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pate in our third panel discussion this afternoon. Nonetheless, I challenge everyone in this room to rise to a vantage point high enough to experience the Overview Effect. It will enable us to reach common ground.

Let me say when the Vice President was talking and Father O'Donovan was talking, I was looking around this old hall that I have loved for so long, and I found it utterly amazing that I first came here 33 years ago. I was reading this morning up at Camp David the list of people who were going to be here today, and I found it utterly amazing that a few of you I first talked to as long as 20 years ago about the need to build an alternative energy future for America. And I find it completely amazing that five-eighths of my Presidency is behind me.

I make these points for this reason: If you think about the benchmarks in your own life, it doesn't take long to live your life. And what seems at the beginning of your life a very long time, seems to have passed in the flash of an eye once you have experienced it. These great developments, such as the one we're here to talk about today, occur over many life spans. And popular democracies are far more well-organized to take advantage of opportunities or deal with immediate crises than they are to do the responsible thing, which is to take a moderate but disciplined approach far enough in advance of a train coming down the track to avoid leaving our children and our grandchildren with a catastrophe.

So I ask you to think about that. We do not want the young people who sat on these steps today, for whom 33 years will also pass in the flash of an eye, to have to be burdened or to burden their children with our failure to act.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:30 a.m. in Gaston Hall at Georgetown University. In his remarks, he referred to Father Leo J. O'Donovan, president, Georgetown University; and Apollo astronaut Russell L. Schweickart.

Remarks During the White House Conference on Climate Change

October 6, 1997

[*The first panel discussion on the science of global warming and climate change is joined in progress.*]

The President. Isn't there some evidence already that malaria in nations and areas where it presently exists is becoming more prevalent and moving to higher climates?

[*At this point, Diana Liverman, chair, National Academy of Sciences Committee on Human Dimensions of Climate Change, confirmed increases in malaria in developing countries and in the United States due to climate change and population mobility.*]

The President. Let me ask you one other question, because—let me go back to what I said in the beginning. This is one of the most difficult problems of democracy because we get 100 percent of the people to agree that it exists, and only 10 percent of the people have experienced it and another 10 percent of the people can imagine it and, therefore, are willing to deal with it. You still have to have 51 percent in order to develop any kind of political consensus for doing anything, I think, commensurate with the need.

So would you say—I have—and I know this happens to a lot of people—but I had a number of people—I had a young Congressman in to see me the other day who was a member of the Republican Party, and he said, "You know, in my State we've had 3 100-year floods in 10 years." I met a man over my vacation who said that he was moving away from the place he had lived for a decade because it was a completely different place than it had been just 10 years ago. It was hotter; there were more mosquitoes; it was a very different and difficult place. Do you believe that these anecdotal experiences are likely related to climate change, or are they just basically people's imagination?

[*Dr. Liverman cited surveys on perceptions of climate change which correlated with observed temperature changes.*]

The President. Dr. Karl, do you want to say anything?

[*Thomas Karl, senior scientist, National Climatic Data Center, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, mentioned statistics showing record precipitation in six States in 1996. The Vice President commented on budget increases related to flooding and other disasters, and then asked about the predicted heat index for Washington, DC, in the next century.*]

Dr. Karl. I think it's up to 105 or 110. I don't know the exact numbers, but——

Dr. Liverman. It's under 100 now, and it's going to go to about 105 on average, they think, during the summer months.

The Vice President. Well, we'll get some more on that. [*Laughter*]

The President. We certainly will. [*Laughter*] One reason I believe this is occurring is that James Lee Witt is the only member of my Cabinet who is actually disappointed when his budget goes up. [*Laughter*] And he's had a lot of disappointments these last 5 years.

I'd like to now call on Donald Wilhite to talk about the relationship—we've heard about increased precipitation, and I'd like to ask him to talk about drought and the apparent paradox in drought patterns and increased precipitation patterns and what implications this might have for American agriculture, which is a terribly important part of our economy. And we have all been counting on it being a very important part of our export economy for the indefinite future.

[*Donald Wilhite, director, National Drought Mitigation Center, University of Nebraska, discussed the impact of drought on U.S. agricultural production.*]

The President. I want to ask a question and try to make sure that we are all as clear as we can be based on what is known about two apparently contradictory things, that is that the total volume of precipitation has increased virtually everywhere and the number and severity of droughts has increased across the country.

Now, Dr. Karl said earlier that part of the explanation is that the precipitation we're getting is coming in bigger bursts. But what I would like to do is have somebody offer basically a line of explanation that everyone in the audience, and hopefully those who will be following these proceedings, can understand. Why did it happen at the same time that we had more drought and more floods? How could we have more droughts when the aggregate amount of precipitation on an annual basis was increased? And I think it's important that people kind of get why that happens.

[*Dr. Wilhite explained that increased intense precipitation led to very high runoff, and increased temperatures led to increased evaporation and soil drying.*]

The President. So I think that's important. When the temperatures warm, they dry the soil and create the conditions for the floods simultaneously.

Dr. Wilhite. That's correct.

The President. And because these floods don't—wash away the soil, rather than sink down into the soil, you get very little benefit out of them, and farmers lose a lot of topsoil.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. Let me ask you a follow-up question, and perhaps someone else would like to answer. But I think it's important again, and forgive—for those of you in the audience who know a lot more about this than I do, you will have to forgive me, but I'm also trying to imagine how this is going to be absorbed by our Nation and by people who will be following this.

It appears that we are headed into a powerful El Niño, and I wonder if one of you would just simply very briefly explain what that is and whether you believe there is a link between the power of the El Niño and climate change.

[*Robert Watson, Director for Environment, World Bank, and Chair, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, explained the effects of the El Niño phenomena on temperature and precipitation patterns throughout the world. The Vice President then noted the similarity between attitudes toward global warming and past skepticism concerning the detrimental effects of tobacco.*]

The President. We've got to wrap up the first panel and get on to the next one, but I'd like to ask—I think I'd like to ask, John, you to respond to this. If anyone else wishes to, you're welcome to. I think there is a more sophisticated question to be asked—although the Vice President is right, there still are some people who claim that this scientific case that I have been completely persuaded by has not been made. I think the more difficult argument, John, goes something like this: Look, you put all this stuff in the atmosphere and it stays there for 100 years at least, and maybe longer, and so what's the hurry? And in a democracy, it's very hard to artificially impose things on people they can't tangibly feel, and so why shouldn't we just keep on rocking along with the kind of technological progress we're making now until there really is both better scientific information and completely painless technological fixes that are apparent to all? Why shouldn't we just wait until all doubt has been resolved and hopefully we have even better technology—and because, after all, the full impact of whatever we do if we start tomorrow won't be felt for decades and maybe even for a century?

Number one, if that's true, how quickly could we lower the temperature of the planet below what it otherwise would be, and, number two, what about the argument on the merits?

[*John Holdren, member, President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology, and professor, Harvard University, used graphs to demonstrate the need to reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere as soon as possible in order to avoid unmanageable degrees of climate change in the future.*]

The President. But I do want to make the following points: Number one, we can't get to the green line unless there is a global agreement that involves both the developing and the developed countries. Number two—however, that's not an excuse for us to do nothing because if we do something, it will be better than it would have been otherwise because we're still the biggest contributor and will be until sometime well into the next century. And number three, based on everything we know, it will be easier in some ways, particularly if they get the financial help they need, for developing countries to choose a different energy future in the first place than it will be for the developed countries to make the adjustments, which is not to say we don't have to make the adjustments but to say that—I have read a lot of the press coverage and people saying, oh, well, we're just using this for an excuse or we're not being fair to them or we don't want them to have a chance to grow. That is not true.

The United States cannot maintain and enhance its own standard of living unless the developing nations grow and grow rapidly. We support that. But they can choose a different energy future, and that has to be a part of this. But it's not an excuse for us to do nothing, because whatever we do, we're going to make it better for ourselves and for the rest of the world than it otherwise would have been. But I think it's important to point out what John showed us there on the green line. The green line—it requires—to reach the green line, we have to have a worldwide action plan.

[*Following conclusion of the first panel discussion, the second panel discussion on the role of technology in reducing greenhouse gas emissions is joined in progress.*]

The President. Let me just say before we go on to the transportation sector, these presentations have been quite important. I remember 20 years ago, more or less—maybe a little less now, I can't remember exactly when—the Congress voted, or the Federal Government at least required—it might have been a regulatory action—that the new powerplants not use natural gas anymore and that we phase out of them because we grossly underestimated how much natural gas we had. And we thought we could go to clean coal because we didn't want to build nuclear plants, for all the reasons that were clear.

And one of the biggest problems we face now in trying to make a reasoned judgment about how quickly we can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and by how much, is the need not to be unfair to electric utilities that have billions of dollars invested in Government-approved powerplants that they have not yet fully amortized. Therefore, insofar—and this

applies both to buildings and to the utilities themselves, about which these two speakers have spoken. You can either conserve more in the production of electricity, or you can have the people who consume it conserve more, or you can change the basis on which the plants work, which is the most expensive way to do it. Therefore, insofar as we can do more in terms of how much electricity people use or how much waste heat you recover, either one of those things is a far preferable—far preferable—alternative than to change the basis on which plants that have already been built are being amortized and will generate huge amounts of saving at lower costs if we can do it.

At the end of this session, we'll get around to sort of the skeptical economist's take on the technological fix. We'll get around to that later. But I just think it's important that we focus on this specific issue, because if our goal is to minimize economic dislocation, then having conservation by the end-users, the people who have the buildings, for example, whether they're manufacturers or residential buildings or otherwise business buildings, and having recovery of waste heat are clearly, I think, the preferable alternatives and clearly the less expensive alternatives.

I'd like to call on Mary Good now, who was the Under Secretary of Commerce for Technology in our administration for 4 years and now is the managing member of Venture Capital Investors. I want her to talk a little bit about the potential for technological advances to reduce emissions in the transportation sector and to focus particularly on the partnership for new generation vehicles that we've been working on with the auto companies and the UAW since this administration took office. And Mary had a lot to do with it.

There is also a huge debate here about how much we can do how quickly. And we have to make the best judgment about this in determining what to say about where we are in Kyoto, because transportation, as Secretary Peña said, occupies such a large part of this whole equation. So, Mary, have at it. Tell me what I should say in Japan on my visit.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. I just wanted to make two brief points. The leaders of the Big Three auto companies and the UAW came in to see us last week, and they said they're going to meet their partnership for the next generation vehicle goal. The real problem is, once they develop a prototype, how quickly can it be mass-produced, and how will people buy it, and will they buy it at present fuel prices? We'll come back to that at the end. But one related question to that is, given Americans' buying habits and consumer preferences, don't we have to include these light trucks and even heavy trucks in this partnership for the next generation vehicle? Don't we have to achieve significant fuel efficiencies there as well, if we have any hope of succeeding here?

The only other point I want to make, Mary, is, you know I'm big on all kinds of fast-rail research, but I hope tomorrow's headline isn't "Clinton Advocates More Research on Levitation." [*Laughter*] I don't need that.

Ms. Good. We'll have to explain it to them better.

The President. I'd like to call on Michael Bonsignore now to talk about the energy savings available through the use of more high-efficiency products and systems, and also the potential for environmental technology exports. What he has to say and how applicable and expandable you believe it is has a lot to do with whether this transition we're going through will be an economic plus, a drag, or a wash. I personally have always believed it would be a plus if we did it right. But I'd like to ask Michael to talk about that.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. We need to wrap up; we're running a little bit late. But I wanted to just give everyone an opportunity to comment on this. Mason was the only person, I think, who explicitly said that in order to make this transition we need to raise the price of carbon-based products. One of the difficulties we're having within the administration in reaching a proper judgment about what position to stake out in Kyoto relates to how various people are responding, frankly, to the recommendations and the findings of the people coming out of the energy labs, because they say, hey, look, what we know

already shows you that we have readily available technologies and courses of action which would take a huge hunk out of—right now, with no great increased cost—a huge hunk out of any attempt to, let's say, flatten our greenhouse gas emissions at 1990 levels. We just heard about it today. Look what you could do with powerplants. You can recapture the waste heat, two-thirds of that. You can make buildings and manufacturing facilities and residences much more energy efficient. You can make transportation much more energy efficient. Besides that, we've got all these alternative sources of fuel for electricity and transportation. I mean, it's all out there; this is what we know now. And then sooner or later, we're going to have the partnership for the next generation vehicle.

So the question is always, though, who will buy this stuff? Right now, you can buy light bulbs—every one of us could have every light bulb in our home, right now, every single one of them—we'd have to pay 60 percent more for the light bulb, but it would have 3 times the useful life. Therefore, you just work it out; we'd pay more up front, we'd save more money in the long run, and we'd use a whole lot less carbon. And why don't we do it? Why do we have any other kind of light bulbs in our homes?

And that is the simplest example of the nature of the debate we are now having. That is, in order to get from here to where we want to go, do we have to either raise the price of the product—there are only three or four things you can do: You can raise the price of the product to the consumers; you can lower the price of the alternative thing you wish to be bought by the consumers; you can create some new business opportunity through some market permit trading, other market option, or otherwise change the business environment the way we do electric deregulation, for example; or you can somehow increase the awareness of consumers of what their options are and the consequences of that and hope that they will behave in a different way. I think those are the four categories of possibilities.

And if you choose an ambitious target, then, if the requirement is more—to reach the target is almost exclusively on the front end—that is, you have to raise the price to the consumer or to the business involved—the businesses may be a consumer—if it happens too quickly, you're going to do economic damage on the one hand. And on the other hand, there is no way in the world this Senate will ratify our participation in Kyoto, so we'll be out there—it will be a grand gesture, but it won't happen.

Therefore, we have got to know how much we can do through a combination of price—you might be able to get some price changes, particularly going back—Mike said this, too, on the real price of energy—particularly if it was not a net tax increase, you wouldn't have to have a net—there are a lot of other ways to do this. But we have to be able to get something out of either lowering the cost of the alternative, creating new business markets, or increasing consumer awareness of what is right there for them now and what the consequences are. We can't do it all on the front end and expect realistically—if all we do on the Consumer Price Index, raising the price of coal, raising price of oil to the real consumer, and that's all we do, we are not going to get what we want to do in the time allotted to get it because it either won't pass the Senate or it won't pass muster with the American people.

So we have to be able to access what the Energy Department tells us is there for all to see in other ways. And I don't know if any of you want to comment on that, but this is not a question of whether you're brave or not or all that, it's really a question of what we can get done and what realistically is going to happen in America.

But I'm plagued by the example of the light bulb I have in my living room at the White House that I read under at night, and I ask myself, why isn't every light bulb in the White House like this? I use this when—I get so tickled—I go in and turn it on and I measure how much longer it takes to really light up, but I know it's going to be there long, you know? [*Laughter*] And I say, why am I so irresponsible that I have not put this in every light bulb? Why are we not all doing this?

So when you get right down to it, now, this is where the rubber meets the road. We have to make a decision, a commitment; it has to be meaningful. I'm convinced that the

Energy Department lab people are absolutely right, but the skeptics on my economic team said, there will not be perfect substitution, they're not going to do it.

So if you want to say anything about that, you can. But when you get right down to it, that's where—all the decisions are going to be made based on our best judgment about what kind of markets we can create for the private sector, what kind of substitution there is, and whether we can—how quickly we can move to alternative energy sources that people will actually access.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. I strongly agree with that, pushing that. And again, I say that does not let us off the hook to do things here at home, it just makes good sense. It's easier for—we should give these other countries a chance to choose an alternative path.

I never will forget a couple of years ago—I know we've got to wrap up—but I had a fascinating conversation with the President of China a couple of years ago, and we were discussing what our future would be and whether we wished to contain China. And I said, "I don't wish to contain China." I said, "The biggest security threat China presents the United States is that you will insist on getting rich the same way we did." And he looked at me, and I could tell he had never thought of that. And I said, "You have to choose a different future, and we have to help. We have to support you. And that does not in any way let us off the hook. But it just means that we have to do this together."

Well, this has been fascinating. You guys have been great, and I thank you a lot.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 11 a.m. in Gaston Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Michael Bonsignore, chairman and chief executive officer, Honeywell, Inc.; Mason Willrich, chairman of the board, EnergyWorks, L.L.C.; and President Jiang Zemin of China.

Remarks on Signing Line Item Vetoes of the Military Construction Appropriations Act, 1998, and an Exchange With Reporters

October 6, 1997

The President. Good afternoon. Today we take another step on the long journey to bring fiscal discipline to Washington. Over the past 4½ years, we've worked hard to cut the deficit and to ensure that our tax dollars are used wisely, carefully and effectively. We have reduced the deficit by 85 percent even before the balanced budget legislation passed. The balanced budget I signed into law this summer will extend our fiscal discipline well into the next century, keeping our economy strong.

But to follow through on the balanced budget, Government must continue to live within its means, within the framework established in the agreement. The line item veto, which all Presidents of both parties had sought for more than a century, gives the President a vital new tool to ensure that our tax dollars are well spent, to stand up for the national interests over narrow interests.

Six days ago, I signed into law the Military Construction Appropriations Act, a $9.2 billion measure that is vital to our national defense. Today I'm using the line item veto to cancel 38 projects inserted into that bill by the Congress that were not requested by the military, cannot make a contribution to our national defense in the coming year, and will not immediately benefit the quality of life and well-being of our men and women in uniform. The use of the line item veto saves the taxpayers nearly $290 million and makes clear that the old rules have, in fact, changed.

I want to stress that I have retained most of the projects that were added by Congress to my own spending request. Congress plays a vital role in this process, and its judgment is entitled to respect and deference. Many of the projects I have chosen to cancel have merit, but should be considered in the future. This is simply the wrong time.