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King, Jr., by engaging in service on the holiday commemorating his birth. I joined 65 AmeriCorps members and more than 300 community volunteers in repairing and repainting Cardozo High School in the Shaw neighborhood of Washington, D.C. Thirty-one years ago, Dr. King came to that very neighborhood and urged the people there to engage in citizen service to rebuild their lives, their community, and their future. That is what those national service participants, and the thousands more who were participating in similar projects across the country, were doing—honoring the legacy of Dr. King and answering the high calling of citizenship in this country.

Each of the more than 500,000 participants in the programs of the National Senior Service Corps and the 750,000 participants in programs supported by Learn and Serve America, and every AmeriCorps member answers that high calling of citizenship when they make and fulfill a commitment to service in their communities. This proposed legislation builds on the successes of these programs and improves them for the future.

I urge the Congress to give this proposed legislation prompt and favorable consideration.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
March 19, 1998.

Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Dinner

March 19, 1998

Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to begin by thanking all of you, not only for your warm welcome in this magnificent Women's Museum, which I always love to visit and which is a real treasure of our National Capital, but for being here to support the Senators who are here and those whom we hope to add to their ranks.

I thank Senator Torricelli not only for his friendship and his kind words but for his fighting spirit. He has the heart of a lion. And when others feel weak, he feels stronger, and we are stronger because of what Bob Torricelli has done. And I thank him.

I thank Senator Kerrey, my longtime friend. We used to be Governors together, and we used to lament the condition of our country in the eighties, and the escalating deficits and what we saw as the irresponsibility of decisionmaking here. Bob Kerrey did cast the deciding vote on that budget bill, and I thank him for that. But in a real sense, so did all the other Democrats, because we didn't have a single Republican vote. And Al Gore even had to vote. And as he says, "Whenever I vote, we win." [*Laughter*]

But imagine how different the last 6 years would have been—5 years and 3 months—if we hadn't done that. And I want to thank Senator Kerrey for being willing to do this job for 2 years. It's not easy. It's easy to give the speeches. You know, he just asked me to show up every now and then at these events and smile and take a few pictures, see people I enjoy visiting with anyway, and give a talk. But he's had to go across the country and do all the work and see all of you and ask you to help. And it's often a thankless task. And when he took it, it was certainly a thankless task because we were down and our numbers were depleted. But he took it on, and I predict a stunning and historically unpredicted result in November of 1998. And you will have a lot to do with it, Senator Kerrey. We thank you very much.

Finally, I want to say that it would be impossible for me to do my job if it weren't for Tom Daschle. He is a magnificent leader of our Democrats in the Senate. Yes, let's stand up for him. [*Applause*]

I want to talk very briefly about what I believe to be at stake. First, just a little picture on the past. It is wonderful to stand up and say that these are good times for America, that we have the lowest unemployment rate in 24 years and the lowest crime rate in 24 years and the smallest welfare population in 27 years and the lowest inflation in 30 years and the highest homeownership in history. That's wonderful to say. But we forget how hard it was to do.

Before the Balanced Budget Act ever saved a dollar, the deficit had been reduced by 92 percent because of the votes solely of Democratic Members of Congress in 1993. The crime rate is down in part because we moved beyond the hot rhetoric of tough talk

to put 100,000 more community police officers on the street, to give our children something positive to do in their leisure hours, and to take assault weapons off the street. And many of our people gave up their jobs on those two votes.

And so I say to you, I am proud to be a member of my party, and I'm proud of every Senator and every Congressman who cast those votes. And the people who lost their jobs because they did it can at least go to sleep tonight knowing that this is a better, stronger, safer country because they were in the Democratic caucus, and they did what was right when the chips were down. And I'm grateful to them.

After a year of real, harsh partisan fighting back and forth in which the majority party in the Congress today shut the Government down, and we didn't shut down—and so the ''Contract With America'' was abandoned, and we moved on to bipartisan cooperation.

We passed a balanced budget bill. That bill did a lot to keep our recovery going, and I thank every Republican who supported it. But that bill had the biggest increase in child health care since 1965. It will add 5 million people—children—to the ranks of those with health insurance. It had the largest increase in aid to education since 1965. It opened the doors of college to all Americans by giving a $1,500 tax credit for the first 2 years of college; further tax credits; education IRA's; 300,000 work-study positions; finally, tax deductibility for the interest on student loans. Those education provisions and those health care provisions—you know who put them in the Balanced Budget Act: the Democrats in the United States Senate and in the United States House of Representatives. And I thank them for it.

And more importantly, I ask you to look to the future. We have a lot of challenging decisions. Senator Kerrey said we've got an ambitious agenda; we do. We now have virtual consensus in Washington that before we spend a surplus that hasn't even materialized, we should save Social Security for the 21st century and not allow the baby boomers to bankrupt their children or to live in abject poverty because we failed to do it. It was because of the unanimous support of the Democrats in the Senate and in the House for that position that it is now the position of the entire United States Government. And that's another thing that the future will be able to thank Tom Daschle and all the other members of this caucus who are here tonight for, and I thank them for it.

We also have to save Medicare. We're going to have an election this year, and we're going to have a report at the end of the year to deal with Medicare changes and Social Security changes. Who do you trust to make those changes for the 21st century? Think about that when you think about how much support you're going to give Senator Patty Murray, for example. I think it's clear what the answer is: the Democratic Party.

We're in the middle—we have some money now, finally, at long last. And I have asked the Congress to put the money primarily into education and into research for the 21st century, to medical research and scientific research; but in education, to go down to a class size all across America that averages 18 kids a class in the first 3 grades, to rehabilitate 5,000 schools, and hire 100,000 more teachers.

In the Senate, the majority party voted to cut $400 million this year out of education. We don't agree with that. We think that the American people should be heard on that. And we believe they will agree with Tom Daschle and the members of the Democratic caucus and the people who will be running in the Senate elections this November. That's important. We need to stand up for that.

I could give you the same argument on the environment. You know as well as I do that the environment will be a more important issue 10 years from now than it is today. You know it will be. Who is more likely to stand up for responsible action that will permit us to preserve our environment, indeed to enhance it, as we continue to grow the economy?

You just go through these issues. Child care: Most American parents are in the work force, and I promise you that hundreds of thousands, even millions of them, go to work every day worried sick that their children do not have access to quality, affordable child care. We have a proposal to address that, to increase the child care tax credit for middle class families, to increase the support we give

to lower income working families. That support, today at least, is not supported; that program is not supported by the majority party in the Senate.

I believe the American people agree with us, and every single Senate election will be a referendum on whether we really believe it when we say that parenting is our most important job, and everybody ought to be able to succeed at home and at work at the same time.

Let me close with a story. Beyond all the policies, there really is a question of whether we are committed to putting the interests of all our people first. Yesterday I went out to Las Vegas to meet with the executive committee of the AFL–CIO. But before I did that, I went to this wonderful training program that the carpenters union runs out there for people who are basically entry-level carpenters, trying to give them higher levels of skill. And in addition to the on-site, on-the-job training, they also have classroom time in which they try to make sure that all the working people understand what their health insurance is and how it works, what their retirement plan is and how it works, and how it all fits in and how they can manage their own finances better.

So I met with all these people; most of them I'd say were between 28 and 35 years old, very young by my standards. And the first question was, in this class—this young man said, ''Well, I see I've got a good retirement, but have you people in the Government done what you should to protect it?'' And I was able to proudly say that in 1994, when we were still in the majority, we passed a plan to reform the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation; we saved 8½ million pensions that were underwater; we stabilized 40 million more. And yes, we had done everything we responsibly could to protect the integrity of the pension systems of the country.

Then the next young man said—and this is what made me so proud of all these young people and proud to be a member of my party—the next young guy said, ''Look up there at all of our fringe benefits, because we belong to the union and because we're working here in a State and a city with low unemployment and a lot of prosperity.'' He said, ''Do you realize there are people who do what we do for a living who don't make as much per hour as we get in fringe benefits?'' He said, ''Mr. President, how are those people living? I think they ought to have health care, too. How are they going to save for their retirement? How are they going to educate their children?''

And all of a sudden, all these other people, all these young people started saying, ''Yes, we think in Washington you ought to be looking out for those people. You ought to be doing everything you can to make sure that anybody that's working as hard as we are, whether they are in a union, whether they make the kind of money we make, or not, at least have the basic things they need to succeed in raising their children and educating them, and having a chance to own a home and succeed and live the American dream.'' And I thought to myself, this country is in pretty good hands. These people were there, grateful for their prosperity, but thinking about others.

This country has always done best at every time of change and challenge when we've tried to do three things. I say this over and over again, but I want you to think about this: When you go home tonight, ask yourself why you came here, and ''Bob Torricelli made me'' or ''Bob Kerrey made me'' is not an acceptable answer. [*Laughter*] Now, you ought to try this; try this on for size: Go home tonight and before you go to bed—I'm dead serious—I'm dead serious—go home tonight and ask yourself, why did I go to that dinner tonight? And get out a piece of paper and a pen and write down an answer. Imagine you went home and one of your children asked you, ''Why did you go there,'' and you had to give an answer.

This country has met every challenge of the last 220 years because at every time of challenge and change we've done three things: We have widened the circle of opportunity; we have deepened the meaning of freedom and extended it to more people; and we have strengthened the bonds of our Union.

We are moving into an age where the volume of knowledge is doubling every 5 years, a global society where we're drawing closer to people around the world and where all of our neighbors are more than ever likely

to be from all around the world. We have to learn to live in ways that we never imagined, with people we couldn't have possibly understood just a few years ago. But what we have to do is what we've always had to do, widen the circle of opportunity, deepen the meaning of freedom, strengthen the bonds of our Union.

And when you go home tonight, you think about that. And you ask yourself, which party is more likely to do that. I rest my case.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:48 p.m. at the National Museum of Women in the Arts. In his remarks, he referred to Senator J. Robert Kerrey, chair, Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee.

Remarks on the Enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

March 20, 1998

Thank you. Thank you very much, Secretary Albright, General Shelton, General Sandler, Mr. Berger, Senator Roth, to the members and representatives of the Joint Chiefs, members of the diplomatic corps, and other interested citizens, many of whom have held high positions in the national security apparatus of this country and the military of our country. We're grateful for everyone's presence here today.

I especially want to thank the Members of the Senate who are here. I thank Senator Roth, the chairman of the NATO observer group, Senator Moynihan, Senator Smith, Senator Levin, Senator Lugar, Senator Robb, and Senator Thurmond. Your leadership and that of Senators Lott, Daschle, Helms, and Biden and others in this Chamber has truly, as the Secretary of State said, made this debate a model of bipartisan dialog and action.

The Senate has held more than a dozen hearings on this matter. We have worked very closely with the Senate NATO observer group. And I must say, I was immensely gratified when the Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted 16 to 2 in support of enlargement.

Now, in the coming days the full Senate will act on this matter of critical importance to our national security. The admission of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to NATO will be a very important milestone in building the kind of world we want for the 21st century.

As has been said, I first proposed NATO enlargement 4 years ago, when General Joulwan was our commander in Brussels. Many times since, I've had the opportunity to speak on this issue. Now a final decision is at hand, and now it is important that all the American people focus on this matter closely. For this is one of those rare moments when we have within our grasp the opportunity to actually shape the future, to make the new century safer and more secure and less unstable than the one we are leaving.

We can truly be present at a new creation. When President Truman signed the North Atlantic Treaty 49 years ago next month, he expressed the goal of its founders in typically simple and straightforward language: to preserve their present peaceful situation and to protect it in the future. The dream of the generation that founded NATO was of a Europe whole and free. But the Europe of their time was lamentably divided by the Iron Curtain. Our generation can realize their dream. It is our opportunity and responsibility to do so, to create a new Europe undivided, democratic, and at peace for the very first time in all history.

Forging a new NATO in the 21st century will help to fulfill the commitment and the struggle that many of you in this room engaged in over the last 50 years. NATO can do for Europe's East what it did for Europe's West: protect new democracies against aggression, prevent a return to local rivalries, create the conditions in which prosperity can flourish.

In January of 1994, on my first trip to Europe for the NATO summit, we did take the lead in proposing a new NATO for a new era. First, by strengthening our alliance to preserve its core mission of self-defense, while preparing it to take on the new challenges to our security and to Europe's stability; second, by reaching out to new partners and taking in new members from among Europe's emerging democracies; and third, by forging a strong and cooperative relationship between NATO and Russia.