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come out of this. Well, we have to acknowledge the fact that what we have is, in America, a very small number—nobody knows how many—of kids that are really troubled and disturbed and may have a lot of rage. With easy access to guns in a culture where they've been exposed to lots and lots and lots of violence, and there are literally scores and scores of serious studies which show that the younger you are and the more you're exposed to it, the more kind of desensitized you are to it. And those three things can be a combustible combination.

So what I hope we can do is to do a better job of kind of alerting ourselves and identifying kids that may have problems, before these things happen, and then acting with greater strength and discipline to go forward. Many of the parents today gave me a lot of specific suggestions. I thank you for those. I know that Senator Wyden and Senator Smith just yesterday introduced a bill that said that any young person who brought a gun to school, which is in violation of Federal law, should be held for a 72-hour period of evaluation. And I think that's a very good suggestion.

Today I instructed the Secretary of Education and the Attorney General to prepare a guidebook to be ready when school opens next year in every school in America, for teachers and parents and for students as well, to describe all the kinds of early warning signals that deeply troubled young people sometimes give, not just bringing a gun to school but maybe the other things as well.

Not to scare our people all across America or to trouble them, but everybody who has looked at you knows that this is a good community that they'd be proud to live in, and therefore, it could happen anywhere. So what we have to try to do is to, all of us, learn more about the people with whom we live and the kinds of signals that are coming out. And then we've got to make sure that we have the capacity to actually do something about these problems if we can find them out before they get out of hand.

And I know that—I believe, at least, that's what your commitment is. That's what a lot of people have told me, as I worked my way around the room today, as I met with your officials at the airport.

And so all I can tell you is, we'll do our very best to continue to help with whatever residual challenges you have here. And I'll do my very best to listen to what you have said to me today, and then to make something really positive happen in the country to increase our ability to prevent such things in the future.

I hope you will go on with your healing and go on with your lives and take a great deal of pride in the way your school and your community has responded to a terrible thing, in a human, strong, very positive way. For me and for all the people who came here with me today, this has been a great inspiration that we will never, ever forget.

Again, I thank all of you for coming out. And more than anything, let me say again to all the families who came to meet with me, I know it couldn't have been easy, but it meant more to me than I can possibly convey.

God bless you all, and good luck. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:25 p.m. in the gymnasium. In his remarks, he referred to Larry Bentz, principal; Jamon Kent, superintendent, and Alan Petersen, school board chairman, Springfield Public Schools; Mayor William W. Morrisette of Springfield; and Michael Nickolauson, father of Mikael E. Nickolauson, and Mark Walker, father of Benjamin A. Walker, the two students who died as a result of a May 21 attack in the high school cafeteria.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in Beverly Hills, California

June 13, 1998

Thank you very much. I don't need to say anything, do I? [*Laughter*] Let me join all of you in thanking Lew and Edie for another wonderful evening. I love to come here. I'm always happy. I don't think the place has ever been more beautiful. And that's the nicest Presidential seal I have ever seen, Lew. [*Laughter*] And the only one that smelled intoxicatingly wonderful. [*Laughter*]

I do thank all of you for coming. I thank you for your support of our party. I thank Steve Grossman and Len Barrack for their

efforts. And Steve and Hillary have already told you a lot about what we're trying to do. I want to begin with a few more thanks, too. I want to thank Senator Feinstein, who is here, and Senator Boxer and Congressman Waxman for what they have done to support our efforts to move this country forward. I want to ask you to do everything you can to make sure Barbara is reelected. Believe you me, she has earned it.

Yesterday I made that announcement that we would ban offshore drilling off the California coast for another decade and permanently in marine sanctuaries. And I told somebody when it was over, I said, ''You know, I really believe in this, but if I didn't believe it, I'd do it just to get Barbara off my back.'' [*Laughter*] There's so many ways in which she represents California superbly, and I ask you to help her.

I also want to tell you, I was thrilled to see Gray Davis get more votes than his Republican opponent in the primary, which was an amazing feat. And we've got a chance to have our first Democratic Governor of California in quite a long time now. And believe me, we don't need to blow it. It's important for California; it's important for the country.

I had a chance to visit with Gray and Sharon today, and I was reminding Gray that it really matters a lot more today than it used to who the Governor is, because we now have given the States vast new responsibilities in dealing with the welfare of poor families. The States have been given vast new resources to guarantee that if people on welfare are required to go to work that they get transportation help they need, the child care help they need, so that you don't ask people to sacrifice their responsibilities to their children to take a job. But we don't run that in Washington; it really matters whether the Governor has a good plan and executes it and cares about it. It's a huge thing. It's very different now than it was just 4 years ago.

We passed—part of our balanced budget bill is the biggest increase in health care coverage for children in 30 years. It will add 5 million children to the ranks of those with health insurance. Over half the uninsured kids in the country are going to get health insurance if the States don't mess it up. And California, obviously, has the lion's share of those children, even a higher percentage of those kids than your percentage of the overall population. It really matters who the Governor is.

We're doing our best to pass a very aggressive, ambitious education agenda. It could bring funds to repair or build hundreds of schools here, to start literally hundreds of charter schools here, to do a lot of exciting things to make sure all the classrooms in the poorest neighborhoods in California are hooked up to the Internet. But all of it will just be sitting there—it matters whether the Governor has a plan and the compassion and the caring enough to execute it in a way that will benefit the people of this State.

So the stakes are high, and you have a wonderful candidate. And I'm going to be back out here doing what I can to help him get elected and to help Barbara. And I want all of you to stay there.

I also would like to say a particular word of thanks, as Hillary did, to Henry Waxman for his heroic efforts to pass comprehensive legislation to protect children from the problems of tobacco. We're fighting a terrible pitched battle in Washington now, and everywhere I go, I see the tobacco advertisements trying to convince you that we've got this dark scheme in Washington to build some new Federal bureaucracy, and it's the biggest load of hooey I ever heard in my life. [*Laughter*] We're trying to save 1,000 kids' lives a day; it's just as simple as that. And we're either going to do it, or we're not. But if it gets done, it will be in no small measure because of years and years and years of dogged efforts by Henry Waxman, and I've very grateful to him for it.

The last thing I'd like to say in this regard is I'd like to join Hillary in thanking Dianne Feinstein for her efforts to save as many of our children as possible through trying to restrict access to assault weapons.

You know, I went to Oregon today—a lot of you know this. I went down to Springfield, Oregon, where that terrible school shooting occurred. And I met with the fathers of the two children who were killed. I met with a large number of the children who were wounded—many of whom still have the bullets in their bodies—and the families. I met

with the school principal and the superintendent and the school board and the teachers, and I got a lot of terrific suggestions.

You and I know that no matter what we do, there will always be some tragedy in life. You can't make any society completely perfect. You can't make any life fully risk-free. But we should also be honest enough to know that you had a series now of these really horrible killings at schools at the time when our overall juvenile crime rate is actually going down, so we have fewer kids getting in trouble now. The crime rate among juveniles, the overall crime rate, is going down. And yet, you're having all this happen.

And we all have got to be really honest about this and ask ourselves, why? Because I think every one of us has some responsibility in fixing it. And I thought about this for years, and I have to tell you honestly, I think that what is happening is you've got a small number of children who are carrying a lot of rage and maybe a lot of other serious, serious emotional problems in a society where it's real easy to get a whole lot of guns.

And as I have said here many times before, because of the pervasive influence of media on children from their earliest days, the average child is exposed to a lot of what seems to be, to a child, random and repetitive violence, and there are scores of studies which show that it makes children more deadened, desensitized to the immediate consequences of it. And you put all those things together, and you can have an explosive mix.

What we talked about in Oregon today was what we can do to set up a system in our country, school by school, community by community, that will set off some early warning lights when these kids are in trouble. If you have been reading about all these instances, in virtually every one there was some indication that somebody had—that something real bad was wrong. But nobody really thought, ''Well, it could lead to this.'' The young man in Oregon was kicked out of school the day before for having a gun. One of the young people in Arkansas reportedly made threatening comments. The same thing happened in another place.

But we're going to work very, very hard over the next few months to analyze this and to come up with a guide we can give to all of our schools and our parents next year, so we can do a better job of this.

Now, let me say I also did some other things this weekend I want to talk about, and then I want to make the general point that Hillary was making. I spoke at Portland State University today, which is a community-based school, and I talked about immigration and why I thought it was a good thing. And I asked a family to stand up. There was a woman there named Mago Gilson who came to this country from Mexico 12 years ago without a high school diploma; today she got her master's degree in English. Today her son got his bachelor's degree in business administration after working full-time for 7 years to get his college degree. And her other son, next year, will get his master's degree in education. That is the best of the immigrant story in America.

And I pointed out to the people there that we're going through the largest wave of immigration that we've had in this century. And this country is changing dramatically. You think of Texas; most of you would be surprised to know that there's no majority race in Houston, Texas, now. Five years from now, there will probably be no majority race in California. About 55 years from now, there will be no majority race in the United States.

One-hundred and fifty years ago, Irish immigrants in this country were routinely characterized in the same breath with recently freed slaves. It's funny how things change. There's a hilarious book out now—kind of a cheeky book that we Irish like. It's called, ''How the Irish Became White.'' [*Laughter*] And it's sort of a sad commentary on how we forgot our peasant roots and abandoned the cause of racial equality and other things and then sort of later came back to it.

The point I'm trying to make is this: If we want to lead a world in which many of the problems that are tearing the heart out of the world today—from Bosnia and Kosovo to India and Pakistan to the Middle East to Rwanda—are rooted in racial, ethnic, and religious differences—if we want to do good in that kind of world, we have to be good at home. We have to prove that we can live together across all the lines that divide us.

And so I went to Portland State to talk about that because all those graduates, that's the world they're going to live in. And America has always been a nation of immigrants. And we have to redefine ourselves in that way so we accommodate even more diversity and have an even stronger sense of common purpose.

And then yesterday, Senator Boxer and others, we were down in Monterey at the oceans conference, the first time in American history we ever had a conference on the oceans, and we've got to do it because the oceans' quality is deteriorating. It's going to affect the lives of our children and our grandchildren.

Now, these are not the sort of things you normally hear bandied around in election years. But what I want to say to you is that it seems to me in a fundamental way, the people of California, when they vote for Congress or Governor or Senator, they're going to have to decide, as Americans will, what are we about right now, and what do we want to do? I just mention these 3 things because they're the things I have been doing the last 2 days.

But let me come back to the conditions that are in this country. When I carried California in 1992, the unemployment rate here was over 9 percent, and people thought this State had been neglected and that nobody had a plan to do anything. And I said, "Vote for me. You may not agree with me on everything, but I've got an economic plan, a crime plan, a welfare plan. I'm going to do things, shake things up. We've got ideas. We're going to move this country forward."

Five and a half years later, we have the lowest crime rates in 25 years; we have the lowest unemployment in 28 years and 16 million new jobs; we have the lowest percentage of people on welfare in 29 years; we're about to have the first balanced budget and surplus in 29 years; we have the lowest inflation in 32 years, the smallest Federal Government in 35 years, and the highest homeownership in the history of the United States. This country is moving in the right direction.

Now, I say that not to take full credit for it. The lion's share of the credit belongs to you and all of the other American people. This is a free society in which billions of decisions are made every day. But it does matter what the direction of the country is, and ideas translated into action have consequences.

I do not believe that the people in my party in the Congress, who have supported these ideas, translated them into action, and very often put their own lives on the line—political lives on the line to do it, have gotten the credit they deserve. I believe the American people have been very good and generous to me beyond all belief, but I don't think they yet have accepted the fact that there were only Democrats voting with me in 1993, when we put that first economic plan before the American people that took 2.2 million kids out of poverty, cut the deficit by $700 billion, and by the time the balanced budget bill passed that Republicans and Democrats voted for, 92 percent of the deficit had already disappeared. There are consequences to ideas and actions.

And the first point I want to make is, the people that I support here, in my party, I support not because they're members of my party but because their ideas and our ideas had good consequences for America when translated into action and because in Washington the primary fight today is between those who are for progress and those who just want to keep practicing politics as usual, divide people up, and hope they get by another election.

This election is fundamentally about progress versus politics as usual. And if the American people understand that, I think I know what decision they'll make. And I want you to help them, here in California and throughout this country.

The second point I want to make is we have to decide what to do with this time. You all clapped when I said things were good; I got a call from a guy the other day that had just spent some time with a lot of very conservative Republicans who said something like, "I don't really like that President of yours, but he sure has made me a lot of money." So even they recognize that things are pretty good.

What are we going to do with this good time? Democracies normally in times like this just relax, sort of lay in the sun, and enjoy it and wait for things to go bad someday,

knowing that they will. That would be a terrible mistake. I believe that the American people have the confidence today and the sense of well-being today necessary to look to the future and think about the long-term challenges we face.

Yes, we're going to have a surplus, but we also have to fix Social Security and Medicare before the baby boomers bankrupt their children and their grandchildren. And I want the Democrats to be a part of that. Yes, we're moving forward economically, and we've opened the doors of college to all Americans, but if we don't fix our public schools so that they're the best in the world, we will never become what we ought to be, and a lot of children growing up in this State will never have the lives they ought to have. You know that as well as I do.

I am proud of the fact that in our administration we set more land aside in natural preserves than any administration in the history of America except those of Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt. But if we don't do something about climate change and the quality of the oceans and the quality of the water here, our grandchildren will pay a terrible price for it.

I am proud of the fact that we have been able to add 5 million kids to the ranks of the health insured, but there are so many people in HMO's today that don't know what their rights are, that we need to pass a Patients' Bill of Rights to make sure that the quality of health care is also protected.

I'm glad that the juvenile crime rate is going down, but there are still a lot of kids in trouble. And part of our budget would provide funds that ''Governor'' Davis could give to school districts to keep schools open later and to have more kids in summer school and to give them good positive experiences so they've got something to live for and something to do that's good.

Hillary's hometown of Chicago now has a summer school that's so big—the summer school is the sixth biggest school district in the United States. And if you don't make a passing score at the end of the year, you've got to go to summer school. And guess what? Learning is up, and crime is down. And they led with prevention by getting people to do something good in the first place. These are the kind of things we ought to be thinking about now.

We shouldn't be—even the President, the Democrats in Congress, we should not be going around patting ourselves on the back because we've got 16 million new jobs and crime is down and welfare is down and everything is fine. We ought to be saying, ''Thank God we have got this opportunity to look at the long-term challenges of the 21st century. Let's take this space we've been given, take a deep breath, look at these challenges, and go meet them together.''

That's what I believe this is about. That's what I think this election ought to be about. And I would just implore you—California has always presented itself and thought of itself as a place of the future. Certainly, racially, ethnically, you are and will be. Certainly in terms of the high-tech economy and the entertainment economy, you are and you will be.

But the real question is, are we going to go into the future where we widen the circle of opportunity for everybody or just those that have a good education and understand what's going on? Are we going to widen and deepen the meaning of freedom so we don't permit discrimination against people because of whatever group they belong to? And can we prove we can go into the future together?

You know, we have a lot of very troubling problems that have arisen in the world, many of them just in the last few months. But I know that America can lead the world to a better place in resolving these things, to do the right thing if we can do right here at home, if the power of our example is still more important than the volume of our voice.

You can make that happen. And every one of these elections, in ways large and small, will etch the shape of 21st century America.

I thank you for being here tonight. I thank you for your contributions. But remember: You've got a brain; you've got a voice; you've got a heart. We've got to decide what to do with this time. A time like this comes along maybe once in a generation, where things seem to be all moving in a good direction. We dare not squander it in self-satisfaction or complacency. We need to look at our children, think about our grandchildren, and

take on the big challenges of the 21st century. In Washington, we need to choose the future over politics as usual.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:57 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to Lew and Edie Wasserman, dinner hosts; Steve Grossman, national chair, and Leonard Barrack, national finance chair, Democratic National Committee; and California Lt. Gov. Gray Davis, Democratic candidate for Governor, and his wife, Sharon.

Remarks to the Presidential Scholars

June 15, 1998

Thank you very much. Welcome to the White House. I want to thank Bruce Reed for his service, and I want to thank him for making a joke about how young he looks and saving me the trouble of doing it. [*Laughter*]

Secretary Shalala, Deputy Secretary of Education Smith, to the Commission on Presidential Scholars and its chair, Stuart Moldaw, to the cosponsors, the corporate sponsors, as well as the families and teachers and friends of the scholars here today, and most of all to you, scholars, welcome to the White House. I hope you have enjoyed the day so far. I want to begin by thanking the United States Marine Band, this year celebrating its 200th anniversary as the President's band, playing for you.

The Presidential Scholars Award dates back to 1964 when President Johnson signed an Executive order, and I quote, ''to recognize the most precious resource of the United States—the brainpower of its young people.'' Today I look out across a group of young people whose brainpower could light up this entire city. Someday, many of you doubtless will light up this entire city. Already you have enriched your communities by your activities in music, art, athletics, and citizen service. I'm especially grateful to those of you who have helped to mentor or tutor children who need your help.

As you look ahead to further academic success, let me say that I very much hope you will continue to pursue other interests as well, including community service. And I hope you will become increasingly involved as citizens in the great issues of today and tomorrow.

We are going through a period of profound change. You are on the edge of a new century and a new millennium. We are very fortunate that this is such a good time for America. And every day I get up and give thanks for the fact that we have the lowest crime rate in 25 years, the lowest unemployment rate in 28 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 29 years. We're about to have the first balanced budget and surplus in 29 years, the lowest inflation in 32 years. We have the smallest Federal Government in 35 years, the highest homeownership in history. Inequality among different classes of working people is going down, and millions of children have been lifted out of poverty in the last 5 years. I am grateful for that.

But in that kind of environment, where the American people feel great confidence and where your future looks so bright, it seems to me that as a people we have two different choices: We can do what people usually do in good times—we can relax and enjoy them; or we can do what we should do—we should recognize that things are changing dramatically in our country and in the world, that we still have enormous challenges facing us in this new century, and we should be bold and look ahead to the future, to your future, to the world your children will live in, and act now, when we have the prosperity, the security, and the confidence to act on the long-term challenges of the country. There are many.

Next year I believe we have to reform Social Security and Medicare so that when we baby boomers retire, we don't bankrupt our children and undermine our children's ability to raise our grandchildren. I believe we have to make our public schools the best in the world, just like our colleges and universities are now. I believe we have to deal with the growing problems of crime and violence among children and families. I think we still have economic challenges in the inner cities and isolated rural areas. I believe we have to prove that we can grow the economy and improve the environment, not continue to destruct it. I believe we have serious challenges, long-term, if we want to be the world's leading force for peace and freedom