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So, yes, we're better off economically, but we're a stronger country, too. And I'm very proud of that.

President's Legacy

Ms. Payne. How do you hope Chicagoans and all Americans will remember William Jefferson Clinton?

The President. As a person who did what he said he'd do when he ran for President, who put the American people first, who helped to prepare us for the 21st century, and left the country a little better then he found it.

President's Future Plans

Ms. Payne. Sir, what are you going to do? Are you going to come back and watch a couple Cubs games with us?

The President. I certainly hope so. I hope so. Mr. Sosa says he'll keep inviting me, and I want to do that. I'll stay very active. I now have a United States Senator to support and a daughter to finish educating, so I'm going to go out and make a living. But I'm going to try to spend about half my time on public service, and then as soon as I can do so, I would like to spend my whole life just trying to give back what I've learned and the experiences I've had as President. I think I can do a lot of good for the country and for the world as a citizen. I'm going to do my best.

The Presidency

Ms. Payne. May I just say that I've been so inspired by your drive and your fire. Can you tell the common man a little bit what it's like, from your perspective as a common man from Hope, Arkansas, to be the man sitting inside the Oval Office?

The President. All I can tell you is, it's still the biggest thrill—it's as big a thrill for me today to land on the back lawn of the White House in the helicopter, to walk into the White House and spend the night, to walk over to the Oval Office every morning. It's as big a thrill for me today as it was on the first day I showed up as President.

I believe in the promise of this country. I believe in the American system. Politics is a rough game, and it's a contact sport, and if you can't take a hit, you shouldn't play. But if you're prepared to pay the price and try to bring people together, the American people can do anything, and we can meet any challenge. We can overcome any obstacle. We can seize any opportunity. And for me, I will leave the White House more idealistic and optimistic about America and its promise and its young people than the day I took office.

Ms. Payne. Listen, I baked you a homemade pound cake, but it's stuck with our makeup artist on the other side of the room. So I'm going to have to send you a fresh one to the White House.

The President. Would you do it? I'd be honored to have it.

Ms. Payne. Absolutely, and I want you to taste it. Everybody in Chicago has had it. Ask Mayor Daley. He gets one every year.

The President. I'm nuts about pound cake. I love it.

Ms. Payne. God bless you. God bless you, sir.

The President. Thank you.

Ms. Payne. All the best to your family.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 7:17 p.m. in Grand Ballroom at the Palmer House Hilton Hotel for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago; Gore 2000 campaign director William M. Daley; and Major League Baseball player Sammy Sosa of the Chicago Cubs. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 10. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks on the Unveiling of a Statue at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial

January 10, 2001

The President. Calm down.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. You still have to do what I ask for 9 more days. Calm down. [*Laughter*]

Secretary Herman, thank you for your eloquence and your passion on this issue. I thank all the members of the administration who are here: Secretary Babbitt, thank you; Secretary Shalala; Secretary Slater; SBA Director Alvarez; Janice Lachance. I thank the other members who are here who supported this in every way.

Thank you, Max Cleland, for the power of your example and the largeness of your heart. Thank you, Tom Harkin. Every day you redeem the promise of your brother's life and your love for him in what you have done. Thank you, Senator Levin and Congressman Levin; Congressman Eliot Engel. I like your beard. [*Laughter*] I had a note that said, Eliot Engel was here, and I thought instead it was Fidel Castro for a moment. [*Laughter*] But you look very good.

Thank you, Jim Langevin, for running for Congress and for winning. Ken Apfel, our Social Security Administrator, is here. Thank you. Thank you, Justin Dart, for seeding the crowd with signs. I think you must have something to do—[*inaudible*].

I want to thank all the donors, and a special word of appreciation to two folks who did a lot of our work—one who has been acknowledged—thank you, Jonathan Young; thank you, Bill White. Thank you very much. You guys have been great. Thank you. And I, too, want to thank Larry Halprin and Bob Graham.

This whole memorial has exceeded my wildest dreams for it. It gives you a feel that is completely different from any other memorial. It is grand and beautiful, all right, but it is so accessible, in a way that I think would have pleased President Roosevelt and Mrs. Roosevelt. And of course, this last addition is even more than the icing on the cake. But I know that for Larry and for Bob this has been a labor of love and honor. And we honor them for what they have done. Thank you very much.

I would like to also say to all of you that, as a person who has loved the history of my country and tried to learn more about it every day, it would have been under any circumstances an honor in my life to become friends with Jim Roosevelt and his wife, Anne—and Ann. But what I want you to know is they are the true heirs of their ancestors because they are exceptional and wonderful people, and I'm very glad to be here with them.

Last Saturday marked the 60th anniversary of President Roosevelt's speech on the four freedoms. It is fitting to remember it here today, for this is the story of freedom in this memorial: freedom's steady advance across the land, from the school room to the voting booth to the corridors of power; freedom's open arms embracing the tired, the poor, the huddled masses from every shore; freedom's rising tide across the globe as more people and more places secure the blessings of liberty; and freedom's march for people with disabilities here at home and around the world.

This is a monument to freedom, the power of every man and woman to transcend circumstance, to laugh in the face of fate, to make the most of what God has given. This is a statue of freedom. I, too, am glad that the statue is built at a scale not larger than life but lifelike; not raised on a pedestal but available, touchable, for people who are in wheelchairs and people who cannot see. The power of the statue is in its immediacy and in its reminder to all who touch, all who see, all who walk or wheel around that they too are free, but every person must claim freedom.

In April of 1997, when I asked for a depiction of FDR's disability here at the memorial, I, like every other American who had paid attention, knew that he went to some length to hide his disability on almost all occasions. But he lived in a different time, when people thought being disabled was being unable, though he proved them wrong every day. He was a canny fellow, and he didn't want to risk any vote loss by letting people see him in a wheelchair. [*Laughter*]

Of the more than 10,000 photos in his archives, only four show him as he is depicted in this magnificent statue today. He knew the impact of the image, and he knew, seen wrong in those days, it could have ended his political life. But he also knew he had an obligation to use it when appropriate. On rare occasion, he did so to great effect. His speech writer Sam Rosenman said he could never forget, as he put it, "the look of courage and faith and self-reliance and affection in the faces of disabled Americans who were given the privilege of seeing FDR struggle with his own disability and the joy of watching him overcome it."

For example, in the summer of 1944 President Roosevelt spent an afternoon at a naval hospital in Hawaii. The men there had been

seriously wounded, and many had lost limbs in the war. He insisted on wheeling himself into their wards. He wanted to show them that he, the President of the United States, could not walk any better than they, but he could still show courage and hope and inner strength.

He said that returning Americans with disabilities to active and productive lives was a great objective for the Nation, one of the greatest causes of humanity. It's hard to believe that that was a very unusual statement to make back then.

It was one of the basic tenets of the New Deal, the inherent worth of all Americans, our shared responsibility to empower them. That is what we have sought to do here for 8 years, to avoid any barrier that would keep the potential of any American from being fully tapped.

We have tried to reward work and give people the support they need to live their lives in freedom. Even in the last days of the administration, we are still working on efforts to increase employment of Americans with disabilities, to provide alternatives to institutions, and we're going out with a report on the progress we've made and what we still have to do.

We must always remember that in the end, the story of America is the story of freedom and interdependence. The crowd that started us off pledged their lives, their fortunes, their sacred honor to forming a more perfect Union. That's what they said.

What does that mean? It means that people can never fulfill their own lives completely unless they're working with their neighbors to help them fulfill theirs. And so we have to constantly work to push back the frontiers of our imagination, to advance the cause of both freedom and community—that interdependence which makes life richer. That means we have to encourage each other along the way, as well.

President Roosevelt once told a little girl who, like him, had been stricken with polio, that she must keep up the splendid fight. For someone else who has not suffered in that way to say it is splendid for Max Cleland to labor all those years against his horrible war injuries to become a great Member of the United States Senate, seems almost out of place. But the truth is we have to learn to talk to each other that way.

The thing I like about the disability movement today is, it has moved beyond trying to get the rest of us to do the right thing out of compassion, doing the right thing because it's the right thing and the only sensible thing to do.

I want you all to go out when you leave here not just to look at the statue but to read—in letters or Braille—the quote behind the statue, by Eleanor Roosevelt, who pointed out that before he was stricken with polio, President Roosevelt had never been forced to become a truly great man, had never been forced to develop those habits of infinite patience and persistence without which life cannot be fully lived. And I want you to think about that.

The reason this is a story of freedom is that what matters most in life is the spirit and the journey of the spirit. And we lug along that journey whatever body God gives us and whatever happens to it along the way and whatever mind we were born with. But a clever mind and a beautiful body can themselves be disabilities on the spirit journey.

And so we celebrate freedom and dignity for incredibly brave people whose lives were all embodied by that incredibly brave man, whose disability made him more free for his spirit to soar and his Nation to survive and prosper.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at noon. In his remarks, he referred to Representative Jim Langevin, newly elected to Rhode Island's Second Congressional District; Justin Dart, former Chair, President's Committee on Employment of People With Disabilities; event organizer Jonathan Young; Bill White, White House Office of Political Liaison for Disability Outreach; landscape architect Lawrence Halprin; sculptor Robert Graham; FDR's grandson James Roosevelt, and his wife, Anne; and FDR's granddaughter Ann Roosevelt.