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deliver on those things, and our country's future will be more secure. And you will know you did it.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:07 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to Martin Frost, chair, Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee; Lt. Gov. Gray Davis of California; Art Torres, chair, California Democratic Party; and dinner hosts Eli and Edythe L. Broad.

## Remarks at a California Labor Initiative Breakfast in Los Angeles, California

*May 4, 1998*

Thank you very much. I want to thank John Sweeney for those kind words and for his brilliant leadership in giving new life and energy and direction to the American labor movement. Thank you, Doug Dority and all the other labor leaders who are here. I thank Ron and Jan for opening their home to us and letting us relive the movie fantasies of the last 60 years here in this great old house.

I'd also like to say a special work of appreciation to my longtime friend John Garamendi for his distinguished leadership as Deputy Secretary of the Interior, and he's now gone to work with Ron. And I wish him well in private life. He also got a daughter married off last weekend; he assures me it is survivable, but I'm not so certain. [*Laughter*] I thank the Members of Congress who are here, and Lt. Governor Davis, thank you for coming.

I would like to just say a few words to all of you who have come here to this fundraiser. First of all, you wouldn't be here if you didn't believe what I think is an elemental truth of the modern economy, which is that we can only have a good economy and a good society if we find ways to widen the circle of opportunity and to reward people for their labors. And insofar as we reward people for doing the right things, then those who are especially well-positioned will do even better.

John mentioned the Therma plant up in Silicon Valley I visited. Most people think that most of the places that are doing well up there are computer companies or biotech companies, but someone has to build all those buildings that they work in, and someone has to supply them with what they need. And that plant, as John said, is a family-owned business with 1,600 workers, most of whom are sheet metal workers, a few of whom are in the plumbers union, but they're all unionized, and yet they have all the things that the enemies of organized labor always say you never see. They have a flexible workplace; they have incredible partnerships with their owners, and the people who run that plant are very, very proud with their relationship with the union and with the people on the floor. And they have a modern workplace in which no one wants to leave, because they think they're getting their fair share of the labor, and because they believe their labor is respected.

We have tried to do that. I was very disturbed when I became President that our country had had 20 years of increasing inequality among working people. And there were many reasons for it, some of them unavoidable, because we were changing the nature of the American economy, and whenever you change the nature of an economy—it happens about once every 50 or 60 years—the people that are really in the best positions do best. It happened when we went from being agricultural to an industrial economy. But a lot of it was because our people weren't well-equipped and weren't being treated fairly, and that people didn't understand that we had to make extra effort.

So I want to thank the labor movement and John Sweeney and all the other labor leaders for the things they've supported that their own members were not the primary beneficiaries of. Most of the people that got the benefit of the Family and Medical Leave Act were working people who did not have the benefit of union representation. Most of the people who got the benefit of the increase in the minimum wage, directly or indirectly, most, if not all, were union people—were not union workers. Most of the people who get the benefit of the earned-income tax credit, which is now worth $1,000 a year to a family of four with an income of under $30,000, and it's lifted 2.2 million children out of poverty—were working families that did not belong to unions. And so I thank you for being the voice, all of you, not only for

your members but for those who are not members of organized labor.

Now, when you look ahead to the future, it seems to me one of the great challenges still facing us is how every single person in our country, and ultimately in other parts of the world, can feel that there is some way they can live out their dreams, raise a family, live a life that makes sense in this new world we're living in.

And it's funny, because one of the things that has clearly happened, with more and more people on the Internet, more and more kids on the Internet at school, more and more people being able to individually access information, is that there really is a new upsurge in the world today in people's desire to have more individual control over their destiny.

We're in the process now of reviewing the Social Security system, for example, and there's this huge age differential—young people all say, well, we should have—not all, but a lot of young people say, ''We should have individual accounts, and we'll decide how to invest it.'' Older people remember that the stock market has not always gone from 3,000 to 9,000 in any 5-year period—and so they say, ''Well, you better have a little bit of protection here for what happens on the days when it's not so good.''

This initiative on the California ballot can be seen against that background. The people of California have been very good to me and my family and my administration. And I have watched with interest as the State has emerged from its economic recession, starting in 1993 and coming forward—Californians, in the most popular State in the country and a State where it's fairly easy to get an initiative on the ballot, have been asked to come to grips with issues that are being debated.

Now, I think sometimes these ballot initiatives have dealt with real problems, but at least from my point of view, with the wrong solution. For example, if you look at this ballot initiative on bilingual education, I think there is a significant problem in the—I think the way we are handling immigrant children, integrating them into our education system, integrating them into the mainstream of American life, is inadequate. I don't think it's working as well as it should. But I think the proposal on the ballot will make it worse, not better. That my only—but at least they're debating a real issue. And I'm hopeful on that issue that the voters of California will be able to think it through. And I applaud the speaker of the House here who tried to get an alternative measure through to deal with it in what I believe is a much more positive way.

This issue dealing with labor unions and the relationship with labor unions to their members, I think it's an entirely different one. This is an issue, in my view, which seeks to take a legitimate principle, which is that people should not have their money spent against their will, and turn it into a ballot initiative that will simply put organizations that represent working people at a significant competitive disadvantage to other organizations in the political marketplace.

So this is something that sounds good, but isn't—not something that's dealing with a real problem. There is no real problem here. And that's what you have to get out to the people of California.

John and I—on the way in, he pointed out that, again, that it is labor union members who do not wish their dues money, others who do not wish their voluntary check-off money to be spent on political purposes, can inform their unions of that and get back a portion of their money. I think you said—Gerry McEntee said 33,000 AFSCME members got back a portion of their money last year. This is not a problem. This is being put forth as a problem. This is not a problem that exists. No one is making labor union members contribute to political campaigns.

Now, what this amendment seeks to do is to basically muffle the ability of the collective voices of working people to be heard by putting on them a far, far greater administrative burden than corporations face when they spend their own money—they don't have to get their shareholders' permission every year—or other organizations like the Chamber of Commerce, the NFIB, any other membership organization that spends money either to support candidates or to affect ballot initiatives or other political issues.

Why should labor unions be singled out when they already give their members a better voice at opting out of the system than a lot of other organizations do? Why should we have a system where we say—let me tell you, I've been in Washington now for 5 years—we haven't always agreed on everything. John Sweeney and I don't agree on every issue. But I'll tell you something: If it were up to them, every American would have health care tonight, every child would go to bed tonight not worrying whether or not there would be a doctor there if the baby woke up at 3 o'clock in the morning.

We have family and medical leave. We have this very different tax system for low-income working families. We have all these things in our balanced budget agreement; we've got the biggest increase in child health care in 35 years—going to provide 5 million children with health insurance.

We have virtually opened the doors of college to every American, in no small measure because American labor was working up there in the Congress to try to pass this. This is a better country because of them.

I don't know what the 30-second message is because I'm not part of the ad team out here, but I can tell you this: I believe if the people of California understood, clearly, that every member of every union in America has a right at any time to say, ''I do not want my money spent, my dues money spent, to lobby on ballot initiatives or spent for political purposes''—that that is a far more expensive thing that applies to other organizations as a practical matter, and that this is just an attempt to put unions at a disadvantage to other organized groups in the political marketplace, and thereby to diminish the voice of working men and women—and keep in mind—and for people who are not members of unions for whom they speak who would otherwise have no voice—who would otherwise have no voice.

That family and medical leave thing, we had 170 other countries that had family and medical leave for goodness sakes, and we still have people in the United States Congress saying, ''Oh, if you do this, it will cost America jobs.''

And that's what this is about. And I honestly believe if you can just tell the people of California the facts, that no man or woman in any labor union anywhere in California or in the country is being ripped off, that they can reallocate their money when they want to, they can say, ''I do not want this to happen.'' And then they understood that this ballot initiative does not apply to business organizations; it does not apply to other organizations; it does not apply to corporations; I think the innate sense of fairness of the people out here will prevail. And all of you who are contributing here at this breakfast today are giving the people who are running this campaign a chance to do that.

But I really believe that it's important that the message get out there that is not like—a lot of these other ballot initiatives are dealing with real, legitimate problems, and then you're just arguing over whether this is the right solution to a real problem. This is not a real problem. This is an attempt to create the impression that individual members of unions are being put upon when they aren't. And it's being done to alter the balance of power in the political debate.

And so I hope very much you will prevail, and I hope my being here helps you a little bit. And I hope between now and the time it's voted on, enough people will understand the facts. This is why we're—if they really know the facts, I think you'll win.

Good luck, and thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:22 a.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to John Sweeney, president, AFL–CIO; Douglas H. Dority, international president, United Food and Commercial Workers International Union; breakfast hosts Ron and Janet Burkle; Lt. Gov. Gray Davis of California; State Assembly Speaker Antonio R. Villaraigosa; and Gerald W. McEntee, president, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

## Remarks Announcing the Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing in San Fernando, California

*May 4, 1998*

Thank you very much. I think Christy did a terrific job. And the rest of her family is out here; we're glad you're here. And let me