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Irvin of Georgia; James E. Burke, chairman, Partnership for a Drug-Free America; and Mayor Bill Campbell of Atlanta.

Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Luncheon in Atlanta

July 9, 1998

Thank you very much, and welcome. Michael, I would say, with family like this and support like this, you have an excellent chance to win.

I want to thank all of you for coming today in support of Michael Coles and his wonderful family. I want to especially thank the mayor and the Governor and all of the State and local officials who are here, and my good friends, the mayor's predecessors, Maynard Jackson and Andrew Young, for coming.

I feel a great deal of gratitude to Georgia for many things. In 1992, when I started running for President, Zell Miller was about the only person besides my mother and my wife who thought I could win. [*Laughter*] And then, I didn't win in New Hampshire, where I had one or two minor obstacles—[*laughter*]—and an opponent who lived 5 miles from the State line, and they said, ''You know, if Bill Clinton doesn't get 40 percent in Georgia, he'll have to withdraw; he's toast; he's history.'' And I said, ''Now, Zell, I don't want to put any pressure on you.'' [*Laughter*] So we got 57 percent in the Georgia primary in 1992. And there have been a lot of wonderful experiences since, and I am very grateful for this State.

I'm grateful for people like Maynard and Andy, who have been friends of mine and my wife's for many, many years. I'm grateful for Bill Campbell's leadership. I can honestly say that I know quite a bit about being a Governor. I was a Governor for 12 years. One of the great honors of my life was when my colleagues once voted me the most effective Governor in the country. I'm saying that not to brag on myself but to establish my bona fide for what I am about to say.

In my experience, I believe that what Zell Miller has done as Governor of Georgia has affected more people more personally, positively, than the work of any other Governor with whom I have worked in the last 20 years.

I also want to say, when I'm a very old man, if the Lord lets me live that long, and I'm thinking about—over the high points of my wonderful career for which I'm very grateful, in the late of the night, one of the things I will always remember is Zell Miller's voice at the New York convention in 1992. I can give that speech about the house his mama built better than he can. [*Laughter*] But it captured the heart of America and the heart of what we're all about.

When we were sitting here at lunch, I went around the table before I came up, and I said, ''Can you folks—how are we going to win this race? What do you want me to say? How is this going to work?'' And they all gave me their ideas. And I don't know if I can add anything to what's already been said. Very often, since I became President, I always get to speak last. That's a great honor. But very often, it's that sort of situation where everything that needs to be said has already been said, but not everyone said it.

I think maybe there is something I can say. What do you need to win a race like this? To convince voters in what is clearly an American battleground State for the future, where Atlanta now is home to more foreign companies than any other city in America, where you have in this city really everything that you can imagine the future being about in America, but where in the State the parties are pretty evenly divided and the philosophies are pretty evenly divided, and the races have a way of being agonizingly close, as I have found in my joy and disappointment. What can I say?

Well, you have a good candidate who has demonstrated his character. Through overcoming adversity, he's demonstrated that he understands the American economic system through triumphing in it. He has built a great family, which is the most important thing for anyone to have in life. He has the guts to challenge incumbents who are going to have tons of money, which is evidence of courage in public life.

But what I would like to say to you is that we have to convince moderate Republicans and independent voters that what happened

in America in the last 6 years and what happened in Georgia in Zell Miller's tenure was not an accident and was directly related—not that I am responsible for every good thing that's happened in this country or not that he's responsible for every good thing that's happened in Georgia—but there is a connection between the ideas that leaders have and the policies that are pursued and the consequences in the lives of people.

It's not just that Zell Miller is a good man with a lot of energy and a lot of courage, and he was brave in the Marine Corps, and he gives a great speech; the HOPE scholarship was, in fact, the right thing to do. It was the right thing to do. And what I can tell you from my experience is, I was a Southern Governor; I listened to the Republicans bad-mouth the Democratic Party from can till can't, from dawn until dark, year-in and year-out, forever and a day. And that time I ran for President, I had ump-de-dump people in Arkansas who had voted for me repeatedly for Governor who never thought they would vote for a Democrat for President. Some of them didn't vote for a Democrat even when it was me—[*laughter*]—after voting for me repeatedly, because Republicans had done a great job of sort of doing reverse plastic surgery on the Democrats. You know, they'd say, ''You can't vote for them; they can't handle the budget; they can't handle this; they're weak on foreign policy.'' You know that whole litany. ''They want to take your money and give it to people on welfare; don't believe in work.'' I can give that speech better than they can give it, too. I've heard it so many times. [*Laughter*]

And they still milk that old cow every chance they get. And when 1992—I wanted to take the Democratic Party in a new direction based on its oldest values. I believed that we could unite the country and move it forward, that we could build that bridge to the 21st century based on opportunity and responsibility and a sense of community. And we set about doing things that really were different. We had new ideas on the economy. We said we believe it's possible to cut the deficit and balance the budget and still have money to invest in education and in science and technology and building the future. We believe it's possible to expand American trade and still care about preserving the environment and the standards of our working people.

We believe it's possible to be tough on crime but to be smart, too, and to find ways to keep more kids out of trouble in the first place. We believe it is possible to move people from welfare to work but not to ask them to hurt their children; to empower people to move from welfare to work by saying, ''Yes, if you're able-bodied, you have to do it. But by the way, there's got to be a job there and there ought to be child care and you ought not to have to neglect your role as a parent to do your role as a worker in this society.''

We believed that America could be a force for good in the world and still help the economic interests of our country. We believed we could have a smaller Government that was more effective, that worked on empowering people to make the most of their own lives. And we believed that we could build one America, across all the lines that divide us, because what unites us is more important than what divides us. And if we could ever learn to appreciate our differences instead of be afraid of them, we would be a very great country, indeed.

Now, that's what we believe. Now, after 6 years—and again, I say I do not believe that I, my party, or Washington, DC, is responsible for every good thing that's happened in America; most of the good things that happen in a free country happen by the billions and billions and billions of decisions that ordinary people make every day on their own. But what the President does and the policies that are pursued are not unrelated to what happens in the country. They have an impact.

And I am profoundly grateful that you gave me the chance to do this job, and I am very grateful that after 6 years, we have the lowest crime rate in 25 years, the lowest unemployment rate in 28 years, the lowest inflation rate in 29 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 29 years, the first balanced budget and surplus in 29 years, and the highest rate of homeownership in the history of the country. I'm proud of that, and you should be, too.

Now, that's not a reason to let Michael Coles—and I can't run for reelection. And if I could, it wouldn't be a reason to reelect

me. I remember once I was about to run for reelection after I had been in 10 years, and I asked a guy at the State Fair once—we were having Governor's Day—and this guy came up in overalls and said, ''Are you going to run for reelection?'' And I said, ''Yes, I might. Will you vote for me if I do?'' He said, ''I will; I always have.'' And I said, ''Well, aren't you sick of me after 10 years?'' He said, ''No, but most of my friends are.'' [*Laughter*] And I said, ''Well,'' I said, ''Don't they think I've done a good job?'' He said, ''Yes, but you drew a check every two weeks, didn't you?'' [*Laughter*] He said, ''That's what we hired you to do.''

So what's that got to do with this race, where we are now? I'll tell you what it's got to do with it. Number one, it's some indication that, if the ideas we had in the past were right, that the ideas we're advocating for the future may be right as well, and what we are trying to do in education with smaller classes and modernized schools and computers in all the schools and higher standards, that these things are important. Because no one in the world believes we have the best system of public education in the world. And everyone knows we have the best system of college education in the world. And we will never be what we ought to be for every American child until our elementary and secondary education system is also the best in the world.

You take health care. We're having this big debate over the Patients' Bill of Rights. I pleaded with the Congress to pass it, and I thought for sure they would. Now, the health insurance companies, a lot of them are against it—but not all of them, I might add. Most people are in managed care plans today. I have never been one of those that attacked managed care.

When I became President, health care costs were inflating at 3 times the rate of inflation. It was unsustainable. It was going to break every business in the country that tried to provide health insurance for their kids. It was going to consume the whole economy. We had to do something to slow down the rate of inflation. On the other hand, any system taken to extremes is subject to abuse. I don't care what system it is.

The genius of the American Constitution is the limits it places on all of us in power. And whenever we forget that, we do so at our peril. That is the problem with managed care today. People still ought to be able to get an emergency room when they need to go. They need to be able to see a specialist when they need to see a specialist. They need to be able to appeal these decisions when they need to be able to appeal them. And that's what the Patients' Bill of Rights is all about. So that's an important issue.

We have all these exciting ideas about how we can grow the economy while doing a better job at preserving the environment. Look at these wildfires that your neighbor down in Florida has been suffering. I'm going down to Daytona when I leave you to thank the firefighters down there. Florida had the wettest few months in history in the fall and winter; then they had the driest few months they had ever had; then June was the hottest month they had ever had; hotter than any July or August they had ever had.

The 5 hottest years on record since 1400 have all occurred in the 1990's. And 1998 is going to be the hottest of all if trends continue. Now, we have two choices. We can do what my—as my leaders of the other party do in Washington, which is to deny that this climate change is going on, deny this is a problem, and say we're going to go right on and do everything just like we've been doing it. If it rips the sheet, we're going to do it, and everybody else is just, you know, like Chicken Little. Or, we can face the evidence and say: Do we have to give up economic growth to change our energy use patterns, try to cool the climate, try to be more responsible? And when you look at the evidence, the evidence is plainly, no, you can grow the economy at least as rapidly as we've been growing with a different energy strategy and without having the heavy hand of government regulation do it if you just give business and citizens the incentive to do what is plainly there before them to do.

These are huge decisions. What I want to tell you is, if you like those statistics I just read off, the ideas we've had in the past are an indication that the ideas we have in the future may be right.

The third point I want to make is this: I do not expect this man, if he gets elected to Senate, to vote with me on every issue. I want him to only do so when it is consistent with his conscience and when he believes it's the right thing for the people of Georgia. But I believe he thinks enough, like all of you do and like we do, to know that we will be building a future based on progress not partisanship. And that's the last point I want to make. Look at the record of the alternative.

I am grateful that the Republicans worked with me to sign the Balanced Budget Act last year. But don't you ever forget that 93 percent of that deficit was reduced—it was 93 percent gone on the day I signed the Balanced Budget Act because of a bill that every single one of them voted against in 1993 to get it started. Don't forget that.

They said we were going to wreck the economy. When we said, ''You know, it seems to me that if somebody's got a criminal record or a serious mental health history, they ought not just to be able to walk in and buy a handgun.'' Even in Arkansas, where nearly everybody's got a gun, why, they accused me of the awfulest things you ever heard. They said, ''Oh, the world was going to come to an end.'' And one of the reasons they won the Congress in 1994 is because I disagreed with the NRA over the Brady bill and the assault weapons ban. And it wasn't just in the South; they took out a Congressman in New Hampshire, too. In 1996 I went back to New Hampshire where I started, and I got a bunch of those hunters together. And I said, ''Do you remember what they told you in '94?'' I said, ''Well, as of today, there have been 80,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers who couldn't buy handguns because of the Brady law.'' I said, ''Now, if there's a single one of you who lost your hunting rifle because of what I did, I want you to vote against me for reelection. But if you didn't, then they lied to you, and you need to get even.'' [*Laughter*] And in Republican New Hampshire, they got even, and I'm grateful. [*Laughter*]

I say that because we actually view the world in different ways. You've got to understand. Somehow—I talked to Zell on the way in here—those of you who are in this room, we have to be able to reach out to the voters who don't follow politics as closely as you do, and say, look, there are consequences to these ideas. This is not just about whether the President can give a good speech or Michael Coles made a lot of money or—even though I admire him enormously, it's not even about whether he overcame all that adversity from his terrible accident. It's also about whether we're doing the right thing for America's future.

And you know, when times are good like this, most people tend to relax, and you want to say, ''Gosh, I just want to go out and sit in the Sun. I went through the seventies; I went through the eighties; I lived through all this tumult; I'm making money; the stock market's up; leave me alone; I don't want to have to think about this. [*Laughter*] I'm going to vote for the person that looks nicest on television, makes me feel good—[*laughter*]—promises me to keep taxes down and just don't bother me.'' [*Laughter*]

I had a great uncle one time, who just died at 91, who had about a fourth grade education. He said, ''All I want you to do is keep the brooks clean so I can fish and make sure there's plenty of birds in the air and animals in the woods in hunting season. And otherwise, just leave me alone.'' [*Laughter*] There's a lot of people who feel that way. But let me tell you, any person living in Atlanta knows that this is a very dynamic world. You see what they're going through in Asia now economically. You know about all the ethnic and racial and religious tensions all over the world.

If you've looked at the demographics and you know what happens when the baby boomers—and I'm the oldest of the baby boomers—when we retire, what we're going to do, the pressures we're going to put on the Social Security system and the Medicare system, we have big, long-term challenges in this country that we have to face. It is easier to take the long-term challenges on when you're doing well. We have the confidence in this country to do well. And Georgia ought to have the confidence to vote for somebody like Michael Coles for the Senate. We ought to say, look, we've got the confidence to do that.

Here's a guy who has done all these other things right in his life, and he's a doer. You

know, get out and do things, and it will be for progress, not partisanship. I think I'll take a chance and do it, because this is a time when we have the opportunity to deal with these long-term challenges.

And I want you to go out and tell people that. I'm telling you, I've been in Washington 6 years, and I only have 2½ years to go, then I can go be a real person again just like the rest of you. But what we need is progress over partisanship. What we need is people who are willing to take a chance to deal with the long-term challenges of the country. What we need is people who understand that we cannot lead the world to a better place unless we are becoming a better country at home, that we can always do better.

Our Founders left us a charge that is a permanent mission. It's never finished: to form a more perfect Union. I think that any one of the Founding Fathers, here today, could read about this man, his family, his work, his values, and say, "that's the kind of person we had in mind."

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:10 p.m. in the Marquis Ballroom at the Marriott Marquis Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Georgia Senatorial candidate Michael J. Coles; Mayor Bill Campbell and former mayors Maynard Jackson and Andrew Young of Atlanta; and Gov. Zell Miller of Georgia.

Remarks to Firefighters and Relief Workers in Daytona Beach, Florida

July 9, 1998

Thank you so much. Well, ladies and gentlemen, first of all, I'd like to thank Karen Terry and Randy Holmes for their remarks and the introduction and for giving me and all of you and all of America, thanks to the media folks who are here, one vivid picture of what these last couple of weeks have been all about.

I want to thank my good friend Governor Chiles for the work that he has done. I thank Lieutenant Governor MacKay and all the other State officials who are here. I thank Mayor Asher and Mr. Rosevear, the chair of the county council. The mayor asked me to say in front of national television what Lawton has already said, that Daytona Beach is open for tourists. People all over America are calling the White House on the comment line. They want to know, what can we do to help the people of Florida? Well, one thing you can do is, if you haven't taken your vacation yet and you were trying to decide whether to come, give these people an economic boost down here. They've got the fires under control, and they need some help and support. It would be a good thing to do.

I want to thank the Members of Congress who are here—Corrine Brown, Peter Deutsch, and Allen Boyd—for representing you well and for supporting strongly the emergency appropriations that make it possible for FEMA and the other agencies to do its work. I thank our Agriculture Secretary, Dan Glickman, and our wonderful FEMA Director, James Lee Witt, for the work they have done.

I want to thank all the firefighters who are here. I know we have people from Palm Coast Fire Department, from the National Guard, from the U.S. Forest Service, from the Division of Florida Forestry, the Florida Emergency Management Division, and a lot of State and local emergency workers; Mr. Myers, your emergency management director here; and I'm glad to see Mr. Barbera from the International Association of Fire Fighters here.

There's so many people I want to thank, but I'd like to say a special word of thanks, too, to Bill Franz for making Daytona available as a headquarters for the firefighters and for the effort here. I really appreciate that.

They had to postpone the race this year because there was a more important race going on, and you just heard them talk about it, a race that was fought house by house and family by family. There are 150,000 fans that normally show up here, and even though the race was delayed, I hope they'll show up later to show their loyalty and support not only to Daytona but to all of you for what you did here.

I'm here because I think it's important that every American knows that this summer, notwithstanding the great movies, the real American heroes are not up in space fighting asteroids, they're in Florida fighting fires. And I thank you for it.