

The deferral affects the Social Security Administration.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
June 24, 1996.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Reception in New York City

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Thank you very much. I want to—I sort of want to quit while I'm ahead. [Laughter] I've had a wonderful time. Thank you, Wynton Marsalis, and thank you, all you musicians. You were magnificent. Mr. Marsalis, you know, is probably the only great musician today who has basically proved himself a genius at both classical and jazz music. And he's a great American treasure. I'm honored to have his support and to have him here tonight. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Senator Moynihan. I never fail to learn something from Senator Moynihan. And shoot, I didn't know that no other President had a long economic expansion with very low unemployment and high inflation. I knew it was the best in 27 years; I didn't know it never happened before. [Laughter] They accuse me of overstatement. [Laughter] Senator Moynihan's my dictionary of established truth and fact in America. We have been understating the economic achievements of this administration. Thank you very much.

I always love being with Al Franken, but when I close my eyes I sometimes think that—I have this eerie experience that I'm on the same stage with Al D'Amato. [Laughter] He sounds more like Senator D'Amato than Senator D'Amato. [Laughter] You know, when Al got up here—I never know what he's going to say; that makes two of us. [Laughter] He made that crack about the White House not making any mistakes. I thought to myself, we're about to see one unfold right here on the podium. [Laughter] But if you haven't read his book, you ought to read it. It's shameless for me to say, but it's a good book for our side. If you read Al Franken's book and James Carville's book, "We're Right and They're Wrong," you know

all you need to know to take you all the way to November. They'll get you through there.

I'd like to just take a few moments to speak somewhat seriously about this election. I have to speak seriously. I used to be funny, and they told me it wasn't Presidential. So I had to stop. The other day I was at one of these—an event rather like this, and there was a young boy there who was 10 years old. His father brought him. And this young man walked up and shook my hand. And just as mature as you please, he said, "Mr. President, I imagine once you become President it's rather difficult to find a joke you can tell in public, isn't it?" [Laughter] Didn't crack a smile, dead serious. I said, "Well, now that you mention it, it is." He said, "Well, I've got one for you." He said, "Do you want to hear it?" I said, "Sure." He said, "Being President with this Congress is like standing in the middle of a cemetery. There's a lot of people under you, but nobody is listening." [Laughter] He is now the youngest member of the White House speechwriting staff, and he's cranking them out every day.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to ask you to think back just a moment to where we were 4 years ago, how we felt and where we were. The country was drifting. We had been in the midst of a long recession. Unemployment was high. We had the slowest job growth since the Great Depression. And we seemed to be coming apart as a people. I mean, look around this room. Our country is a place of fabulous diversity, and it's an enormous asset for us as we move into the global society if we figure out how to manage it. But if we don't manage it, you can see the consequences of people not getting along all over the world, can't you? Every place in the world, virtually, where there's a significant conflict today, it's based on race or ethnicity or religion or some combination of all of them, where people insist on defining themselves by who they aren't, instead of who they are.

And so all these things concern me greatly. And I got into the race for President because I felt that we needed to go full steam into the 21st century with three things clearly in mind: That we ought to keep the American dream alive for every person willing to work for it. That we ought to be a country that

is coming together, not being driven apart; we ought to stop using political campaigns for cheap ways to divide us one from the other, but we ought to keep coming together. And we ought to maintain the leadership of the United States as the world's strongest force for peace and freedom and prosperity. And at the end of the cold war no one else can play those roles.

And so when I was elected with this vision, I thought that the way to do it was to use the power of Government not to guarantee results but to try to make sure we gave people the tools they needed to make the most of their own lives if they were willing to be good, responsible citizens; and to look for ways to keep drawing us together, pushing us forward, and maintaining our leadership.

Now, you've heard a little about that, but as we go into this election season it seems to me there are three central arguments for the case we have to make. Number one, we came into this job with a plan, it was executed, the results were good, and the other side fought us every step of the way. Number two, you don't have to guess in this election, unlike most. You know what I'll do, and you know what they'll do. They already did it once; I just stopped them with a veto pen. If there's no veto pen, they'll just do what they tried to do in 1995. And number three, and most important of all, we are better off than we were 4 years ago, but we can't say that our problems are solved, that we don't still have challenges. This country's transition to the 21st century, to the new economy, to the new world we're living in is a work in progress. And we need to do much more.

And just let me take those three things each in turn. It was clear to me that we needed a new approach to economic opportunity that avoided this dichotomy about whether the Government could create a recovery or was the problem and had to get out of the way. What we tried to do was to reduce the deficit; to expand trade dramatically; to continue to invest in education, technology, research, and the environment; and to do those things that would help us to support those places that had been left behind and people that had been left behind.

So we lowered taxes for 15 million working families because we didn't want them to fall

back into welfare. We said, if you work 40 hours a week, you have children in the home, you ought to be lifted out of poverty by the Tax Code, not put in it. And we had an empowerment zone concept for places like the distressed area of New York City that got one to encourage people to invest private capital to put people back to work.

Now, you heard the economic results. It's important to emphasize that this program did not receive a single vote from the other side and that the leaders of the House and the Senate in the Republican Party fought it all the way. They said it would bring on a recession. They said it wouldn't reduce the deficit. John Kasich, the budget chairman from Ohio, said, "If this program were to work, I'd have to become a Democrat." I'm saving a seat for him at the Chicago convention this year. *[Laughter]*

So that's very important, because 9.7 million new jobs is nothing to denigrate. To emphasize what Senator Moynihan said, I'm about to leave in a couple days to go to France for the annual meeting of the seven big industrial powers of the world. In the last 3½ years, those 7 nations have, in total, created 10 million new jobs, 9.7 million of them in the United States of America, a quarter of a million in New York State where the unemployment rate has gone down by 2 percent.

We tried to take a serious approach to crime, to do what was already working in New York City and to try to accelerate it, 100,000 more community police, the assault weapons ban, the Brady bill, prevention programs. And by the way, the Brady bill has now kept 60,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers from getting handguns. It was the right thing to do, and it is working in this country.

And Senator Moynihan will remember, there was bitter opposition from the leadership of the other party, primarily in the Senate where they tried to kill this crime bill with a filibuster. They tried to keep it from happening. They said it would never work. It was a waste of money. It wouldn't lower the crime rate. We're about to have the 4th year in a row where the crime rate in America is going down, led by big drops in our big cities like New York, where there's been an intelligent application of police resources

in the right way doing other things that work. Don't let anybody tell you that we cannot do much, much better with the crime problem. But the strategy is working; we need to build on it. And don't forget, we did it with the opposition of the leadership of the other party, and it was bitter and strong. We were right, and they were wrong.

Let me just mention one other area, the sort of buzz word area now in Washington: welfare reform. To hear them talk about it, you'd think they discovered it. Senator Moynihan discovered the welfare problem three decades ago, and I've had the privilege of starting to work with him on it about a decade ago. In 1988, the Congress gave the President the authority to let States experiment to move people from welfare to work. While they've been talking about welfare reform, we've approved 62 of those experiments for 40 of the 50 States. More than three-quarters of the American people on welfare are already under welfare reform where they have to try to move to work. And there are 1.3 million fewer people on welfare today than there were the day I became President. And we didn't have to punish immigrant kids to get there. We did the right thing.

They say, "Well, President Clinton doesn't care about welfare reform; he vetoed our bill." I did veto their bill. I vetoed their bill because it was tough on children and weak on work. I don't have any problem, none of us do, with requiring people to move from welfare to work, but you don't want to hurt the kids. They should have child care. They should have health care. And there has to be a job there if you're just going to cut people off. So that's what I believe very strongly. That's what we need to do.

There's been a lot of talk for years in Washington, justifiably, about family values. People are concerned about the stresses families feel. But we tried to do something about it. The family and medical leave law—12 million American families have now benefited when they had a sick child, a sick parent, or a newborn, from the family and medical leave law, and the leadership of the other party fought us on it.

And if you look at all the family initiatives—requiring the V-chip and the voluntary

rating system that Hollywood is developing for television to help parents with young children; the initiative to try to discourage the advertising and dissemination of cigarettes to young people, which is illegal in every State in the country, but 3,000 kids a day start to smoke, 1,000 will die early because of it. It's the big health problem of the country. In each of these three cases we tried to do something to promote and strengthen the family in America; the leadership of the other party fought us. We were right; they were wrong. We need to keep going in this direction. This is very important to the United States.

The next point I'd like to make is—I just want to say it one more time—you don't have to guess about this election. Every election there's a little bit of guesswork. You know, when I was running in '92 I knew a lot of the Members of Congress—they looked at me. I'd never served in Congress before. Some of them probably barely knew where my home State was on the map. We only had six electoral votes. It was a guess; they took a chance. The American people took a chance on me. The people of New York took a chance on me. I'm grateful for that.

But now you don't have to guess. You have two known quantities, two known programs. You know what I'll do, and you know what they'll do. They already did it. Like I said, I just stopped them with a veto pen. So you take the veto away, the budget I vetoed will be law within 6 months. The antienvironmental measures will be law within 6 months. The end of the commitment to put 100,000 police on the street will be law within 6 months. The abolition of the national service program, AmeriCorps, which has given—by the end of next year, will have given 96,000—or 69,000, excuse me—young people a chance to earn college credit by serving their communities and helping people solve problems at the grassroots level—it will be gone within 6 months.

So you don't have to guess. And that's really good. Do we have to do something about the entitlements problem? You bet we do. Do we have to balance the budget in a way that keeps the budget balanced in the short run and in the long run controls health care costs? Of course we do. That does not mean

we have to turn Medicare into a second-class citizen and have two classes of Medicare. It does not mean we have to remove Medicaid's guarantee to children with disabilities in middle class families that would go broke if they didn't have Medicaid help or people in nursing homes or poor children or their pregnant mothers. It does not mean that. It does not mean to balance the budget you have to cut education spending when education is more important than any time in history. And it certainly doesn't mean that you have to wreck the environment. So we should remove the guesswork of this, and don't let the people of New York or any of your friends or family members anywhere in the country pretend that the future will be anything other than you know what the roadmap is.

They passed their program once, and we stopped them. If there is no veto pen and they keep the Congress and have the White House, you don't have to guess what they'll do. You know what I'll do. You know what they'll do. Hallelujah, we know. Let's show up and make our voice heard and stand up for that.

But let me also say, as you go toward the 21st century, there is more to do. There is more to do. One of the things that our economy has finally begun to do, we've finally begun to see average wages go up for the first time in 10 years. And that's very encouraging. But there's still a lot of inequality in this country. The only way to deal with it is to give people the tools they need to lift themselves through education.

If we are returned to office, our administration, working with the Congress, will finish our commitment to hook up every classroom and library in this country to the Internet by the year 2000, to democratize educational opportunities all across America. If we're returned to office, I will do everything I can to see that we are very prudent in budgeting but we do give people a tax cut for the cost of college tuition and we give a tax credit to guarantee access to community college to every American citizen. Everybody should have 2 more years of education after high school. It should become universal.

I will do what I can to make health care available and affordable so that people don't lose it when they lose their jobs or when

someone in their family has been sick, to provide for access to retirement for all these people that are going into small businesses now and are having a terrible time getting it, to do what I can to extend the effort to make people able to succeed at home and at work.

Today in Nashville, Tennessee, at the Vice President and Mrs. Gore's annual family conference, I proposed that we enact a family leave law II. Today, the family leave law applies to people when there's a genuine medical emergency for a parent or a child or an immediate family member or when there's a baby born. I think it should be extended for up to 24 hours a year for routine medical visits with a parent or a child and for going to school to a child's teacher-parent conference. I think people ought to be able to go to school and see how their kids are doing in school and see their teachers. These are basic things that will enable the working families of this country to succeed at home and not to have to choose between being parents and being successful employees. These are the kinds of things I think we have to do. I also proposed today a way to give workers more option to have flexible time, to convert their overtime into cash or into time at their own choice, if it helps them with their families, but in ways that also gives greater protections to the overtime of working people.

These are the kinds of things we ought to be thinking about. And there are a lot of other issues we have to face. We've got to do something about all these toxic waste dumps. The present Congress is not permitting us to go clean them up. We need to do it. We need a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty. We need to continue the fight against terrorism. We've got important legislation in the Congress today which will enable us to take a stronger stand against Iran which is very important. We've got a lot of things out there. And what I want you to do is to go out in this next 4 months and 3 weeks and say to people, "Hey, this is an important election."

In '92, remember what the thing was? Are we going to have change, or are we going to have the status quo? The good news in this election is there is no status quo option. The bad news is, from my point of view, is

one of the change options is not very attractive. You know, their argument is that Government is the problem. If you just get it out of the way, everything will be fine. If you were just on your own, left to the tender mercies of the global economy, to float out there in cyberspace, you'd do great.

I believe no great nation has ever done well without giving more and more people the opportunities to succeed if they're willing to be responsible for it. I believe we cannot do well unless we have a commitment as a nation to coming together across the lines that divide us, instead of allowing ourselves to become more divided. And I know we cannot do well unless we're continuing to stand up for peace and freedom and decency around the world. I believe these things. So you get to decide which road we're going to walk into the 21st century.

And I'll just leave you with this image. In the last 2 weeks my life and Hillary's life and Al and Tipper and all of our administration, they've sort of been dominated by flames—that and conversations with Eleanor. [*Laughter*] But I want you to think about—well, at least she's from New York, you ought to draw some pleasure from that. [*Laughter*] I want you to think about this, because this is what we've done the last 2 weeks. We've worried about church burnings, and we've celebrated the Olympics. You saw it. I mean, I went down to South Carolina to dedicate a little church. It was way down a country road. The church gets burned down; they rebuild it a mile away. I really identify with that. My great-grandparents are buried 5 or 6 miles down a country road in Arkansas in a little country churchyard almost exactly the size—the church is almost exactly the size of that little church that burned down I saw in South Carolina. And I would be ripped out of my mind with anger if anybody had burned that little church down where my great-grandparents, with whom I often stayed as a little child, are buried.

We've had a tripling of church burnings in the last year and a half, a lot of synagogues desecrated, two or three Islamic centers burned. And even, believe it or not, there's been a big uptick in the burning of white churches, although not nearly as many have been burned as African-American churches.

And I don't think it's a conspiracy. But I think it manifests in the extreme behavior of some people a trend in the society to become more intolerant of people who are different from us and to believe that people who are really different from us are sort of sub-human and it's okay to do just about whatever you want. I mean, after all, this country got started by people looking for religious liberty. It is the first amendment. The idea of desecrating a church, a synagogue, a mosque, a Hindu temple, any religious institution in America, violates the core of what it means to be an American. And it can only be done by people who really believe that the people they're burning out are basically lower than they are in the human food chain.

On the other hand, we welcomed the Olympic torch to the White House, where it burned overnight and then left the next morning. The Olympic torch was carried by thousands and thousands of Americans of all races and ages and walks of life, the able, the disabled. And they were all picked for one reason. Every one of them had one thing in common: They were good citizens of this country; they represented the best of this country.

In Nevada, a 74-year-old woman, who took 100 children who had been abandoned by their own parents into her home, carried that torch for a kilometer. When the torch came into the White House, it was carried first by a Catholic nun who devoted her life to serving the poor and the disadvantaged, and then by the first deaf president of America's deaf university, Gallaudet University in Washington, Dr. I. King Jordan, who, just a few days after he delivered the Olympic torch to me at the age of—I think he's 56 or 58—was going to run a 100-mile race.

The next morning we sent the Olympic torch on its way to Atlanta, first with a man named Lang Brown and 12 children. He's African-American, but these children were African-American, Hispanic, and white, all troubled kids, all had really had difficult lives. This man is devoting his life to rescuing them one by one. He gave the torch to me, and I gave it to Carla McGhee, a woman who is on our Olympic basketball team. She was recruited for the University of Tennessee, was in a terrible wreck, was almost dead, her

body was broken and destroyed. And her will was so strong to come back that she wound up, against all medical predictions, returning to her team and helping it to win a national championship.

Now, you've got to figure out which torch America's going to be identified with. So I leave you with that. I think this is the country of the Olympic torch where citizens who are real citizens are the heroes of America. I believe that the 21st century will give the young people in this audience more possibilities to live out their dreams than any time in human history. But we have to make the right decisions. More opportunity for people who are responsible, a deeper commitment to bringing our people together, an understanding that we have to continue to stick up for peace and freedom in the world, those are the decisions I ask you to make sure we make in November.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:37 p.m. at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to comedian Al Franken. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks Announcing Support for a Constitutional Amendment on Victims Rights

June 25, 1996

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and let me thank you all for being here. Thank you, Senator Kyl and Senator Feinstein, for your ground-breaking work here. Thank you, Senator Exon; my longtime friend Senator Heflin. Thank you, Congressman Frost, Congressman Stupak, Congressman Orton.

I thank all the representatives here of the victims community, the law enforcement community. I thank the Attorney General and John Schmidt and Aileen Adams and Bonnie Campbell for doing such a fine job at the Justice Department on all criminal justice issues. I thank the Vice President and, especially, I want to thank Roberta Roper and the other members of the National Movement for Victims' Advocacy. Mr. Roper, thank you for coming. Thank you, John and Pat Byron; thank you, Mark Klaas;

and thank you, Pam McClain. And especially, John Walsh, thank you for spending all of these years to bring these issues to America's attention. Thank you, sir.

I'd also like to say a special word of thanks to the person who did more than any other person in the United States to talk me through all the legal and practical matters that have to be resolved in order for the President to advocate amending our Constitution: former prosecutor and a former colleague of mine, Governor Bob Miller of Nevada. Thank you, sir, for your work here.

For years, we have worked to make our criminal justice system more effective, more fair, more even-handed, more vigilant in the protection of the innocent. Today, the system bends over backwards to protect those who may be innocent, and that is as it should be. But it too often ignores the millions and millions of people who are completely innocent because they're victims, and that is wrong. That is what we are trying to correct today.

When someone is a victim, he or she should be at the center of the criminal justice process, not on the outside looking in. Participation in all forms of government is the essence of democracy. Victims should be guaranteed the right to participate in proceedings related to crimes committed against them. People accused of crimes have explicit constitutional rights. Ordinary citizens have a constitutional right to participate in criminal trials by serving on a jury. The press has a constitutional right to attend trials. All of this is as it should be. It is only the victims of crime who have no constitutional right to participate, and that is not the way it should be.

Having carefully studied all the alternatives, I am now convinced that the only way to fully safeguard the rights of victims in America is to amend our Constitution and guarantee these basic rights: to be told about public court proceedings and to attend them; to make a statement to the court about bail, about sentencing, about accepting a plea if the victim is present; to be told about parole hearings to attend and to speak; notice when the defendant or convict escapes or is released; restitution from the defendant; reasonable protection from the defendant; and notice of these rights.