

to say anything that will complicate the work that's being done. I hope some progress can be made there.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:14 p.m. at the Longworth House Office Building.

Remarks in a Telephone Conversation With Astronaut Shannon Lucid

September 26, 1996

The President. Hello.

Ms. Lucid. Hello.

The President. Welcome home.

Ms. Lucid. Why, thank you so much. It's so kind of you to call.

The President. Well, we're all so proud of you. We've been watching you, and I couldn't believe you walked off the shuttle.

Ms. Lucid. Well, I'm just really proud to be an American, and I'm just really proud to be part of this cooperative program that we have going with the Russians. It was just a great mission. And I just had a great time.

The President. Well, it was wonderful. And as I said, the whole country followed you, but I appreciate what you said about the cooperation with Russia, too. It really sets the stage for the work on the international space station. And it's very, very important. And I believe the way you captured the public imagination will also help us to build long-term support for the space program.

Ms. Lucid. Well, I think so. Of course, I don't know from a political standpoint or from the big boss standpoint, but I just know from the people that are actually working, you know, like the Cosmonauts and the Astronauts working together, that this works out just great. They were just wonderful people to work with.

The President. Yes, they are good people, and we're making real progress in working with them, I think.

Ms. Lucid. I think so. And it couldn't have been a better experience. And I just thoroughly enjoyed working with the Cosmonauts.

The President. The other thing that I wanted to say was that on behalf of my wife and daughter, is that you have been a terrific

inspiration for young women around the country and all around the world. And I know as you get out and around and people get to congratulate you, you'll see that. But it's a wonderful thing for these young girls that may have nontraditional aspirations to see someone like you up there doing that.

Ms. Lucid. Well, thank you, sir. Yes, I just didn't really give a thought to that. It was just something that I'd always wanted to do. And I was just very glad that it worked out.

The President. Did you have a good reunion with your kids?

Ms. Lucid. I sure did. [Laughter] And they're here nagging me already.

The President. Did you get your M&M's I sent you?

Ms. Lucid. Oh, I sure did. I wanted to thank you first thing. That was so nice. They're already into them.

The President. That's good.

Ms. Lucid. That was so nice and so thoughtful of you. I really, really appreciate that.

The President. Thanks. I'm going down to Texas tomorrow, and I just got a note that said you might be there at the time I land in Houston. If so, I hope I get to see you.

Ms. Lucid. Oh, well, that would be very nice. I hope that works out. That would just be great.

The President. Me, too. Well, congratulations. I know you want to go back to your family, but I just wanted to say hello. You've given us all a great deal to be proud of and a lot of thrills, and we're glad you're home safe and sound.

Ms. Lucid. Thank you very much, Mr. President. And it was very nice of you to call. I really appreciate that. Thank you so much.

The President. Bye-bye.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:52 p.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

Teleconference Remarks With the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers

September 26, 1996

Thank you. I want you to save some of that energy for the next 5 weeks and 4 days; we need your help all the way. I thank you

for your endorsement. Your support means a great deal to me. As you know, it is crucial to our victory. I wish I could be there with you to thank you in person, but I'm glad to have this opportunity to speak to you by satellite. You're out there in Chicago, a city that has always stood for the strength and drive of our working people, and a city that was awfully good to our Democrats just a couple of weeks ago.

I want to thank my good friend, your president, George Kourpias, for all of his hard work and support. George rode with me on the train to Chicago, and I enjoyed that very much, and I missed him on Labor Day. We usually spend that together, too. I'll see you soon, George.

I also want to thank Don Wharton, your secretary-treasurer, and the entire executive council of the IAM. You're all doing a great job. The International Association of Machinists has been going strong for 108 years now, and I congratulate you on your plans to unify IAM with two other great unions, the United Steel Workers and the United Auto Workers.

By the year 2000 when we start that new century, you will be the largest union in North America. And with leaders like George Kourpias, Steve Yokich and George Becker, I don't have any doubt at all that soon you'll be the largest in the entire world.

I want to talk to you today for a few minutes about the choice our country is facing in just 40 days—a choice that will determine whether we build a bridge to the future or a bridge to the past. Whether we can build a bridge to the 21st century that is strong enough and wide enough for every American to walk across.

Just 4 years ago, our economy was stalled with high unemployment, the slowest job growth since the Great Depression, a record budget deficit, stagnant wages, increasing inequality, rampant cynicism. Our workers were becoming more divided economically, and it seemed that Americans were working harder and harder just to keep up.

I took office with a simple strategy: Opportunity for all, responsibility from all, and bring us all together in a great American community again. That's America's basic bargain. We didn't ask who is to blame; instead,

we asked what can we do. And our strategy has worked. Today, we have further evidence of just how well it is working.

According to the Census Bureau just today, we have had the largest decline in the last year in income inequality in 27 years, the largest decline in the number of Americans living in poverty in 27 years.

Since our economic plan passed, family incomes are up over \$1,600. In the last year, after inflation, average incomes are up about \$900. That's the biggest jump in a decade. Now, these are remarkable turnarounds from a condition that many people thought was inevitable, from America growing apart, to America growing together as we go forward together. And that's just today's news.

In the past 4 years, we've cut unemployment by a third to its lowest level in 7½ years. The combined rates of unemployment and inflation and home mortgages are the lowest in nearly 30 years. Our economy has produced 10½ million new jobs, 4.4 million new homeowners. We've cut the deficit by 60 percent, given 15 million of our hardest-working American families a tax cut. And now we're going to help 25 million Americans get the quality health care access they need by saying, in the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill, you can no longer have your insurance taken away from you when you move from job to job, and you can't be denied coverage simply because someone in your family has been sick.

The U.S. aerospace industry, which is so critical to our country and its future, is on the rebound in a big way. Last year, American aerospace companies captured a record 83 percent of the world market for large commercial aircraft. I am committed to supporting the aerospace industry and the hundreds of thousands of good jobs it produces. That's why our administration will continue to promote our aerospace industry and our exports all around the world, just the way the late Ron Brown and Secretary Mickey Kantor and I have done for the last 4 years.

I know that many of you have been affected by defense downsizing. That's why we've done what we could to ease the transition by developing new applications for defense technology and working to create employment opportunities for former defense

workers. Over the past 4 years, we've also fought to protect our own values, the ones you and I share.

Yes, we do have to balance the budget; it keeps interest rates down and the economy growing. But when the Republican Congress tried to pass devastating cuts in Medicare, Medicaid, education, and the environment, I stopped them. Then, they shut down the Government twice to try to force their cuts on the American people, and together, we said no again.

Because we want to strengthen families, we fought for the Family and Medical Leave Act. Because we honor our parents, we worked to secure the pensions of 40 million working and already retired people. And we stopped the Republicans from letting their corporations raid their workers' pension plans again in their budget. We learned our lesson in the eighties; we don't want to do that again.

And because we honor work and family, we were right to raise the minimum wage for 10 million American workers. Next Tuesday, because of that victory, those 10 million American workers will get their raise. It was a long and difficult fight, but when many of our hardest pressed citizens get a raise on Tuesday, I know you will agree it was worth it.

And I want to pay a special word of tribute to the IAM and to the labor movement in general for its fight for this increase. I know your members don't earn the minimum wage, but you fought for it, anyway, because you know how important it is for people who are working hard to support their children and to be productive citizens and to stay off welfare, to be able to be rewarded and to have dignity in their work. So I thank you; you did a great thing for our country.

We all know that America is on the right track to the 21st century, but we've got more to do. I want to build a bridge to the next century where every American family has a chance to benefit from the growing economy, a chance to succeed at home with their children, and to succeed at work.

We should expand the Family and Medical Leave Act to give parents a little time off to take their children to the doctor and to parent-teacher conferences. We ought to

make the first 2 years of college as universal as high school is today by giving families tax cuts to pay for college tuition. I know that will help a lot of you.

I've proposed a \$1,500 tax credit for tuition, a dollar-for-dollar reduction from your tax bill, for the first 2 years of college. That's the typical cost of tuition at a community college. And I've proposed a \$10,000 tax deduction for any tuition after high school for people of any age.

We also want to expand IRA's so that families can save for college and then withdraw from the IRA, tax-free, to pay for those college costs or for a medical emergency or to buy a first home.

I also want to streamline the training programs that have been passed to benefit America's workers who are unemployed or underemployed. I've proposed a "GI bill" for America's workers that will tell every worker in America: If you lose your job or you're underemployed and you qualify for a Federal training program, we'll give you a skill grant worth up to \$2,600 a year, and you figure out where you want to take it, to get the training you most need to go on to a better job. I don't want anybody left behind or stuck in this global economy; I want us to go forward together.

We also had a good day for health care here in the Nation's Capital. We said that there are not going to be any more drive-by deliveries, that insurance companies can't force mothers and their newborn babies out of the hospital in just a day, in some cases up to 8 hours.

We began to take some steps to provide some parity for families that have members with mental health problems, which I think is terribly important. And we said to the Vietnam veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange and whose children, therefore, were born with the terrible disease of spina bifida, we're going to give you the support and the help you deserve. These things, plus Kennedy-Kassebaum, mean we're moving in the right direction.

Now, we've got to take the next step on health care. My balanced budget plan would provide for support for people who are between jobs so they can keep their health insurance for 6 months. That will help 5 million

Americans a year, up to 700,000 children a year. And I know you're for that, and I ask you to keep working with me until we make sure that health care is accessible and affordable to all American working families.

Now, that's how we'll build our bridge to the 21st century, doing everything we can to strengthen and support working American families. Soon after I took office, I got rid of my predecessor's anti-worker, anti-union Executive orders. Our administration is pro-family, pro-worker and pro-union. I strongly support collective bargaining. It is not a privilege, it's the right of all of our workers.

The recent resolution of the McDonnell-Douglas contract dispute at the bargaining table is a great example of why we have to preserve that right always. And we're glad to have you back at work. I want you to know I'll keep standing up for working Americans. Congress tried to make our workplaces less safe and company unions the law of the land, but I wouldn't let them. Congress tried to gut the National Labor Relations Board and undermine the prevailing wage laws, and I said no.

We can have a stronger economy without sacrificing workers' rights, workers' job security, and safe workplaces. And I will keep fighting to protect striking workers from being permanently replaced. I will also continue to use my veto pen to stop Republicans in Congress from attacking our working families and the unions that represent them. Our unequaled progress throughout the entire 20th century would simply not have been possible without the unions that helped to make it happen. I know I can count on you to help me build that bridge to the 21st century.

Our best days are still ahead of us, but we have to do everything we possibly can to make that promise real for all Americans. And as we do, we'll all be better off.

So, for the next 40 days, go out and tell your friends what President Kourpias told you. Your vote matters more than ever, for the Presidential race, for the fight to elect good people to Congress, for your future, your children's future, and the future of America.

Thank you, God bless you all, and on to victory.

NOTE: The President spoke by satellite at 6:41 p.m. from in the Hyatt Regency Hotel to the association meeting in Chicago, IL. In his remarks, he referred to George J. Kourpias, president, International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers; George F. Becker, international president, United Steel Workers; and Stephen P. Yokich, president, United Auto Workers.

Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Reception

September 26, 1996

Thank you so much. Thank you, Senator Kerrey, for that uncommonly generous introduction. *[Laughter]* And I thank you and Senator Kennedy for being on your best behavior tonight. *[Laughter]* And I thank you for giving me the chance to be the warmup act for Don Henley. *[Laughter]*

Ladies and gentlemen, I very much wanted to be here tonight with Senator Daschle and Senator Lieberman and Senator Kerrey and all the others who have talked and who are here because this is an important evening. I'd like to personally thank the retiring Senators who are here, many of them I have known for a long, long time.

I thank my friend Bill Bradley, and I thank Jim Exon who always gave me such wonderful, sage advice. If I had taken all of it, I'd be better off today. *[Laughter]* I thank Howell Heflin whom I first met over 20 years ago when neither one of us were even close to our present positions. I thank my neighbor Bennett Johnston for his friendship and his guidance. I thank Sam Nunn for his many contributions to our country and to me personally. I thank Claiborne Pell for always standing up for what is noble and good in politics and human nature. I thank Paul Simon for being a force for reform down to the last day of his service in public life. And I thank my friend David Pryor, as good a friend as I ever had in public life. I will miss them all, and they have served our Nation well.

I do believe that Senator Kerrey and others who were involved in this, and maybe just the civic impulses of the candidates themselves, have given us an unusually attractive group of candidates who are running for the United States Senate this year. And