

been blocked in the Congress by a filibuster in the United States Senate, a procedure by which only 41 of the 100 Senators can stop a bill from coming to a vote. Now the special interests and their allies in Congress are poised to strike again, waiting to quietly smother reform with another filibuster. But this year they won't get away with it, at least quietly, because Senators John McCain, a Republican, and Russ Feingold, a Democrat, have pledged to bring their reform legislation to a vote in the Senate this month, and all America will be watching.

On Thursday, all 45 Democratic Senators—every single Democrat in the Senate—wrote to the Senate leadership in support. I'm very proud of them. I'm also proud that citizens' groups, spurred by business executives and civic leaders, have gathered one million signatures on a petition to Congress advocating campaign finance reform. I'm grateful to Presidents Ford and Carter and Bush, all of whom have called for reform. They are being joined by dozens of former lawmakers. And the American public clearly wants action.

This is a time of testing for Members of the United States Senate. The opponents of reform are gearing up to keep it from coming to a vote at all. Let's be clear: A vote to filibuster campaign reform is a vote to keep special interest money and kill reform; a vote to filibuster is a vote for the status quo. A Senator who votes "yes" on a filibuster is voting "yes" to soft money and "yes" to keep the cost of campaigns exploding and "no" on reform. That vote will be hard to explain to the American people.

This year, despite all the odds, we've got the best chance in a generation for reform. Throughout our history, the American people have overcome the resistance of entrenched interests to expand our democracy and to keep it strong in changing times. Let's make this autumn a season of reform in our campaign finance laws.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 6:36 p.m. on September 12 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on September 13.

Remarks at a Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Gala

September 13, 1997

Thank you. Thank you very much. Congresswoman Waters, every time you get up to speak I'm always all ears. When you introduce me, I'm certainly all ears. I'm never quite sure what you're going to say—[laughter]—but I'm absolutely sure you will say what you think. Maxine Waters is my kind of public official. I've been to her district several times with her. She knows the people in the street, the people on the corners. She cares about the people that other people forget. Her district is the first one where I met young men who had been in gangs, who were walking the streets with her to save the lives of other young people. That's the kind of thing she's done, and America owes Maxine Waters a debt of gratitude, and I thank her.

I want to congratulate Congressman Clyburn and LeBaron Taylor and all of you who are responsible for this event tonight. I was glad to be here, too, with Congressman Gephardt and with all the distinguished members of the audience. I see Kweisi Mfume there and Mrs. King and Mayor Barry, Dr. Height. Reverend Jackson, I'm always glad to see you. And I think I speak for many of us here when we say that you and your family and your mother are in our prayers, sir. God bless you. And thank you for the magnificent job you did leading, along with Secretary Slater, the American delegation to the African economic summit in Zimbabwe.

Let me also congratulate the award winners: Major Owens and Eva Clayton, Bill Lucy and Danny Bakewell, Laura Murphy and William Brooks, Myrlie Evers-Williams, Coretta Scott King, the late Dr. Betty Shabazz, and my good friend, the chairman of our racial reconciliation advisory board, Dr. John Hope Franklin.

And finally, let me say one other word of introduction. One of your members is not here tonight because he had to go home to dedicate his new cathedral. But I want to wish Congressman Floyd Flake well as he leaves the United States Congress and goes home to his mission, where his heart is. Floyd Flake, in his church, has helped to start 11

businesses, employing hundreds of people in inner-city neighborhoods who would not have jobs otherwise. That's the sort of partnership I'd like to see us make with African-American churches all across the United States of America, so everybody who wants a job has one. So, even though he's going home, I want him to be a model that all of us here in Washington can continue to follow.

I want to say one serious thing. If you don't remember anything else tonight, remember this one sentence: I am profoundly grateful to the Congressional Black Caucus for making a dream of a lifetime come true; I am the opening act for James Brown. *[Laughter]* In one of James Brown's songs he says, "I don't want nobody to give me nothing. Just open up the door. I'll get it myself." I think that's the motto of the CBC. And for 4½ years, we've been working together to open up those doors.

Today we see the results: unemployment below 5 percent, lowest African-American unemployment in 24 years; 13 million new jobs; family incomes up, African-American family income is up \$3,000 in 3 years; the lowest poverty rate among African-Americans ever recorded; violent crime down 5 years in a row; record drops in welfare. That is the progress that I could not have possibly made if it had not been for the support of the Congressional Black Caucus, and I thank you very much for that.

And let me say that progress should spur us on, for there is still too much poverty, still too much lack of economic and educational opportunity. There is still too much discrimination. There is too much to do. And I come here today to say that, down to the last day of my Presidency, I will be there with you, working with you, fighting for a tomorrow that we can all share together.

I also want to thank the members of my administration who are here. Many have been noticed, but I'd like to say a special word of thanks to all the African-Americans who work in the White House. And to Bob Nash, Goody Marshall, Ben Johnson, Minyon Moore, Terry Edmonds, Ann Walker, Tracey Thornton, and Andy Blocker—I know they're here—there may be more. But I want

to thank them for helping me to be a better President.

I also want to thank the CBC for its strong support of the man who will be the next Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, Bill Lee. He's here tonight, and I thank you for sticking by him. For much of his career, Bill Lee's been a civil rights lawyer with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. He was not born into a position of leadership. Instead, he's a Chinese-American who worked his way out of poverty in Harlem to become a national leader in the fight for social justice. We need your support to ensure his confirmation. He will do a magnificent job.

I also want to ask your support for the man whom I nominated this week to be the next Surgeon General and Assistant Secretary of Health, Dr. David Satcher.

Finally, let me say, as the Congress comes back after its recess, I ask for your support to get from this Congress the money that was promised for the priorities we fought so hard for in the balanced budget agreement: the largest increase in aid to education since 1965, the biggest increase opening the doors to college for all—and aid to college—since 1945, and the biggest increase in health care for poor people and children since 1965. Now we've got to make good on the promises of that agreement, and I need your help to do that.

Finally, let me say that as we approach a new millennium, we must decide that we can never be what we ought to be unless we get there together. I was, just the other day, at American University in Washington. There are students from 140 different national and ethnic groups at American University. We don't have time for, or room for, discrimination. And we can no longer ignore the unfinished business of our past. We cannot continue to grow economically as long as there's a single soul in this country who needs a good quality education who can't get it and who is denied access to a job for which he or she is plainly qualified. We cannot do that.

And we have to decide, as a country, that we can't afford our past baggage or our present blinders. We've got to embrace a future in which we're all going forward together. Look around this room tonight. You are the future of America. Your children and

grandchildren are the future of America. And we are going to have the most exciting future that this country has ever had if we just make up our mind to make sure everybody has a chance to walk through that door together.

I ask your support for Dr. John Hope Franklin and Judy Winston. I thank you for the national town hall meeting on race relations in the new millennium that you held. I ask you to remember this: Everybody who gets to serve in Congress, certainly someone who gets to serve as President, has had a chance—all those folks—we've had our chance to live our dreams, but there's still a lot of people our age that were denied that chance. There are huge numbers of people our parents' age who never had that chance. We should promise that there will be no one our children's age who will be denied that chance to walk through the door of their dreams. That is our mission, and I promise to pursue it with you hand in hand until my last day as your President.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9 p.m. at Union Station. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. Maxine Waters, chair, Congressional Black Caucus Foundation; LeBaron Taylor, chair, Congressional Black Caucus Foundation; Kweisi Mfume, president, and Myrlie Evers-Williams, chair, board of directors, NAACP; Coretta Scott King, founder, Martin Luther King Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Inc.; Mayor Marion Barry of Washington, DC; Dorothy Height; president and chief executive officer, National Council of Negro Women; civil rights leader Jesse Jackson; William Lucy, international secretary and treasurer, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; Danny J. Bakewell, chair, The Bakewell Company; Laura W. Murphy, director, American Civil Liberties Union, Washington, DC, office; William Brooks, vice president of corporate affairs, General Motors; the late Betty Shabazz, director, institutional advancement and public relations, Medgar Evers College City University of New York; entertainer James Brown, who performed at the gala; and John Hope Franklin, Chair, and Judith A. Winston, Executive Director, President's Advisory Board on Race.

Remarks to the Service Employees International Union

September 15, 1997

Thank you very much. Thank you. This is a pretty good way to start off the week. [Laughter]

You know, I'm getting up in years now, and—[laughter]—every day I start a little slower, it seems like, and I always need kind of a jolt of energy. I may be dancing by the time I get back to the White House. This may be the afternoon of my first 5-mile run since the accident.

It's great to see you, and I thank Andy for that remarkable introduction and for his remarks and his passionate commitment. I thank your executive vice presidents who are up here on the stage with me, and all the rest of you for inviting me here.

We have a large number of people from the White House who have come here today. I think I should mention at least two of them. One is a gift you gave me or a theft I accomplished—[laughter]—but Karen Tramontano is doing a magnificent job. I also would like to note that the Assistant to the President and Director of Public Liaison used to work with you at the Labor Department, Maria Echaveste, and she is also doing a great job, and she's here with me.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to be here and delighted to see all of you, wishing I had one of those purple T-shirts to jog in. [Laughter] I'll get one before I leave. The SEIU—better not do that or it will be a story. [Laughter] The SEIU is leading the way for better wages, safer workplaces, more full-time jobs, and a brighter future for our working families. There's new life, new energy, new creativity in the labor movement in America, and a lot of it began right here with you, and I thank you for it. Because of your leadership in the workplace and your involvement in the political process, not just you but America is also back. I've come here today to thank you for what you've done, not simply for me and our administration but for the people of the United States, to strength-