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**Remarks at a Reception Honoring  
Senatorial Candidate Charles  
Schumer in New York City**

*October 12, 1998*

Thank you very much. What a gift. Thank you. Now you all have us in the right frame of mind. Let me say to all of you, I thank you for the warm welcome. I thank Iris and Jessica and Alison and all of Chuck's and Iris' family for being here. And I thank you for being part of Chuck's family at this important time.

I'm delighted to have the chance to be here with a number of distinguished New Yorkers, and I just want to mention a few. First I'd like to thank Gerry Ferraro and Mark Green for being here and showing their support. It means a great deal to me to see them put the profoundly important issue of this Senate seat first and their concern for the people of New York first. I'll never forget it, and I hope none of you do as well.

I'd like to welcome City Councilman Tony Weiner, the successor to Chuck Schumer in the United States Congress, for being here. And I don't want any of you to forget how terribly important it is to reelect our wonderful State comptroller, Carl McCall, who is also here. Thank you very much, Carl. Our candidate for attorney general, Eliot Spitzer, who's here; thank you, Eliot, for being here.

I told Eliot earlier tonight that's the best job I ever had. *[Laughter]* When I was attorney general, I didn't have to hire people or fire them, appoint people or disappoint them, raise taxes or cut spending, and if I did the first thing unpopular, I could always blame it on the Constitution. *[Laughter]* But it really matters who has the job, and I hope you'll help him. Thank you for being here, Eliot.

I'd like to welcome Manhattan Borough President Virginia Fields, Assemblyman Robert Ramirez, and City Councilmen Walter McCaffrey and Ken Fisher—all of them. Thank you all for being here. And I know our State party chair, Judith Hope, is here,

and I want to thank her for the wonderful job she's done for New York.

Now, I told Chuck Schumer when he decided to take on this Herculean task that if he ever needed anybody to fill in for him, just to call me, and I'd try to do it. *[Laughter]* So here I am.

I want to say I've been a little bit amused by some of the things that have been said in this Senate race, including, apparently, the contention that Mr. Schumer doesn't have a good voting record in the Congress. And I don't see how any Republican could criticize any Democrat for not voting in Congress this year. I mean, this Congress has worked fewer days than any Congress I can remember. It's the first Congress in 24 years not to pass a budget resolution. And the reason they're still there so close to the election is they blew the 9 months before. So nobody in the Republican party should be blaming any of the Democrats for what they didn't do. And I hope you'll remember that when you see that ad.

Let me just say, they're showing some real progress now, and we're working with them in good faith. But if it weren't for these negotiations, now 11 days after the beginning of the new budget year, if it weren't for the fact that we're still there, finally looking at education and some of the other serious issues before us, this Congress would be known as the one that killed campaign finance reform, that killed the tobacco legislation designed to protect our children from the dangers of tobacco, that killed the Patients' Bill of Rights, that killed the minimum wage, that continued the assault on the environment, that attempted to divert the surplus before we could save Social Security first, and had taken no action to date on either education or the imperative nature of investing in the International Monetary Fund so that our country can continue to lead the world in this time of financial turmoil.

Now, if I were a part of their caucus, I don't believe I would be criticizing someone like Chuck Schumer for not showing up for duty. Let me tell you some of the things he did vote for. In 1993, when a single vote would have turned the tide the other way, Chuck Schumer voted for my economic plan that reduced the deficit 92 percent, before

the Balanced Budget Act—the bipartisan Balanced Budget Act of 1997 passed—92 percent of the work done. If he had not voted that way, the whole thing would have failed because we didn't have a vote to spare. That's just one of the many issues on which he differed from his opponent, and I think Chuck Schumer was right. And I think you do, too.

We now have the first balanced budget and surplus in 29 years as a direct result of that courageous vote. Then, in 1994 Chuck Schumer authored the Brady bill, now the Brady law. Now a quarter of a million felons and fugitives have been denied the ability to buy handguns—a quarter of a million—saving goodness only knows how many lives. He voted yes; his opponent voted no. So when there really was a vote that mattered, I believe Chuck Schumer was right, and I think the people of New York do, too.

When the vote in 1994 on the crime bill came up, and in the United States Senate there was this incredible effort—that I never shall forget as long as I live—by the leadership of the other party, then in the minority in the Senate, to prevent us from getting a vote to put 100,000 police officers on the street, to put the Violence Against Women Act into motion, to ban 19 kinds of assault weapons designed only to kill people, and in the Senate they were doing everything they could to keep it from even coming to a vote—the assault weapons ban, the 100,000 police, the programs to keep our children out of trouble in the first place, the Violence Against Women Act—Chuck Schumer was where he always is, out there leading the fight for public safety and civility and decency on our streets and in our neighborhoods and in our schools. And his opponent was on the other side.

So, if I had that kind of record, I don't believe I'd be criticizing Chuck Schumer for his voting record. Every time it counts, just like today, Chuck Schumer is there to vote for you, for New York, for your children, and for the future. And I hope you'll give him a bigger vote in the United States Senate.

You know, I have been increasingly concerned in the last few weeks about what the American people were going to say in this election about our future, about what they would say by not only how they voted but

whether they vote—because, normally, when times are good—and to be sure, compared to 6 years ago, times are good, and I'm grateful for that and very grateful that the people of New York twice voted to give Al Gore and me a chance to serve our country and to implement our ideas and to work for you. But if you think about this, the lowest crime rate in 25 years—no person in America, I might add, more responsible, no Congressman in the country more responsible than Chuck Schumer—the lowest crime rate in 25 years, the lowest unemployment rate in 28 years, the smallest percentage of people on welfare in 29 years, the first balanced budget and surplus in 29 years, the highest homeownership in history, the lowest African-American poverty rate recorded, the biggest drop in Hispanic poverty in 30 years, the biggest rise in wages among average citizens in over 20 years—these are good things. But what are we going to do with them? What are we going to do with them?

I believe, notwithstanding the arguments that are being made in the television wars here that don't really have any underlying merit about the voting record of a Congressman, or even the contrast in their voting record that I just gave you, which is meaningful, the most important thing is who's going to do the most to make the most of this moment for our tomorrows. That overshadows everything else, because the thing that concerns me is so often when times are good, people say, "Well, things are going fine and, therefore, we don't want to rock the boat, and maybe we don't even need to vote." But here in New York, the financial capital of our country and indeed the world, I think you know enough from seeing what all is going around in the world in terms of financial turmoil to know that in a dynamic world, the fact that things are good does not mean you can sit still. And I would argue that New York needs a visionary, an activist, a doer, someone who understands what needs to be done and has the courage to do it. And I would argue that our people—every one of them, without regard to party across this country—need to consider this a profoundly important election in which they want their voices to be heard, so that we send a clear message that we don't think this is just a time when

we can fiddle around and not pay attention to the big issues.

And what are they? Number one, if we want to keep America's economic growth going, America must have the tools to lead the world away from the financial instability that has gripped so many other countries. That means funding the International Monetary Fund instead of running away from our obligations there.

Number two, if we want to be a symbol of stability in the world, it means not squandering this surplus until we have fixed Social Security for the 21st century. That is profoundly important.

Number three, it means not stopping until we know we have done everything we can to give all our kids, without regard to their income, their race, their background, access to a world-class education. The education program I sent to Congress in January that only now they are beginning to debate is a very simple, straightforward, but profoundly important one: 100,000 teachers to lower class size to an average of 18 in the early grades; funds to build or rehabilitate 5,000 schools; hooking up all the classrooms in the country to the Internet by the year 2000; after-school and summer school programs for children so that we can end social promotion, but we don't dub the kids a failure if the system fails them; mentors for kids in their middle school years so that they can know they can go on to college if they stay in school and study and do well.

It is a good program. It is a matter of urgent national concern. And it should be beyond partisan politics, for every American—every American—has a vested interest in the success of our children.

Now, these are the big issues before us. To be sure, there are others. We should stay on the path of improving the environment as we grow the economy and not abandon that. We should, next year, pass this HMO Patients' Bill of Rights to guarantee people the right to see a specialist, the right to keep their medical records private, the right to keep a doctor during the course of treatment even if the employer changes plans, the right to go to the nearest emergency room, not one halfway across town just because the nearest one is not covered by your plan.

That's what this bill of rights does. These things are important to America's future.

And I'd like to say just one other thing. I know a lot of you were profoundly moved and saddened, as I was, with the news this morning that that young man from Wyoming, who was so badly beaten, passed away. It is inappropriate to speculate about the specifics of the case, but it does seem clear that he was beaten horribly because he was gay.

Now, New York is a place where we have gotten a lot of advantages as a country out of our remarkable diversity—our racial, our ethnic, our cultural diversity, our diverse skills, our language skills, our different connections with the rest of the world—and the idea that if you come here, no matter where you come from, if you're good at whatever it is you want to do, you'll have a chance to live out your dreams. All over the world, I see people held back because they can't find a way to look beyond the differences in people to what they share in common.

Today my Special Envoy for Kosovo, Dick Holbrooke, was working with our NATO allies in a feverish attempt to try to bring peace there without further violence. Today I talked to the Prime Minister of Israel and to Chairman Arafat about their coming to the United States in a few days in a determined effort to resolve this next big step on the road to peace in the Middle East. All over the world, I see people held back and heart-broken and lives crushed because there are those who are so animated by fear and their compulsive need to look down on others that whole nations are kept from becoming what they ought to be. And I say to you, in memory of that young man and his family, America cannot do good in the world unless America is good at home.

And another reason I would like to see a person like Chuck Schumer elevated to the Senate is that I believe that he and our party in this time have taken clear and unambiguous stands for the proposition that everybody who is a law-abiding citizen ought to have a home in America, ought to be treated with dignity and honor, that we do not countenance hate and discrimination and bigotry.

If you think about the way the world is changing, you could seriously argue that, as you look ahead, in terms of building a global

society, we have three big challenges. One is to develop a financial system that doesn't go through a boom/bust cycle in the world in the way that we experienced, and others experienced here, many years ago. That's the threat—or the fear some people have out there. Two is to deal with global environmental challenges and still keep growing the economy. But, three is to go to the heart in country after country after country of this dark compulsion people have to hate and fight and kill each other because of their religious, their racial, their cultural, or their other differences.

And I have done my best as President to try to get the American people to move beyond that. Today I asked the Congress once again to pass my anti-hate crimes legislation. And as my staff never tires of telling me, I'm doing a better job of getting America to get over it than I am of getting the people in Washington to get over it.

But I ask you to think about that. Say a prayer when you go home tonight for that young man's family in Wyoming, and think about what kind of Senator New York ought to have. New York has been an integral part of America from the beginning. It has always been central to our conception of who we are as a country and where we're going.

Senator D'Amato has gotten some criticism that I never thought was fair, actually, for being called "Senator Pothole" and all that—you know that people make these funny little jokes. It's not funny if you've got a pothole in front of your house. *[Laughter]* It's not funny; it's important. It's hard to think about the higher things if you get a flat every morning. *[Laughter]*

So what I want to say to you, though, is—now, I want you to think about this—there is not a person here who would dispute what I am about to say. If Chuck Schumer is a Senator, given his level of energy, his intensity, his aggressiveness, he will make Senator D'Amato look laid back when it comes to filling potholes. *[Laughter]* Or solving whatever other problems there are. But I don't think he should be criticized for that. That's an important part of this job.

But there are two other things that are very important. One is voting right, voting for the future, voting for the profound, deepest in-

terests of the people of New York—and not just here 3 or 4 weeks before the election but every year, for 6 years, the entire term. And the other is being able to visualize the future we are trying to build, being able to represent and bring together this incredible diversity of New York and America, and giving voice to the tomorrow that is just over the horizon.

So I say to you—I started this speech by answering an ad against Chuck Schumer, and I think I did a pretty good job. *[Laughter]* I pointed out what I think is very important in his vote for the economic plan of '93 and the crime bill of '94 and his essential leadership. But the most important thing to me of all is New York deserves a Senator who is both tied to the specific, concrete needs of individuals and their communities, and a Senator who will vote in the interest of the State and the Nation over the long run and finally give voice to what makes America a great nation.

This is a time when we need people who are both practical and visionary, a time when we have business to attend to that is right before our eyes and dreams to dream and realize. And I am here proudly tonight because I believe Chuck Schumer can be that kind of Senator.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:40 p.m. in the Grand Ballroom at the New York Hilton and Towers. In his remarks, he referred to Mr. Schumer's wife, Iris, and daughters Jessica and Alison; Geraldine Ferraro and New York City Public Advocate Mark Green, who both challenged Mr. Schumer in the Democratic primary; New York State Assemblyman Roberto Ramirez; Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke, the President's nominee to be Ambassador to the U.N.; Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel; and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority.

### **Remarks in New York City on the Situation in Kosovo**

*October 12, 1998*

Good evening. In recent weeks, faced with a deepening and dangerous crisis in Kosovo, the United States has worked to stop the violence and repression and put the people of Kosovo on the path to peace.