

Remarks at a Reception for Senatorial Candidate Representative Ron Klink
in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
July 10, 2000

Thank you very much. Thank you for the wonderful welcome. I want to thank you, Mayor Rendell, for agreeing to take this little part-time job I offered you as head of the party—[laughter]—and for doing it so well. And thank you, Mayor Street, for proving beyond doubt that I was right when I came up here and campaigned for you. I told them you were going to be a great mayor, and you have been. Thank you.

I thank Chaka Fattah for being here for Ron and for always being there for me and for the people of Philadelphia and for his truly exemplary leadership in the Congress. One of the things that Chaka Fattah will always be known for is getting us to adopt a program to put mentors into schools with poor kids, to tell them early that if they learned their lessons and took the right courses, they would be able to go to college, and we would be able to have the money for them. And we owe him a lot for that, and I thank him for that.

I want to thank Ron Klink for running. [Laughter] You know, I kind of identify—he started running, and everybody said, “Well, nobody can win the Senate race. They don’t have enough money. They’re going to have a primary”—blah, blah, blah. It reminded me when I ran for President in 1991, only my mother and my wife thought I had a chance to win. [Laughter] And on the bad days, they weren’t sure. [Laughter]

So I want to thank him for running, and I would like to thank his wife, Linda, for being here and for supporting him and for being great. Thank you.

These races are tough for everybody. I’ll tell you, now that I’m struggling to become a member of the Senate spouses club—[laughter]—I’m a lot more nervous about Hillary’s campaign than I ever was about mine. [Laughter] I mean, you’re running, you just sort of suit up and go out and play the game. But otherwise, you just sit home and claw the walls and hope it’s working out all right. [Laughter]

So I want to thank them for undertaking this. He has been a superb Congressman. We’ve worked together for almost 8 years now. Every

time the interest of working families, the long-term interests of the ordinary citizen of this country were at stake, he was always there with me, and I’m grateful. And he could have stayed in the House and never been touched. You know, they told him, “Well, you represent this sort of heartland, old-fashioned district. You won’t play in Philadelphia.”

Well, one of the reasons I came here tonight is there is nobody in the whole wide world Philadelphia has ever been better to than Bill Clinton, and I came to ask you to help Ron Klink play in Philadelphia, because we’ve got to have you to win this race.

I must tell you, this is somewhat awkward for me tonight to be here because, you know, tomorrow morning I’m going up to Camp David to start the Middle East peace talks. And we’re going to try to agree on a resolution of these big, thorny issues that the parties agreed, on the White House lawn in September of 1993, they would come to terms with a good while before now. And it isn’t easy.

I just got back from Penn State. I went over to Penn State to speak to the Governors’ conference—they’re meeting over there—and to go to the Creamery and get my ice cream cone. [Laughter] Anyway, I just got back from there. And all these people were saying, that I’ve known forever, saying, “Gosh, you look tired.” I said, “I am tired. I’ve been up studying. Give me a test on some piece of land anywhere in Jerusalem or Israel. I know the answer.” [Laughter] “Ask me to draw a map of the West Bank in my sleep. I can do it.”

But I say that to make this point. What really matters in our common life, when you strip it all away, are things like what Ron said—quoting Hubert Humphrey.

I’m glad these children are here tonight. What will this election mean for those who have most of their lives in front of them? Did you ever think of that? A lot of people who have the most influence in elections are those who have lived most of their lives, but the people that will be the most impacted by the decisions are those that have most of their lives in front of them.

What will this election mean for the people who couldn't afford to come to this fundraiser tonight but get up every day and work their hearts out, with dignity, and do their very best to raise their children and do everything else they're supposed to do, people like the folks that served all of you your drinks and helped you come in tonight? What about them? [*Applause*] What about them?

In a larger sense, I'm here not just because I like Ron Klink and I'm grateful for the support he's given to everything we've done for the last 8 years but because I think that this election is just as important as the two in which I was elected and reelected President and to which the Vice President was elected and reelected Vice President. I think it's just as important. And I'd just like to tell you three things. You only have to remember three things about this election, and a few odd details.

Number one, it really is a big election, for President, for Senator, for Congressman. Why? Because how a nation deals with its prosperity is just as stern a test of its judgment, its values, and its character as how a nation deals with adversity.

I mean, when I ran for President in '92, the economy was in the dumps; the deficit was exploding; crime was going up; welfare was going up; social divisions and political paralysis were getting worse. You didn't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out we ought to change something.

But now everything is going in the right direction. We've got over 22 million new jobs, the lowest unemployment rate in more than three decades, the lowest crime rate in three decades, the lowest welfare rolls in 32 years—half the size they were when I took office—the longest economic expansion in history, the lowest minority unemployment rate ever recorded, highest homeownerships ever. So what are we going to do with this?

Here's the point. Think about these kids. There's not a person in this room tonight, not one over 30, who cannot remember one time in your life when you made a mistake, not because things were going so poorly but because things were going so well you thought there was no penalty for your failure to concentrate. That is what this election is all about. This is a huge deal. We may never in our lifetime, ever, get the chance we have today to build

the future of our dreams for our children. That's the first point.

The second point I want you to know is, there are real and honest differences. And I hope and pray for my country's sake that we can have an old-fashioned election. I wish it could be like the old Lincoln-Douglas debates. I wish Governor Bush and Vice President Gore could get in a caravan and just go around the country and have debates—have 8 or 10 or 20 or 30. I wish that we could have it in the Senate races.

And this is an election where we don't have to have the kind of things coming out of the candidates, and unfortunately, out of other quarters in our society—we've had too much the last 20 years where people are afraid the only way they can win is to convince the voters that their opponent is just one notch above a car thief. We'd just talk about where the differences are and let the folks decide. And we don't have to assume there's something wrong with our opponents. We say, "They're good people. They really do believe this, and I really do believe that, and you decide." So there are real differences—important election; real differences.

Here's the third thing you need to know. Only the Democrats want you to know what the differences are. What does that tell you about who you ought to vote for? [*Laughter*]

Now, I see it all over the country, in campaign after campaign after campaign, where our guys just want to talk about, "Here's where I stand; here's where my opponent stands. Here's how he voted; here's how I would have voted. Here's what the position is on the issues current; here's what their position is on the issues." And the other guys, they complain about a negative campaign. And then they go out and say bad things about our side, personally, something wrong with our people, personally. But if you just tell the voters, if you give them information about how they voted, is that a negative campaign? Beats anything I ever saw.

But I'm just telling you that's why it's so important for you to be here. You are giving Ron Klink the ammunition he needs to get the evidence out there.

And look, we don't disagree on everything. I'm working with the Speaker of the House, and I hope we can pass it in the Senate, pass this new markets legislation that I think will have overwhelming bipartisan support to bring more economic opportunity to poor areas. We

voted virtually unanimously to lift the earnings limit on Social Security. So there are lots of things that we still can do, that we don't disagree.

But let me just tell you that the areas of disagreement that are real and honest are profoundly important. I'll just give you a couple of examples—and Ron alluded to them. Let's talk about people in the twilight of life, first. We believe, now that we've got this big surplus, that one thing we ought to do is to give a Medicare prescription drug benefit—voluntary—for all seniors who need it, make it affordable. That's what we believe.

And when we say that we're for it and they're not, they have now all been conditioned—there was a survey the other day that said they had hired a pollster to give them words and phrases to convince you that they're for something they're against. In fact, they actually owned up. They didn't even deny it. It was in the press the other day. And they act very wounded. They said, "Oh, how could they say that about me?" [Laughter] "I am for a Medicare prescription drug benefit," or, "I'm for a prescription drug benefit for seniors." That's what they say.

Well, they are. But their plan is a private insurance plan that even the health insurance companies say nobody will buy because it won't be affordable. A couple of days ago the press reported that Nevada had actually adopted a plan exactly like the one the Republicans are advocating, and now it's been several months, and there is not a single insurance company offering this drug insurance because they know they can't offer it to the people who need it at a price they can afford to pay.

Now, look, we've never had a surplus like this before. And if we were starting Medicare today instead of 35 years ago, we'd never think about having a program for seniors if it didn't cover drugs in it. The average person who lives to be 65 has got a life expectancy of 82 years. The prescription drugs keep people out of the hospital. They lengthen their lives; they make them richer. This is a big deal. You have people every single week choosing between food and medicine.

So I say to you, this is a profound difference. And I believe we're right. And they say, "It's not worth it. We're worried about the cost"—I'll come to this later. They say, "We're worried about the cost of this. We don't want to spend all this money here. So that's why we just want

to help a few people. We want to help people up to 150 percent of the poverty line." That sounds reasonable, doesn't it? You know what that is? That's an income of \$12,600 for a senior citizen and \$16,600 for a couple. There are lots of seniors in this country who spend that much every year on drugs. This is a big deal. This is not rhetoric or hot air. They have differences of opinion. The truth is, that's not one of their big priorities. They'd rather spend the money on something else, and they ought to just say that and let you decide.

Or, take the Patients' Bill of Rights. We're for a Patients' Bill of Rights, and we do have some Republicans who are for it, and we appreciate that. The bill that passed the House of Representatives says everybody in an HMO anywhere in the country has got a right to see a specialist when they need to see the specialist, that you cannot be forced to give up your doctor in the middle of a treatment even if you change employers. For example, if you have cancer and you're taking chemo or if you're a young pregnant woman and you're about to have a baby, just because you change employers, you can't be forced to give up your doctor.

And if you get in an accident in Philadelphia, you don't have to go all the way across town. You can stop at the nearest hospital emergency room without a financial penalty. And if you get hurt by a bad decision, you have a right to redress, in other words, to enforce the Patients' Bill of Rights. That's our position.

Now, this is a big deal. I don't know how many people I've talked to in the last 2 years in the health care system who told me horror story after horror story after horror story. I was with a man just the other day, in the State of Missouri, who introduced me, a male emergency room nurse. This guy was amazing. He was about 6 feet tall, weighed about 230, looks like he could bench-press me on a cold day. [Laughter] I could just imagine him just yanking the doors off cars to rescue people and stuff. And he told a story about losing a patient, that he had to go by two hospital emergency rooms to get to the one that was covered by the plan. This is a big deal. Now, in the Senate, the Patients' Bill of Rights failed by one vote, 51 to 49. If it had been 50-50, the Vice President could have voted, and as he says, whenever he votes, we always win.

Now, this is a big deal, folks. Think about how you'd feel if it was somebody that you

loved. How would you feel if you walked out of this hotel and—God forbid—got hit by a car? Would you want the ambulance chasing around looking for the approved hospital, or would you want them to go to the quickest one? How would you like to know that you could be docked because you didn't call for permission? How are these people supposed to call when they get hit? What if they get knocked unconscious? Did you ever make a phone call with three broken ribs? [Laughter] I know you're laughing at this, but I'm very serious. This happens every day.

So their side has a bill which leaves out 100 million Americans and doesn't give you a right to redress and actually weakens some States' patients' bill of rights. And we have the one that a couple of hundred medical professionals have endorsed, all of these groups, health care groups. So when we say we're for the Patients' Bill of Rights and our opponents aren't, they look very wounded and they say, "But we're for a patients' bill of rights." The operative word is "a." And there is a lot of difference between "a" and "the," more than two letters let me tell you.

So what you have to do to help Ron Klink, and all you have to do, is to say, "We don't have anything bad to say about the person of his opponent. They honestly differ. He's for the Patients' Bill of Rights, and his opponent isn't. And if he changed his vote, we'd have it today—today—that one vote. One hundred million Americans, their livelihood and maybe their very lives riding on a vote just cast in the United States Senate—one vote. If he had been there, we'd have the Patients' Bill of Rights."

Like I said, I'll give you just one more example, because I know I'm preaching to the saved here, but you've got to think of things you're going to say to other people. I'll give you one more example.

It seems to me that one of the most important things the next administration and the next Congress have to deal with is how to keep what is already the longest economic expansion in the history of the country going, and how to extend it to people in places that still aren't fully participating in this prosperity. How are we going to keep this thing going?

Well, I believe that what we ought to do is invest in what we know works, in education, in science and technology, and the energy future of the country. You ought to take care of the

baby boom generation. That is, we ought to make sure that when all of us retire, Social Security and Medicare are safe so we don't bankrupt our kids and our grandkids. We ought to have a tax cut, but it ought to be one we can afford. It ought to be targeted toward long-term care, child care, retirement savings, savings for a college education, giving people incentives to invest in these poor areas of our country. That's what I think. But we've got to save back enough money to keep paying the debt down.

Now, why should the progressive party, the Democratic Party, be for getting the country out of debt? Under our plan, you get out of debt in 12 years, the first time since 1835. Why should we be for that? Well, why are we all standing here? How could you afford a ticket tonight? Because we've got the longest economic expansion in history. And when you drive interest rates down and people can borrow money, they buy more cars; they buy more homes; they finance more college educations; they start more businesses; they expand more businesses; they create more jobs; and they raise more wages. That's why. The most progressive thing we can do for ordinary people is to keep this economy going, and that's why we are for doing this whole thing in a way that enables us to keep paying down the debt.

Let me just give you one little statistic. If we pay down the debt and we keep interest rates just one percent lower than they otherwise would have been, just one percent, that amounts to \$250 billion in lower mortgage payments for the American people over the next 10 years. It's the same thing as a \$250 billion tax cut.

Now, that's what I think. That's where we are. That's one reason why I want Ron Klink to be there, because the progressive party has become the fiscally conservative party. And I don't think that's bad; I think that's progressive. In a global economy where people put their money anywhere they want, we've got to get the money here, at prices people can afford.

Now, what is their policy? Their policy is to say, "We've got this huge surplus. It's your money. We're going to give it back to you." Now, that sounds better than what I just said. And I could say it in 3 seconds, right? It's got to be a political winner. [Laughter]

Here's the problem. By the time you take their proposed tax cut, which includes 100 percent doing away with the estate tax—and I think it ought to be changed, by the way; I think

it's too onerous on people—but they want to get rid of 100 percent of it, and that's \$100 billion over 10 years, and \$50 billion goes to one-tenth of one percent of the population.

A friend of mine who is now a billionaire called me last week and said, "What are you guys doing in Washington? I don't need—why are you doing this?" He said, "Raise the minimum wage. Give people a child care tax credit. Why are you cutting my taxes?" It was very interesting.

But look, that's just part of it. It does need to be changed for small businesses and farms. We ought to change it some. But it doesn't have to be done away with.

But here's the main point I want you to know. When you pay for all their tax cuts and their privatization of Social Security, it costs a lot of money. That is, if you let people keep their own payroll taxes and invest it and—you've still got to pay for all the retirees and you've got to get the money from somewhere, right? So when you just pay for all their tax cuts and the privatization of Social Security, before they keep any of their other spending promises, you've already spent the entire projected surplus.

Now, let me just say that, projected. All the people that talk about how big the surplus is—the only surplus you really know about is this year's \$211 billion; and when I leave office, we'll have had 3 years in a row, and we'll have paid off \$400 billion of the national debt. Everything else is projected. That's the important word, "projected."

Now I want to ask you all a question. Don't answer it, just think. Think. What is your—the people working here and the people that showed up for the fundraiser—everybody think—what is your projected income over the next 10 years? That is, what do you think it will be? And I want you to think just for 20 seconds, and I want you to arrive at a figure that you have 80 percent confidence in; I mean, you're just sure over the next 10 years you'll make at least this much. Now, you think about it.

Okay, now, if I asked you to come up here right now and sign a contract spending every last penny of your projected income for the next 10 years, would you do it? [Laughter] Now, if you would, you should vote for the incumbent Senator. But if you wouldn't, you better vote for Ron Klink and keep this economy going.

I could go on and on, but you get the picture. The Patients' Bill of Rights, the Medicare drugs, the paying down the debt, and there are lots and lots of other issues. Senators cast a lot of votes, or they decide not to cast votes. Just in the last year, the Republican majority on the party-line vote defeated an African-American judge from Missouri I nominated for the Federal court. They said he wasn't qualified; he was too liberal. He was the only African-American ever to serve on the State Supreme Court of Missouri. He had the highest recommendations from the American Bar Association. But the way they figured it, he wasn't qualified. If Ron Klink had been in the Senate, there would have been one less vote against that African-American judge and one more vote for one America.

I appointed a Hispanic man from Texas who grew up in a poor community in El Paso, a poor neighborhood, went to Harvard, graduated summa cum laude. The judges in west Texas said he's one of the best three best lawyers in west Texas. He got the highest recommendation from the American Bar Association. The Republican Senators from Texas, they won't even give him a hearing. They say he's not qualified. And when they say "not qualified," what they mean is, he's not rightwing enough for me, not part of my America. And the leader of the Republican Party in Texas—and you all know who he is—[laughter]—total silence while this man is denied even the dignity of a hearing.

Now, why did they not want to give him a hearing? Because they don't want him on the court, but they don't want you to know they don't want him on the court. And they want it to just go away. It's a big deal, a vote in the Senate. It's a big deal.

I'll say something else. You all clapped when I mentioned the people, the people that work in this hotel. Their kids ought to have a chance to go out and be Federal judges or Senators or Presidents.

So I came here because Philadelphia has been good to me. You've never been better to anybody than you've been to me and the Vice President. We're grateful. But these Senate seats are real important, and you've got a guy that comes out of a part of this State and has ties to people that give him a chance to win this race. It's very difficult to beat a well-funded incumbent. He's got a chance to win it, and he's worth fighting for.

July 10 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 2000

If you want to keep the prosperity going, if you want to extend it to people left behind, if you want to take more children out of poverty and give more children a world-class education, if you want our seniors to have a Medicare drug program, if you want people in managed care programs to be protected, if you want to know that everybody will get fair consideration and everybody can be represented on our courts and other parts of our national life, we really can build one America. It's a big deal who you send to the Senate, and I hope you'll send Ron Klink.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:45 p.m. in the Grand Ballroom at the Warwick Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Edward G. Rendell, general chair, Democratic National Committee; Mayor John F. Street of Philadelphia; Republican Presidential candidate Gov. George W. Bush of Texas; family nurse practitioner Doug Bouldin; and judicial nominees Ronnie L. White of Missouri and Enrique Moreno of Texas. Representative Klink was a candidate for U.S. Senate in Pennsylvania.

Remarks on the Middle East Peace Summit and an Exchange With Reporters

July 11, 2000

The President. Good morning. As all of you know, I am now leaving for Camp David to join Prime Minister Barak and Chairman Arafat in their effort to reach agreement on the core issues that have divided Israelis and Palestinians for half a century now.

The two leaders face profound and wrenching questions, and there can be no success without principled compromise. The road to peace, as always, is a two-way street. Both leaders feel the weight of history, but both, I believe, recognize this is a moment in history which they can seize. We have an opportunity to bring about a just and enduring end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. That is the key to lasting peace in the entire Middle East. Of course, there is no guarantee of success, but not to try is to guarantee failure.

The path ahead builds on the journey already taken from the first Camp David summit to Madrid to Oslo to the first handshake on the lawn between Prime Minister Rabin and Chairman Arafat to the peace between Israel and Jordan and the agreement at Wye River. The parties have proven that peace is possible when they are determined to make it.

In the process, they have passed the point of no return. The only way forward now is forward. Both sides must find a way to resolve competing claims, to give their children the gift of peace. It will take patience and creativity and courage. But Prime Minister Barak and

Chairman Arafat have those qualities, or they would not have come this far. They will also have the unstinting and unequivocal support of the United States.

I'll do everything I can over the coming days to see that this moment of promise is fulfilled. And I hope that those leaders will have the thoughts and prayers and support of all Americans.

Thank you very much.

Israeli Knesset Vote

Q. Mr. President, having barely survived the no confidence vote, does Prime Minister Barak come here with a handicap? Can he negotiate with the full weight of the Knesset and the Israeli people behind him?

The President. First of all, I'll say what I said yesterday. The polls show, in Israel, that well over half the people support his coming here and believe he ought to work for peace. Secondly, he has promised to put whatever agreement is reached here, if an agreement is reached, to a vote of the people. So they have nothing to lose. They'll have final say anyway. There ought to be 100 percent support for his coming here, because the people will be the ultimate deciders on the question. So I think that that is fine. And yes, he had an eight-vote margin yesterday; I would remind you that on most of the days when Yitzhak Rabin came here, he had a one-vote margin in the Knesset.