agreeing when he left the mayoralty of Philadelphia, which has been fabulous to me and given me massive margins—I said, “I've got a little part-time job I'd like for you to do. Would you become chairman of the Democratic Party?” And he had earned a rest, and he didn't take it, because he knows how important these elections are to our future, for the same reason Peter Angelos said. So I want to thank him.

Now, I'd like to say some things tonight in a fairly straightforward way. You can do that when you're not running for anything. Most days I'm okay with that. [Laughter]

First of all, I feel profoundly indebted to Baltimore and to the State of Maryland for how good you've been to Hillary and me and Al and Tipper Gore. You've given us your electoral votes. You've always been there to support us. And through this administration of the Governor, you've been an ardent partner for us in so many of the things that I've tried to do for America. I don't know how many times in the last 7 years I've come to Maryland to give the country evidence that this or that or the other thing could be done, whether it was in law enforcement or education or the economy or the environment. And so I thank you for that. I am very, very grateful.

Tomorrow somebody might ask you why you came here tonight, and so I want to ask you to think about what answer you would give. I hope you will say, as has been said, “Well, you know, when President Clinton and Vice President Gore were elected in 1992, they said they wanted to change America for the better, to give the Government back to the American people, not just to restore the economy but to bring our society together, to build a more united community, and to enhance responsibility on the part of all citizens. And the economy is the best it's ever been. And the crime rate

is down. The welfare rolls are down. Adoptions are up. Ninety percent of our kids are immunized for the first time; 150,000 of our kids have served in AmeriCorps, serving their communities in Maryland and every other State and earning money for college. America has been a force for peace and prosperity around the world. We've got cleaner air, cleaner water. We've cleaned up 3 times as many toxic waste dumps as the previous administrations did in 12 years. We've had the first back-to-back balanced budgets in 42 years."

So the first answer is, you know, "They did what they said they'd do. They did what they said they would do." And one of the most personally rewarding things that has happened to me since I've been President occurred actually fairly early in my first term, when a professor I had never met, who was a scholar of the Presidency, wrote me and said I had already kept a higher percentage of my promises to the American people than the previous five Presidents had. And that was in the first term.

I believe in laying out a program and sticking to it. I think it's a great mistake to ask for a job if you don't know why you want it. So that's the first thing I hope you'll say.

The second thing I hope you will say is, there's an answer to Governor Bush's question about what Al Gore has been doing in Washington for the last 7 years. And again, I can say this: I haven't been Vice President, but I have made quite an extensive study in my life, intensified in the last 7 years, of every one of my predecessors and the Office of Vice President.

Much as I love and revere Franklin Roosevelt, he did not pick Harry Truman expecting he would be President or with some great thought for why he would be. And when he tragically died, then-Vice President Truman did not know about the existence of the atomic bomb. He did not even know that. And thank the good Lord, we were lucky Harry Truman turned out to be a great man and a great President who made the tough decisions that were necessary to build the next 50 years.

President Eisenhower gave some more thought, and President Kennedy did, and Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon both had more influence as Vice President than anyone before them. Then President Carter inaugurated a whole different way of dealing with Vice Presidents with Walter Mondale, who met with him

every week, would come to every meeting. And to be fair—I don't want to be like our friends in the Republican Party—one of the things that Ronald Reagan did was to give then-Vice President Bush more responsibility, because the Carter-Mondale model had worked so well and because any President in his right mind knows that anything can happen in life and you might not be here tomorrow.

I had a different idea. I thought: Why would you want to be Vice President unless it was a real job, all day, every day? Who wants to hang around waiting for something bad to happen to the President? [Laughter] And I believed that the role that had been given to Vice President Mondale and then-Vice President Bush was a good thing but only the beginning.

So in 1992, when I asked Al Gore to run with me, I defied all political convention. Some people thought I was too young; I picked a guy who was a year younger than me. Some people thought I was too southern; I picked a guy from a border State. Some people thought I was too much of a New Democrat; I picked a guy who basically agreed with me on the issues. But I also picked someone who knew about things that I did not know about, who had experience in the Congress, who knew a lot about science and technology, who understood a lot about the environment, who knew an enormous amount about arms control and foreign policy. And I picked someone who I thought had strengths that I didn't have, because I thought we could work together in harmony.

And I can tell you that if you look at the whole history of the United States and you ask any objective historian who has really studied it, Vice President Gore has been, by far—not even close, by far—the most influential, productive Vice President in the history of our Republic, without regard to party. No one has ever been close.

He broke the tie that passed the economic plan in 1993, without which we wouldn't be here celebrating tonight, because it drove the interest rates down and got this economy going again. He recently, as you just heard, broke the tie on the gun safety legislation. In between, he headed our empowerment program designed to bring economic opportunity to designated poor cities and rural areas in this country. He headed our partnership with Detroit to develop new generation vehicles, some of which are now

at the Detroit auto show, that we developed over a 6-year period, working with the auto companies and the auto workers, getting 70, 80 miles a gallon. They'll be in the showroom in the next couple of years. He headed a special commission with Russia and helped to continue to reduce the number of nuclear weapons; had a special commission with South Africa to try to make sure that once they got real freedom and democracy after 300 years, it had a good chance to work.

And every tough decision I've had to take, whether it was a decision to try to restore democracy to Haiti or stop the slaughter in Bosnia or stop the slaughter in Kosovo or give financial aid to Mexico—on a day when a poll came out saying the people were 81–15 against it—every single tough decision, he backed it to the hilt. When we took on the tobacco interest and the NRA in a way that no previous administration of either party had ever done, he backed it to the hilt. So if somebody asked you the Governor Bush question, what's Al Gore been doing for the last 7 years, give them an earful, will you, because it's a good story. It's a good story.

The third thing I hope you will say is, you agree with the fights we're waging now. You can thank me later, when I'm a former President, if you're still so inclined, but I'm interested in what we're doing today. We're trying to pass the Patients' Bill of Rights. We're trying to pass a bill to build 6,000 schools and modernize 5,000 a year for the next 5 years—very important issue. We're trying to double the number of children in after-school and summer school programs and pass a budget in Congress which would give every child in every disadvantaged school in the entire United States the chance to be in an after-school mentoring program. We're trying—we have opened the doors of the first 2 years of college to all Americans through the HOPE scholarship. We've got 5 million people in college now getting the tax credits that were in the '97 Balanced Budget Act for college. I want to give people a tax deduction of up to \$10,000 for college tuition so we'll open the door for 4 years of college to all Americans. This is what we're trying to do now. These are important things.

We're working on the peace processes, from Northern Ireland to the Middle East, and I'm going to the Indian subcontinent at the end of the week. We're moving. The country is on

the move. We're fighting attempts by the other party to pass tax cuts so big that we wouldn't be able to save Social Security and Medicare and pay the debt down and do the things that need to be done for our country.

So you ought to say, "The last 7 years have been good. They did what they said they'd do. Governor Bush wants to know what Vice President Gore has been doing the last 7 years. I think he's been doing good, real good. And third, I agree with the fights that they're waging."

The most important thing that we're doing right now, of course, is we're embroiled in this fight over gun safety. And I always—I suppose I should be glad because they're kind of unmasked, but it's always kind of sad to me when one of these fights turns real mean and personal. I have a pretty thick hide after all these years, and it's not really very effective when they say things like they've been saying the last few days, the gun lobby. But it obscures the reality.

Sometimes people just don't like you, and you don't know why. Have you ever had that happen to you? One of my favorite stories is this story about this guy that's walking along the edge of the Grand Canyon, and he slips off, and he's careening to his certain demise. And all of a sudden he sees this little twig sticking out of the canyon, and he grabs onto it, and it breaks his fall. And then all of the sudden the roots start coming out of the twig. And he looks up in the sky and he says, "God, why me? I'm a good man. I've taken good care of my family. I've worked hard, and I've paid my taxes all my life. Why me?" And this thunderous voice comes out of the sky and says, "Son, there's just something about you I don't like." [Laughter]

Now, everybody has been in that situation. I know why the NRA, however, doesn't like me. They don't like me because I was shooting cans off a fencepost in the country with a .22 when I was 12 years old. They don't like me because I governed for 12 years in the State where half the people had a hunting license. And therefore, I know how to talk to people they try to scare up against us, those of us that want to have a safer world.

But the real issue is not the spokesman for the NRA saying that I want more deaths in America, or that somehow we're responsible for the death of that wonderful former basketball coach from Northwestern, and all these absurd

claims which they will doubtless use to raise money on. The real issue is, we have the lowest crime rate in 25 years and the lowest gun death rate in 30 years, but no one in their right mind believes America is as safe as it ought to be or could be. And no one believes we should stop until we make America the safest big country in the world. Now, that's what I believe.

You know, when people start batting around responsibility for people's lives—one of the jobs that I was not prepared for as President—I never dreamed about and I confess I never thought about it—was the responsibility to comfort the grieving when their loved ones had died. I never thought when I was running for President I'd be meeting a plane carrying the body of my friend and brother, Ron Brown, and all those people who died in Croatia, trying to give those people a better life. I never thought I'd have to go down to one room after another at a military base and greet 19 families of 19 airmen that were killed by terrorists because they were serving us in Saudi Arabia. I never thought I'd have to go to a place like Oklahoma City, where nearly 170 people were killed by a man consumed by his hatred for our Government.

I never thought I'd have to have parents like the grieving mother and stepfather of young Kayla Rolland sit in the Oval Office. And what can you tell them, if you've got a little girl and their little girl is gone? So I don't really think we should be talking about this debate in these terms.

When they fought me on the Brady bill, because they said it would be so burdensome to hunters and sports people, and I said it wouldn't, and we won. We had evidence now: 500,000 people have been kept from getting handguns because they were felons, fugitives, and stalkers. Unfortunately, the man who killed Ricky Byrdsong in Chicago and a young Korean Christian walking out of his church and several other people was able to get a gun illegally in another way.

Well, one of the ways people get guns, as the NRA said way back in '93, when they were against the Brady bill, they said, "Oh, well, people don't buy these guns at gun stores. They get them at these gun shows and these urban flea markets." So I said, "Well, let's just do a background check there." That's what this is about: child safety locks, money for smart gun technology, banning the importation of large

ammunition clips—assault weapons are illegal in this country; then we let people import the ammunition clips that can convert legal weapons into assault weapons—and closing the gun show loophole.

And oh, there's been the awfulest outcry about how terrible this is and how burdensome this will be. And one of the reasons they don't like me is I've actually been to these country gun shows. You're the Governor of Arkansas, you've got to get out there and hustle around and go where the people are. And I've got a lot of friends that have bought hunting rifles at these country gun shows. And it's true, if you're out in the country and somebody has to go someplace else, it's a little bit of an inconvenience if you have to wait a day to get your gun. But every one of these places has a nearby police office or a sheriff's office where those guns could be deposited while a background check is done.

Most people I know of good conscience, that love to go into the deer woods, would do anything to keep another child alive. This is not what this is about. And 95 percent of these people could be checked in a day, and the other 5 percent that I want to wait 3 days to make sure we can check—their denial rate, because of their background problems, is 20 times the denial rate for the 95 percent to clear in a day.

We're going to hold up the whole United States Congress, go 8 months after the Columbine slaughter? I didn't even talk about that, going to Columbine High School, going out to Springfield, Oregon, calling those people in Jonesboro, Arkansas, where I knew the people in the school. You know, I'm sorry, but I think it's worth a little inconvenience to save a lot of lives, and I think you do, too.

Ben Cardin was with me today when they won a great legislative victory over a tiny thing, because the NRA was trying to beat a resolution by Representative Zoe Lofgren from California, that simply said: Look, the Senate passed a good gun safety bill 8 months ago, and the House passed one that wasn't so good, but at least they passed a bill—and what Congress does when the Senate and House pass different bills, they get together, just like you do in Maryland, and you have a conference committee, and you work out a compromise, and you send it to the chief executive, and he signs or vetoes it.

They haven't met in 8 months. And the reason is, they know that our friends in the media back there cannot run a headline story every day for 8 months saying they haven't met; I mean, they can't. They've got a lot of work to do; tomorrow there will be something else on the news. So they thought, "This thing will just go away if we just don't meet. But if we meet and we have to say what our position is, we'll get hurt, or something might happen." So they just never met.

So Zoe Lofgren introduced a resolution in the House today that simply said one thing: Meet. [Laughter] You draw a paycheck every 2 weeks; earn it. Meet. Do something on this bill. Even if it's wrong, do something. That's all it said.

Well, the NRA acted like we were going to go confiscate guns. And they were up there pressuring people, handing out these awful pamphlets, running all these ads and everything.

So a bunch of them came down to the White House today, a bunch of the Members of the House, including about three Republicans, including Connie Morella from Maryland, who spoke. And Carolyn McCarthy spoke, whose husband was killed and whose son was nearly killed by the man who was using an automatic weapon on the Long Island subway 7 years ago. She was a lifelong Irish Catholic Republican. She switched parties, ran for Congress, became one of our Members. And I can tell you, we're really proud of her. She got up and talked about how callous it was for people who disagree with us on the issue to act like we don't care whether people die or not.

And the point I made was that—I was trying to get a little levity in the situation because it's so profoundly sad, but I also wanted people to think. I said—but these people at the NRA, what their position is is that guns are different from every other single safety threat. Every other threat, we do as much prevention as possible, and then if somebody does something wrong and we catch them, we punish them. But we try to prevent. I mean, every one of us was raised with that old "ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," right? But they say, "No, no, no, no prevention. Just throw the book at them if they do something wrong."

And I asked the crowd, and I'll ask you, how would you feel if I called a press conference tomorrow morning and I said the following: "My fellow Americans, I have been really concerned

about how difficult it is in crowded airports, with airplanes already delayed, for people to have to go through these metal detectors. And you've got a money clip in your pocket or a belt buckle that's too big, and you have to go through 2 or 3 times, and it's just a pain. Now, most people who fly on airplanes are completely honest. And 99.999 percent of them are being terribly burdened by these metal detectors. So I'm just going to take them out. And the next time somebody blows up a plane, if I catch them, I'm going to throw the book at them." [Laughter] You guys would think I had completely lost it, wouldn't you?

What if somebody said to you, "You know, most people who drive cars are really good people. They're responsible drivers. They're never drunk when they drive. They're just as good as they can be. And I'm just tired of them being burdened with having to get a license and having to observe the speed limit. And by the way, we're going to rip all the seatbelts out of all the cars, because most people do the right thing anyway." I mean, it's absurd, right? You know it's absurd. That is the argument: no prevention, only punishment.

So this is a huge deal, much bigger than just the issue at hand. Look, I know what the Constitution says. And quite apart from the Constitution, the American people believe they ought to have the right to hunt; they ought to have the right to sport shooting. But the death rate from accidental gun shootings is 15 times higher in this country than it is in the next 25 biggest countries combined, for kids.

I had a fellow call me yesterday when he saw all the press about this, an old friend of mine, just to remind me that once in his garage many years ago his little boy and his little boy's best friend were playing with a gun that they got somewhere else. The gun went off and killed his little boy's best friend. I've known this guy forever. He said, "I just want to remind you of that; don't forget that." He said, "It took my son years to get over that. He had no wounds, no burdens himself, but he had to live with seeing his friend die, and in front of him, as a kid, in a game they were playing together with something they had no business in their hands."

So I say to all of you, these are not issues to be taken lightly. And there are huge differences here between the parties and their

leadership and between our nominees for President. And that's going on this year.

Now, the last thing I would like to say to you is, we've got—what I hope this election will be—I hope and pray that there will be no votes on this gun issue in November. But the only way there can be no votes in it is if Congress does the right thing and starts saving kids' lives and putting the lives of our children first.

But I want you to think about this. I want you to think—I want you to lift your sights now. I want you to say, “So I came here because they did good. I came here because Al Gore was the best Vice President in history. I came here because I agree with them on the fights they're waging now.” The fourth thing I hope you'll say is, the big issue, “This is the best time this country has ever known in many ways, and we have to make the most of it.”

That's what I tried to say at the State of the Union Address. You know, when I became President, everybody was just worried about keeping the ship afloat and turning it around. Well, we've got it turned around now. What are we going to do with it?

How many times in your life have you made a mistake—if you're over 30, you have, whether you admit it or not—how many times in your life have you made a mistake not because times were bad but because times were good in your life, because you thought everything was—in a business or in a family situation or just in your personal situation, you thought things were rocking along so well there was absolutely no questions to be asked and no consequences to breaking your concentration or indulging yourself a little when you should have been thinking down the road?

That's what I want you to think about. We have a chance to save Social Security and Medicare for when the baby boomers retire, so we don't bankrupt our children and their ability to raise our grandchildren. We've got a chance to get this country out of debt for the first time since 1835, so we keep interest rates low for a generation and the economy hot. We have a chance to give an excellent education to every child in this country by working with the schools and the States. We have a chance to meet the enormous environmental challenge of global warming and our local environmental challenges and to do it in a way that actually increases

the rate of growth of the economy, not undermine it.

We have a chance to help people balance work and family by doing more for child care, by broadening family leave, by raising the minimum wage, by providing more health insurance coverage to lower income working people who can't afford it. We have a chance to do these things.

We have a chance to be the world's leading force for peace and freedom and justice, to help people solve their racial, their tribal, their religious conflicts. And we have a chance to truly build one America at home and to stop the prejudice against people just because of their race or their religion or just because they're gay or just because of their politics.

You know, the difference between us and our friends in the Republican Party is, I don't have any problem with people on the so-called religious right practicing their religion and taking their religion into politics. That's their business. I've never tried to demonize them. But if they were in power, they would demonize us, just like they did before. They don't think we should have the same rights that we're willing to give to them. They want us to live according to their rules. We're perfectly willing to let them live according to their rules. They want us to live according to theirs. And that's the difference.

And I just want you to think about that, because this is such a hopeful time for our country, but it will only work if we are very serious about this election. Now, you heard Peter talking about the money involved. The only reason the money is important is it costs money to communicate with people. The American people nearly always get it right if they have enough information and enough time. They've got a great internal compass, and they nearly always get it right. That's why we're still around here after over 200 years.

And it doesn't matter if they have more money than we do. They had \$100 million more than we did in 1998, and we still picked up seats in the House of Representatives, in the sixth outyear of a President's term, for the first time since 1822. But we have to have enough.

So I want you to think about—this is the most important thing you can say. When you talk to people when you go home, more important than “They kept their promises,” more important than “Al Gore was the greatest Vice President,” more important than “I agree with

them on the fights,” more important than the specific issues going toward the future, the most important thing is this: We have got to be one united country, committed to making the most of this moment.

Sunday, a week ago, I went to Selma, Alabama, for the 35th anniversary of the voting rights march on Bloody Sunday across the Edmund Pettus Bridge. And for me as a white southerner, it was a moment of a lifetime. Unless you were part of all that back then, you can't imagine what it meant to me, the honor I felt just to be there, to be with John Lewis, who I admire and love, and Coretta Scott King and Hosea Williams, getting up out of his wheelchair to walk across the bridge, and Dick Gregory and Reverend Jackson and all these other people. Kids find it hard to believe that 35 years ago you could get killed—white or black—you could get killed for fighting for the right to vote.

And what's that got to do with this? Here's what it's got to do with this. We're now in the longest economic expansion in American history—20-year low in poverty, record lows in African-American and Hispanic unemployment—the longest one we've ever had. Do you know when we broke the record? Do you know what record we broke? The economic expansion of 1961 through 1969.

I finished high school in 1964. President Kennedy had just been killed. President Johnson was in office. The country had rallied behind him. Unemployment was low. Growth was high. Inflation was low. And I'll tell you something, we thought it would go on forever—and not just the economy. We thought we'd win the cold war without incident, and we thought our President and our Congress would solve the civil rights problems of America through legislation in the Congress. And we thought we were going to rock on forever.

In 1965 we had Bloody Sunday. In 1966 we had riots in our streets. By 1968—I graduated from college on June 8. It was 2 days after Senator Kennedy was killed, 2 months after Martin Luther King was killed, 9 weeks after Lyndon Johnson said he couldn't run for President anymore. Our country was split right down the middle. Richard Nixon was elected President, saying he represented the Silent Majority, which meant those of us who weren't for him were in the loud minority. It was just a version of what you see today. It was, “This old country

is divided between 'us' and 'them.'” And we've had these “us” and “them” elections. I've done my best to end it, but that's what you see, “us” and “them,” “us” and “them.” And a few months after that, the longest economic expansion in American history was gone.

I've been waiting for 35 years—not as President, ever since I was a young man—I have waited for 35 years for my country to be in a position to build the future of our dreams for our children. Now, that is fundamentally what this election is about. And when you hear the gun debate, the education debate, the tax versus pay-down-the-debt-and-save-Social-Security-and-Medicare debate, you need to be asking yourself every single time: Which decision is more likely to allow us to come together as one America and to build the future of our dreams for our children? Because when I was a kid, we thought all this was going on automatic. And then one day it came off, the wheels came off, and it was gone. And for 35 years I have waited.

I have worked as hard as I can for 7 years to give you this chance. And it is in your hands. Don't let anybody you know vote in this election without asking themselves that question: How do we build the future of our dreams for our children?

Thank you. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:30 p.m. in the White Hall Ballroom at the Harbor Court Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Peter and Georgia Angelos; Gov. Parris N. Glendening and Lt. Gov. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend of Maryland; Richard N. Dixon, State treasurer, and president, State board of education; John T. Willis, Maryland secretary of state, Casper R. Taylor, Jr., speaker, and Peter Franchot and Howard P. Rawlings, members, Maryland House of Delegates; Sheila Dixon, president, Baltimore City Council; Ronald L. Daniels, commissioner, Baltimore City Police Dept.; former Mayors Thomas D'Alesandro III and Kurt Schmoke of Baltimore; Mayor Martin O'Malley of Baltimore and his wife, Katie; Earl S. Richardson, president, Morgan State University; Edward G. Rendell, general chair, Democratic National Committee; Gov. George W. Bush of Texas; Wayne LaPierre, executive vice president, National Rifle Association; Veronica and Michael McQueen, mother and stepfather of 6-year-old Kayla Rolland, who died

after she was shot by 6-year-old classmate Dedrick Owens in Mount Morris Township, MI; Coretta Scott King, widow of Martin Luther King, Jr.; civil

rights activists Hosea Williams and Dick Gregory; and Rev. Jesse Jackson, founder and president, Rainbow/PUSH Coalition.

Remarks on Departure for Capitol Hill and an Exchange With Reporters

March 16, 2000

Legislative Agenda/Oil Prices

The President. Good afternoon. I'd like to say just a few words, before I go up to the Speaker's annual Saint Patrick's Day luncheon, about three issues.

Yesterday the House took a small but significant step down the long road toward common-sense gun safety legislation. House Members from both parties have said it's time to get to work, after 8 months and other senseless shootings. It's time for the House and Senate conference to resolve the differences between the two bills and send one to me.

The American people have spoken clearly and consistently about the need to protect our children from gun violence. The House is listening. I hope the Republican leaders in the House and the Senate will listen and get this conference underway.

Of course, a meeting is just a beginning. Congress should keep working until it sends me a bill I can sign that closes the gun show loophole, requires child safety locks with all new handguns, bans the importation of large capacity ammunition clips. Again, I hope they will reconsider and restore the provision that hold adults responsible if they knowingly or recklessly let little children have access to guns.

A courageous bipartisan majority in the House has now said no to the attack ads, no to the name-calling, and no to the threats. They have stood up for the American people, but there are further tests ahead. The clock is ticking, and America is waiting to see whether Congress can really produce a bill that responds to the interests of our children and not the intimidation of the NRA.

I'd also like to say a few words about the budget the House passed yesterday. It is more than a balance sheet; every budget is. It's a blueprint for our future. For 7 years, our administration has worked to build a future based on fiscal discipline. The budget proposed by the

Republican leadership would erode that discipline. It would weaken, not strengthen, the foundation Americans have worked so hard to build for the future.

Before devoting a single dollar to pay down the debt or extend the solvency of Social Security or Medicare or provide a voluntary prescription drug benefit or invest in our children's education, the majority's budget already spends almost half a trillion dollars in tax cuts—almost half a trillion, and as the Republican budget makes clear, they're just getting started.

This is unrealistic, unwise. The risks it poses are unconscionable. It is as risky and costly as the budget they proposed last year that I vetoed. It would undermine our ability to make America debt-free by 2013, to strengthen Social Security and take it out beyond the life of the baby boom generation, to lengthen the life of Medicare and add a voluntary prescription drug benefit. It would slash our most pressing priorities across the board, from education and the environment, from law enforcement to public health, from scientific research to basic nutrition. It would be impossible for them to follow the path that we have all agreed on to modernize our defense forces and improve the quality of life of our men and women in uniform.

This is the wrong path for America. The only way they could meet their spending priorities with this tax cut is to go back to huge deficits. I asked the leadership to change course, to go back and write a budget that maintains our fiscal discipline and meets our most pressing priorities.

Now, the third issue I would like to mention very briefly is that I have just met with the Secretary of Energy and his team and my economic team, and we have talked about the present difficulties that Americans are facing because of the price of gasoline and the high price of oil, and what our short and longer term options are. And we've been working very hard