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It's not just the cost; it's the quality and availability of health care that matter. So we put this coalition together, and we had health care providers and business people, employers, and consumers of health care on it. And they came up with this health care bill of rights.

The leader of the other party in the Senate says, it's a terrible thing because it's too much of an imposition on the people who are running the programs. I disagree. Big choice. Who is right about the future? Are we right, or are they right? Whether we can pass it or not depends on the Members of Congress. And it will affect the lives of millions of people.

Once we get these 5 million kids insured, what about the other kids that don't have health insurance? What about all these people that work all their lives, and they have to take early retirement in companies, and they lose their health insurance, and they can't get into the Medicare program because they're not old enough? What's going to happen to them? There are lots of other challenges out there. You have to decide; who do you trust to meet these challenges?

Look at our schools. What's the next big challenge here? We've got to guarantee that all of our kids get a world-class education. The Democratic Party is firmly on record in favor of high standards, more investment, a national testing program—voluntary—to see if the kids are meeting these standards, and then opening the doors of college to every kid in this country. If you want young people not to be trapped in dead-end jobs, they have to be able to get education for a lifetime. Who do you trust to give education for a lifetime?

Now, the things that our friends in the Republican Party used to say about us—they used to say we couldn't manage the economy. Now we've got almost 14 billion new jobs and the lowest unemployment rate in 24 years. They used to say we couldn't be trusted on crime; we were soft on crime. We have the lowest crime rate in 24 years. And if our Democratic juvenile justice approach passes, it will be lower still.

They used to say we couldn't be trusted on welfare. Look at the welfare reform bill. A lot of Democrats voted against it; a lot of them voted for it. But you know what's in that bill? We did not give in to their determination to take away health care and nutrition from kids. We've got $4 billion more in there for child care and $3 billion to give the poor neighborhoods, where there aren't enough private jobs for able-bodied people to go to work. Which party do you think made those contributions to that welfare reform bill?

These are important issues. They can't say that anymore. They used to say, well, we couldn't manage foreign policy, the national defense. This country is stronger and has made more contributions to peace and freedom in facing the security challenges of tomorrow than it was 5 years ago.

So I say to you we have a party we are proud of. And we are not ashamed that it is more progressive, that we believe we are one Nation, that we believe we have to come together across all the lines that divide us, that we believe in things like AmeriCorps and citizen service and people getting together and what I saw in the Bronx today. And if you want more of that, if you like what's happened in the last 5 years and you want more of it, you give me a few more of these folks, and you'll have it.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:20 p.m. in the Empire Room at the Waldorf Astoria. In his remarks, he referred to singer James Taylor.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Hispanic Gala in New York City

December 10, 1997

Thank you. I was—please, sit down—I was sitting over there when Hillary was talking, thinking how grateful I am that she wrote that wonderful book, ''It Takes A Village,'' and how many copies it sold, and how it embodies what we believe in. And then I was thinking that after we leave the White House, she could write another book and sell even more copies if the subject of the book was, ''all the things I wish I could have said all the times I introduced my husband.'' [*Laughter*] Thank you once more for refraining. [*Laughter*] Let me say to all of you—some

nights she kind of—she says, here's Bill, or who knows. [*Laughter*]

I am profoundly honored to be here tonight. This is a very special night. Hillary and I both wanted to be here. I thank the members of the Cabinet and the administration who are here that have been introduced for the work they have done, as well as for their presence here. I thank the Members of Congress who are here. I thank the Lieutenant Governor and the public advocate and the other officials from New York City and from the boroughs who are here. I thank Miguel and Marife and Dennis and the other leaders of this dinner.

This is truly an historic event, because the Latino business and labor communities have come together as never before to support the Democratic Party. And for that we are grateful. This is a fitting way for me to end the day because I started my day today in New York in the Bronx and in that borough with the highest percentage of Latinos. And I was standing on the very spot where, over 20 years ago, President Carter bemoaned the condition of the Bronx and said he would try to help; and then when President Reagan, nearly 20 years ago, said it reminded him of London during the Blitz in World War II.

Today it reminds you of any other thriving, successful, middle-class neighborhood, with beautiful homes and well-kept sidewalks and streets, and a beautiful school in the background, and enthusiastic, exuberant children, because of what people have done over the last several years together.

I want to thank, in particular, Secretary Cuomo for the work that he has done in the last several years that he has been at HUD to try to help make this happen. But if you think about what we have been about, trying to prepare this country for the 21st century, and you ask yourself, "Why am I a Democrat; why am I doing this?" I think you have to answer, first of all, because I don't buy the argument that was made by the other side for the 12 years before we came in that Government is the problem; it is inherently bad; and if we just got rid of it and it sat on the sidelines, everything would be hunky-dory. That's not true.

Neither is it true that we can go back to the time when Government handed down edicts from Washington. Governments should be a partner with people in their local communities working together. That's our philosophy. Our philosophy is the role of the National Government in our domestic life is to create the conditions and give people the tools to make their own lives, to build successful careers and families and communities, and make those streets safe and give people a chance to do the things that I saw done in the Bronx today. And it was exhilarating.

I was walking down that street, and I thought, this is why I ran for public office the first time, and this is why I ran for public office the last time. This is public service at its best—grassroots people working with national policy together, public and private sectors, and it was a truly thrilling moment.

And I think of all the communities in America, the Latino community knows best that people should never ask Government to do something for them that they can do for themselves; nor can Government ever pretend to replace the strength and joys of family life or the integrity of work life. But neither can people who are struggling to make the most of their own lives be denied a hand up when it's important to give it to them. That's what we stand for.

The other thing that I think we stand for that is unique now is that we really like the fact that we're so different from each other. We like the fact that America has so much diversity. We think in a global economy, in a global society, where we have to cooperate with all different kinds of people and do business with all different kinds of people, it is a great thing. And we think that if you're a good, upstanding citizen who obeys the law and pays your taxes and if you're grown you go to work and if you're a kid, you go to school and if you're—through no fault of your own—in trouble, you get help. We think that we're all part of the *familia.* That's the difference. And I'm proud to be on that side of the divide in America. I want every American to have a chance to be a part of our future. I feel good about that, and I want you to feel good about that.

There are other differences as well. We had a different view about economic policy. We tried trickle-down economics for 12

years, and we had a $290 billion deficit, enormous interest rates, a high unemployment rate. Then we set about balancing the budget, and before the last balanced budget bill was passed in a bipartisan way, the Democrats-only budget passed in 1993 had succeeded in reducing the deficit by 92 percent, driving interest rates down. We have now almost 14 million new jobs and the lowest unemployment rate in 24 years. I think invest-and-grow is better than trickle-down. I think we are right with our economic policy.

We changed the crime policy. The crime policy of the National Government, as near as I could tell, was either to do nothing but talk tough or to talk tough and say we need to lock them up and throw away the key. We said, ''How about stopping crime in the first place? Let's put more police on the street. Let's take assault weapons off the street. Let's not let people who have got criminal records have handguns. Let's give some money so that communities can give kids something to say yes to in the first place.'' We've got the lowest crime rate in 24 years. I think our crime policy is better. It works. People support it at the grassroots level.

We have different views about the environment. We believe we can grow the economy while we improve the environment. We've cleaned up more toxic waste dumps in 4 years than they did in 12; we need to do some more. We've got a lot of serious environmental challenges. We're trying very hard. We've been working like crazy—and I want to thank the Vice President especially—we have been working so hard for the last several weeks, and especially in the last few days, to reach agreement at the international conference in Kyoto on climate change, to try to find a way to drive down our emission of greenhouse gases here, drive down the world's emissions of greenhouse gases, and still grow the economy. We Democrats, we believe we can do that. We believe we can do that.

Our friends on the other side of the aisle, if there is the slightest question, they say, ''I'm sorry, it would be nice to have a good environment, but we've got to go for the economy. We can't afford to burden it.'' If you look at the high-technology world in which we're living, we're going to create more new jobs if we commit ourselves to cleaning the environment in the proper way. We will explore new technologies. We will create new businesses. And more important, we will fulfill our moral obligation to leave our children and our grandchildren a planet upon which they can live in peace with one another, because of the resources that are left. I think the Democrats are right about that, and I am proud to be a part of that.

I believe that we were right to stand up for family and medical leave. I believe we were right to give a tax cut to the lowest income families with children. I believe we were right to raise the minimum wage. I believe we should do more of that. We should help to do more to help people reconcile the demands of work and family. I believe we were right to try to provide access to health care to all Americans, and I'm proud of the fact that we're going to cover 5 million children. I'm proud of the fact that it's now against the law to take somebody's health insurance away from them just because they change jobs or somebody in their family gets sick. And I want to pass the consumer's bill of rights in health care, because I think as more and more people are insured by health maintenance organizations, they at least have a right to know that they'll know what's going on, that they can have access to the best professional opinions, and that they can get quality as well as access to health care. And I think the Democrats are more likely to provide that. I'm proud to be on that side of the divide, and I hope all of you are as well.

And let me just mention one other thing. I want more than I can convey to you to see every neighborhood in every distressed area of America look like the neighborhood I walked through in the Bronx today. I want every child to be able to have access to world-class education. I want every adult who loses his or her job or can never get a raise because they're not so competitive in the global economy to be able to go back and get further training.

And I'm proud of the fact that in the last year we put more money into education than had been put in since 1965 at the national level, that we did more to help people go to college than we've done in 50 years. I think

you can really say we've opened the doors of college to all Americans, with a $1,500 tax credit for the first 2 years of college and tax credits for the other years and help for people who have to go back after they've been working a while, and more Pell grants and more work-study positions and more national service positions. I'm proud of all that.

But we've got a lot more work to do. You know as well as I do that you cannot stand here and look at me in the eye and tell me that every child in every community represented in this room is getting a world-class education. You know that it's going to provide new challenges to us—you know, we have this sort of bilingual debate going on around the country now—do I want every child in America to be able to speak English and read English and learn in English? You bet I do. Do I think they should have to quit learning anything while they do? No, I don't. That's why I support bilingual education, because I think that we ought to have both.

But the Latino community now has got to go out and tell America, this is not a Latino-Anglo issue anymore. You know how many languages are spoken by the kids in the school district nearest me across the river—across the Potomac River in Virginia? One hundred languages.

Now, our party has got to lead the way toward high standards and access and opportunity. We've got to lead the way. We've got to give every single one of those children a way to find their way into a 21st century America where they can be winners. And that's just one of the many challenges we're going to face.

So I say to you, our record in the last 5 years is good; I'm proud of that. Our record in the years ahead can be better if we continue to build on the strengths of the last few years.

I want to thank the Lieutenant Governor for joining the Democratic Party, and congratulate Judith Hope—and I want to congratulate Judith Hope, the chair of the New York party, and all the other Democrats here. They picked up over 200 local seats in the elections of 1997 in the State of New York. Fine. Because I think people do believe Government ought to give people the tools to make the most of their own lives and not sit on the sidelines. And they know that we're not yesterday's Government; we represent something different. Why? Because I think people do want us all to be one family. I think they think everybody that obeys the law and does their job deserves to be treated with dignity and equality in this country. And that's the last thing I want to say.

I have done my best—maybe because I grew up in the segregated South and I saw all the dark side of people not getting along and working together, but when I say that I want us to be one America, in the end that's the most important thing of all. My work here will be over in 3 years. And I'm doing the best I can to deal—like we've got a Medicare commission now. We want to deal with the long-term problems of Medicare so we can secure Medicare without overburdening our children and grandchildren. I will do everything I can to solve every big problem that I can that I think will load up America for the next 25 or 30 years. But I will not be able to completely foresee the future. No one can.

One thing I know, this country is still around here after 220 years because every time we faced a real challenge, we pulled together and somehow we found the strength, the courage, the wisdom, the determination to do the right thing.

Now we're going to become more diverse than ever before. That's what this race initiative is all about. California, our biggest State, will soon have no majority race. People of European heritage will not be in a majority. Sometime in the next century, probably in the first half of it, that will become true of America. We have many other differences as well. And I'd just like to emphasize that this race initiative of mine is basically about three things.

First of all, we've taken a few licks about talking, but it's about talking. Why? Because people are both fascinated by and afraid of people who are different from them when they haven't had contact and they don't understand each other, and we've got to have a community process in every neighborhood in this country for people to talk together across the lines that divide them.

Secondly, it's about enforcing the laws against discrimination. A lot of you have

stood up with me to support the idea that Bill Lann Lee ought to be head of the Civil Rights Division. I thank you, those of you who have done that. I must tell you, when I appointed him and I saw what an even-tempered man he was and what a fine record he had and how he was a Chinese immigrant's son from Harlem who then lived in Los Angeles and spent his whole life trying to keep people from being discriminated against, I thought, now, there is no way in the wide world anybody could vote against this guy. [*Laughter*] He has one totally disqualifying characteristic: He agrees with his President about affirmative action. I find that very curious that I'm being told that I can appoint anybody I want into the Civil Rights Division unless they agree with me. [*Laughter*] I thought we had an election about that.

Now, if my position was not to enforce the law, not to recognize the restrictions on affirmative action the Supreme Court has imposed upon it, that would be one thing. That is not my position. I will vigorously honor the law—the letter and spirit of the law. But that's—the thing that bothers me is that we have not obliterated all discrimination in housing. Secretary Cuomo is working day and night to try to deal with legitimate and severe claims of discrimination in housing. We haven't eliminated all discrimination in the work force. We haven't eliminated all discrimination in education. And virtually 100 percent of the American people, without regard to party, agree that what is illegal should be illegal and that the law should be enforced.

So I wanted somebody who had lived a lifetime in this, who also was committed to getting people together and changing the environment so we don't have to have so many of those kinds of problems lead that division. And I still think he deserves the job. And I thank all of you who stood with him.

The last thing that this ''One America'' race initiative is about is finding ways that we can work together across racial lines that will, by definition, obliterate a lot of the problems we have today. And I can tell you that there are three that dwarf all others: the more we learn together, the more we work together, and the more we serve our communities together across lines that divide us, the more likely we are to build that kind of one America.

That's why I'm so grateful we've got 800 colleges with their students working in our schools to teach children to read independently by the third grade. That's why we're working very hard on an initiative to reduce the Hispanic dropout rate, and a lot of you in business can help us with this. We now have almost no difference in America in the high school graduation rate between Anglos and African-Americans—it's a stunning statistic—almost none.

There is still a big gap between both of them and Latinos. And I am convinced it is because so many Latin Americans come here as first generation immigrants and they want to get out there and go to work and support their parents and support their children and do the responsible thing, and historically that's worked. But we're now living in a world where people who don't have a high school education are going to suffer dropping earnings in the workforce, they won't even be able to hold their own.

So we have got to find ways to make it possible for our first generation Latin American children, no matter how difficult their circumstances at home, to stay in school and to go on to college and to get the message that that is now the responsible thing to do for their families because we don't want them stuck in a place where they can't have a future. And you've got to help us with that.

So I say again, let's work on this and be proud that you're here. And know this, too, I want you to be involved in the life of this country and the life of this administration and the life of this party in a positive way, with your ideas and your experience. We're grateful for your contributions but your contributions should also include not just a check, but your knowledge and your experience and what you can do to prepare this country to go forward as one America with opportunity for everybody, with responsibility from everybody; coming together, not drifting apart; leading the world for peace and freedom. That's what I'm working for, and tonight you have helped to make that more possible.

And let me just say, finally—this is the last thing I want to say—all my life I wanted to

dance with Rita Moreno—[*laughter*]—all my life. And it only lasted 30 seconds, but it was worth the trip.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:05 p.m. at the Rainbow Room. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gov. Betsy McCaughey Ross; New York City Public Advocate, Mark Green; Miguel Lausel, Marife Hernandez, and Dennis Rivera, event chairs; Judith Hope, State Democratic chair; and actress Rita Moreno.

Remarks on Departure From New York City and an Exchange With Reporters

December 10, 1997

Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change

The President. I'm sorry about the rain. I'll make this brief, but I want to take a moment before I leave to comment on the outcome of the climate change negotiations that have just been completed in Japan.

I am very pleased that the United States has reached a truly historic agreement with other nations of the world to take unprecedented steps to address the global problem of climate change. The agreement is environmentally strong and economically sound. It reflects a commitment by our generation to act in the interests of future generations.

The United States delegation, at the direction of the Vice President, and with the very, very skilled leadership of Under Secretary Stu Eizenstat, showed the way. The momentum generated by the Vice President's visit helped to move the negotiations, and I thank him very much.

I'm particularly pleased that the agreement strongly reflects the commitment of the United States to use the tools of the free market to tackle this problem.

There are still hard challenges ahead, especially in the area of involvement by the developing nations. It's essential that they participate in a meaningful way if we are to truly tackle this problem. But the joint implementation provisions of the agreement open the way to that result. The industrialized nations have come together and taken a strong step, and that is real progress.

Finally, I cannot say enough about the extraordinary leadership of Prime Minister Hashimoto. The people of Japan should be very proud of the spirit and the work that their country's leaders did to make this historic day possible.

Thank you very much.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. No. No. And the agreement we made is actually, because of the way the details are worked out and what counts against the total, even though we have committed to a 7 percent reduction, it's actually closer to our original position than that indicates. We will make some reduction. I think we can.

We got what we wanted, which is joint implementation, emissions trading, a market-oriented approach. I wish it were a little stronger on developing nations participation. But we opened the way—the only way we can get there through joint implementation of projects in those countries.

This is a very good agreement. It is going to be possible for us to do this and grow our economy. It is environmentally sound. It's a huge first step. And I did not dream when we started that we could get this far. We should be very, very proud of this.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:30 p.m. at John F. Kennedy International Airport. In his remarks, he referred to the Kyoto Protocol to the Framework Convention on Climate Change reached at the Third Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which was held in Kyoto, Japan, December 1–10. The President also referred to Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto of Japan. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change

December 10, 1997

I am very pleased that the United States has reached an historic agreement with other nations of the world to take unprecedented action to address global warming. This agreement is environmentally strong and economically sound. It reflects a commitment by our