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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

enough of a cut in the deficit, we'd never get the interest rates down; we'd never get the economy going again.

Now, at the time we did that, the stock market was at about 3200; interest rates were much higher; the unemployment rate was a whole lot higher; and the budget passed by a single vote in the Senate and in the House—one vote. So it is literally true that if in the last 6 years California had been represented by her opponent, we wouldn't have had the economic recovery to the extent we have, and I might not be here giving this talk tonight. [*Laughter*] So I think that's important to remember.

She voted to ban assault weapons. She voted for the Brady bill. She voted—which has kept a quarter of a million people with criminal histories and mental health problems from buying handguns. Lord knows how many lives we saved. Roughly 15 million Americans have taken advantage of the family and medical leave law, which says you can take some time off when a baby is born or a parent is sick without losing your job. I mean, she's done things that have made a difference to the life of the country. This last budget—you heard them talking about it—all those funds for after-school programs wouldn't be in that budget if it weren't for Barbara Boxer.

Let me just give you an example of what this means, just one. During all the years I served as Governor, I think most of you know Hillary is from Chicago, and we used to spend a lot of time in Illinois. And the Chicago school system had a reputation for being the worst big-city school system in the country. Every year it got shut down. They had a teacher strike in Chicago every year whether they wanted one or not—even whether the teachers wanted one. They—just sort of automatic—and they changed the whole way of governing the school system.

The teachers basically are a part of the governance of the school system now. There hasn't been a strike in years. And the schools all have parent councils and lots of other changes have been made. Chicago—big-city school system ended social promotion. If you don't pass a test, you can't go on to the next grade. But they didn't declare children failures because the system failed them. Instead, they guaranteed summer school to all the kids that don't do well.

The summer school is now the sixth biggest school system in the United States—the summer school. And there are now in Chicago alone 40,000 children that eat 3 meals a day in the school system. Well, guess what's happened? Learning has gone way up. The dropout has gone way down. The juvenile crime rate has plummeted. That's what this after-school programs means. And she did it, and she deserves the credit for it.

Now, let's talk a little bit about what the stakes are. First of all, in spite of the fact that the country is doing well economically, and that a lot of our social problems are abating, and we have, fortunately, been able to advance the cause of peace around the world and to become, I think, much more capable of dealing with the world as it's going to be, from Africa to China, to Bosnia and Kosovo, to Northern Ireland and the Middle East, we've got a lot of challenges at home and abroad. And this next Congress will have a lot to do with what 21st century America looks like for a long time.

I want to mention two or three things. Barbara mentioned the Patients' Bill of Rights. This is a huge deal. A hundred sixty million Americans are in managed care, and I support it. I always say this. You know, I was never against managed care in the beginning. A lot of people don't remember this, but in 1993, when I became President, the inflation rate in health care costs was 3 times the inflation rate in the economy as a whole. You have to manage any system that's taking that much money up. It's irresponsible to think otherwise. It will consume the economy.

On the other hand, no management technique or device can ever be allowed to consume the fundamental purpose of the endeavor, whatever it is. If you make movies or CD's, you want to do them as efficiently as possible; you don't want to do them in a way that you have a low quality CD or a lousy movie. If you run a grocery store, you want to run it as efficiently as possible; but you don't want to run it with bad milk or rotten fruit. You can save money a lot of ways.

Any endeavor that you're doing, you can save money. But if you undermine the purpose of the endeavor, you have thwarted the very reason you're trying to be more efficient. That's what's going on here. You've got people who are out there dying because they're doctors say they need to have certain procedures or certain specialists, and it has to be approved by a managed care company. And the first person that gets it is a modestly paid accountant, a claims reviewer. And put yourself in the position of the claims reviewer. We're talking about 160 million Americans now.

Suppose instead of being an Academy Award winning actor, you're a claims reviewer for an HMO. [*Laughter*] Now, wait a minute—what do you know? You know you're making a modest salary; you'd like a bonus at Christmastime; you'd like to have your job next year; you'd like to get a promotion someday. And all day long you're reviewing claims, and they're always the same thing, you know. The doctor says, ''Well, so-and-so ought to see a specialist,'' or ''so-and-so ought to have this procedure that may be experimental,'' and all this. What do you know about your job? You know one thing: You will never get in trouble for saying no.

I want you to understand this from a human point of view. You won't get in trouble if you say no. Why? Because if you make a mistake, they can always appeal the decision. And at the next level or maybe one more level removed, there will be a doctor there. And the doctor can ultimately, you say, make the right decision.

Some of the biggest damage being done to the quality of health care in America today is being done on the way up the appeals ladder, when ultimately a doctor will say, ''Okay, yeah, this person should have the bone marrow transplant'' or whatever, you name it, or should see the plastic surgeon instead of just a general surgeon. But by then it's too late to do the thing that was recommended in the first place. Now, this is how this really works out there.

Now, if we had to pay a modest amount more, all of us, just a modest—believe me, it's a modest amount; we're talking small bucks here—more, to have the benefits of a managed system, but a system where the purpose was protected so that if your doctor says you ought to be able to see a specialist or you ought to have a certain procedure or if you get in an accident, you ought to be able to go to the nearest emergency room, not one all the way across town because it's the one that's covered; or if you're pregnant or getting chemotherapy and your employer changes health care providers, you ought to be able to keep your doctor until you finish a treatment, and you ought to be able to keep your medical records private throughout—I think the American people would like that kind of system. And we didn't do that this time because I didn't have enough people in the Congress who agreed with me and Barbara Boxer. This is a big deal, and it will only get bigger. [*Inaudible*]

On the education, we fought and we fought and we finally got the funds for the 100,000 teachers. And if we keep funding this, we'll get 100,000 teachers in the next few years, and that will enable us, because we're targeting them at the youngest children, to take average class size down to 18. Now, here's why this is a big deal. This is the first year—the last 2 years—the first time we've had more kids in school than the baby boom generation. But unlike the baby boomers, there is no arc where it ends after 18 years. It looks like it's going to keep on going, because so many of our young children are immigrants, and we continue to bring immigrants in, and they're younger people and have children.

Now, I was in a little town in Florida the other day—2 months ago—a little town that had a grade school with 12 trailers out back for classrooms. I've been in big cities all across this country with beautiful old school buildings where whole floors were shut down because they were in such disrepair. So what we didn't pass this time was a tax cut paid for in our budget that would have helped school districts to build or repair 5,000 schools. If you're going to hire the teachers, they have to have some place to teach. If you want a smaller classroom, there has to be more classrooms. I mean, this is not rocket science here. But it's a huge issue.

If you're going to say, ''Okay, end social promotion, give the kids after-school, give the kids summer school, have smaller classes,

bring excellence in education back''—then you send a huge signal to children—a huge signal—by the buildings that they attend school in. We have people—there are teachers in this country today conducting classes in broom closets. That's how bad it is. So we've got to win that. That's a big issue.

The next Congress—this year we saved off this ill-advised election-year tax cut with the first surplus we've had in 29 years so we could reform Social Security. Now, when all us baby boomers get in the retirement system, there will only be two people drawing for every one person—two people working for every one person drawing Social Security. To most of us, it won't make any difference. I've got a better pension than most Americans will have. Most Americans don't have a big pension. So we're trying to make it easier for them to save. But today, half the seniors in this country are living above the poverty line only because of Social Security.

Now, we've got to change the system. The system we have now will not support itself when there are only two people working for every one person drawing. It simply won't. Now, if we start now, we take this surplus and some portion of the surpluses we expect in the years ahead and make modest reforms, we can extend the life of Social Security so that the baby boomers can retire in dignity without bankrupting their kids. If we squander the money now or just avoid the tough decisions now, we'll have some really tough decisions to make in a few years. And there will only be two choices. We can either lower the standard of living of retirees, which will kill our consciences, or we can maintain the standard of living with a broken system by raising taxes on our kids in a way that undermines their ability to raise our grandkids. This is a huge issue.

And one reason you ought to vote for her is because she will vote, A, to change it, but she'll do it in a way that is humane and decent. And she won't throw all this money away that you've worked so hard to get us out of debt in—with.

One other issue—I'll just mention one other. There are lots of them, but one other—I've had two people at these events tonight come up and mention it to me. We have a lot at stake in America in the success of the global economy. No country has benefited more, and no State has done better in the last 6 years than California, because of our ability to trade with Asia, our ability to trade with Latin America. Now, you all know there are a lot of troubles out there. Some of it's just pure growing pains, and nobody has good times all the time. Some of it's just the cycle of things. But a lot of it is the direct result of the fact that in addition to global trade and global investment, the global flow of money has grown so rapidly and in such sweeping volumes—now over one trillion dollars a day crosses national borders—over a trillion dollars a day—a lot of it in highly leveraged instruments where people only put up a small percentage of what it is they're investing. A vast amount of funds cross national borders every day just betting for and against national currencies.

This is all, frankly, necessary. If you want to have high volumes of investment, if you want to have high volumes of trade, if you want to have high volumes of travel, if you want all that, you've got to have some way of moving money around.

But the system that has—we have modified over the last 50 years is not adequate to keep the global economy growing and going without running the risk of the kind of boom/bust cycles that used to afflict countries before the Great Depression. After the Great Depression, the United States, Europe, Japan, every country figured out how to avoid it ever happening again. It's never happened. We have not had another Great Depression, have we? We had some stiff recessions. We had some bad times. But never did the wheel run off.

What we have to do is to devise a system for the global financial movement that will get the benefit of this money moving around without the risk of total collapse that you see affecting some of the countries in Asia and elsewhere. Now, it's not an easy thing. I think it's inconceivable we'll be able to do all that without having somebody help in Congress.

So these are just some things I want you to think about. These are big issues. There are some other things that are easier to understand. I tried to get the Congress this year to raise the minimum wage. Why? Because the minimum wage is 5 bucks and 15 cents

an hour, and you can't raise a family on it. And when you've got low unemployment and low inflation and the rest of us are doing pretty well, that's the time when you ought to raise it.

I tried to pass legislation to protect children from the dangers of tobacco. Why? Because it's the biggest public health problem in the country for kids. And it's a huge issue. I tried to pass campaign finance reform so you wouldn't have to go to so many of these dinners every year. [*Laughter*] And, you know, there are a lot of things to be done.

Now, the last thing I want to say is this—what Barbra said. I want you to focus on this, just because—and I want to thank Barbra Streisand because she said she's going on the Internet to try to get people to vote. It is generally accepted now that our agenda this year is the winning agenda; that the American people support what we're trying to do; they believe in this; that they believe that we ought to be a force for peace and freedom around the world. They support us stopping another Bosnia from happening in Kosovo. They support us being involved in the peace process in Ireland and in the Middle East. They support these domestic agenda items that—saving Social Security and more classrooms and the Patients' Bill of Rights.

The difficulty is that almost without exception when you have an election for Congress and you don't have an election for President, you get a big drop in the turnout. And a lot of our folks don't go—lower income working women that have a big enough hassle every day to figure out how to get the kids to child care, to school, and get to work; or inner-city residents who have to ride a bus to work every day, and the polling place is not on the bus route coming home. And just a lot of things happen. And a lot of people just don't think it's that big a deal. I'm telling you, this is a big deal. It is a big deal.

And so what I would like to ask you to do is to think about what you could do between now and a week from Tuesday. Is there an interview you could do? Is there—who do you come in contact with?—everybody you come in contact with at work or socializing or in any other way, that you could tell, this is a big deal, and they need to show up.

This election, in its potential significance, is like a Presidential election because these issues will shape the way we live for a long time to come. And we don't live in a dictatorship; so, the President doesn't call all the shots. A lot of this has to be done by Congress and the President working together. Now, I just can't tell you how important it is.

But let me ask you to think about this when I close. The most heartbreaking thing that's happened in the last several days in America, I think, that's really seared the heart of the country, was the death of that young man out in Wyoming. And I called to talk to his parents and his brother—hard to think of what to say. And it moved us all because you see the picture of this fine looking young guy, this intelligent, vital young man with his whole life before him. And it appears that he was taken out by people who thought he didn't belong. So it offended our common sense of humanity.

You all stood up and clapped for me, and I appreciated that, over this Middle East peace thing. But, you know, I felt lucky to be doing that. I loved it, even the ugly parts, the tough parts, and the long nights. That's what I hired on to do. That's why I ran for President. That's the kind of thing I wanted to do. I felt so fortunate to have been given the chance to do that.

And I might add, it's easier for the honest broker than it is for the parties. You see—I think Mr. Netanyahu has gotten some unfair criticism in this country for being too tough in the negotiating. If you've been watching the news today of what he's facing in Israel, you see that he has to bear the consequences of the commitments he made. Now, he made a good deal for his country. It will increase their security. It is a very good deal. But he's got a hill to climb to sell it to the people that are part of his coalition.

I think Mr. Arafat made a good deal for the Palestinians. It will help them with land. It will help them with the economy. But I'll guarantee you, there are people who don't want peace who will try to take him out over it.

But why did you like that so much? Why did you stand up and clap? I mean, think about it. Why did you do that? Because you know these folks have been fighting each

other a long time. And you know Netanyahu and Arafat, they're both real strong-willed, hard-headed guys, right, and they're not supposed to get along.

And you think about the wreckage all of that estrangement has wrought. And you think, God, maybe it will be different now. And here are these people who reached across this divide and decided they'd hold hands and jump off this high dive together. And it makes you feel bigger, doesn't it? It makes you feel more alive. It gives you energy. It gives you hope. It sort of chips away all those layers of cynicism that we carry around encrusted on us all the time. Why? Because it's just the opposite of the murder of young Mr. Shepard. It reaffirms our common humanity. That's why we like it.

Now, what's that got to do with this election and Barbara Boxer? I'll tell you what. I made a decision to run for President in 1991 because I thought that we were not doing what we should do to prepare for this new century; because I wanted everybody to have an opportunity to live up to the fullest of their God-given abilities; because I wanted our country to be a better force for peace and freedom and prosperity for other people, as well ourselves; because I wanted America to be one community across all these various lines that divide us and all the crazy ways we're cut up; and because I thought Washington was a place where people were more interested in politics and power than in people and progress. And I thought the rhetoric coming out of there sounded like a broken record that gave me a headache. And I have done my best for 6 years to reconcile the American people to each other, to move this country forward, to bring it together, to make the world a better place.

In all that, I have succeeded more than I have succeeded in changing the dominant rhetoric and modus operandi of Washington. But Lord knows I have tried. And if we had a few more people like Barbara Boxer, then we could produce more days in Washington which would make you feel the way you did when you saw Prime Minister Netanyahu and Chairman Arafat up there saying, ''Oh Lord, I don't know if I can do this, but I'm going to take a big leap and try.''

I'm telling you, if you look at the people in this room, you will come in contact with tens of thousands of people, directly or indirectly, maybe millions if you do the Net, between now and election day. I thank you for your money. We'll put it up on the air. But you can have an even bigger impact if you don't let one person go without looking them in the eye and telling them their country needs them to show up on November 3rd.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to actress Barbra Streisand, who introduced the President; dinner hosts Bob Daly and Carole Bayer Sager; musician Carole King; 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; and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority.

Remarks at a Luncheon Honoring Senator Barbara Boxer in San Francisco, California

October 25, 1998

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for your wonderful welcome, I'm delighted to be here with so many great supporters of Barbara Boxer. I want to thank Mark and Susie and my longtime friend Dick Fredericks, all the others who are responsible for this event today.

I am delighted to see Senator Cranston here, and thank you, sir. And I'm so glad that Gray Davis was able to come—another way station on his way to victory in a few days.

You know, I have had a great time at this event listening to other people speak, first of all because, believe it or not, I'm a little afraid to speak today because I still haven't had much sleep since the end of those peace talks. And I gave a couple speeches for Barbara yesterday in southern California, and I told everyone that before I got off the plane—my staff gives me these typewritten things, see, like this, and I always ignore them; I just stand up there and talk. So because I was up for 39 hours in a row at the end of the Middle East peace talks, and then