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Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in Coral Gables, Florida

July 13, 1999

Well, thank you very much. I must say I have had a wonderful time in south Florida today, as I always do. I got to speak to the communications workers convention earlier today, and then I got to play golf with some of you in this room. I didn't play all that well, but I had a good time anyway. [*Laughter*] And now Coach Riley is giving me this Miami Heat gear, and I might say Hillary will be very jealous of me. She thinks that Pat Riley is the best looking person in the NBA. [*Laughter*] And we're thrilled by the success that you've had down here, Coach.

I have so many friends in this room, and I hesitate to even start to say any, but let me begin by saying, Alfie, you were there for me from the beginning, and you've been there—we've gone through some difficult times. And I want to thank you personally for the extraordinary effort that you made, with Mitch Berger and others, to resolve this issue of where we would go and how we would save the Florida Everglades. And now I think we're going to do it, and I thank all of you for being involved in this. I thank you.

I want to thank Attorney General Butterworth and Marta for being here, and Bill and Grace Nelson. And I almost never ran without opposition; I guess Bill's going to get through the primary without any. That's pretty impressive. That's the best way to run, I think. I want to say to all of you, that's a profoundly important race in 2000. We have a lot of highly competitive United States Senate races. And who wins will have a lot to do with what our country will be able to accomplish in the first 3 or 4 or 5 years of the next millennium.

I want to thank Representative Carrie Meek and Representative Alcee Hastings for being here, and I want to thank them for their wonderful support over the years. I want to thank my good friend Adele Graham for being here—and with her daughter and her about-to-be grandchild—[*laughter*]—and her son-in-law. Thank you. Bob was reminding me, their 10th grandchild—it doesn't seem—I knew Bob and Adele when their kids were maybe not even all in high school. It seems impossible to me that they have, or are about to have 10 grandchildren.

I'm here tonight also because this State's been very good to me, from 1991, in December, when I won the Florida straw poll, thanks to a number of you in this room, including Representative Elaine Bloom—I hope you're going to send her to Congress to join Terry. Pat was telling me he wanted to make sure the Democrats targeted Florida in the year 2000 because I argued with all the Democratic Party people in '92, I said, "We can win Florida." They said, "You're crazy." And we nearly did, in spite of everything. I think we spent $3.50 here in 1992—[*laughter*]—and took a lot out and nearly won anyway. And in '96—we had our first campaign meeting in 1995. I said there was one issue over which we will have no argument. The first meeting, 5 minutes into the first meeting, I said, "This year we're going after Florida, and we will win." And thanks to you, we did. And I thank all of you. So I'm very, very grateful to all of you for that.

And I'm also here because Charlie Whitehead has been my friend a long time. I'll tell you an interesting story. It's a little bit about human nature that you never forget. I first came to Florida to give a speech in 1981. Now, when I was invited to Florida to give a speech by Charlie Whitehead in 1981, he thought he was inviting the youngest Governor in America. Then we had the Reagan landslide, and it turned out he was inviting the youngest ex-Governor—[*laughter*]—in the entire history of the Republic, you know? [*Laughter*] You can't imagine what it was like back then unless you went through it, man. [*Laughter*] Our friends on the other side, some of them are fairly cold-blooded, and the guy that defeated me terrorized—I had contributors, people I had actually appointed to office who were afraid to speak to me on the street. True story.

So I was rather amazed that anybody still wanted me to come to Florida and get a suntan. And so I came and I made the best little talk I could. Then I got reelected, and he invited me back in '83. And then I got to come back in '87—so I became a regular fixture at the Florida Democratic Convention, and I came to love it very much.

But I'll never forget the fact that when I was down and out and I didn't think I'd ever get invited to the smallest Rotary Club in my State again and my career prospects were something less than bright, Charlie Whitehead still wanted me to come to Florida to give a speech. And I will never, ever forget it, and I thank you.

Alfie told you why he's a Democrat. I thought he made a remarkable statement. Somebody asked me the other day what I thought about Governor Bush raising $36 million. I said it just proves I didn't discriminate in my economic policies—they benefited the Republicans, too. [*Laughter*] And as far as I'm concerned, they can spend their money any way they wanted to. That was not part of my deal, but we helped to make it.

I've got a friend in New York who's a very wealthy and successful businessman, an ardent Democrat, who's now going to every person he knows on Wall Street and saying, ''Look, if you paid more taxes in 1993 than you made in the stock market, support the Republicans.'' [*Laughter*] ''But if you made more money than you paid in taxes, you better stay with us, and it will keep going.'' So you might remember that, you all, when you're out there moseying around. [*Laughter*] You don't even have to give me credit for it. Just sort of mosey around and say it. [*Laughter*]

Anyway, I've had a wonderful relationship with this State. The last time I was here I was at the Garys' home, and what a wonderful night we had there with so many of their friends. And we had great music—I think he had the Drifters there, and Willie got up and sang with them. He could actually leave his day job, unlike me. [*Laughter*]

I want to say just a few things to you tonight. I spent most of the 1980's, except for my brief period out of office, as a Governor. My seatmate for most of that time was Bob Graham. I think I served with 150 Governors. If you asked me to make a list of the five best I served with, he would certainly be on that list.

But we had an interesting time of it in the 1980's, in that Republican ascendancy when we were out here in our States trying to make our schools better, trying to generate income, trying to build a future. And I spent a lot of time thinking about what makes America work, what were the challenges of our country, what should the Federal Government do, and what shouldn't it do. And in 1991, when I decided to seek the Presidency, I had thought for years and years and years not so much about what I would do but what I thought our country should do. And one of the reasons that I've been very pleased with the Vice President's campaign is that alone among all the people running in both parties, he is the only person who said, ''Now, before I tell you that I want you to vote for me, I want you to know what I intend to do if I get elected.'' And I think that's pretty important.

And so I said to the American people, I didn't think our country was headed in the right direction for the 21st century. Unemployment was high; social problems were worsening; there was a sense of drift in the country. And I asked the American people basically to embrace a vision of politics that was premised on some simple ideas. One is that we ought to be committed to opportunity for every citizen who was responsible enough to deserve it. The second was that we ought to be committed to building a community that embraced every law-abiding American without regard to whatever differences they had in their God-given characteristics or their choices in life. The third was that the Government of our country ought to be smaller, but more active, and ought to be focused not on trying to solve all the problems but being a good partner, giving people the tools they need to solve their own problems and live their own dreams.

And I said if we did the right things and embraced some new ideas, I really believe that we could go into the 21st century with the American dream alive and well for everyone, with America coming closer together instead of drifting further apart, and with our country still the world's leading force for peace and freedom and prosperity around the world.

Well, 6½ years later, I have been profoundly gratified by what has happened. Our country has nearly 19 million new jobs; the longest peacetime expansion in history; a 26-year low in crime; a 30-year low in the welfare rolls; declining rates of teen pregnancy,

teen smoking, teen drug abuse; 90 percent of our kids immunized against serious childhood diseases for the first time in our history; the highest homeownership in history; the lowest minority unemployment rates ever recorded; 100,000 young people have served our country and their communities through AmeriCorps and earned some money to go to college. We changed the tax laws now so that through tax credits we've really, literally, opened the doors of college to anyone who's willing to work for it. We set aside more land for preservation than any administration in the history of this country, except those of Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt. The air is cleaner; the water is cleaner; the food is safer. And we've been a force for peace in the Middle East to Northern Ireland to Bosnia and Kosovo. It has been a wonderful ride. And for the role that all of you had in it, I am grateful.

Why am I here tonight? I'm not running for anything. I'm here tonight for two reasons. Number one, I don't want the country to go on idle for the next year and a half while everybody plays games about the next election. There's plenty of work to do, and everybody in Washington is still drawing a salary from you; therefore, we are expected to show up for work every day. I do, and I want everybody else to do the same. And there are some big challenges out there.

The second reason is—and I will talk more about that in a minute—the second reason is, it is very important that we build the strength of the Democratic Party at the grassroots level so that every person can answer the question Alfie answered, each in your own way. Why are you here tonight? You're going to go about your life tomorrow morning. You'll come in contact with all different kinds of people. People ask you, "Why did you come?" You might say, "Well, it is a beautiful house." [*Laughter*] That would be a good reason to come, but it won't persuade anybody else. You need to know—and you can tell them what I just told you—that this is working.

And when people make their judgments in 2000, no one should believe that you're just riding on a clean slate, that there's no connection between the candidates and their ideas and what they're committed to and the consequences that will flow to the country. You can see it today in Washington.

We're debating the Patients' Bill of Rights. Two hundred organizations have embraced the bill unanimously supported by the Democratic Senators, unanimously supported by our side: The American Medical Association and all of the other major doctors groups, the American Nurses Association and all of the other major health care groups, all the major consumer groups. The health insurers are on the other side. Why? They think it will erode their profits. And they're claiming—they're telling the American people that all these people that are in managed care plans, if we guarantee basic fundamental rights that we ought to be able to take for granted, your premiums will explode. This is just one of the issues that's before us.

What are those rights? Most of us probably have good health care; we don't have to worry about it. But I'm telling you, millions and millions and millions of people who are in managed care today do not know whether they can get to see a specialist if their doctor tells them they need it, or whether some accountant can tell them no, they can't. There are people in managed care plans today that if—God forbid—they should go outside and get hit by a car, they would have to go by one or two hospitals before they would finally get to a hospital emergency room covered by the plan. That's not right. When people are hurt, they ought to go to the nearest health care, not the farthest, because it's covered. There are people today who work for small businesses who, if the small business changes their health provider while a woman is 6 months pregnant, no matter how difficult the pregnancy, or a woman or a man is undergoing chemotherapy for cancer, might be told in the middle of the treatment they have to change physicians. And I don't think that's right.

Now, the Congressional Budget Office, which until this moment—until this very moment—from the day they got into the majority, the Republicans have said is the end-all and be-all, the authority on everything having anything to do with money. You ask Alcee and Carrie. They tell us every time, you know, whatever they say is what we do. So they said if we guarantee these rights to all

Americans, it might—it might—raise health insurance premiums by as much as $2 a month. I think it's worth it to see a cardiologist or to keep your pediatrician or to keep your obstetrician or to stop at the nearest emergency room. There is no reason in the world that we shouldn't.

And it's another—going back to what Alfie said—my premise is, if you do what's right for the people, the country tends to do pretty well. Those of us who have been blessed with the means to make money or with good educations or with good positions in life, we tend to do pretty well, regardless—but we do a whole lot better when everybody else does well.

We have a big decision to make. Are we going to deal with the challenge of the aging of America now that we have this surplus? Did you ever think we'd be debating what to do with a surplus? [*Laughter*] When I took office the deficit was $290 billion; the debt total had quadrupled in the previous 12 years; we were spending 15 cents plus every dollar of your tax money on interest payments on the debt. Elaine will go to Congress, and first thing she'll have to do—she has all these things she'd like to do for you, whether it's investing money or giving you tax relief or you name it. Well, the first thing she has to do is to figure out how much of every dollar you pay in taxes you've got to take right off the top just to pay interest on the debt.

So now we have this surplus. And I'm gratified that there seems to be agreement between both parties that we ought to take that portion of the surplus that's produced by your Social Security taxes and set it aside for Social Security. Now, how we do that will make all the difference. But they want to spend the rest of it on a tax cut. And you know, it's getting close to election and I'm sure it's popular, but I'd like to tell you what the consequences of that will be.

If we do it, there will be no new money put into Medicare. There's a representative here tonight who told me he worked for a hospital and the hospital already is out $6 million this year because we cut Medicare too much in the balanced budget amendment for a lot of urban hospitals that deal with a lot of poor people. That's true with a lot of teaching hospitals, a lot of university hospitals.

I propose to put 15 percent of the surplus into Medicare, provide a prescription drug benefit, to provide free preventative services so older people will go in and get all these tests and screenings and prevent themselves from getting sick. It doesn't make any sense for us—we don't pay for the preventive screenings, so people don't get them. Then they get sick, they go to the hospital, they cost 10 times as much, and we pay for that. Better to keep people well. So that's what I think we ought to do.

I also don't think we ought to cut education or our investments in medical research or technology or the environment or defense by the 25 to 35 percent it would cost to fund this program over the next decade. I think that's a mistake. I think that's a mistake.

But we have offered the American people a sizable tax cut, targeted at child care, to long-term care if your family needs it, to help all families save more for their retirement, to help build world-class schools, to give people the same incentives to invest in poor neighborhoods in our inner cities and rural areas. You saw me visiting some of them last week at our Native American reservations.

I think they ought to have—every one of you in this room with money ought to have the same incentives to invest in those areas that you get today to invest in poor areas overseas. I'm not against that; I'm glad we invest in the Caribbean and Latin America and Asia and Africa. But I believe you ought to have those same incentives to invest in the Indian reservations, in the Mississippi Delta, in Appalachia, in inner cities in Florida, in New York, in California, and wherever else in this great country of ours. I think it's important.

Let met just say one other thing. If my plan gets adopted, we'll save most of this surplus for Social Security and Medicare. As we save it, our debt will go down, because we don't have to spend it right away. We'll run Social Security's Trust Fund out until 2053; we'll run Medicare out to 2027—it will be the first time in everybody's memory that it's been stable for that long. We'll be able to handle the retirement of the baby boom generation. The interest payments on the debt

will go down, and we'll take the savings on the interest and put it into Social Security. And, guess what? For the first time since 1835, in 15 years this country will be debt-free.

Now, why—and I'd like to tell you all, particularly those of you who are younger and have young children, why that's important. I predict to you that 10 years from now, when your 10 grandchildren are all getting up there, it will be the conventional wisdom all around the world that wealthy countries ought to be debt-free. Why? Because we live in a global economy; this money moves around; the interest rates are set by global movement. All of you know this.

If we are out of public debt, what it means is, interest rates in America will be lower. That means more business investment, higher business profits, more money for more jobs, and higher wage increases. It means ordinary people have lower home mortgages, lower car payments, lower credit card payments, lower college loan payments. It means that our children and our grandchildren will have a more stable economy. It means when the world gets in trouble like it did 2 years ago in Asia and there's a terrible financial crisis, we won't have to worry about it because we won't be borrowing money. And our friends we want to help will be able to get the money they need at a lower cost. This is a huge deal.

Now, all of this takes more time to explain than somebody saying, "Look, I'm going to take this surplus and put the part paid by Social Security into that and give the rest back to you in a tax cut." That just took me 5 seconds to say. It sounds great. But keep in mind, I'm not running for anything. But I do want to able to bring my grandchildren to Florida someday and show them the things that I did when I was a young man here, and tell them the stories about what you did for me and know they're living in America that is having its best days.

And I'm telling you, did you ever think we'd be sitting here having a national debate about what to do with the surplus? We can have a tax cut. The question is, how big can it be and still allow us to fulfill our fundamental responsibilities to make sure America is the strongest country in the world in the 21st century and every American, without regard to race or religion, has a chance to live out their dreams? This is the question before the Congress today. That is the question before the American people today.

I'm going to do my dead-level-best to work with the Republicans. I have told the Democrats, and I think almost all of them agree with me, that we should do this. There will be still plenty we disagree with by the 2000 election—take it from me. [*Laughter*]

Florida is not known—for example, we have a 26 year low in the crime rate, right? Part of the reason is we put 100,000 police on the street, and we passed the Brady bill, which has kept 400,000 people with criminal records from getting handguns. Now, when we passed the Brady bill, I remember what the Republican leaders and the NRA said. They said, "This is a worthless bill because those criminals do not buy guns in gun stores; they get all their guns at gun shows and flea markets and stuff like that." So we passed the Brady bill—turned out they were wrong—400,000 people who shouldn't have handguns were trying to buy them at gun stores. And that's one of the reasons the crime rate has gone down.

But now we said, "Hey, you guys might have been right. Let's close the gun show loophole. Let's do the background checks at the gun shows and the flea markets." They said, "Oh, goodness, we couldn't do that," even though they told us 4 years ago that's where the criminals are buying the guns. Florida, no flaming liberal State, right? [*Laughter*] Left-wing, pinko Florida voted 72 percent in the last election to close the gun show loophole. We can't close it in the Congress for the country. Why? Because the leadership of the other party and the NRA won't let the rank-and-file Republicans vote for it. That's the truth.

In the Senate, 98 percent of our side voted to do it, and 90 percent of theirs voted against it. In the House, 75 percent—almost 78 percent of our side voted to do it, and 85 percent of the their side voted against it. There are real, significant partisan differences here—on the Patients' Bill of Rights, on how to keep America safe, and other things.

But you know, we'll all going to get older. The baby boom is going to age. There will be twice as many people over 65 in the year 2030 as there are today. And whether we like it or not, we Democrats are going to get old just like the Republicans. [*Laughter*] And we are never going to have another time like this in our lifetime. We should not wait to save Social Security, to save Medicare, and to get this country out of debt. We shouldn't wait; we don't need to do that. We shouldn't wait to pass the Patients' Bill of Rights. We shouldn't wait to continue the improvements in education that we've worked so hard on the last several years. There will be plenty to argue about in 2000. So I hope we can do it.

But you ask me why I'm a Democrat. I'm a Democrat partly for the reason Alfie is. When ordinary citizens in this country do well, when poor people have a chance to work their way into in the middle class, the rest of us who have been gifted and blessed and are lucky as sin, we do just fine, even better than we would if those folks were in trouble, first of all.

Secondly, life is about more than money. And when we live in harmony with our friends and neighbors, when we have a feeling that our society is just and moving in the right direction, when we know that people who are less fortunate than we are are going to have a chance to live out their dreams, and when we come into more contact with more different kinds of people, life is more fun, more interesting, and more rewarding. So all those things are terribly important to me. And when they ask you why you came tomorrow, say you came because of those things. Say you came because our ideas worked. And say you came because what we're fighting for now is right.

Let me just say a few words—Alfie asked me to talk about the Cuban issue and the unfortunate incident with the people who were trying to come here. I'd like to put it into a larger context. One of the most frustrating things to me as President—people say all the time I'm a reasonably good communicator, but I don't think I've succeeded in convincing the American people entirely that America is living in a world that's increasingly interdependent and that our prosperity and our security and the quality of our life is more and more caught up with how we relate to other people throughout the world.

I'm proud of the fact that we stopped the ethnic cleansing and slaughter in Bosnia in 1995, and I'm proud of the fact that we didn't let it go on for 2½ years before we stopped it in Kosovo. And that's a long way away. And you may say, "Well, that's a long way away." I mean, it's amazing—we lost no pilots in combat. They had far fewer civilian casualties than we would have had if there had been some massive invasion. But over 650,000 of those people have already gone home. Václav Havel, the great Czech President, great hero of liberty and human rights, said it was the most moral, selfless war ever fought, because the people who carried it forward—we didn't want anything; we didn't want territory; we didn't want power; we didn't want money. All we wanted was to create a world in which Europe could live without people being killed because of the way they worship God or because of their race or ethnic background.

We're trying to set up the same systems that will prevent that from happening in Africa. We're working today to diffuse the conflict between India and Pakistan. We're looking forward—I'm eager as a kid with a new toy for the meeting I'm going to have with the new Israeli Prime Minister this weekend, in the hope that we can begin to energize the peace process in the Middle East on terms that are just and fair and will guarantee genuine security for Israel and a way of living for the Palestinians that will bring reconciliation and a resolution of all these issues with Syria so that there can be peace in the Middle East. These are things I believe in, just like I believe we were right to expand trade.

I haven't convinced everybody in my party we were right about that. But if you think about it, we're 4 percent of the world's people; we've got 22 percent of the world's income. There's no way for us to keep 22 percent of the world's income unless we sell something to the other 96 percent of the world's people. To me, it's not rocket science, and I know there are difficulties, but we have to do it.

Now, one of the things that I've tried to do as President is to be more active with the

Caribbean and with Latin America. I'm trying to pass a Caribbean Basin Initiative through the Congress that will enable us to be better neighbors to our friends in the Caribbean.

I have had now the opportunity to participate in two Summits of the Americas. Every country in the Caribbean and Latin America is a democracy but Cuba, and it is a continuing frustration to us. We have an embargo, a tough embargo that's even tougher than it was before those people were shot out of the sky. And you remember that, just a few years ago, which led to the passage of the new legislation. There is no question that they were flat out killed illegally. It was wrong.

So what we have tried to do recently is to be firm with the Government of Cuba and make it clear that we can't be forthcoming until they change, but that we want to help the people of Cuba and their suffering and keep families here in communication, one with another. One of the most difficult things has been how to handle the people that want to get away, particularly when you know, well, from time to time they've been used as a political weapon.

So a few years ago, we reached an understanding with Cuba, and we've tried to use the Coast Guard, as Alfie said, as a lifesaver. We have, completely independent of that—and you should know this—completely independent of what is happening with Cuba, the United States has had more and more and more people come to this country, principally in California and New York, under the control of alien smugglers, cruel people who enslave people and bring them here.

So the Coast Guard, in part, I think, has tried to react more to try to cut down on alien smuggling. But what happened with the way those people were sprayed and all that, it was outrageous. I want you to know it was not an authorized policy. None of us knew anything about it in Washington until we saw it on the news or read it in the newspapers, just like you did. We have taken vigorous steps to make sure it does not happen again, and the incident is being thoroughly investigated.

So now we have to look and see whether or not the policy we have is manageable, given the problems that we're facing. But we still have to try to have a legal, orderly process by which people come from Cuba to the United States.

A few years ago, I expanded the number of people who could legally get visas to come here to 20,000 a year, and we are reviewing this whole situation now in light of what has happened. But I do believe that the general statements Alfie made at the beginning are the correct ones. We have to try to keep the movement here orderly, safe, and legal, and we have to look at the new challenges that have been presented to us. But I want you to know that there will never be a time when any of us will willfully sanction the use of excessive or inhumane tactics in dealing with anybody coming to this country.

We have to try to enforce our laws; we have to try to protect our borders; we have to try to deal with a situation which could, as you well remember from times past, spiral out of hand. And I am reviewing what the facts are and what our options are. But I want you to know that the values that will guide us, I think, are the right ones.

So last thing I want to say is, thanks for giving money to the Florida Democratic Party. [*Laughter*] Pat, I will do my best to make sure nobody gives up on Florida. I haven't given up on Florida. We're going to get a Senator. We're going to get Members of Congress. You're going to have gains in the legislature, and I believe we can carry it in the Presidential race in the year 2000 if it is clear what the issues are and what the choices are. And you can't do that if you don't have folks like you out here who know good and well what they are and are willing to say it, and if you don't have people like you who are willing to give money so we can get our message out to the larger populace.

You have done that tonight. You have validated Whitehead's decision to come out of retirement. You've made sure that the old lion will not return to his den prematurely. [*Laughter*] So for all that, I am very grateful. Mostly, I am grateful that you have been so good to me and to Hillary and to Al and to Tipper in what has been the experience of a lifetime. But we're not done yet, and we owe it to the American people to give them our best down to the last day. That's what

I mean to do, and I'm going to do what I can, wearing my Miami Heat outfit—[*laughter*]—to keep enough heat in Washington to make sure they do the same.

Thank you very much.

Mayor Penelas just came in. Thank you very much, Mr. Mayor. Good to see you. How are you? Welcome.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:08 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner host Alfonso Fanjul; Mitchell W. Berger, member, South Florida Water Management District; State Attorney General Robert A. Butterworth and his wife, Marta; State Treasurer Bill Nelson and his wife, Grace; Senator Bob Graham's wife, Adele, daughter Kendall Elias, and son-in-law Robert Elias III; Charles A. Whitehead, chairman, Florida State Democratic Party; Gov. George W. Bush of Texas; former Gov. Frank White of Arkansas; Willie E. and Gloria Gary, who hosted a DNC dinner in Stuart, FL, on March 16; Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel; and Mayor Alexander Penelas of Metro-Dade, FL.

Remarks in the Democratic Leadership Council National Conversation in Baltimore, Maryland

July 14, 1999

The President. Thank you very much. You guys look good out there. [*Laughter*] I want to thank Al for inviting me. And thank you, Cruz, for your wonderful remarks and your generous introduction. One thing I like about the California Lieutenant Governor is he doesn't beat around the bush; you know what's on his mind. [*Laughter*]

I shouldn't do this because it's not really Presidential, but I'm going to do it anyway. I have really—you've got to give it—this "compassionate conservatism" has a great ring to it, you know. It sounds so good. And I've really worked hard to try to figure out what it means. I mean, I made an honest effort. And near as I can tell here's what it means—it means: "I like you, I do." [*Laughter*] "And I would like to be for the Patients' Bill of Rights, and I'd like to be for closing the gun show loophole. And I'd like not to squander the surplus and save Social Security and Medicare for the next generation. I'd like to raise the minimum wage. I'd like to do these things. But I just can't, and I feel terrible about it." [*Laughter*]

Oh, that will come back. [*Laughter*] I would like to thank—you don't have to give me credit if you repeat that back home. [*Laughter*] I want to thank you all for being here today. We have five Governors: Governor Glendening, Governor Barnes, Governor Carnahan, Governor Carper, Governor Vilsack; Lieutenant Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend is here, along with Lieutenant Governor Cruz Bustamante; Mayor Schmoke, the leaders of the Maryland legislature, Senator Mike Miller and Speaker Casper Taylor; any number of other officials.

I brought a large delegation from the White House, including Secretary Glickman and a number of people who have been particularly close to the DLC, including Sidney Blumenthal and your old hands, Bruce Reed and Linda Moore. And I brought a person who joined the DLC with me back in 1985, although he says he joined before I did—my first Chief of Staff and the former Special Envoy to Latin America, Mack McLarty. So we're old hands, and I thank them all for coming with me today.

This is the third National Conversation about a talk that Al From and I have been having for nearly 15 years now. Today we can have a very different conversation than we had 15 years ago, or even half that long ago, because of the proven success of new Democratic ideas.

When I first ran for President back in 1991, I asked for a change in our party, a change in our national leadership, a change in our country. The American people have been uncommonly good to me and to Hillary, to the Vice President, to Tipper, to our administration, and thanks to their support, we have changed all three things. The ideas of the men and women who are here today are rooted in our core values of opportunity, responsibility, and community. They have revitalized our party and revitalized our country.

We won the Presidency in 1992 with new ideas based on those values, because the American people could see and feel that the old ways weren't working. We won again in 1996 because, with the help of a lot of people in this room, we turned those values and ideas into action. And they did work to get