

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee and Nevada State Democratic Party Reception in Las Vegas April 2, 2000

Thank you very much. Well, first, let me say I am delighted to be here. When I got up this morning—a little early, because we had this shift to daylight savings time—it was cloudy in Washington. And I think I made a good swap. [Laughter] I just talked to Hillary on the phone, and I'm on my way to northern California to do an event and see our daughter tonight, and I think I made a good decision to travel west today. I love coming back to Las Vegas.

I will say—you know, Jan was kind of joshing with me on the way in. I said, "Gosh, I love this house." And she said, "Well, you know, I'll give you a lot of variety because I move every year." [Laughter] And I think she ought to give this place at least 18 months. This is a wonderful place, and I'm delighted to be here, and I think we all are.

I want to thank Senator Bryan, as he retires. I want to wish him well and thank him for all that he did as Senator, Governor, and attorney general. I'm so old and creaky, I served with both Dick Bryan and Bob Miller, and I thank you, sir, for everything you did. Thank you, and we wish you well.

I want to thank Harry Reid, and I want to thank you, Representative Berkley, for helping to get the votes that will guarantee that when I veto that nuclear waste bill, the veto will be sustained. And I thank you for that.

I told the people of Nevada in November of 1998 in no uncertain terms that if they wanted to have the law observed instead of short-circuited, they had to reelect Harry Reid, and that we needed a Member of Congress from our party who had agreed with us here. And you won, and you won. And Harry was like Jack Kennedy in 1960; he didn't buy a single vote he didn't need. [Laughter]

And I want to be heard again publicly on this. If it hadn't been for your delegation working the Congress, explaining the issue, we would never have gotten enough votes on our side—and we did better this time—to sustain the President's veto. And I would hope the people of Nevada will think about this in this coming Presidential race, because I'm not on the ballot, and I won't be here next time. And I'll guar-

antee it; it is an absolute certainty, 100 percent certainty, that there is a difference in position between the candidates on this issue.

Keep in mind, when the study was originally done, there were two sites that were thought to be appropriate, possibly. One was in Nevada; the other was in rural Texas. So I'll leave it to you. [Laughter] I know you can figure this out.

I want to thank Governor Miller, too, for being my great friend and for all the things that we've done together. We even took a trip to the Balkans together recently, and we had a good time in Bulgaria. I want to thank you, Ed Bernstein, for running for the United States Senate. It's a hard thing to do as a private citizen, and I thank you.

And thank you, Rory Reid, for being the chair of this party. I want to thank all the members of the legislature and the city council, the county commissioners, Mayor Gibson from Henderson, for being here. I want to thank Ed Rendell, my great friend, who when he retired as mayor of Philadelphia, I said I had a little part-time job I wanted him to do. [Laughter] And he's embraced it with gusto.

Thank you, Janice Griffin. There was a couple here who have not been introduced that I'd like to acknowledge. They've come from Chicago, and Lou Weisbach and his wife, Ruth—he's the head of our Jefferson Trust Program for the Democratic Party. And I want to welcome them to Las Vegas and thank them for coming out here with me. And I want to thank former Congressman Bilbray for being here.

Let me say one thing about him, as well, I said earlier. We celebrated—I will begin and end with this fact—we celebrated the longest economic expansion in the history of America in February. It happened because when Al Gore and I were elected, we first of all said, even before we took office, that we were going to do something about the crippling deficit and the debt of our country, which had quadrupled—quadrupled—in the 12 years before I took office. The deficit was \$290 billion, projected to be about \$400 billion this year. And we said we would do something about it, and

interest rates immediately started to drop. Then I presented a program; they started to drop again. Then, in August of '93, came decision time: Were we finally, after 12 years of irresponsibility, going to actually do something about the deficit that was gripping our country?

Now, don't forget what America was like in 1992: high unemployment; high interest rates; low growth; every time we'd get out of a recession, we'd fall right back in; social problems getting worse; Washington full of name-calling and political division, not much going on. That's what was happening.

And the Republicans made a decision that they would not give us a single, solitary vote on the deficit reduction package in 1993—not one. And the leadership put the word out; no one could budge. And they told everybody this was nothing but a tax increase, in spite of the fact that we cut thousands of programs and eliminated hundreds. And they said it would wreck the American economy, and they washed their hands of it. They said, "We're not responsible for what happens." And they certainly aren't. [Laughter]

And this man, Jim Bilbray, voted with me. And he gave up his seat in Congress because of it, because by 1994 the American people had not yet felt that the economy was doing better. They had not felt it. And the Republicans could come out and say, "Well, they all voted for tax increases." Well, a few of you may have had your taxes increased—about 1.2 percent of the American people did. The rest either had no tax increase or an income tax cut.

But we lost a lot of good people in the Congress, and he was one. But I want you to know, if he hadn't cast that vote, we didn't—we passed that budget by one vote. And everything that has happened since, right down to the longest economic expansion in history, would not have happened if we hadn't gone from deficits to surpluses and gone from high interest rates to low interest rates. And I thank you, Mr. Bilbray, for what you did.

Now, let me say—I want to just get out and say hello to you, and it's a warm day, and I don't want you to have to stand a long time in the sun. But I want you to think about this. If I were to ask you, what's this election about, what would you answer?

This is my answer: Seven years and a few months ago, Al Gore and I took office. And we said we were going to put the people of

this country first by going beyond the politics of division to try to create a country in which there was opportunity for every responsible citizen; in which we had one community across all the racial, religious, and other lines that divide us; in which we're the leading force in the world for peace and freedom and prosperity, and that anybody who wanted to be a part of that should have a chance.

And we have now worked for over 7 years. We not only have the longest economic expansion in history and 21 million new jobs, we've got the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, the lowest minority unemployment rate ever recorded, the lowest female unemployment rate in 40 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 30 years, the lowest poverty rates in 20 years, the lowest crime rates in 25 years, the highest homeownership in the history of the country. Now, that is the record. We have also downsized the Government to the point—it's now the size it was when Dwight Eisenhower was President, and that was a year or two ago. And yet, we're doing more.

So there's not a real debate here. What we have stood for works. And what we have to decide now is, what are we going to do with this moment of prosperity? Are we going to give in to our fears, or are we going to act on our hopes? Are we going to take the easy way because there seems to be no adverse consequence, or are we going to sort of lift our visions and take on the big challenges of the future?

The real issue is, here, not what we've done for the last 7 years but, now that we have this moment, what are we going to do with it? And my answer to you is quite simple. You get a chance like this once in a lifetime, a country does. And we have got to use this moment to take care of the big challenges that our children are going to face when they grow up. And I'll just mention a few.

We could create 21st century schools with world-class education for all of our kids. But we've got to have high standards, accountability, and support, from after-school and summer school programs to computers to modernized facilities in a lot of the cities like Philadelphia, where the average school building is 65 years old, and in New York, where many of the schools, believe it or not, are still heated by coal-fired furnaces built in the 19th century. We can build those 21st century schools.

We can deal with the 21st century family. We have to help people balance work and family. What does that mean? It means, among other things, I think people ought to get a tax deduction for college tuition. I think they ought to get a tax credit for long-term care, because more and more families are taking care of their elderly parents or members with disabilities. I think that we ought to have a tax incentive for child care for working families. Those are the kinds of tax breaks I favor.

I think we ought to raise the minimum wage again. The last time I raised it, they said it would increase unemployment. Since then, we've had record job growth. People ought to make a decent living. I think these are the kinds of things that we ought to do.

I think that we ought to recognize that when we baby boomers retire, there will only be two people working for every one person drawing Social Security. And we should move now—now, not then, now—to lengthen the life of Social Security to 2053—that's my proposal—out beyond the lifespan of the baby boom generation; to save Medicare; to add a prescription drug benefit. Sixty percent of the seniors in this country today can't afford the prescription drugs they need. We ought to do it now.

We ought to act now to prove we can grow the economy and preserve the environment and deal with the problem of climate change and all the other environmental challenges we face. It's not necessary to hurt the economy to do that.

You get the idea. I remember one of the members of the other party criticized me for going to India and Pakistan because we didn't, so-called, "get anything." I think we got a lot out of going to India and Pakistan. I don't want them to have a war, and I think that we should do it. I believe America should be a force for peace and against discrimination and hatred, from Kosovo and Bosnia to the Middle East and Northern Ireland, to Africa and India and Pakistan. That's what I believe.

Now, all of this is at issue. I'm for Al Gore for President not just because I'm devoted to him, and I feel loyalty because he's been the finest Vice President in history, but because I know—because I know he understands the future, and he has the experience, the ability, and the will to lead us in this direction.

And I came here to help these folks in Nevada who are running for Congress, because I

think it's important. Let me tell you something, it really matters who is in the Senate. They're going to vote on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. The Republicans just voted it down—the first time since the dawn of the nuclear age the United States walked away from its responsibility to a safer world. But he would vote for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. It's a big deal. The world these children are going to live in will have all kinds of people trying to build small-scale nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. You can't say it doesn't matter just because we're out here and things are prosperous today. It does matter.

It matters who—the next President is going to appoint between two and four members of the Supreme Court. Who do you want voting to confirm them? You need to think about these things.

And I will say again, this nuclear waste issue, it will not go away. So you need to reelect this fine woman to Congress, and you need to vote for a Senator who will fight with us, and you need to remember that if you make the wrong decision in the White House, you can forget it; it's history. You need to remember these things.

Let me just say again, this is the longest economic expansion in history, and I'm proud of it, and I'm grateful I've had a chance to be a part of it. And I'm delighted that I have had an opportunity to be President, and I love this job. I never would quit if I weren't term-limited, I don't think. *[Laughter]*

But I say this to you as a citizen. The last time we had an expansion this long was in the sixties. And when I—I grew up in it. I graduated from high school in it in 1964, and I did think it would go on forever—low unemployment, low inflation, high growth. I thought all of the civil rights problems of the country would be solved in the Congress and the courts. I had a President, Lyndon Johnson, who was going to do it. I never dreamed the country would be divided over Vietnam in 1964. By the time I graduated from college, Robert Kennedy had been killed 2 days before; Martin Luther King had been killed 2 months before; Lyndon Johnson, 9 weeks before, had to get out of the President's race because our country was divided over Vietnam.

Richard Nixon got elected on a campaign saying he was for the Silent Majority—which means those of us who weren't for him were outcast

in the loud minority—launching whole decades of divisive politics. And just a few months afterward, the longest expansion in American history was gone—history. It was over.

Now, it's a pretty warm day, and we're all in a good humor, and there's not a more optimistic person out here by this pool than me. But I'm telling you, this is the chance of a lifetime. That's what you're here for. Are we going to take on the big challenges, or go back to the easy way out? Are we going to pull together across the lines that divide us with things like the hate crimes bill and the employment nondiscrimination bill, or are we going to go back to "us" and "them" politics?

I've been waiting for 35 years for this to roll around again—35 years since my country had

a chance to build the future of its dreams for its children. I'm a Democrat by heritage, instinct, and conviction. I'm proud of what we've done. But the best is yet to be. You go out and tell people that, and we'll win in November.

Thank you, and God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:06 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to former Mayor Jan Jones of Las Vegas; former Gov. Bob Miller of Nevada; Rory Reid, chair, Nevada State Democratic Party; Mayor James B. Gibson of Henderson, NV; Edward G. Rendell, general chair, Democratic National Committee; and Janice Griffin, chair, Women's Leadership Forum.

Remarks on Arrival in San Jose, California, and an Exchange With Reporters *April 2, 2000*

Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi of Japan

The President. I just wanted to say that I have heard today the sad news that Prime Minister Obuchi has been hospitalized with a stroke. He has been a good friend to me personally, a good friend of the United States. And he has been a tireless worker to restore the Japanese economy and to bring Asia back from its financial crisis.

And I just wanted to say that the thoughts and prayers of the American people are with him, his family, and the people of Japan. We hope for a speedy recovery. And in the meanwhile, we will work with Acting Prime Minister Aoki to maintain the strong relationship we enjoy.

But I think Prime Minister Obuchi is a very good man, and I—it's sad news for all of us here in America, but we're pulling for his recovery, and we will—we will keep our prayers there.

Thank you very much.

Q. What are you hearing about—about how he is?

The President. Nothing. I have tried to get more information, but all I know is that he's hospitalized, and the condition was serious enough to appoint an acting Prime Minister. That may or may not mean anything, you know. My guess is that they'll have to wait a while and assess—

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Q. Mr. President, did you hear—did you hear Mr. Lazio's comments today indicating he might get into the New York Senate race?

The President. No, I have no knowledge of that.

Thanks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:15 p.m. at Moffett Field. In his remarks, he referred to Acting Prime Minister Mikio Aoki of Japan. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.