

Message on the Observance of Labor Day, 2000 *September 1, 2000*

Warm greetings to all Americans as we celebrate Labor Day and honor the millions of working men and women across our nation whose achievements have brought us to this moment of unprecedented economic strength and prosperity.

When I took office in 1993, I committed my Administration to putting in place an agenda to get America back on its economic feet while restoring the values of opportunity, responsibility, and community. I believed that we could create a strong economy that was pro-labor as well as pro-business; that was pro-family as well as pro-work. I am proud that we succeeded in raising the minimum wage, signing into law the Family and Medical Leave Act, and cutting taxes for millions of low-income working families by doubling the earned-income tax credit. And today, thanks to the hard work, creativity, and determination of the American people, our country is enjoying the longest economic expansion in our history, with more than 22 million new jobs, the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, the lowest African American and Hispanic unemployment rates ever recorded, the lowest female unemployment rate in 40 years, and the smallest welfare rolls in 35 years.

But there is still much to do if we are to build the future we want for our children. We must use this rare moment of peace and prosperity to protect Social Security, modernize Medicare, provide prescription drug coverage for our nation's senior citizens, and enact a strong and enforceable Patients' Bill of Rights. We must raise the minimum wage again so that all our workers are able to earn a decent income. We must bridge the digital divide and encourage new investments in underserved regions so that every American community shares in the promise and opportunity of today's dynamic economy. And we must provide America's children with the quality education they need to reach their full potential.

The 20th century was a time of enormous growth and progress for our nation, in large part because of the skill, imagination, and dedication of America's workers. As we celebrate the first Labor Day of this new century, let us honor and thank the working men and women of our nation by building on their accomplishments to create a brighter future for all our people.

Best wishes for a wonderful holiday.

BILL CLINTON

Remarks at a Dinner for Hillary Clinton in Syracuse, New York *September 1, 2000*

Thank you very much. Well, first, I want to thank Duke and Billie for having us here. I want to thank the neighbors in the back for putting up the bathrooms. *[Laughter]* And I want to thank the neighbors across the street for putting up with the sound. Hello, folks! How are you over there? You get to hear my pitch for free. I want you to vote for Hillary, too. *[Laughter]*

We've all had a good time, and I want to hear the musicians some more. And we've got a magician, and I want to see this. I spent 8 years trying to be one. *[Laughter]* So I just want to say a couple of words here.

First of all, I want to thank the people of New York, including the people of Syracuse and central New York, for being so good to me and Hillary and Al and Tipper Gore for the last 8 years. It's meant a lot to me. Secondly, I want to thank my buddy Terry McAuliffe and his family for being like a second family to Hillary and me. And little Jack is out there passing out Hillary stickers. He even gave me one. He wasn't sure who I was for. *[Laughter]* And he wanted to make sure I didn't go soft on him between now and election day, so I appreciate that.

I don't know what I can say to you, because you know where I stand on this election. But

I think there are a couple of points I'd like to make that I know. First of all, you should know that to an extraordinary extent, Hillary has played a substantive, positive role in the work we've done over these last 8 years. Everything we've done in education, health care, and helping people balance work and family and taking care of kids, she's had a hand in—from the family and medical leave law in 1993 to our efforts right through this year to promote adoption and to take better care of foster kids and to take care of those kids that go out on their own in the world with nobody to take care of them—and I'm really proud of that—to getting 2 million kids health insurance to all the things we've done to open the doors of college for all. We now have 10 million people getting tax credits for college education today. And she has fought for every single one of those things. I'm very proud of her.

The second thing I want you to know is, because economics is an issue in central New York and north of here, when I was Governor of Arkansas for 12 years, we had to completely turn the economy around. We did not have an unemployment rate below the national average, until I ran for President in 1992, for a decade. And we worked for 10 long years.

During that time, my wife went on the boards of three Arkansas companies—or two Arkansas companies and one other company—and learned what it would take to get people to invest money and to bring jobs to places that had been left behind. And I'm just telling you, of your choices in the Senate race, you've got one person that spent a serious 10 years working to redevelop the economies of places that aren't doing as well as they ought to be doing. And that's experience. It's money in the bank for you, and you ought to take advantage of it.

Now, the third thing I want to say is, I think she can have an enormously beneficial impact for New York all around the country and all around the world. She can help you in all kinds of ways. One of the reasons that I—I wanted her to run for the Senate if she wanted to—who am I to ever tell anybody not to run for anything? But I said, “You know, you've got to be willing to pay the price. I'm going to India and Pakistan, and you can't go. I'm going to Africa, and you can't go. I'm going to Colombia, and you can't go.” So everywhere I go in the world, people I don't even know come to me and say—everywhere in the world—say, “I

am pulling for your wife. I'm sorry she can't be here.”

At the state dinner the other night in Nigeria, the President of Nigeria, one of the most highly regarded leaders of any developing country in the world, a decorated army general, gets up in the state dinner and says, “I'm really sorry your wife is not here, but I'm glad she's home, and I hope she wins her election.” Not normally said at state dinners.

I was in Bombay with my daughter, in India, and this woman who spends her life going out into villages trying to help millions, literally, of women who have been left behind figure out how to borrow money, start businesses, and take better care of their kids—all she talked about to me was Hillary.

And I'm telling you that because there is a reason that the people that are running against her spend all their time trying to run her down. Because they know if the people of New York ever figure out who she is, what kind of person she is, what she's done, and what she can do for them, she will win in a walk. That's what I want you to do in this election.

I thank you for your contributions, but the most important thing is that you realize that elections are decided by people who don't know the candidates, not by people who do. And she is running a campaign based on the issues and the honest differences between her and her opponent.

And you know, their campaign is basically try to paint a—try to do reverse plastic surgery on her. Right? I mean, let's face it. So you gave her the money, and I thank you for that. And she'll spend it well. But I want you to go out and take some time every day between now and November to tell people you came here; you saw this woman; you like her; you admire her; she'd be good for you, good for your kids, good for your future, and great for New York. If you'll do that, she will win on election day.

Thank you, and God bless you.

I've got to say one other thing. This is flat pander, but I'm not running for office, so I can get away with it. I have, for the last 27 years, eaten barbecue for a living. I come from a place where barbecue is not food; it is a way of life. [Laughter] It is a philosophy of human nature. I have rarely had any as good as this. These people are great, and I thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:35 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts John (Duke) and Billie Jean Kinney;

2000 Democratic National Convention chair Terence McAuliffe and his son, Jack; and President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria.

The President's Radio Address

September 2, 2000

Good morning. On this Labor Day weekend, as we relax with our families, we honor the hard-working men and women who've helped build the strongest economy in our Nation's history. With more than 22 million new jobs, record surpluses, the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, all Americans have a right to be proud.

But even at this time of unprecedented prosperity, millions of Americans still are working every day for the minimum wage. Today I want to talk about giving them a much deserved raise.

Every one of us knows someone who works for the minimum wage and often struggles to make ends meet, people like Cheryl Costas, a mother of four I met just a few months ago. Cheryl's from a small town in Pennsylvania. She works at a local convenience store for the minimum wage so she can support her four children and her disabled husband. As she said to me, \$5.15 an hour doesn't pay the bills. It doesn't put food on the table.

Seventy percent of all workers on the minimum wage, like Cheryl, are adults; almost 50 percent work full-time; 60 percent are women. In many cases, they are their family's sole breadwinners, struggling to raise their kids on \$10,700 a year. These hard-working Americans need a raise.

For more than 7 years now, our administration has sought to build an America that promotes responsibility and rewards work. That's why we nearly doubled the earned-income tax credit to cut taxes for millions of hard-pressed working parents; why we passed a children's tax credit for \$500 that 15 million Americans have taken advantage of; and why we provided for tax cuts for college tuition that 10 million families have taken advantage of; why we fought to pass the Family and Medical Leave Act that over 20 million Americans have taken advantage of to take a little time off when a baby is born or a parent is sick; why we've worked for better

health care coverage and more child care coverage; and why, in 1996, I signed legislation to raise the minimum wage to \$5.15 an hour over 2 years.

It's long passed time we raised it again. In fact, more than a year-and-a-half ago, I proposed to raise the minimum wage by a dollar over 2 years. That's a modest increase that merely restores the minimum wage to what it was way back in 1982 in real dollar terms.

Still, that's no small change to more than 10 million Americans who work for the minimum wage. For a full-time worker, it means another \$2,000 a year, enough for a family of four to buy groceries for 7 months or pay their rent check for 5.

But month after month, even with bipartisan support in Congress, the Republican leadership has sat on our proposal to raise the minimum wage, costing the average full-time worker more than a \$1,000 in lost wages. So far it's been the victim of every legislative maneuver in the congressional handbook, from poison-pill attachments to special interest strong-arming.

Some Republicans have even reverted to the same old attacks they used back in 1996, the last time we raised the minimum wage. Back then, they called the increase, and I quote, a "job killer" that would, quote, "lead to a juvenile crime wave of epic proportions." Well, my fellow Americans, the only thing of epic proportions that's happened since 1996 has been the continued growth of our economy. Since we last raised the minimum wage, our economy has created more than 11 million new jobs, and juvenile crime has gone down every year. Study after study has shown that raising the minimum wage is not only the right thing to do for working families; it's the smart thing to do for our economy.

So my message to Congress is simple: Stop stalling. If the subject is tax breaks for the