AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

Hillary and I extend our thoughts and prayers to the family of Dr. Slepian.

Remarks at a Reception Honoring Senator Barbara Boxer in Los Angeles

October 24, 1998

Thank you very much. Well, thank you for the wonderful welcome. Thanks for the raincheck. [*Laughter*] I want to thank Jim and Holly for having us here in this beautiful, beautiful setting tonight. I'd like to also acknowledge the presence in the audience of Congresswoman Jane Harman and Congressman Brad Sherman. I thank them for being here. Hello, Brad. There you are.

I just came from an event for Janice Hahn, who is running to succeed Jane Harman in the Congress. And I told the audience something I feel almost constrained to also say to you. This last week I had was a rather interesting one. [*Laughter*] I was home at 3 and 4 o'clock in the morning 4 or 5 times, and then on the last marathon day I was up for 39 hours. And I didn't even do that in college. [*Laughter*]

Now, when I go out, as we are tonight, to give a speech, it's always covered by the press. We feed these microphones into the press that is traveling with me, and there's a member of the press here tonight. And I always get these cards from my staff, these nice little cards that says Jim and Holly Brooks and all the reasons I'm for Barbara Boxer, as if I didn't know, and all that. [*Laughter*] And then what I did—it's too small a card, she said. [*Laughter*] And then what I do is I take these little cards and I write on them, these things, you see? And no one can read my writing. And at my age, even I can't read it when it's this small. [*Laughter*]

So the last thing they said to me when I got off the plane was, ''You went 39 hours without sleep; you've slept one night, last night, and got a little nap on the plane. Don't forget that. Read this card.'' [*Laughter*] ''We're afraid of what you will say if you—read this card.'' [*Laughter*]

So I was on the way over here tonight, and I called Hillary, who wishes she could be here for this family event, to be with Barbara and Stu and Nicole and Doug and Tony and our nephew, Zach. And she said, ''Read this card.'' [*Laughter*] So I think I'll read this card. [*Laughter*]

Let me say first of all, I'm very honored to be here because Barbara Boxer is not just my friend; she is really my colleague, and I believe in her. I believe in the depth of her passion and the purity of her heart and the determination of her service. You clapped when she said I helped to bring California back from the worst recession you've had in the long time. Don't forget that, apart from whatever we did specifically for this State, it all began with one vote in August of 1993 for the economic plan that reduced the deficit by 93 percent before the bipartisan balanced budget bill passed.

That's what brought the interest rates down, got the investment going, got the economy going again. And when that vote was cast, there was not a single member of the other party who voted for it. It passed by one vote in the Senate and one vote in the House, only. If she had changed her vote, we'd be here talking about something else tonight. I might not even be here as your President tonight.

And she could have said, ''Hey, I had a tough race in '92. I didn't win by so much, and it's the first time I'd ever been on a statewide ticket.'' And she could have taken a dive. But she stood up, and on that night she was not a little adult, she was 10 feet tall in my mind. And so that vote, every Member who cast it can claim to have had an equal hand in the revitalization of our economy.

Barbara talked about the budget we passed and how we got the 100,000 teachers and the money for after-school programs. That's a quarter of a million children—a quarter of a million—who can stay after school, who wouldn't be able to do it otherwise.

She talked about a lot of other issues. I will tell you that her work for the environment has really been impressive, and one of the things we got in this budget, against all the odds, was a clean water initiative to help us deal with the fact that in spite of all of our environmental progress, 40 percent of

our lakes and rivers are still not fit for swimming and fishing. And there was so much else. So I am for her because she has a good record. I'm also for her because we do have a lot to do.

If you just look at where we are now, in this budget, again, against all the odds, because my fellow Democrats stood with me, we beat off an unwise election-year tax cut scheme to save the surplus for Social Security until we reform that. We finally, after 8 months of imploring, got America's contribution to the International Monetary Fund so that I can try to organize the world to deal with this global financial turmoil we're all dealing with. So we got a lot done. But we have a lot to do.

If you look ahead—let me just mention some of the things that I think are terribly important. Number one, the next Congress will have to face the reform of Social Security for the baby boom generation. When all the baby boomers get in the Social Security system, we'll only have two people working for every one person drawing. Now, because we have the first surplus in 29 years, and because it's projected that over time—making allowances for recessions taking the money up and down—over time, we'll be able to stay on a balanced budget surplus pattern. We have the opportunity now to reform Social Security in a way that will secure its integrity for the baby boomers without putting undue financial burdens on our children and their ability to raise our grandchildren.

But if we don't do that—that is, if either we throw the money away on something else, or we just don't make the tough decisions—then when the time comes, we will be faced with one of two unpleasant alternatives. And keep in mind, not everybody in my age group is going to have as good a pension as I will. [*Laughter*] Today, you should know that half of the seniors in this country are living out of poverty because of Social Security. And if Social Security were taken away, they would be in poverty.

So if we don't do this, we'll have the following decisions that will affect every single person in this audience who is my age or younger, one way or the other. We will either have to say, ''Well, I'm sorry, we spent the money on ourselves when we wanted it,'' or, ''We just couldn't bear to make the tough decisions.'' And so when push comes to shove, we can say to the seniors, ''I'm sorry, I hope you've saved enough for your own retirement.'' We've done a lot, by the way, to make that easier, and I thank Barbara for that. But what will happen is we'll see a lot of seniors in abject misery again. Or that will kill our consciences, and we'll say, ''We can't do that; we have to maintain the system we have.'' And that will cause a whopping tax increase, which will lower the standard of living of our children and their ability to raise our grandchildren. Either side is wrong and unnecessary. But you need to think about that when you go to the polls. Who do you trust to make the complex but, ultimately, value-based decision to reform Social Security in a way that will care for the baby boom generation in a way that does not undermine our obligations to our children and grandchildren? It is a huge issue, very important.

The second thing this election is about, Barbara already talked about—we've got the first downpayment on 100,000 teachers. And we had to fight like crazy to get it. My ability to keep going until we do that, which will lower class size in the early grades to an average of 18 all across America, depends upon who's in the Congress.

The one thing we tried to do that we couldn't get done, that is so terribly important, is to pass a program that for the first time would have the National Government, through a paid-for tax incentive, help to build or repair 5,000 schools in this country. Where are the teachers going to teach? We've got the biggest group of schoolchildren in history. You have it here in this county. It's a big problem.

The next big issue we have to face is how we should reform the laws as they relate to HMO's and other managed care plans. Now, let me say, I feel a special responsibility here, because I've never been anti-HMO, per se. When I became President, health care costs were rising at 3 times the rate of inflation. It was totally unsustainable. It was going to bankrupt businesses, consume people's personal income, take away money we needed to be investing in education, in the environment, in medical research. It was a terrible

problem. It was imperative that we manage our health care system better.

But no management tool should be allowed to consume the objective of the enterprise. I don't care what you're doing. I don't care whether you're running a school or a law office or a grocery store or a filling station or anything else—all management tools are designed to enhance the quality of the enterprise, not overcome it.

Now, we tried to pass a Patients' Bill of Rights, and we were defeated strictly on partisan lines. We had a handful of members of the other party who helped us, and I'm grateful for that, but not enough to overcome their opposition. And all our law says is—our Patients' Bill of Rights—is the medical decisions ought to be made by doctors, not accountants; if you get hurt in an accident, you ought to go to the nearest emergency room, not one clear across town because it's covered by your plan; if your doctor says you need a specialist, you should be able to see one; if your employer changes health care providers while you're in the middle of treatment, like you're pregnant, you're taking chemotherapy, whatever it is, you ought to be able to finish the treatment with the doctor you started with; and your medical records ought to be private. I think it's a good law, and I think we need it. And I think it's an important reason to reelect Barbara Boxer.

I'll tell you something else we're going to have to do—we may need help from Congress to do it. The global economy has benefitted us greatly. It has played a major role in the resurgence of California. I think all of you know that—Asia, Latin America—you know what turmoil it's in now. Now, some of these things are growing pains; they were inevitable. Other developments are more harsh than they can safely be allowed to continue to be. And I need a Congress that will not wait 8 months just to make our elemental, fundamental investment—America's investment—in stabilizing the global economy, because we're going to have more tough decisions. And if we want the benefits of the global economy—and no country in the world has benefitted as much as we have—we have to be willing to assume the responsibilities of leadership. That's a big issue in the next election.

Then there are some other things I'd just like to mention. We weren't able to overcome their majority last time in passing legislation to protect our children from the dangers of tobacco, the number one public health problem for kids in America. If we had a few more people like Barbara Boxer in the Congress, we could do that. We were not able to pass campaign finance reform. We were not able to raise the minimum wage. You know, you can't support a family on $5.15 an hour, and we have rarely had an economy with such low unemployment and such low inflation where there was so little risk to raising the minimum wage. And, you know, the people that we're arguing for will never be able to afford to come to an event like this, but they're Americans, too, and they deserve, if they're willing to work hard, their share of the future. And I feel strongly about that.

Now, let me just say one last thing. I thank you for coming here. I thank you for your contributions. I thank you for enabling Barbara to go up on television. But let me say, as you come here to the last 10 days or so of this election, most people know that we've got the right agenda for America, that we're pushing, that we have the ideas, that we're driving. On the other side, they have a lot more money than we do. Even after tonight, they will have more money than we do. [*Laughter*]

I saw some reports a couple of days ago that said that in these sort of independent expenditure committees, Democrats would be outspent better than three to one in the last 2 weeks of the election. There is something else they've got going for them, too, which is that this is not a Presidential election year. In Presidential elections, most people make an extra effort to vote. In the off-year elections they don't. And we are disproportionately, the Democrats, disadvantaged.

Why? Because we have a disproportionate number of the single working mothers, for example. Every day is big enough hassle. You've got to figure out what are you going to do with your kids, the child care, the school, go to work, get home. And now—

ah, it's Tuesday, I've got to figure out how to vote, too?

We have a disproportionate share of people living in inner-city neighborhoods where it's all they can do to get on the bus and go to work, and now they've got to figure out, is the polling place on the bus line, or forking over the money for a taxi cab. These are not idle questions here. But we also have a lot of people who just don't think it's that big a deal. Now, I'm telling you, this is a big deal—a big deal.

And if you believe in this agenda, if you believe that we ought to do more on education, if you believe we ought to do more to stabilize the global economy, if you believe we ought to pass the Patients' Bill of Rights, if you want us to reform Social Security and do it in the right way, if you want these other things done, then between now and election day you've got to get everybody you know to show up.

And if you think about the people you work with, the people you socialize with, the people you worship with, the people you come in contact with—just in this crowd—there will be tens of thousands of people touched by you between now and November 3d who will never come to a political event like this. Tens of thousands of people. And I want you to talk to them about this.

You know, you were so nice to give me such a nice reception over this Middle East peace breakthrough. And I thank you for that. But let me tell you something, I want you to know something about it. Number one, it's my job. [*Laughter*] Number two, I loved it, even the meanest, toughest moment. [*Laughter*] And number three, it was a profound honor. It was an honor.

But why did you do that? Why did you do that? Because it makes—when people who have been fighting and killing each other, when people who have their own political problems when two leaders who both will be in more danger, both political and physical, because they did this, do something like this, it just fills us up, it makes us feel good. It gives us hope. It gives us energy. It appeals to our better selves. When people saw the heroic figure of King Hussein going back and forth, intervening—every time I called him, he showed up, and he went down there. And you know that he's dealt with these terrible health challenges, and still he labors on. It touches our common humanity.

Why? Because down deep inside we know that the most important victories in life are not the victories we win over other people; they're the victories we win for our common humanity. You know it, and I know it. And the older you get and the more times you win and the more times you lose, you know that in the end what counts are the victories you win for what you share in common with other people.

And if you think about the elation we felt over the Middle East peace process, the heartbreak we felt at the brutal beating and killing of young Matthew Shepard—why do we hate that? Because it violated our common humanity. Some people marked him out and said he didn't belong.

Now, when I came to California, running for President in 1992, I said I wanted to do three things to prepare our country for the new century: I wanted to restore opportunity for every American who would work for it; I wanted to bring this country together in a community across all the lines that divide us; and I wanted our country in a new era to still be the world's leader for peace and freedom and prosperity for everyone, not just ourselves.

We're further along than we were 6 years ago, but we have a great deal to do. And I'm telling you, there is a clear choice in this election. And if you really liked how you felt when you saw those two tough, grizzled enemies—[*laughter*]—that I kept up for 39 hours until they could hardly stand up—[*laughter*]—standing up there—and keep in mind, it was a lot harder for them than it was for me. All I had to do was to stay awake. [*Laughter*] All I had to do was stay awake. They have to go home and face the music. If you like how you felt when you saw them overcoming all their limitations, all their hatreds, all their scars, all the memories of their dead friends—in the Prime Minister of Israel's case, his dead brother—if you liked that, and you really believe that public life and citizenship is about the victories we win for our children, for our future, and our common humanity, then you get everybody you can to the polls November 3d.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:53 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to reception hosts Jim and Holly Brooks; Senator Boxer's husband, Stuart, their son, Doug, their daughter, Nicole and her husband, Tony Rodham, and their grandson, Zachary Rodham; Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; and King Hussein I of Jordan.

Remarks at a Dinner Honoring Senator Barbara Boxer in Los Angeles

October 24, 1998

You know, I only wish we knew how Barbra really feels about all of this. [*Laughter*] It's so hard when people hold back like that. [*Laughter*] Thank you. And thank you, Bob and Carole, for opening your beautiful home and leaving it open day after day after day—[*laughter*]—while I carried on at the Wye River. Thank you, Carole, for that wonderful set of songs. We were sitting there singing those songs with you, and I said, ''You know, every time Carole King opens her mouth, you can make 30 years of my life vanish.'' [*Laughter*]

I am glad to be here with Senator Boxer and Stu and Doug and Nicole and Tony and my nephew, Zach. Hillary is very jealous of me being here tonight. I talked to her just before I came out. This is the third talk I've made, and I've started with the same story, but it's true, so I'm going to say it again. A true story you can tell more than once. [*Laughter*] So I want to tell another true story.

Every time I give a talk, my staff prepares a little card like this. At the top it says, ''Barbra Streisand, Carole King, Bob Daly, Carole Bayer Sager.'' And it has little notes: ''I'm glad to be here to support Senator Barbara Boxer for the Senate.'' [*Laughter*] And it says why I'm for her here. [*Laughter*] Barbara says the list is way too short. [*Laughter*] And then before I do it, I make out little notes like this in my handwriting. And at my age, in dilapidated condition, I can't read it anyway, so I have no idea what I said. [*Laughter*]

So before I got off the plane—I swear, before I got off the plane, my staff said, ''When you were at this Middle East peace thing, every night you got home at 2 or 3 in the morning, and then the last night you didn't come home at all.'' I was up for 39 hours before I went to bed last night. I didn't even do that in college. [*Laughter*]

So they said, ''Read this card—[*laughter*]—because the press is listening in, and Lord only knows what you'll say.'' [*Laughter*] So I talked to Hillary; she said, ''Read the card; read the card.'' [*Laughter*] But I'm not going to read the card. [*Laughter*]

Anyway, I want to say just a couple of things about Barbara Boxer and then a couple of things about where we are right now and what's at stake. First of all, apart from our relationship by marriage and our deep friendship, I care a lot about her. And you should know that I see people in Washington in ways that their constituents often don't. I see Senators when they're mad—at me, sometimes. I see Senators when they call and want me to do things, and sometimes I can't do it. I see the tough votes and easy shots and just the whole thing.

This woman has a good mind, a good heart, a fierce spirit, and she would make you proud every day if you could see her as I do. And I'll also tell you that of all the members of the California delegation—this is no disrespect to the others—she has called me more than any other member of the California delegation on issues relating specifically to California. Sometimes it gets to the point where I hear she's calling me again I just say, ''Whatever she wants, just tell her, yes; I'm tired of dealing with her. Just tell her, yes; I'm tired of dealing with her.'' [*Laughter*]

So I think she has earned the right to be reelected. But she made a couple of points I'd like to reinforce. In August of '93, when I'd been through a rocky 8 months, a lot of controversy, and I knew our ability to really get this economy going again rested on the capacity of the Congress to vote for an economic plan I gave them to slash the deficit but keep investing in education and children and the environment and research; and that it would require a lot of controversial choices, but that if we didn't do it and it wasn't