

calling. Facts are facts. The one fact is indisputable, that we had a process set up; there was an agreement reached; the hard-working Republicans and Democrats worked until 2:30 in the morning. And they showed up with the agreement, and their leaders wrecked it. They said, "But our special interests won't like this. I'm sorry." Now, those are the facts, and they are indisputable.

So we just need to go back to work here and calm down and do what's right.

Latino and Immigrant Fairness Legislation

Q. Mr. President, the "Latino Immigration Fairness Act" consists of three major provisions. My question is, are you going to fight for all three of them? And you—your people—and I think you may have said it yourself—would veto the State/Commerce and Justice appropriation bill if it did not contain the "Latino Immigration Fairness Act"?

The President. I feel very strongly about that. As I said, the Congress is—the leadership of the Republican Party is against it because they say that—apparently they think they made a mistake with the Cuban and Nicaraguan immigrants, and they don't want to make the same mistake with the others.

I think they did the right thing with them and should do the right thing by the other immigrants. That's what I think. So we're fighting for it, and we'll see.

But I just want—I want to start these negotiations again and get back to work. I think that's the important thing. And I think—I didn't have any choice to do what I did last night. I didn't want to do it, but you know, we just can't—we cannot run the Congress in a way that says we can have an agreement, we can put our kids first, we can get the Republicans and Democrats together, and then the leadership of the Republican Congress can just say, "I'm sorry, our interest groups don't like this; they won't accept it. And so never mind what happens to the 52 million kids that are out there in our schools." We just can't do that. And that's the real story here. It's an astonishing development here, after all we've been through these last 6 years, to see this happening again. And it's very sad, and I hope we can get by it in the next 8 days—7 days.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:36 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House, prior to his departure for Louisville, KY.

Remarks at a Rally in Louisville, Kentucky
October 31, 2000

The President. Thank you very, very much. Thank you. Let me say first of all, did Eleanor give a good speech, or what? That was amazing. [Applause] You know, I have some passing experience at these kinds of events. [Laughter] And I was sitting there thinking, this girl is good; she is really good.

I want to say more about her in a moment, but I also want to tell you how honored I am to be back in Kentucky with your great Governor, Paul Patton, and his wife, Judi, who have been such good friends of mine. My longtime friend who had so much to do with much of the good things that Al Gore and I were able to accomplish in Washington, Senator Wendell Ford, we miss you. Thank you. With your great mayor, who owes some of his success to the fact that he and I were born in the same little

town in Arkansas—Hope, Arkansas—thank you so much, Dave Armstrong, for doing a good job here.

I thank your State party chair, Nikki Patton, for being here and for all you Democrats who have showed up to hear a guy who is not running for anything this year. [Laughter] I want to thank our young president of the school's Young Democrats here, Rashi Sheth. Didn't he do a good job today? Let's give him a hand. [Applause]

And I want to thank Charlie Owen for chairing the Gore/Lieberman campaign. But I'm especially here, as all of you know, to support Eleanor Jordan. She represents the best in our party, the best in our country, and what we need for the future of our Congress.

You know, Kentucky has been awfully good to me. I was standing up here on the stage thinking about the first time I came to Kentucky as a Governor—listen to this—in 1979. I served with six Kentucky Governors, counting Governor Patton, who has been with me this whole time in the White House. And I love this State, and you have been so good to me. You've been so good to me and Hillary and Al and Tipper Gore. You've voted for us twice, given us a chance to serve America.

And you know, the temptation in a rally like this where it's hot and we're all committed—[laughter]—is just sort of give one of these hallelujah speeches and go on and get out of here, you know, because we all know that we're for Eleanor, and we're for Al and Joe, and we know why we're here.

But let's face it. All over America and here in Kentucky, these races are close. And I believe they're close because times are good, and people are relaxed, and everybody running seems like a nice person, and they all sound good.

We've taken a lot of the poison out of America's life. And I'm proud of that, and I'm glad that we're not having all that poison. But nonetheless, it is quite important that we acknowledge that not just Democrats but Republicans are good people who love their country and will do what they think is right. And we ought to be in a good humor in this election year, because we're a better country and a stronger country and a healthier country than we were 8 years ago.

But that does not mean that just because things are going so well and we're all being nice that there are no differences, that there are no consequences, and that we don't have to show up on election day.

So what I would like to ask you to do is just indulge me one more time for a few minutes and let me make the arguments that I hope you will go out across this district and across this great State and to your friends beyond the borders of Kentucky and share with them between now and election day why they ought to vote, what the stakes are, and what the consequences are. Because I believe, in profound ways, that this election is every bit as important as the one which sent Al Gore and me to the White House 8 years ago.

Why do I say that? Because we've done everything we could do to turn the country around and move it forward, to pull it together. But

all the best things are still out there. We have a chance for the first time in my lifetime to conduct a national referendum on our dreams.

Eleanor talked—had that wonderful quote from Benjamin Mays about dreams. We have never in my lifetime had this much prosperity, this much social progress, the absence of domestic crisis and foreign threat to our security. We can use this election to dream our dreams and decide how to get there. But in order to do it, we have to be quite clear not on saying our opponents are bad folks, but saying we have honest differences, and here are the consequences to those decisions, so then the people can go and vote, and all of us can accept the result happily as democracy working.

But those of us who have strong convictions about who should be President, who should be Vice President, who should be Senator or Congressman, we can't let the next 7 days go by without doing everything we can to make sure that all of our fellow citizens understand how important it is that they go to the polls and how important it is that they understand the real and honest differences.

Now, look at 8 years ago, when you gave Al Gore and me a chance to go to Washington. We had an economy in terrible trouble, a society profoundly divided, a political system that was paralyzed. And we asked you to give us a chance to go up there and give the Government back to you; to provide opportunity for every responsible citizen; to create a society in which we were more of a community, in which we didn't run our national politics trying to divide one group against another, but saying that we all have to go forward together; in which we reached out to this amazing new world we're living in and had America as a friend and a supporter of peace and freedom and prosperity everywhere, and where it would help us here at home. And I think you'd all agree it's worked pretty well.

In 1993, when I took the oath of office, unemployment in Kentucky was 6.3 percent; today, it's 3.8 percent. As Eleanor said, we have, nationally, over 22 million new jobs, over 300,000 here in Kentucky; the lowest poverty rate in 20 years; child poverty reduced by a third; the lowest unemployment in 30 years; the lowest African-American unemployment ever recorded; the lowest female unemployment in 40 years; the longest economic expansion in history; and

the highest homeownership ever. That is the difference in now and 8 years ago.

Question number one: Should we keep this prosperity going and extend it to people in places that are left behind? What is the Gore/Lieberman/Jordan proposal? Keep paying down the debt; keep interest rates low; keep the economy going. Take what's left, invest it in education and health care, and give the people a tax cut we can afford.

Now, Eleanor's opponent and the others, they say, "We've got a surplus. We'll give three-quarters in a tax cut and spend a lot of money and privatize Social Security, and well, so what if we go into deficit a little bit?" I'll tell you what, so what. If we keep paying this debt down, interest rates will be a percent lower every year for a decade. Do you know what that's worth to the American people? Three hundred ninety billion dollars in lower home mortgages, \$30 billion in lower car payments, \$15 billion in lower college loan payments, lower business loans, more jobs, more growth, a stronger economy. It's a clear choice. If you want to keep the prosperity going, vote for Eleanor Jordan for Congress.

This is about more than money and more than economics. We have the lowest welfare rolls in 32 years, the lowest crime rates in 26 years. Teen pregnancy and drug abuse are down. There are fewer people without health insurance, for the first time in a dozen years, thanks to the Children's Health Insurance Program that was in the balanced budget law that we fought so hard for.

Our schools are getting better. The dropout rate is down. Math and reading scores are up all over the country—with Kentucky leading the way, I might add. Failing schools are turning around. Thank you, Governor Patton. We have opened the doors of the first 2 years of college to everybody with the HOPE scholarships and the biggest increase in college aid since the GI bill, and the college-going rate is at an all-time high.

And while we've had record economic growth, the environment has steadily gotten better. The air is cleaner; the water is cleaner; 43 million more Americans breathing air that meets Federal standards—43 million. The drinking water is safer; the food is safer. We've cleaned up 3 times as many toxic dumps as the previous administration did in 12 years, and we've set aside more land than any administration since

Theodore Roosevelt, nearly 100 years ago. Now, that's the record.

So, the second big question: Should we build on this record of progress with—on the environmental record with a long-term energy strategy that gets us out of the fix we've been worried about the last few months with new sources of energy and more conservation?

Should we build on the health care strategy by giving health insurance to the children's parents that we've insured? If we've insured the children, shouldn't their parents be able to have insurance? Shouldn't we have a Patients' Bill of Rights? Shouldn't we have a Medicare drug program that all our seniors can afford?

Shouldn't we open the doors of 4 years of college education? Shouldn't every State have to do what Kentucky does, which is to turn around their failing schools or put them under new management so that all of our kids can learn? Shouldn't we provide more teachers for our classrooms and modern schools?

In other words, should we build on this progress, or should we say, "Well, who cares if we've gotten results? We're going to change the crime policy; we're going to weaken the environmental laws; we're going to abandon the education strategy; and we're going to abandon the health care strategy." This is a clear choice. I think we should build on the progress. That's why you need Eleanor Jordan and Al Gore and Joe Lieberman.

Then there's a different, larger question which is harder to put into words, but I think it's important, which is, are we going to become a stronger community? Are we going to keep growing together? We have put an end to the idea that there ought to be class divisions or economic divisions or gender divisions or any other kind of divisions in America. My whole theory is, if somebody shows up and says, "I'm willing to work hard, and I'm willing to obey the law," that's good enough for me. I don't have to know anything else. You're part of America.

So every day we get a chance to advance the goal of one America. That's why we ought to raise the minimum wage. That's why we ought to pass the bill to enforce the equal pay laws for women more strongly. That's why we ought to pass the hate crimes legislation—I think it's important—and end racial profiling.

Now, let me tell you what this election is not about. It is not about whether the Democrats are for big Government. They all talk about that big Government thing—let me just tell you that—you heard it all in the debates and all that. Here's the record. Under Al Gore's leadership for the reinventing Government program, we have reduced the size of the bureaucracy by 300,000. It's the smallest it's been since 1960. That's the fact. We have reduced—yes, we're for this ergonomics rule, and I'll say more about that in a minute. But we've gotten rid of 16,000 pages of unnecessary Government regulations. We have reduced by two-thirds the number of regulations the States and the school districts have to deal with under the Federal Aid to Education Act alone.

So when you hear people talking about, this is big Government versus little Government, man, they're talking about something that didn't happen. In fact, Government will be smaller under our proposal than under theirs. Why? Because the third-biggest item in the Federal budget is what? Interest on the debt. There's Social Security, defense, interest on the debt. We spend more on interest on the debt than we spend on Medicare or education or the environment.

If we get rid of the debt, which is what the Democrats want to do—that's the Gore/Lieberman program—you won't be spending that 12 cents on the dollar. That leaves a lot of money for education, health care, tax relief, and smaller Government.

The second thing this thing is not about—this election is not about whether we're not bipartisan, and they are; and they want to bring everybody together, and we don't. Look, we have—you know, I'm pretty easy to get along with. I'm an easy-going guy. [Laughter] After the people elected a Republican majority in Congress, look what we did. We adopted a bipartisan welfare reform law. We adopted a bipartisan balanced budget. We adopted a bipartisan telecommunications law that created thousands of businesses, hundreds of thousands of jobs, and had the Vice President's E-rate program, which has allowed us to connect 95 percent of the schools, even the poorest ones, to the Internet. We've done a lot of stuff in a bipartisan way.

We just had a bipartisan bill for the biggest amount of funds ever to buy lands, to protect them forever, in the history of the country. We

do a lot of things in a bipartisan way. But being bipartisan, to me, means getting together and making an honorable compromise. It doesn't mean being run over by partisan, polarizing policies.

Now, last night, after we made a lot of progress in this session, last night I had to veto the bill that funds the Congress and the White House. And I'll tell you why. I did not want to sign a bill that funded the White House and the Congress when they won't send me a bill that funds our schools, our children, our education, and our future.

I want you to play close attention to this because this is what this election is about, especially right here in Louisville. A couple of days ago, at 1 o'clock in the morning, the Democrats and the Republicans reached an agreement on an education and a labor budget. It was an historic agreement. It would have provided the biggest increase ever for more teachers, smaller classes, modernized schools, hooking up the rest of our schools to the Internet, double the funds for after-school programs so that all of our latchkey kids can be in school learning and doing something constructive, put more funds in to help other States follow Kentucky's lead to identify failing schools and turn them around or put them under new management. It's a fabulous bill.

And the Republicans wanted some things, and we went along with them—also had a huge increase in college aid. Now, they had some things in there we didn't like, and when the House passed this bill, Eleanor's opponent put on a proposal to block a worker safety rule that I want to put in, that would protect workers from stress-related management. Now, they say this is going to cost business a lot of money. But the truth is that 600,000 people lose time from work every year because of repetitive stress injuries on the job, and that costs business about \$50 billion a year.

Who are these people? The worker who types on a keyboard 8 hours a day, the cashier who scans your food in a neighborhood grocery store. Today there are some workers with us who suffer from repetitive stress injury, after years of service as keyboard operators at Bell Atlantic. They're here today. Raise your hands. Thank you for being here. There's also a cashier who suffers from carpal tunnel syndrome after years at the register. Now, there are 600,000 people like this. They're your fellow citizens.

Our proposal, which Eleanor supports, would save these businesses \$9 billion a year. It wouldn't cost them money; it would save them money because with better work rules, they wouldn't be injured, and they'd be there working every day. And it would also save workers the pain and suffering associated with 300,000 injuries every single year. This is not about money alone. It's about a mother who can no longer pick up her child, a father who can't toss a baseball with his son anymore. So we're fighting for this worker safety rule.

Now, here's what happened. They come in and say, "You can't have your education money unless you agree to killing this worker safety rule." So we said, "This is ridiculous." We're having an election. The Democrats are for this; the Republicans are against it. We offered an honorable compromise. We said, if they would give us some more money for education, I would put in the rule, but we would delay its impact. So if they can convince the American people this is a terrible thing, they would then have a few months after the beginning of the year to try to undo the rule—which they can do, but then they have to show evidence that they're right. They can't just do it kind of when nobody is looking.

I said, "If you're going to undo this, do it in the daylight where everybody can see what's going on here, and let's hear the argument." But look, I'll be out of there by January 20th, and the Republicans will be elated—[laughter]—and we're having an election. So, "Okay, I'll put it in, but I know you can undo it, so I'll just delay the impact of it for a few months, and if you want to undo it, you can, but do it in the ordinary course of business."

And the Republicans said okay. So they said, "You do this for us; we'll give you your school money." We shook hands on it at 1 o'clock in the morning. Everybody was as happy as a clam. The next day, the Republicans go to the Republican caucus, and Mr. DeLay, their leader, who says—says "No, no, no, we can't do this. Our lobbyists are hysterical. Never mind the 52 million school kids and what they get out of this. Our lobbyists don't like this, and we will not do it. We want it exactly like Eleanor's opponent put it in. And if we can't get what Eleanor's opponent wants, then the 52 million school kids can't get their help."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Now, this is the way it works in Washington—not the way it works out here. And I'm not blaming all the Republicans. The people that negotiated that with us deserve the thanks of their country. They did it in good faith. And I'm telling you, we've got—look, we've got a bipartisan agreement on the minimum wage, but it's not law yet. We got a bipartisan agreement on the Patients' Bill of Rights. We could get a bipartisan majority for a Medicare prescription drug program. I could go on and on and on. But the leadership won't let it happen.

The leadership is sticking with Eleanor's opponent and says that the 52 million schoolchildren of this country, including every one of them here in Louisville, including everyone standing on this stage with me today, if they need this help, that's too bad. You do it our way, or no dice—after we made an agreement with them.

So you have to know that's the way it works there. So when you vote for Eleanor Jordan, if just six more congressional districts do what you did, then we won't have to worry about Mr. DeLay anymore running the United States Congress. And look, I want to say again, this is not about bipartisanship. I won't be there, but the Democrats will work with the Republicans. We're not right about everything; they're not wrong about everything. A lot of Americans vote with them, too. We've got to work together. But you've got to understand that the leadership in Congress is way to the right of the Republicans in the country that would ever work with the Democrats and the Independents to get things done.

And if they get a call from one of those big lobbyists that says, "I'm sorry. You can't do this," they say, "I'm sorry. We can't do this." And they said, "We've got to have it just like Eleanor's opponent wanted it, or no dice for the school kids of America." Now, that's what they said.

So you remember that. And you go out—I wouldn't keep that a secret from the voters in this congressional district for the next week if I were you. I believe you ought to go out there and tell them. If you want to protect the worker safety and health, and if you want to promote the education of our children, you better send Eleanor Jordan to Congress and make sure we have different leaders in the United States Congress in the next 2 years.

Look, when Vice President Gore says in these speeches, “You ain’t seen nothing yet,” I expect maybe some Americans hear that and they think, “Well, that sounds political, you know; he wants to be President.” But I’m not running for anything, and I believe that. I believe that. I believe if you vote to keep the prosperity going and expand it to people who aren’t part of it, instead of voting to reverse economic course and go back to the bad old days of deficits, I believe if you vote to build on this evidence of progress in every area of our society, instead of reverse the policies that have helped us achieve it, you will be free to think about the big things. I think we can save Social Security and Medicare for the baby boom generation, and add that prescription drug benefit, and not bankrupt the baby boomers’ children and grandchildren.

I believe we can give the largest and most diverse group of school kids in American history ever the finest education. There need be no more failing schools. We now know something we didn’t know 20 years ago, when I started working on this. We know how to turn these schools around. I believe that we can provide health insurance to working families in this country and to people who retire at 55 and can’t get Medicare yet. And I believe we can have this Medicare drug program. I believe we can get this country out of debt for the first time since 1835 and keep this thing going. We can do this.

We can solve these long-term energy and environmental problems. We can do more to balance work and family. We can have a tax cut that helps people with child care and retirement and paying for their kids’ college education. We can continue to build one America. We can do these big, big things. But we have to make the right decisions on the basic questions: Are we going to build on the prosperity or reverse course? Are we going to build on the progress or take down the policies that achieved it? Are we going to continue to grow as one America, or are we going to have the policies of division, no matter how soothing the rhetoric is? These are the big challenges before America.

You look at Eleanor Jordan. I want to tell you something: She’d be the second former welfare recipient in the United States Congress. America—we say we’re a country that believes in giving everybody a chance. She got one, and she took it. She’s got her family members here, including her sister who worked in our administration. This is a family that proves that America’s promise can be alive and real. And her great burden, for which they called her those bad political names, is that she simply believes everybody ought to have the same chance that God gave her in life, that America gave her.

Folks, I will say again, I know I could stand up here and give you all those whoop-di-doo lines, but you need to think about this. This is a close race. And it’s a close race nationally. And every one of you has friends that may or may not vote. Every one of you has lots of friends who have never been to an event like this. Am I right? Never been to hear a President talk or a Governor talk, or somebody running for Congress. But they love their country; they consider themselves patriots. If they have a good reason, they’ll go vote, or they’re going to vote, but they may not know what the differences are yet.

So you’ve got 7 days, 7 good days that every day you can find somebody to say, “You know why you ought to vote for Eleanor Jordan and Al Gore and Joe Lieberman? Because we want to keep the prosperity going. We don’t want to reverse it, because we want to build on the progress of the last 8 years; we don’t want to abandon it. Because we want to go forward together. Because all the best stuff is still out there.” But you’ve got to make the big decisions right. You go tell them those three things; she’ll be celebrating next week.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:45 p.m. in the gymnasium at the duPont Manual High School. In his remarks, he referred to State Representative Eleanor Jordan, who introduced the President; and former Senator Wendell H. Ford. Ms. Jordan was a candidate for Kentucky’s Third Congressional District.