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Message on the Observance of Independence Day, 1996

July 2, 1996

I am pleased to join my fellow Americans across the nation and around the world in celebrating Independence Day.

On this day each year, we gather with family and friends to commemorate the anniversary of the signing of our Declaration of Independence. With vision and courage, our Founders stated unequivocally to the world: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." These were literally revolutionary concepts, and they fundamentally changed the course of human history.

Today we are living through another period of profound and historic change—change in the way we work, the way we live, the way we relate to one another and to the rest of the world. But the truths set down in our Declaration of Independence are immutable, and they continue to light our path into the challenges and possibilities of the future. Equality, individual rights, life, freedom, opportunity—we still cherish these values, and we must continue to reaffirm them daily.

America is a work in progress, and we have strived through decades of challenge and change to become what our Founders envisioned on our first Independence Day. As we continue that endeavor, let us work together to create an America that remains the world's strongest force for peace, justice, and freedom. Let us work for an America that is not driven apart by differences but instead is united around shared values and respect for our diversity. Let us work for an America in which every one of us, without regard to race or religious belief or gender or station in life, can achieve our dreams. In this way we will best pay tribute to those who, 220 years ago, pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to guarantee our freedom.

Best wishes for a memorable Fourth of July.

Bill Clinton

Remarks at a Reception for Representative Dick Durbin in Chicago

July 2, 1996

The President. Thank you very much.

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

The President. Thank you. Well, if we get them, they'll be a lot better if Dick Durbin is in the Senate, I'll tell you that.

First of all, I'm delighted to be here with Senator Simon and Senator Carol Moseley-Braun, my good friend Bill Singer, and all of you who have contributed to this terrific fundraiser. I want to say how very much I admire Dick and Loretta Durbin—they live their family values, they don't just give political speeches about them at election time—and how happy I am to be here at this—[*applause*].

When Dick was talking about being a Lithuanian, I was just thinking that the Chicago person in my household would like to be here tonight. But when we were in France for the G–7 meeting, and I left Hillary, and she went on to Romania, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Estonia, and two or three other places. And she called me yesterday, and she told me about her day in Romania. And she told me—she said, "You realize all the places I'm going, all the people I'm going to see?" And she reeled them all off. And I said, "Look, I can make one trip to Chicago and see people from all those places."

So Dick reminded me of my wisecrack, and I thought I'd give it to you. [*Laughter*] It's really true about Chicago; it's one of the things that makes it so wonderful. The mayor and Bill Daley took me down to the Taste of Chicago today, and I walked, and I ate like a horse. [*Laughter*] But I was an equal opportunity eater. I gave—every ethnic group got a fair and equal shot at me. And I'll have to run an extra 5 miles in the morning, but it was wonderful.

Let me say on a more serious note how much I appreciate the support I felt from all the American people when I went to Europe to try to get our allies to support the United States in our fight against terrorism in the aftermath of what happened in Saudi Arabia to our Air Force personnel. But I also

want to compliment the Federal officials and those who worked with them for the arrests that were made in the terrorist incidents that were headed off in Arizona, which you doubtless read about in the press this morning.

And this is not the first time we've been successful in doing that. It's something we work hard at. And I say it to make this point: At the end of the cold war, when the world was not divided into communist and noncommunist blocs, and when we can worry less—we haven't done away with the worry, but we can worry less—about the imminence of a nuclear war, we see this welling up of ancient hatreds based on race and ethnic group and religion. And we see the fact that we're more open to each other in terms of our ability to travel and our ability to send money and ideas and technology around the world in a split second, it makes us more vulnerable to the organized forces of destruction, and especially to terrorists.

But what I want you to know is that if we work together and we're smart, we can't guarantee 100 percent security, but we can prevent a lot of these instances. In the Middle East, in Israel, for all the terrible terrorist incidents we see, I want you to know they stop a lot more incidents than ever occur. And we can do the same. We can do the same, but we've got to keep in mind the terrible sacrifice of innocent victims, and including those whose lives I honored in Florida on Sunday. And we've got to continue to work together. And I felt the support of the American people in that.

The other thing I want to say is that I know you all support our common endeavors to try to do what we can to end this terrible rash of church burnings of black churches and other houses of worship around this country. That's been an especially painful thing for me because I feel so strongly about the first amendment, freedom of religion. I think it's one of the most distinctive things about the United States, that we have the freedom to believe whatever we want or even not to believe. And it's one of the reasons I think that we are, by all accounts, the most religious country in the world. And it gives character and depth to our Nation.

And what's happening is—I don't think there's any big conspiracy, but I do believe it's evidence of this kind of dark impulse that you see welling up all over the world. There are a lot of people who are disappointed in their own lives and have problems, and we've now seen that some of these people that have been arrested, some that have admitted doing this, they've talked about their own lives, and it's obvious that they had a lot of problems. They were people, if they hadn't burned churches, would have evoked our sympathies because of the difficulties they were having in their lives.

And when people have frustrations, they can do one of two things: they can take responsibility for it and try to get help, or they can look for somebody else to blame and someone else to look down on. ''No matter what kind of shape I'm in, there's always somebody else I can look down on. I think I'll go burn a church.'' And that is not only un-American, it is profoundly wrong and destructive. But we have to change the atmosphere in this country about that.

So today before I came here, I declared this month National Month of Unity and asked every American citizen to do something, either in their places of worship or where they work or some other way, to reach out to people who are different from them and express our unity as a people around the shared values embodied in the Constitution of the United States of America.

And apropos of what Dick said earlier, we also took a little of the money that the Justice Department has for police officers and dedicated it to the 12 States that have suffered the most from the church burnings. And we said to every county, we will give you more police officers, or you can use the money to light up these churches at night or work people overtime or do whatever is necessary. But we want to do more to prevent these burnings, not just to catch the people who do it. And we have to do that.

Now, what's all this got to do with Dick Durbin's election? Everything. Everything. When I ran for President in 1991 and '92, it was for, most people thought, a totally bizarre and almost unfulfillable adventure. The President at that time was at way over 70 percent in the polls. My mother was the only

person that thought I was going to win. [*Laughter*] That's not true. Hillary always thought I would win. [*Laughter*] She did.

But apart from that, the pickings were pretty slim. And I did it without regard to whether we could win or not because I was very troubled that our country seemed to be sort of drifting into the 21st century. We had an exploding deficit. We had very weak job growth, the weakest since the Depression. We had a high unemployment rate. And we seemed to be drifting apart instead of coming together.

Just look around this room tonight, look at the diversity in this room. And we've got to prove that the rest of the world is wrong when they fall out over race, religion, and ethnicity. We've got to prove that we can be better and bigger than that, not because we're intrinsically better human beings but because we've got a system and a history and a set of values in our Constitution that tells us how we ought to behave and that we know from experience really works in the world of today and will work in the world of tomorrow.

And I felt very strongly that unless we had a common shared national commitment to keeping the American dream alive for everybody without regard to their race or their gender or where they started out in life, to bringing this country together instead of letting it drift apart, and in maintaining the leadership of the United States for peace and freedom and prosperity—unless we all said that's what we're trying to do as we move into the 21st century, we'd just keep on drifting and lose a lot of the greatness of America and the extraordinary opportunity that the end of the cold war and growth of the global economy and the information age presents us.

And so I set out on this odyssey. And I guess the first big hurdle was cleared on St. Patrick's Day in 1992, when we carried the Democratic primaries in Illinois and Michigan and it became obvious that unless a wheel ran off I'd be nominated. And so I thank you all for that.

When the American people gave me the chance to serve and I got to work with people like Paul Simon and Carol Moseley-Braun and Dick Durbin, we had a simple strategy. I thought we ought to put the power of the Government in Washington to work to create opportunity, not guarantees but opportunity for every American to live out their own dreams, that we ought to insist on responsibility in return for that opportunity, and that we ought to consciously work to bring the American people together and push this country forward.

Now, I just talked to you about a couple of examples of bringing the American people together around our basic values. But that's what Dick Durbin's done. And the difference in the way we view the world and the way our opponents in the political arena view the world is daylight and dark. It's not just a little difference; it's a big difference.

When Dick Durbin fought against the Republican cuts in the environmental community right-to-know laws, to me that said everything. I mean, it seems to me that if you want to build a sense of community and you want to build a future for our children, you have to believe that you have to find a way to grow the economy and preserve the environment, and you have to believe that you can trust citizens to know what's in the chemicals that are in their own backyards and neighborhoods. But they wanted to weaken those laws, and Dick Durbin said no.

He mentioned the tobacco issue. I now know why no other President has ever fooled with this—[*laughter*]—it's what we used to call a character-builder back home when I was growing up. [*Laughter*] But you know, the truth is that it's illegal in every State in America for children to smoke. But every day 3,000 of them start, and 1,000 of those 3,000 will die earlier than they otherwise would because of it. We worry about health care costs, the cost of Medicare, the cost of Medicaid, where there have to be draconian cuts in these programs to save them. The truth is, if we could solve that one problem, we'd save more in health care costs than all these things we're talking about in Washington, which would be destructive to the fundamental integrity of Medicare and Medicaid. It's an important issue.

But nobody really wants to deal with it, so they try to act like, well, this is a matter of personal liberty and the Government shouldn't be fooling with this, and all that.

But it just depends on what your philosophy is. And Dick Durbin and Al Gore, who lost his only sister to lung cancer, and I believe that the law ought to be enforced, and we ought to take strong steps to stop the advertising, marketing, sales, and distribution of cigarettes to minors. And I think it's a very important issue.

But the folks on the other side, they really don't believe that. I mean, it's not like they're—you know, they really don't believe that. I know that Senator Dole said the other day he wasn't sure cigarettes were addictive—[*laughter*]—this morning said that he admired Dr. Koop, who was President Reagan's Surgeon General and as far as I know is a Republican but has always been very forthright about the dangers of tobacco to children. But he said that Dr. Koop might have had his views colored by excessive exposure to the liberal media that might have brainwashed him.

Well, I think Dr. Koop's problem is that he has had excessive exposure of 50 years of medical practice and reading medical journals and having evidence and facts, and he is not clouded by the political pressure that can be put on by the interest groups on the other side. So he stood up to the heat about this.

Well, anyway, that's why I'm for Dick Durbin. I'm glad—that's a good reason to be for him. He was out there; he was out there carrying on this battle all along, and he did a good job, and he'll do a better job if you ratify the positions we have taken in this coming election.

And I just want to make three arguments to you very quickly that I hope—I realize that, as we used to say down home, I might be preaching to the saved tonight. [*Laughter*] But I want you to go out and preach this for the next 4 months, because I need your help. Every one of you, if you can afford to be at this fundraiser tonight, you have the capacity to influence somebody else by talking, by talking and speaking. You can do it.

And if somebody says, ''Well, why should I be for the President, or why should I be for Dick Durbin?'' I want you to give them three arguments. Number one, these guys had a plan—a plan for the economy, a plan for crime, a plan for education, a plan for the environment, and a plan for family and community. And the results were good, and the other guys opposed them.

Look at the economic plan. When I introduced my economic strategy, I said, here's what we're going to do. We're going to reduce the deficit and get interest rates down. We're going to expand trade dramatically. Thank you, Bill Daley, for your help in that. But we're going to do it on fair as well as free trade terms. We're going to invest more in the education of our people, from preschool all the way up to adults needing retraining. And we're going to keep investing in the environment and in technology and research, so that we can grow the economy. That was our strategy.

Here's what they said. Speaker Gingrich: ''This will lead to a recession next year.'' Mr. Armey: ''Clearly''—talking about our economic plan—''clearly this is a job killer.'' Mr. Dole: ''Don't kid anybody; nobody is going to cut spending around here.'' [*Laughter*] Mr. Gramm: ''We're buying a one-way to a recession.'' The House Budget Committee Chairman, Mr. Kasich: ''This plan will not work. If it was to work, then I'd become a Democrat.'' [*Laughter*] Well, Mr. Chairman, we're saving a seat for you at the United Center. [*Laughter*] They were wrong.

Three and a half years later we said if you adopt this economic plan, we'll cut the deficit in half and have 8 million new jobs. It turned out we were wrong, too. The deficit got cut by more than half, and there are 9.7 million new jobs after 3½ years. They were wrong.

Dick Durbin mentioned the crime bill. You have—ask Senator Simon, or Senator Moseley-Braun what it was like in the United States Senate when we were trying to get the crime bill. Well, they said it was the awfulest thing we ever saw. ''We don't need 100,000 police. We didn't need the Brady bill. We didn't need the assault weapons ban. We certainly shouldn't give the police any money or local community groups any money to prevent crime by giving kids someplace to go after school or jobs to do in the summertime.'' That was all wasted money, even though the police agencies were begging for the money for children to have something to say yes to. That's what they said.

One year alone, murder rate down in Chicago 11 percent, down in Springfield 35 percent, down in every major urban area in America. The crime rate is about to go down for the 4th year in a row. We are ahead of schedule and under budget in putting 100,000 police on the street.

They told everybody when they won the Congress back in 1994, one of the reasons they won it is they told all these people in rural areas that the Democrats were trying to take their guns away. Well, now we've had two deer seasons since they said that—[*laughter*]—two duck seasons. And every single hunter in America is still shooting with the same rifle if they wanted to. But I'll tell you something—but there are 60,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers who could not get handguns because of the Brady bill. They were wrong, and we were right.

Our plan said we're going to make college loans easier to get, less bureaucracy, lower cost, better repayment terms. We're going to put more kids in Head Start. They all voted against it. We said we're going to have national service and give people a chance to work in their local communities to help pay their way through college. Their leadership led the fight against that. Some brave Republicans broke away on that, but their leadership was against that.

We said, we're going to give tax cuts to people that really need it. We're going to give a tax cut to the people on the bottom end of the wage scale that have children at the house and that are working 40 hours a week. Because if you work full-time, you've got kids in your house, you shouldn't be taxed into poverty. The tax system ought to lift you out of poverty. That's what we did. Every one of them opposed it, but we did it.

For the first time in years we had a reduction in the number of poor children. But we had to do it alone. You heard Dick talking about family leave. Their leadership opposed it. You heard him talking about tobacco. Let me tell you about another big family issue. We fought hard in the telecommunications bill for the V-chip, which is not censorship. It just says if you're a parent and you've got little kids there and you've got 100 channels on the television, you ought to have the right to decide what they see before they're at least 11 or 12. And I think it was the right thing to do. And they opposed that.

They talked about welfare. We just went out and worked with the States and gave them permission to try to find ways to move people from welfare to work that were tough on work but not tough on children, didn't take cheap shots at kids or hurt them because they happen to be born to immigrant parents. But you know what? Three and a half years later, there are 1.3 million fewer people on welfare than there were the day I became President. That's something we did.

So, argument number one: We had a plan; they opposed it. Look at the results: We were right; they were wrong. And I want you to tell people that.

Argument number two: Every election should be about the future. And there's more we have to do. I want to build on the family leave law. I think people should have a little time off if they have to go to a parent-teacher conference or if they have to take their parents or their children to regular medical—[*applause*].

I believe that we ought to raise the minimum wage and not let it fall to a 40-year low. I believe we ought to pass that Kennedy-Kassebaum bill that says you can't lose your health insurance if you change jobs or somebody in your family is sick.

I believe we ought to change the tax law so that every American can be guaranteed 2 years of education beyond high school at the nearest community college. Every American should have it, every single one. I believe there ought to be a million young people in work-study given the chance that Dick Durbin and I had to work our way through college. That's what I think we ought to do.

This is about the future—how are we going to create more opportunity, bring the country together and go forward growing together—ideas about the future, not how we can divide the electorate up in some little segments here and segments there to wind up with more than a majority by terrorizing or terrifying half the people.

And the third thing is, I want you to say to people, this is a great election for the American people because there's almost no guesswork in it. [*Laughter*] Now, you think about it. You know, I mean, normally, in

every election, especially in the Presidential race—I mean, you all took a chance on me in '92. I hope you think it worked out okay. But you did. But you did. But there's no guesswork. You know what I'm going to do. You know that. You know based on the last 3½ years that what I tell you I'm going to do, I'm either going to do it or get caught trying to do it. [*Laughter*] And also you know what Senator Dole and the Republicans are going to do, because they have already done it. I just vetoed it the first time. So you know what they're going to do.

So if the American people believe the country, the Presidency and the Congress, should be in the hands of the people who fought the family leave law, who fought the V-chip, who fought the tobacco initiative, who fought the economic plan, who fought the 100,000 police, who fought the Brady bill, who fought the assault weapons ban, who sought to gut the environmental protection of the country and weaken workplace protection and make it easier for people to raid the pension plans of their employees, they can do that. And they know. And there is no guesswork. [*Laughter*]

Now, you're laughing because you never thought about it that way, have you? But if you like that budget I vetoed in '95, you can have it. And you can get it within 6 months, the first 6 months of 1997. [*Laughter*] All you have to do is give them the White House and the Congress, and they will give it to you.

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. But if you don't like that, then you better make up your mind that as citizens one of your responsibilities for the next 4 months and 1 week and a few days is to go out and tell everybody you talk to that there are three reasons you ought to be for Dick Durbin and Bill Clinton. We had a plan; it got good results. We got a better set of ideas for the future. And you have got a clear choice.

And let's go back to what we started talking about at the beginning, to close. Think about—this is a great adventurous time for America. We have in the space of a few years dramatically changed the way we work and the way we live and the way we relate to the rest of the world. On balance, we're much better off for these changes, although there is a lot of upheaval and a lot of our folks are still having a tough time.

And we are now going to, in the next 4 years, walk across a bridge right into the next century. This election is not like 1992 when the issue was change against status quo. Now you have two very different views of change. But there is no status quo option. And the American people have to decide now, am I going to get on that bridge and walk into the next century, or am I going to get on that bridge and walk into the next century.

They honestly believe, the other side does, that the things we do together through our Government are a legacy of the industrial age of America and basically, except for national defense, by and large not worth doing; that we'd all be better off if we were on our own and unburdened by terrible things like the environment protection law and the family leave law and all those intrusions into our lives; that any tax cut is better than any spending program, even if it's a college loan program or putting tens of thousands more poor children into Head Start. But I can tell you, they believe it. It's sincere. It's not just contributions and all that stuff you hear to try to make people—these are two honestly different visions of the future.

I believe that there has never been a great country that grew greater by shrinking opportunity. I believe that the only way we can continue to grow greater and deal with the challenges of the modern world and turn this extraordinary diversity of America into our most precious asset—if we decide we're going to give everybody opportunity, insist on responsibility as part of the bargain, and then find ways to grow together, to respect our diversity, to tolerate our honest differences, to celebrate the rainbow of America. That's what I believe.

But you have to decide what you believe and whether it's worth fighting for. And I recommend a simple test. Ask yourself what you want this country to look like 20 years from now or 30 years from now, when your children or your grandchildren are your age. Ask yourself what kind of legacy you want to leave to them, and whether you really think we'd be better off if we told folks, "You're on your own. Have a good time at

the tender mercies of the global economy out there in cyberspace somewhere.'' Or wouldn't we be better by saying, if you look at the 220-year history of this country, it is the long, sometimes painful, sometimes agonizingly slow journey of a people to come closer and closer and closer to their ideals of equality of opportunity and decency and justice and fairness, and giving everybody a chance to live out their dreams.

Now, that's what this election is about. You have to help your fellow Americans decide which road we're going to walk into the future. And if they understand the choice, I think we know what the answer will be.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:40 p.m. at the Sheraton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to William S. Singer, chair of the reception, and William M. Daley, cochair, Chicago '96. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at the Chicago '96 Dinner

July 2, 1996

Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, before I say anything I want to, by way of introduction and being true to my past—back when I had a life and did other things—I want to say that I enjoyed the music that this fine orchestra has given us tonight, and I think we ought to give them a hand. [*Applause*] Thank you. Thank you.

It is wonderful to be back in Chicago tonight. I want to thank all of those who have spoken before and those who they represent, and all of you for your contribution to help make our convention a success.

I thank Leslie Fox and I want to thank Dick Notebaert, who has done many, many commendable things for our country as CEO for Ameritech, but helping to make sure we have a good convention in Chicago is one that I will especially long remember.

I want to thank my good friend, Bill Daley, for his fine work. He's always there when you need him. He even came to the White House when I needed him to help me pass NAFTA, and this country is in a lot better shape because of it. And I thank you.

I want to thank the Mayor, who, along with many other gifted public officials in this area, including my friend and fellow Arkansan, John Stroger—thank you, sir. I think the Mayor has made a special point of trying to do what works and trying to make Chicago into a big family. He and Mrs. Daley come from big families so they can set a good example for the rest of us. But I also believe they've tried to make Chicago into a family.

When I first met Hillary, a long time ago now, and she began to talk to me about Chicago, and then I got to know her family and I began to spend a lot of time here, I realized that this was truly a unique city, in some ways, perhaps our most American city. I was at an event for Congressman Durbin a few moments ago, and he was talking about his mother being a Lithuanian immigrant. And I said to the group there that when I talked to Hillary last night—we were in France together for the annual meeting of the seven largest industrial nations and Russia, and afterward she stayed on to visit, I think seven or eight countries in Central and Eastern Europe. She just finished the day in Romania. And so she was bragging on her day in Romania. She said, ''Well, I've been in Romania. I'm going to the Czech Republic. I'm going to Hungary. I'm going to Poland. I'm going to Estonia.'' And she said she was going to a couple other places. And I said, ''Well, I'm going to Chicago, and I'll see people from all those places with just one stop.'' And I said, ''You could have stayed home and done all that with a lot less effort, you know.'' [*Laughter*]

I'm very proud of her. I'm glad she is doing this for our country. But it makes the point about Chicago.

I'd like to thank Debra DeLee, our convention coordinator, and all of the people here who have worked here on our behalf and on the Democratic Party's behalf. You all know that I'm also indebted to Chicago for a lot of things. My campaign in 1992 got off to a real jump-start here. When I spoke to the leaders of the various State Democratic parties in 1991 here at this very Navy Pier, I announced that David Wilhelm would be my campaign manager, and I know he and Deegee are here somewhere tonight, and I want to thank them.