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Week Ending Friday, October 27, 1995

Remarks at the Jefferson-Jackson Day Dinner in Des Moines, Iowa

October 20, 1995

The President. I like to see a Democratic crowd just a little rowdy. I like to see a meeting in Iowa where we don't have to bus people in to raise a crowd.

I want to thank your State chair, Mike Peterson, for inviting me here, and give my regards to your attorney general, Tom Miller, to Treasurer Mike Fitzgerald, to your Secretary of Agriculture Dale Cochran; the Senate President Leonard Boswell, the Majority Leader Wally Horn, your House Minority Leader Dave Schraeder. And to all the other Iowans who are here. And I want to say a special word of thanks to the Iowans who have been a part of our administration: Ruth Harkin, the President of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation; Bonnie Campbell, who does a wonderful job running our violence against women office; Joel Hern at HUD, Rich Running and Dave O'Brien at Labor; John Miller at FEMA; all these Iowans are doing a great job to serve the United States in the National Government, and I thank them very much.

You know, 4 years ago I was here in the middle of the beginning of the Presidential process. I made a courtesy call because I knew I wouldn't do very well in the Iowa caucuses. [*Laughter*] I hope that it works out differently this time. I had the great honor of coming here to speak to your legislature, and then to come back to Ames for the rural conference. And I was very glad to do that.

I didn't exactly enjoy it, but I was deeply moved by what I saw when I came here during the floods. And I think there is something quite remarkable about this State. And you're going to have a very important role in the direction of the country for many, many years to come. I came here because I wanted to see the Democratic Party alive and well, and I wanted to speak to what I believe we have to stand for, clearly, unambiguously, and proudly, and how I believe we can reach out to others to broaden our ranks and deepen our resolve.

I think we have to think first and foremost about the young people here. I'm glad to see all these students who are here. I just spoke to somewhere between 900 and 1,000 of them in the basement. As an old musician, let me tell you that even though I wasn't in the room, I very much enjoyed the Carroll High School Jazz Band, they did a great job. I thank them for that.

I want to say a special word of thanks and admiration to Senator Harkin for his friendship, his leadership, and for what he said tonight. What he said was wise and good and true. I want you to keep him in the Senate; we need him. We need him. America needs him.

You know, Tom Harkin was for balancing the budget when the other guys were still running up the debt. He was for doing it in a way that honors our values and our interests. He worked with me to reduce the deficit but to increase our investment in education, in technology, in research, especially in medical research. He fought for the proposition that we do have certain obligations to one another in this country. That's what the Americans with Disabilities Act is really all about, bringing out the best in everyone so that we'll all be stronger.

He has always been a leader in our fight against crime. And the Vice President and the Attorney General will be coming into Iowa for a violence prevention conference on Monday morning. And I honor him for having led the fight to remind us that we not only have to be strong in dealing with crime, we have to be aggressive in preventing crime. That's one of the many lessons that the majority in Congress seems to have forgotten, that Tom Harkin has not.

The last thing I wanted to say about the other guys in my introduction is that I was

proud to see Senator Harkin invite independents and Republicans to our cause. If you think about the sharp differences in values being expressed in Washington today, we would be historically accurate to call this the Jefferson-Jackson-Abraham Lincoln-Theodore Roosevelt dinner. They were all on our side, compared to what is going on today in Washington, DC.

My fellow Americans, I come to you tonight with a simple and straightforward message. You know we live in a very great country, on the edge of a new era, a new century, a new millennium, a time of great change. We are moving from an industrial age into an information and technology-driven age where even agriculture and industry will be driven by information and technology. We are moving from the cold war to a global village where all of us will be more closely in contact, more closely bound up. We'll have common possibilities and common vulnerabilities as we see every day with terrorism around the world and here at home.

This is a time of enormous potential, and your country is on the move. There is no nation in the world remotely as well-positioned to enable its people to fulfill their dreams and to lead the world toward peace and freedom and prosperity as the United States. But we must be true to our values, and we must have a clear vision of that future.

I ran for President in 1992 for the same reason Tom Harkin did. We thought our country was going in the wrong direction, without a clear sense of vision. I said that if I were honored by the American people with the Presidency, I would try to do the following things: I would try to restore the American dream for all our people and make sure we went into the next century as the most powerful country in the world, the greatest force for peace and freedom and prosperity by having an economic policy that produced jobs and growth, that expanded the middle class and shrinks the under class; by giving us a modern Government that is smaller, less bureaucratic, more entrepreneurial, but can still fulfill our fundamental responsibilities to one another; by making sure that America was still the leading nation in the world in a positive sense; and most important of all, by being true to old-fashioned American values in this very new age, of responsibility and opportunity for all, of valuing work, yes, but understanding that families count, too, and we have to help them to stay strong and be together, and of a sense of community which means that we are stronger when we work together. We're going forward or backward together, and that means we have obligations to one another. It isn't popular in Washington to talk about that today, but it is true. We have obligations to our parents when they need us and to our poor children when, through no fault of their own, they need a hand up in life. We have obligations to those who are disabled or who otherwise need a helping hand who are willing to do their part. We have obligations to take off our own blinders and the chains on our own spirit, which is why I was so proud to see all those people in Washington saying in that march, "I intend to take greater responsibility for myself, for my family, and for my community, but I want to reach out to you to ask you to work with me to make America a better place."

And my message to you is very plain and simple: This country is in better shape than it was 2½ years ago because we have worked hard to do what we said we would do. We still have real and significant challenges that require us to keep going in the right direction, toward a better and brighter future. And we're in the midst of a struggle in Washington that is not about balancing the budget and is far more important than economics, that goes to the very heart of who we are as a people, what we believe and what we are willing to stand for, and what kind of America we want our children and our grandchildren to live in in the 21st century. That is what is going on.

You know, in 1993, when we passed our economic program, in the most intense partisan environment in modern American political history, the other side said, "Oh, the sky will fall." There were Chicken Littles everywhere. "The world will come to an end if you pass this program. A recession is just around the corner." Well, 2½ years later we have 7½ million more jobs, 2½ million more homeowners, a record number of new small businesses, the lowest combined rate of infla-

tion and unemployment in 25 years. They were wrong, and we were right.

Do we have more to do? Of course, we do. In any time of great change like this, inequality is a danger because some people aren't very well suited to the world toward which we're leaving—toward which we're moving. And we've got to do more in the area of education and training. We've got to do more for rural areas and urban areas that have been left behind. We have got to do more to spread opportunity. But the answer is to build on the successes of the last 2½ years, not to turn around and do the wrong thing.

In the area of Government, I heard the other side complain about Government year-in and year-out and how terrible it was. Well, we didn't do that. We did something about it. I put the Vice President in charge of a reinventing Government task force. Two and a half years later—we didn't just rail against the Federal Government—2½ years later there are 163,000 fewer people working for the National Government. Next year it will be the smallest Federal Government since President Kennedy was President. And as a percentage of the Federal work force, we'll be the smallest Federal Government since 1933. The big Government myth is just that; it's a myth. And we brought it down, the Democrats brought it down. We did it.

There are 16,000 fewer pages of Federal regulations, hundreds of programs have been eliminated. But the most important thing is performance has been increased. Take the Small Business Administration: a 40-percent cut in the budget, but they doubled the loan volume; more loans to women, more loans to minorities, no reduction in loans to men and, most important, no watering down of the standards for eligibility, just a commitment to old-fashioned American entrepreneurialism. That's the kind of Government we're trying to give you.

For the first time, we realized if we're in a global economy fighting for opportunities, we need to give small businesses a chance to sell their products and services around the world. We need to get everybody involved in having a chance to create jobs in America by relating to the rest of the world. And so, Ruth Harkin and her organization and the Export-Import Bank and the Commerce Department and the State Department, for the first time ever, are all working together to help create jobs. And 2 million—2 million of our 7½ million new jobs came because of the expansion of the ability to sell American products overseas in the last 2½ years. And we should thank those people for the work they did on it.

I am proud of the work the Federal Emergency Management Agency did in Iowa and in the other States of the Midwest when they had the 500-year flood. That used to be the most criticized agency in Government. I did a novel thing. I appointed a qualified person to head it, not a politician. And people are proud of it, and Iowans remember it.

And I'll tell you something that will surprise you. Every year, Business Week—Business Week magazine, not an arm of our party—[*laughter*]—gives awards for outstanding performance in various areas of business. One of the awards they give is for the best consumer service and customer service over the telephone—Federal Express, L.L. Bean—you name it. You know who won this year? The Social Security Administration of the United States Government.

I want you to go out on the street and tell people these things. We made big Government a thing of the past. Are there still stupid regulations? Of course there are, but at least we have a system for trying to do something about it. We are trying to make this Government more entrepreneurial. But that's a lot different than turning our backs on the American people. We are not about to do that.

And I know we live in a time when people are more preoccupied with their own problems. But we cannot run away from the world, either. And America is safer tonight because we didn't give up our leadership, because we are in a situation where we're destroying nuclear missiles more rapidly. And for the first time since the dawn of the nuclear age, there is not a single, solitary nuclear missile pointed at an American child tonight, not one—not one—not a single one.

We got over 170 countries to agree to indefinitely extend their commitment not to proliferate nuclear weapons. And next year,

God willing, we will have a comprehensive test ban on all nuclear testing.

The United States is stronger when these things happen, when we work against terrorism, when we work against drug-trafficking, when we help to make peace from Northern Ireland to Haiti to Bosnia to the Middle East. We are stronger in a more peaceful world where we are living by our values and the power of our example.

But most important of all, this country is coming together around its values again. In almost every State, believe it or not, the crime rate is down, the murder rate is down, the welfare rolls are down, the food stamp rolls are down. The teen pregnancy rate has dropped for 2 years in a row, and the poverty rate is down. America is coming back together and moving forward together. And I believe—I believe the commitments that we have had to family-friendly policies, to community-oriented solutions to our problems have made a difference.

I think it matters that we passed the Family and Medical Leave Act so people don't lose their jobs when their children are sick. I think it matters that we're collecting record amounts of child support. I think it matters that we gave working families in 1993 a tax cut so that we could say, ''If you work 40 hours a week and you have children in your house, you should not and you will not be in poverty. We want to reward work and parenting.'' I believe that matters. I think it's important.

And yes, I think it matters that we decided we had to give all of our young people a chance to live up to the fullest of their God-given abilities, whether it was helping more poor little kids go into a Head Start program, or helping States that have difficulties that most Iowa school districts don't have, to have smaller classes and computers in the classrooms or making sure all the young people in this country could go to college by giving them more affordable college loans. It was the right thing to do.

And let me say this: What I have tried to do in this time is to always think about how this is going to impact the future, the future of these children, the future of these young people up here. You know, there are so many controversial decisions a President has to make in a time like this. There is no way—I'll bet you I've done four or five things that made everybody in this room mad. [*Laughter*] And I probably—and I doubtless have made some mistakes. But I do show up every day—[*laughter*]—and I do work every day, and I do think about your future every day. And that means every day—every day!

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

The President. Thank you. I'll just give you some examples. I knew that when we passed the Brady bill and the ban on assault weapons that the NRA would be able to terrify a lot of good, God-fearing, hard-working American gun owners into thinking we were trying to take their guns away. And I knew it would hurt a lot of people who stood up for what was right. And don't kid yourself, it's one of the big reasons the Democrats lost the House.

But you know, last year 40,000 criminals who would have been able to get guns didn't because of the Brady bill—40,000. And not a single American hunter or sportsman has lost a gun, not a single one. And there will not be one. But there are some mean streets and some schools where some thug can't show up with an Uzi and gun down a bunch of innocent kids. And that's worth a little political heat, I think. It's the right thing to do.

When the Food and Drug Administration came to me and they said, ''Oh, Mr. President, we have completed our 14-year study of children smoking''—14-month study—''and we know, we know, based on the records, that the big tobacco companies know this is hazardous to the health of young people, that they continue to advertise to young people, that 3,000 young people a day start smoking, and 1,000 of them will die sooner because of it,'' the conventional political advice was, ''For goodness sakes, you have made enough people mad, Mr. President, don't fool with this because they will take all those good, hard-working, God-fearing tobacco farmers and convince them that you want to put them in the poor house, that you're trying to have the Government take over everybody's private decisions, and everybody who's against you on that will be against you, and the people that are for you

will find some other reason to be against you.''

That was the conventional politics. But folks, 1,000 kids a day taking up a habit that will end their lives early. What is that worth? That's worth a lot of political heat. Think about 10, 20, 30 years from now. I want those kids to be alive in a great America of the 21st century, and I think it was the right thing to do.

When the First Lady went to Beijing to stand up for the rights of women and children everywhere—[*applause*]—thank you—the conventional wisdom was, notwithstanding your ovation, that that was a bad idea. People said, ''Well now, look, if she goes, just the act of her going will legitimize human rights practices we don't agree with.'' People on the other side said, ''Oh, oh, if she goes, and says what's true, it might offend the Chinese and we'll mess up our trade relations and will cost a few jobs.''

But let me tell you something, folks. We're going to live in a world with all of these other countries. In South Asia alone, there are 77 million more—listen to this—77 million more young boys than young girls. Why? These little girls are being killed. They're not valued as people. Boys are still thought of as more important economically and therefore as human beings than girls. We can't live in a world at peace and harmony, consistent with our values, until we live in a world where women everywhere, including women here, subject to domestic violence and abuse on the street, can live in dignity and freedom and equality. We cannot do that.

And I just want to say one more thing. When I went to the University of Texas Monday morning, some people said, ''This is a very dangerous thing for you to embrace the people that are showing up in Washington and stand up for racial reconciliation. You don't know what's going to happen there.'' But I know one thing. I didn't know what was going to happen there—I thought I did—I knew that march was about the people that were showing up, not about the leaders. I knew it was about what was in people's heart on that day, not what some people had said in political speeches. I knew that the same thread that's running though America that's driving down the teen pregnancy rate and the crime rate and all of these other things was running through the spirit of those people there. And it seems to me that as President, I have a responsibility to speak to that. You look around this room, you've got a fair amount of diversity. You look up in that crowd of young people you'll see a lot more. Generationally, there will be more and more and more.

In a global village, old-fashioned American values, the power of American free enterprise and technology, the power of America's example, combined with the fact that we are so diverse across racial and ethnic groups, is our meal ticket to the future. It is not only morally the right thing to do, it is a gold mine for us if we will turn away from those who would divide us. And that is why I said to—that's why I said to the American people last week, every American needs to make a personal commitment that they're going to establish some sort of a personal relationship with someone of a different racial or ethnic group. And if you work with a lot of people from different groups, ask yourself if you've ever really had an honest conversation, have you ever really told anybody what you thought?

The most stunning thing to most Americans in the aftermath of the Simpson trial was all that public research saying that people from different races saw the same set of facts in a completely different light. But most of us share the same values. That's what the march proved. People showed up saying, ''We do have to take more responsibility for ourselves, our families, and our communities, and we are going to do it, and we want to reach out to you.'' So we have to do that. All of you do. We have to set an example. We have to be honest with one another. We have to listen to one another. And we have got to find a way to come together. Because, I'm telling you, if you solve this diversity problem, America, there is no stopping this country in the 21st century; it is ours to lead and to enjoy and to profit from.

So that is the background. This country is on a roll. We're moving in the right direction. We have problems. We'll always have problems. We know what to do. We need to have a good economic policy, a Government that works and doesn't get in our way

too much but protects our fundamental interests. We need to make sure we maintain our leadership in the world, and we need to have a set of policies as a people consistent with our values.

Now, that is really what is going on in Washington. That's what we're debating up there today. We are not debating the balanced budget. That is not the issue. I have presented a balanced budget that Mr. Greenspan, who was appointed by my predecessors and is a Republican, and many others, and all the market analysts say it is a perfectly credible balanced budget. I have given them a balanced budget. This is not about balancing the budget. What is at stake here is what kind of people we are going to be in the 21st century, what kind of future are we going to have. And I just want to ask you a few questions.

You heard Senator Harkin talk about the Medicare cuts and how they want to save money, but they've actually made it harder for us to prosecute waste, fraud, and abuse in Medicare. We have set records in our administration for collections of waste, fraud, and abuse, and we haven't scratched the surface. And now they want to stop us. They don't think that's important.

Well, my idea of the future of America is not a Medicare program where it's easier to commit waste, fraud, and abuse, but harder for a senior citizen to live from month to month because their Medicare premiums have been doubled when they can't afford to pay for it. That's not my idea of the future I think we ought to have in America.

The Medicaid program has not gotten as much coverage, but my idea of the future of America is not living in a country where we cut Medicaid so much we're closing more rural hospitals, we're closing inner city hospitals, we're putting unbearable burdens on our teaching hospitals and our children's hospitals, we're making it harder for poor little kids to get care.

And I'll tell you something else that's in this bill. They want to take away the money that we presently give under the Medicaid program to help the poor elderly pay their copays and their deductibles, people living on $300 and $400 a month, so the people under this plan that are going to get hit the hardest are not the wealthiest seniors but the poorest seniors. And a study has been put out that said as many as 1 million seniors might drop out of the Medicare system.

I don't know about you, folks, but I don't want somebody to give me a tax cut and put a million old people out of the Medicare system. That's not the America that I want to live in. I don't think it is right, and I do not support it.

Let me tell you—I want to reiterate—I do support the goal of balancing the budget. I agree with them we have to save the Medicare Trust Fund. To do it, we have to slow the rate of growth in medical inflation in Medicare and Medicaid. We don't have to take 450 billion bucks out of the health care system to do it.

Do you know what else is in one of those plans? They want to repeal the prohibition against spousal impoverishment. Now, that's a Government phrase. Let me tell you what that means. That means if a married couple are lucky enough to be 78 or 80 years old, they've been together 50 years, and they've saved their money and been frugal, one of them gets real sick and has to go to a nursing home—which is heartbreaking enough as it is—they want to go back to the dark, old days when the State can tell the spouse that doesn't have to go to the nursing home, "We'll give you help, but only after you sell your car, your house, and clean out your bank account. Now, then, we'll take your spouse in the nursing home. I don't know what you're going to do. That's not our problem." I don't know about you, folks, that is not the America that I want to live in the 21st century. I don't believe in that. I don't believe in that.

Look at those young—how many college students do we have up there? How many of you get student aid? The only thing that has grown faster than the cost of health care in the last 15 years is the cost of higher education. And yet we know we need more and more and more young people to be able to go to college and be able to finish college.

I pledged if elected President I would provide a more efficient, more cost-effective student loan program that would get the money out quicker, that would lower the cost to students, and that would provide for easier re-

payment terms. I also promised to crack down on people that didn't repay their loans. We have cut the loan default rate in half by cracking down. But you know what else we've done? We're getting those young people their money quicker at lower cost with better repayment terms, so that young people who get out of college and don't get jobs making a lot of money can pay the loan off as a percentage of their income. And there will never, never, never, never be an incentive not to borrow the money to go to college because you're afraid you can't pay it back. Now, that's what we did. And it's a good, good thing to do.

Their budget limits or totally destroys, depending on which House you look at, this direct loan program. It goes back to the old way where we just shove money to the private sector, total Government guarantees, no performance standards, no costs—nothing, raises the cost to the taxpayers and cuts out good loans to them and, for good measure, eliminates somewhere between 150,000 and 380,000 college scholarships, depending on whether the Senate or the House version passes.

I don't know about you, but the 21st century I want to live in does not include kicking middle class kids out of college, taking scholarships away from poor kids, and doing things that will not help us to build the great American dream for all Americans. I don't want that kind of 21st century. That is not my idea of how we ought to be living.

I don't believe we ought to go into the 21st century gutting our budgets to protect clean air, clean water, pure food, to preserve our natural heritage, and letting the lobbyists for the biggest polluters in the country write the clean water laws. That's not my idea of the 21st century that I want.

I don't believe we should walk away from our crime bill, which is lowering the crime rate, and stop people from putting these police on the street, and stop communities from having prevention programs to give our children something to say yes to. I don't believe we should refuse to raise the minimum wage. That's their position. Next year it will get to a 40-year low in purchasing power if we do that. I don't believe that's right, either.

I don't believe, notwithstanding what one of your Senators believes, that we should abolish AmeriCorps. It would be a terrible mistake to get rid of the national service program. The national service program involves young people and working with other people to solve community problems. It has no bureaucracy. It ought to be a Republican's dream. But because it involves the National Government bringing people together to do something positive and good and decent to move people forward, they say, "no, no, no."

That's not my idea of the 21st century. My idea of the 21st century has all young people serving their communities, working together, building this country from the grassroots up, earning their way to college and moving forward.

There is a provision in this budget that would allow companies who have been in deep trouble to withdraw money from their pension funds, even if it puts the retirement of their workers in trouble. Now last December, I signed a piece of legislation that saved 8½ million Americans' pensions, and stabilized 40 million more Americans' pensions. Do you really want me to sign a budget that would permit pension funds to be looted and have people's pensions and retirements put at risk?

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. I don't think that's what we ought to be doing in the 21st century.

And here's the last thing. This is the last on my Top 10 list. There are $148 billion of new taxes, fees, and costs imposed on middle class America and poor America in this budget, including a $42 billion tax increase on working people with the most modest incomes in our country.

The Wall Street Journal—again, this is not me, hardly an arm of the Democratic Party—The Wall Street Journal yesterday reported—the Wall Street Journal reported that if this budget passes with all of its tax cuts in it, the group of people making less than $30,000 a year, 51 percent of the American people, will have greater tax hikes than they have tax cuts. Can you believe it? Why? Ronald Reagan said that the working family tax credit was the best antipoverty program the country had ever devised. All we did was double it so people could say, "If I work 40

hours a week, and I've got children in my house, I will not be taxed into poverty. The tax system will lift me out of poverty. My country values my work and values my being a good parent.''

I do not want to live in a country that throws people out of the middle class and puts them back in the under class, and I don't think you do, either. I don't think you do, either. I don't think any of you want to live in that kind of America.

So, look—I'm nearly done. You don't even have to sit down. [*Laughter*] I just want you to think about this. This country is on a roll. We're coming back. It's in better shape than it was 2½ years ago. The American people deserve the lion's share of the credit. But our economic policies and our social policies and our anticrime bill and our welfare reform, those things have all played a role. We are moving in the right direction.

And the choice now is whether we're going to be a society in which everybody has a chance to win or become a winner-take-all country, a society where we're growing the middle class and shrinking the under class or one in which we're kicking people out of the middle class and swelling the under class, a society in which special interest and short-term greed override the long-term concern for the welfare of all Americans.

This is a very, very great country. We are a great country. And you look at these children tonight. And when you walk out of here, I want you to keep their faces in your mind, and I want you to promise yourself that you will realize that this could be a Jefferson-Jackson-Abraham Lincoln-Theodore Roosevelt dinner. This is about American values, American interests, America's future. And I want you to promise yourself that when you walk out of this room tonight, for the next year you are going to engage your fellow Americans in talking about these fundamental values and the fundamental vision we have for our future.

The 21st century is ours if we will simply be true to our values and follow our vision and think about these children and what kind of America we want for them.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:15 p.m. in the Veterans Memorial Auditorium. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

October 21, 1995

Good morning. I want to talk to you today about American renewal. Not economic renewal, though our economy is certainly on the move. Not the renewal of peace, though the United States is leading hopeful efforts toward peace from the Middle East to Northern Ireland to Bosnia. Not even the renewal of the American spirit, though there is a tide of optimism rising over our country as we harness technology and other changes to increase opportunities for all our people and strengthen our families and communities. No, the American renewal I want to talk to you about today is the renewal of our national pastime, the renewal of baseball.

A year ago, for the first time in 90 years, we found ourselves without a World Series. And boy, did we miss it. We missed those nail-biting extra-inning nights. We missed a game that for so many of us is so much more than a game. Well, tonight, with the start of the World Series, baseball is back. And we couldn't be happier.

Baseball is a part of our common heritage. Its simple virtues, teamwork, playing by the rules, dedication, and optimism, demonstrate basic American values. We can look out at the green grass of the outfield or feel the worn leather of an old glove or watch a Latino shortstop scoop the ball to a black second-baseman, who then throws it to a white first-baseman in a perfect double play, and say, yes, this sure is America. This is who we are.

At its best, baseball is more than just a field of dreams. Every season brings our children and many adults face to face with heroes to look up to and goals to work toward. This year was no different. Greg Maddux's 1.63 ERA; Albert Belle's 50 home runs and 50 doubles; and of course, most important, Cal Ripken's 2,131st consecutive game: All these inspire countless young people to play the game and those of us who are older to