

the direction for the country but not to try to direct the country, to set the direction, and then let people in their local communities solve their own problems—then the Governors of this country become more important than ever before.

So Florida is in better shape than it was. The ideas that we've espoused have been proved right. And he is the person you can best trust to deal with the challenges of the future. That sounds like a pretty good case to me, and if you go out there and make it for a year, I don't care what other arguments are made, I don't care how much money is brought into play against him, I don't care what other national political currents are supposed to be bearing down on Florida and who is trying to get this electoral bloc or that one—just ask the people of Florida to vote for their children and their future and forget about the politics, and Buddy MacKay will be the next Governor of Florida.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:27 p.m. at the Radisson Mart Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to State Representative Kendrick Meek; Gov. Lawton Chiles of Florida; and Jim Pugh, general chairman, MacKay Campaign for Governor.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in Miami

December 11, 1997

Thank you very much. Well, thank you very much. Mr. Mayor, Mrs. Penelas, Lieutenant Governor MacKay, and to Chris and Gene and Mitch Berger—I thank all three of them for all the work they did to make this night a sterling success.

I thank Governor Romer and Dan Dutko and Alan Solomont for the work that the DNC has done. And about the only thing harder than being President on a regular basis is trying to do a stand-up comedy routine at a fundraiser. And I thought they were both great, so let's give them another hand. I thought they were great. [*Applause*]

You know, I have a lot of friends in this crowd tonight. Many of you have been with me for a long time. And today I had two immensely satisfying experiences. First, I went out on a Coast Guard cutter and met

with a number of people in the Coast Guard who are working to protect the borders of our country here off the coast of southern Florida. In the last year they have had a 1,000 percent increase in the number of arrests and a 300 percent increase in the volume of drug confiscations because of their efforts. And I just went to encourage them and to thank them. And then we had, earlier today, a marvelous kick-off fundraiser for Lieutenant Governor Buddy MacKay's campaign for Governor. And many of you said something to me about that.

I want to thank you for being here for the Democratic Party. I want to thank you for being here for the people of south Florida, for the people of Miami-Dade County. This State has been extraordinarily good to me. My first real victory, when I started running for President, was in the Florida Democratic Convention straw poll in December of 1991. I will never forget that.

And we came very close to carrying Florida in 1992. And I strongly felt that we could and would carry it in 1996 because of the opportunity that so many of you gave me to work with you—for sensible immigration policies, for sensible policies toward our neighbors in this hemisphere, for sensible policies on crime and drugs and housing and economic growth, for sensible partnerships for the State of Florida, and one of the most important things we've done since I've been President, for an aggressive effort to save the Florida Everglades. Thank you all for the opportunities you have given me.

If you look at Florida, which in so many ways represents where America is going, with all of its opportunities and its challenges, a State full of people who are older—well, we're all getting older, and life expectancies are going up. And I don't know about you, but with every passing day I like that more and more. I think that's a fine idea. [*Laughter*] Florida, a State where people from all over the world are living here. We're all getting more diverse all over America; a State with high-tech employment and with people who are dying to work who don't have much education; a State with a lot of innovative partnerships to solve problems like crime and drugs, and on occasion, too much crime and drugs; a State with enormous economic

growth and a passionate commitment to the environment, with a profound challenge about how to save this often fragile environment and maintain the adequacy of a clean water supply, and the strength of your commitment to clean air, and the strength of your commitment to basically preserving the ecostructure that makes everybody else get in a car or get in an airplane and come to Florida.

So you ought to be on the forefront of the Democratic Party of the 21st century. You know, we started my campaign for President in '96, and they said, "Well, what does the map look like?" And I said, "I'll tell you one thing; it looks like Florida will be in our camp this time. And that's my priority." And let me say, I was the only guy in the meeting who thought that. [Laughter] But I spent a lot of time here; I knew what kind of people were leading Florida into the 21st century. I knew what the challenges were; I knew what the opportunities were; I knew what the passionate commitment to going forward together was.

And I never will forget this—we had our first campaign meeting—I said, "Look, don't tell me we can't win Florida." They said "Nobody has won it in 20 years, and President Carter came from a State that bordered Florida." I said, "Everybody in this room raise your hands who has been there the most times." I won that. I'd been to Florida more than any of the people who were advising me. And I said, "We're going to target Florida, we're going to win Florida. And what's going to happen is, early on election night they're going to have one of those funny little maps that are on television and Florida is going to blink on and off, on and off, on and off and the whole country will go nuts and say the election is over." And that's exactly what happened, and I thank you for that. It was a great day.

Now, what is it that we're trying to do? First, why are you here? What is the purpose of politics? What is politics? Does it deserve a good name or a bad name? The people who give it a bad name ought to think a long time. The reason this country is around here, after 220 years plus, as the oldest consistent democracy in human history, is because of politics. Politics is how free people work to-

gether to work their will and make their decisions and reach their principled compromise. And the framework within which it works is the system that has taken us from the Constitutional Convention to this moment. And I say to you, I think the purpose of it still is to preserve the liberty and the integrity of the American people and to give the American people a framework in which they can work together to meet the challenges of each new age so that we increase opportunity and so that we have a responsible citizenry and so that we continue to come together as a community.

If you look at the whole history of America, every period of crisis has required us to redefine our commitment to our national unity and has required us to ask ourselves what does it mean, our Constitution, in this context. What does it mean to say all of us are created equal by God? What does it mean to say we have an indissoluble Union? What has that got to do with the immigration decisions we have to make? What has that got to do with the education decisions we have to make? What has that got to do with the economic decisions we have to make or the environmental or health care or you-name-it decisions? That's what this is about.

And when I ran for President and came to Florida and asked the people here to help me, I said that we had to change the political debate in this country. The Democratic Party needed to take its oldest values and adopt some new ideas, and we needed to be unselfconsciously, unapologetically for policies that favored the future over the past, that favored everyone over a few, and that favored unity over division. And I was sick and tired of the politics of personal destruction and division which people seem almost pathologically trapped in in Washington, DC. And I'm still tired of it, and that's why this country is doing better.

I had what many people thought was a terminal disability when I ran for President: I hadn't been in Washington for 20 years. But I had been in a place where people got up every day and went to work and tried to make the best of their own lives and tried to make sense of what was going on in this country. And so, together, you and I, my friends, we began to change America. We began to

change the direction. We began to change the old debate over the role of Government.

I mean, to read in the papers for years what was going on in Washington was like—the Democrats said Government can do everything, and the Republicans said Government can do nothing. The truth is, I never heard a Democrat say that, but they said we said it—[laughter]—and they often get away with labeling us.

And I said, “We’ve tried for 12 years their way. For 12 years we’ve tried just railing about problems and talking tough and doing nothing about crime or welfare. For 12 years we’ve tried campaigning against the Government and talking about how it’s the problem. And I’ve seen the debt quadruple in this country.”

How about if we say the role of Government is to give people the tools and establish the conditions for people to make the most of their own lives, to build strong careers and strong families and strong communities and a strong Nation; and that Government should be seen as a partner—not sitting on the sidelines, not trying to dictate from Washington, but giving people the tools to do what has to be done? I’ve always believed the American people could do anything given a fair chance, given the tools, given a hand up.

And you know, I heard a lot of railing over the years about how we were the party of handouts. I always wanted the Democrats to be the party of the hand up. And I think that’s what we are today, and I think the results show that we have been right in that.

I say that because if your friends and neighbors come up to you in this Governor’s race next year and they ask you, well, why are you for the Democrat—or in the Congress races or in the Senate race, you ought to say, “Listen, I’m for Democrats because we believe that everybody ought to have an opportunity, everybody ought to be a responsible citizen and serve, and everybody ought to be part of a unified American community. We are not for demonizing, denigrating, or segregating any group of Americans who otherwise are law-abiding, go to work, go to school, pay their taxes, and do what they’re supposed to do. I am a Democrat because our policies were right, and theirs were wrong.”

When we said we’re going to reduce the deficit and grow the economy, in Washington all the Republicans voted against us. They said we were going to bring down the economy. Five years later, 14 million jobs later, the lowest unemployment rate in 24 years later, we now know our position was right, theirs was wrong. You need to tell the people of Florida they all need to come home to the Democratic Party to build a better future.

Now, when—I worried about Governor Chiles having to run for reelection 4 years ago because they said all the Democrats are trying to take our guns away. Nobody in rural Florida is going to be able to go hunting anymore. Bill Clinton betrayed his Arkansas roots, passing that neosocialist Brady bill, with the radical proposition that we ought not to be selling handguns to people who were felons, fugitives, and stalkers, and the radical idea that there’s no point in letting people who are in gangs on streets in tough neighborhoods and cities have assault weapons that were designed to kill people, not hunt birds, and the radical proposition that after 30 years in which we tripled crime, violent crime in America, but only increased our police forces by 10 percent, it might be a good thing if we put 100,000 police on the street and put them back in the neighborhoods where they can talk to people, work with people, and stop crime from happening in the first place. That was our idea.

Now, the other side made a lot of hay 3 or 4 years ago, told all these country people I was going to take their guns away—beat some of our Congressmen, gave our Governor here a little scare. But now we know. We also have the lowest crime rate in 24 years. No law-abiding Florida hunter has lost his gun. Over a quarter of a million felons, fugitives, and stalkers couldn’t buy handguns. Thousands and thousands and thousands of people have not been able to get assault weapons to further gang warfare. The police are on the street. The preventive programs are out there. We’ve got the lowest crime rate in 24 years. It is not subject to debate. You ought to tell the people of Florida to join the new Democratic Party and be for a safer future for all of our children. That’s what this is about.

In the last balanced budget—thank goodness, we finally had a bipartisan balanced budget. But don't forget, at the time on the day, the very day, October 1st, that the new balanced budget law took effect, we had, by then, under the old budget law passed in 1993—only by Members of our party—reduced the deficit by 92 percent from where it was the day I became your President—92 percent.

So then we got a bipartisan balanced budget. What was our party's contribution? The biggest increase in child health since 1964; biggest increase in aid to education since the same time; biggest increase in helping people go to college through tax credits, Pell grants, work-study programs, IRA's you can save for and withdraw from tax-free for education, the biggest increase since the GI bill in 1945.

We represent a commitment to excellence and opportunity in education. And that is the key to giving every American, no matter what his or her racial, ethnic, or economic background, a chance to succeed in the global economy of the 21st century. And that's another reason the people of Florida ought to support our approach, not only at the national level, but in this Governor's race, because if we don't have excellence in education, we will never be able to bring the rainbow of people who live in Florida together into one America. And you need to be out there leading the charge for us in 1998 for educational excellence.

There are lots of other things. I'm trying to pass a patient's bill of rights for people in HMO's, not because I'm against HMO's, but because I think you ought to have access to quality and information, as well as affordable health care.

I am determined to finish the job of helping the Everglades restoration and also to deal with this problem of global climate change. You think of what will happen in south Florida if the climate of the globe goes up somewhere between 2 and 5 or 6 degrees in the next 100 years. I'll tell you what will happen. Sometime in the next 100 years, half of it will be under water. This is not a bunch of games we're playing here. We are trying to get people together to grow our economy and preserve the environment of our country and this globe long term.

So the new fear is going to say, "Oh, there goes the President; he's going to wreck the economy with this cockamamie idea about global warming." I'll tell you what will wreck the economy, is if we continue to have more and more and more extreme weather and we have disruption along all of our coasts and people don't feel that they are secure anymore because our generation refused to take responsible actions to reduce the pollution of the atmosphere.

For 30 years, every time we've done something to clean up the air, the water, the food supply, clean up toxic waste dumps, people who weren't for it said we were going to wreck the economy. I have heard it for 5 years. Five years later, compared to the day I became President, there are fewer toxic waste dumps; the food is safer; the air is cleaner; the water is purer; and we've got 14 million new jobs and the lowest unemployment rate in 24 years. We can clean up the environment, and that's another reason you ought to be a Democrat. And I'm asking you for these things.

Finally, let me just make this last point. Mayor Penelas thanked me for the race initiative. To me, politics will always have a human face. Sometimes I read things people say, and they act like that's a weakness on my part, that I'm actually interested in people as individuals instead of as a great sea of unknown faces. But I am persuaded that even Presidents, when they get ready to breathe their last breath and they're laying down, they don't think about their greatest political triumph; they think about the people they loved, the people they like, what it was like in the springtime, what it was like when their children walked for the first time.

All politics is about is about giving everybody a chance to live their dreams. We represent the party of tomorrow's dreams. And that's what you're here supporting tonight. I want you to redouble your efforts so we can do it more and more and more in 1998.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:15 p.m. at the Biltmore Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Executive Mayor Alex Penelas of Miami-Dade County and his wife, Lilliam; Chris Korge, Gene Prescott, and Mitchell W. Berger, event chairs; Gov. Roy Romer of Colorado, national chair, and Alan

Solomont, national finance chair, Democratic National Committee; Dan Dutko, chair, Victory Fund; and comedians Judy Gold and Carolyn Rhea.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in Miami

December 11, 1997

Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Buddy, for giving me the chance to come here today to get your campaign kicked off and to repay in some small way the great obligation of friendship I feel for you for—as I said today at Buddy’s fundraiser—for being for me in late 1991, before the Florida straw poll, before anything happened, and when only my mother felt I could be elected President. Buddy was there. And I’m glad to be here for him tonight. Mayor, thank you so much for what you said and for the vigor and youth and energy of your leadership and the enormous promise of your future. I’ve loved being with you today, and I wish you well. And I cannot thank Chris and Irene enough. I was looking at this—you know, I knew farmers back in Arkansas that didn’t have ponds this big—[laughter]—to feed hundreds of head of cattle. I am so—I love this place, and you’ve made us all feel so much at home. And at the end of a very long day, it’s wonderful to be here. I’d like to thank Governor Romer and Alan Solomont and Dan Dutko for coming down for the Democratic Party. I would like to thank not only Chris but also Gene Prescott and Mitch Berger for helping us tonight.

Some of you were at the other place, and I’ll try not to give the same speech twice—although I am reminded of—maybe that’s what I should do. One night I was at a concert by Tina Turner, one of my favorite political philosophers. [Laughter] And Tina Turner—it was about 10 years ago; she was just making her big comeback, you know, after she told a story about how Ike did her wrong and everything. She had all these new songs and she had that great saxophone player who was a bodybuilder and has chains all over his body. If you’re a Tina Turner fan, you’ve probably seen him. So anyway, so we had the concert and she sings all these new songs and they’re all real good. And then at the

end of the concert, the band starts playing the introductory bars to “Proud Mary,” which was her first hit. So she moves up to the microphone, and the crowd goes nuts. And they start screaming and cheering and she backs off and then she taunts them again and moves up and the crowd screams again. And she goes up to the microphone and says, “You know something, I’ve been singing this song for 25 years, but it gets better every time I do it.” [Laughter] So maybe I should just give the same talk. [Laughter]

Let me say, in 1991, when I decided to leave a job I loved and a State I loved and embark on the Presidency, I did it because I was afraid our country was moving into a new century and a new era without a strategy that would make everybody be a part of America and that in the end would not have America be as strong as it ought to be. I felt that the political debate in Washington was stale and often irrelevant and too infused with an impulse to personal destruction. There’s still a lot of that there, by the way—[laughter]—one reason I kind of hate to go back tonight.

But the main thing I thought was that we were just thinking in yesterday’s framework. And I still believe that’s what was wrong. And so I went to the Democrats in the primary process, and I said, “Look, I want to do something different. I don’t want us to abandon our values, but I want us to take a new direction based on the time we’re living in and in the time toward which we’re going—a global economy, a global society, an information and technology revolution. All the patterns of how we live and work and relate to each other and the rest of the world is subject to change. I want us to focus on the future, not the past; on doing things that help everybody, not just a few people; and on promoting unity, not division. There’s enough division in this country. And I want the Government to be neither the savior, nor sit on the sidelines, but instead to focus on a clear mission which is to create the conditions and give people the tools to make the most of their own lives.” And that’s what we’ve been doing for 5 or 6 years now—5 years really, since I’ve been President, and the results have been pretty satisfactory.