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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

our country moving again—or in the words of Cruz Bustamante, they did help real people.

Now, as we move into a new era and a new millennium, these ideas, as all of you well know, have spread around the world. They've helped center-left parties to take power in Great Britain and France and Germany and Italy and Brazil. They have sparked the kinds of debates and discussions that you have been having in virtually every country in the world where people take politics seriously. The Third Way has become the way of the future.

And when you hear our friends in the other party sort of use the same words in the same way, if imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, that, too, is something we should welcome.

I told the little story at the first because, as the Lieutenant Governor said, rhetoric and reality are sometimes two different things, and it's better when they're not, when they are the same thing. But it shows you the grip that the idea of a dynamic center has on thoughtful people throughout the world. It shows you how desperately people want new ideas, experimentation, an end to bitter partisanship, a genuine spirit of working together. And wherever that exists, it is a good thing.

As we move into the information age, we really, as Democrats, have reclaimed the true legacy of Franklin Roosevelt, which is not a particular set of programs but a real commitment to bold experimentation, to the idea that new times demand new approaches, and often a different kind of Government.

America was ready to listen to that back in 1992. You know it's almost hard to believe now, and we may have to remind our fellow citizens in times to come just what it was like back then—how high the unemployment was; how stagnant the wages were; how steeply growing the inequality was; how fast the social conditions were worsening.

Then, the Democrats were seen too wedded to the programs of the past to make the necessary changes for today and tomorrow. The Republicans were too committed to the idea that Government was the cause of all of our problems, and neglect, therefore, was the right response.

They won election after election at the national level by sort of dividing our people and putting up cartoon caricatures of our Democrats as somehow not really American, not really in touch with the values of ordinary citizens. And they were so good at it, they came to see the White House as their private fiefdom. I'd always get a little kick out of the fact that our friends on the other side of the aisle rail and rail about entitlements; they really don't like them. But actually they thought the White House was their entitlement until the DLC came along.

Now, Al Gore and I had a different idea. We thought power should not be vested in any party but in the people. We thought that we should use the power of our office and the power of Government to take a different direction for the country. We believed we could do it with a smaller Government; and it is now, as all of you know, the smallest Federal establishment since John Kennedy was President in 1962. That's the last time the Federal Government was this small. But, we have been much, much more active, trying to be a catalyst, trying to be a partner, trying to give people the tools and to create the conditions so that our people could meet their own challenges and live out their own dreams. We have been called New Democrats; our approach has been called the Third Way. But I think it is important to remember that we too do not want to get trapped in our rhetoric. We were the first to point out that labels should not define a politician or a person or a political movement; ideas do. And every time, every age in time requires a continuous infusion of new ideas. We took on the hard work of creating real solutions. We worked hard to make politics and policies and to put both in the service of progress.

Now, I think it's worked pretty well. We did everything we could to reject forced, false choices between work and family, between the economy and the environment, between being safe and being free, between recognizing what makes us interesting and individual and different as people and what we have in common. We tried to solve problems rather than score partisan points. We have done our best to restore the people's faith in our Government, but more important to

restore their faith in the limitless potential of America.

Now, I think it's worked pretty well. Along the way, we had the '94 election setback, and we had to fight a rearguard action to beat back the Contract With America. Then we worked with the Republicans to pass welfare reform and the Balanced Budget Act of 1997. And I was encouraged. Lately, I have been discouraged, obviously, because the Republican majority in Congress has taken, I think, very, very wrong actions in killing the Patients' Bill of Rights and in killing the sensible gun control measures embodied in our legislation, among other things to close the gun show loophole. So, there are still profound differences among the parties.

Cruz listed a few of these, but I would just like to say that, as you go back home and the people you represent ask you for your thoughts about what's going on in Washington, I would like to respectfully request that you at least ask them to give us the benefit of the doubt, because our friends in the other party said if we implemented our policies, it would be a disaster for America. They said it over and over and over again. They said when the deficit was $290 billion and we passed our economic program, it would get bigger and we'd have a deep recession. Now we have the biggest surplus in our history; almost 19 million new jobs; the longest peacetime expansion in history; the highest homeownership and the lowest minority unemployment ever recorded; wages are rising; crime is at a 26-year low; the welfare rolls at a 30-year low; teen pregnancy, teen smoking, teen drug abuse are all declining; air and water are cleaner; the streets are safer; 90 percent of our kids are immunized against serious diseases for the first time; we've opened the doors to college to virtually all Americans through the HOPE scholarship that we modeled on what Georgia did; and we have had over 100,000 young people serve our country and their community through AmeriCorps, another big DLC idea. From the California redwoods and the Mojave Desert to the Florida Everglades, this administration has protected or set aside more land than any administration in history except those of Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt. We have worked for peace from Bosnia and Kosovo to the Middle East to Northern Ireland. We've worked to expand trade on fair and freer terms. We have worked to build partnerships with Latin America and Africa and people who often feel that they're not even in our radar screen or in our orbit. We have worked to give our children a safer world by combating terrorism and the other threats which they will face in their lifetime.

We've done this—and I appreciate the reception you gave me when I came in—but we have done this because we had the right ideas. I am grateful that I was given the opportunity, in my time, to be the instrument of implementing those ideas. If anybody is responsible for the intellectual renaissance which possesses the politics in this country, in this world, it really is Al From and all the true believers with the DLC—[*inaudible*].

But, you're here because we believe that you can do these jobs. You can do the jobs you have; you can be Governors; you can be Senators; you can be President. The most important thing is that we keep the ideas coming, consistent with our core values, always looking at the real facts, always looking at the long-term future. And what I am trying to get the American people to focus on now, and the Congress, is that in the remaining days of this century and this millennium, we will either explicitly or implicitly make some very large decisions that will affect our country for a long time to come.

I think that we have shown by results that our Third Way is the right way for America, for our economy, and for our society. In the weeks to come, around the budget we will have a huge debate over great national priorities. We will have to make a choice that 5 or 6 years ago you never would have believed we'd be making, which is how are we going to use the fruits of our prosperity. If somebody had told you 6 years ago, the biggest debate in Washington will be what to do with the surplus—[*laughter*]—you would never have believed it.

Now, I think the answer is to stick with the economic strategy that brought us to this great dance and to deal with the great challenges still before us. So I gave the Congress a budget that will do big things: that will meet the challenge of the aging of America by saving and reforming Social Security and

Medicare; that will do it in a way that will make this country debt free for the first time since 1835; that will raise educational standards and end social promotion, but provide for summer school, modern schools, and 100,000 more teachers and hooking up every classroom to the Internet by the year 2000; that will make America safer with even more community policing and more efforts to keep guns out of the hands of criminals; that will make America more livable with the Vice President's livability agenda; that will provide genuine tax relief to the people and the purposes who really need it at a price we can afford, without undermining our prosperity, including our new American markets initiative, designed to give Americans the same incentives to invest in the poor areas of America we give today to invest in the Caribbean and Latin America and Africa and Asia. I think that's a very important thing to do.

I might say, all of you would have gotten a big kick seeing Al From and Jesse Jackson walking arm in arm across America last week. [*Laughter*] It was good for America. It was good for the Democratic Party. It was good for the people that lived in Appalachia and the Mississippi Delta, in East St. Louis—Mayor Powell, I'm glad to see you here today. We had a wonderful time there. Thank you for coming.

She gave such a great speech when we visited East St. Louis, I told her she ought to show up for this conference. And lo and behold, she did. So I thank you for coming.

We went to Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. We went to south Phoenix. And I know we've got some legislators from Arizona here today, and I thank you for being here—the block over there. And we ended in L.A. These are big things. These are big, big things. And we will decide, directly or indirectly, whether to embrace them. The decisions cannot be escaped.

You all know the basic elements of my plan. I want to use the bulk of the surplus to save Social Security. I want to set aside 15 percent of it to reform Medicare and to begin with a prescription drug benefit, which would have been in any program if it were to be designed today from the start. I want to provide substantial tax relief, $250 billion of it, targeted to help families save for retirement, to deal with child care and long-term care needs, to help to deal with some of our larger challenges including modernizing our schools, adjusting to the challenge of climate change, and as I said, investing in America's new markets.

If we do it the way I have proposed, this country will be out of debt in 2015. Now, I would like to tell you very briefly why I think that is a good idea. First of all, you all know we live in a global economy. Interest rates and capital availability are set in global markets. If a wealthy country like the United States is out of debt, what does it mean? It means interest rates will be lower; it means there will be more business investment; it'll be more jobs; it'll be higher incomes. It means that for ordinary citizens, their car payments, their house payments, their credit card payments, their student loan payments will be lower. It means the next time there's a financial crisis in the world, we won't need to take money, and the needy, vulnerable countries will be able to get the money they need at lower interest rates, which means not only their people will be better off, but they will be better trading partners for us and their democracies will be more likely to weather the storms. This is a progressive idea today, and we ought to stick with it.

Now, I realize 16 months before an election the allure of ''I've got a bigger tax cut than you do; come look at my tax cut''—[*laughter*]—I mean, that's got a lot of appeal, you know. And it doesn't take very long to explain. You can put it in a 5-second ad—''our tax cut is bigger than theirs.'' But I'd just like to remind the American people, number one, look at the results we have achieved in the last 6½ years by looking to the long run and doing the responsible thing.

Number two, every ordinary American citizen, and virtually every wealthy American, will be better off over the long run with lower interest rates, a more stable economy, a more growing economy, than with a short-term tax cut. I'm not against a tax cut. We've got a good one in here. But if we don't fix Medicare and Social Security, and we let the baby boom generation retire and worry about whether these systems are going to go haywire, and we impose on our children the burden of taking care of us when it is absolutely

unnecessary, undermining their ability to raise our grandchildren, we will never forgive ourselves—just because there is an election in 16 months. It's wrong.

The Vice President and I had a meeting with the Republican and the Democratic leaders of Congress Monday, and we told them that we wanted to work with them. And we have worked with them in the past, as I said, with welfare reform and the Balanced Budget Act. But we've got to stay on this new way. I think that on this issue they're still committed to their old ways.

Yesterday the Republican leadership unveiled a tax plan that I believe could wreck our economy. It would certainly wreck our fiscal discipline. Let me explain what is wrong with their plan. Their tax plan would devote just about all of the surplus that doesn't come from Social Security taxes, all the non-Social Security surplus, to a tax cut. First of all, if they did that, it would leave no money for Medicare. Every responsible analyst of Medicare says there are just so many people drawing and so few people paying in—as the baby boomers retire, that will be twice as many people over 65 in 2030 as there are today—everybody says you've got to put some more money in. So there would be no money for that.

Secondly, it would require, as our economy grows, real cuts in education, defense, the environment, research, technology, the kinds of things that we have invested more in. We have almost doubled investment in education and technology, as we have shrunk the size of the Government and gotten rid of the deficit and eliminated hundreds of programs. So it won't work.

The second big problem with it is that if you look at the next 10 years, not just the first 10 years—that is, the 10 years when the baby boomers will retire and when we ought to be paying off the debt—their tax cut will really be big, and it will put us back into debt.

So remember now, I'm not going to—I hope I will be one of the people just out there drawing my check, you know. I'll be out of here. But think about this, especially the younger people in this audience. In the second decade of the 21st century, just when the baby boomers start to retire, just when Social Security and Medicare begin to feel the crunch, just when we could be debt-free for the first time since 1835—at that very moment—their tax cut would swallow the surplus and make it impossible to meet our basic commitments.

I have asked the Treasury to report as soon as possible to me on what their tax cut costs in the second 10 years of this decade. We should not undo our fiscal discipline. We should not imperil our prosperity. We should not undermine Medicare. We should not make big cuts in education, defense, research and technology, and the environment. I won't allow that sort of plan to become law. It wouldn't be right.

Now, again I say, we can have a tax cut. We ought to have a tax cut, but we ought to do it in the right way for the right reasons, and we ought to put first things first. We should save Social Security and Medicare, meet our responsibilities for the next century before we go off talking about the tax cut.

You know, some of this is basic arithmetic. We had years and years in the 1980's when people said there is no such thing as basic arithmetic. There is supply-side economics, or whatever. And they said supply-side economics would dictate a huge recession after our '93 economic plan passed. But the American people don't have to guess any more. We tried it their way; we tried it our way. There is evidence.

And I'm telling you, I don't care if the election is next week, never mind next year; we have worked for too long to get this country out of the hole. We are moving in the right direction, and we must not compromise the future of America and the next generation just for the next election. It would be wrong, and I want you to help us get that message out there.

The same thing is true on crime. The DLC had a lot to do with our ideas about fighting crime. And you remember what they were. We wanted 100,000 police. We used to go—our DLC trips, we'd go to these places, and we'd go look at these community policing operations that were already bringing crime down in cities in the early nineties. We wanted the Brady bill; we wanted an assault weapons ban; we wanted targeted, tougher punishment and broad prevention programs for

our young people. And the program is working.

The real choice, as the Vice President pointed out in his speech Monday, is not between stronger punishment and better prevention; the real choice is to do both. But I hope the DLC will not give up its ideas on fighting crime just because we're at a 26-year low. Because if you're one of the victims, the crime is still too high.

We could make this country the safest big country in the world if we would do the right, sensible things to do it. I thought the Vice President put some great ideas forward on Monday. And that's what this election ought to be about. Even the commentators on the other side point out that so far, he's the only person who has actually said what he would do if the people gave him the job, which I think is a reasonably good idea to do. You probably ought to tell people what you're going to do when you get the job, and then you would be more likely to do it.

And I believe one of the central reasons for the success that we have enjoyed is that we worked—Al and I and others and my folks at home in Arkansas—we worked for years to think about exactly what ought to be done. And so, if you look at what he said, that we ought to apply reforms that are working in the private sector at many levels of government to revolutionize the justice system. We ought to take the next step on licensing people who own handguns to make sure that they're trained to use the guns and that they should have them. And that would solve all these loopholes, because if you had a bad background, you couldn't get a license, you couldn't own one.

This is not going to keep anybody from being a hunter or sportsman. This is not going to undermine the fabric of life in America; it's going to make it safer. And this is a very serious issue, so I would urge you to keep up your interest not only in the economic issues, not only in the entitlement reforms but also in the question of how we can make America the safest big country in the world.

When I was running in '92, we were just trying to get the crime rate down. Everybody thought it was going to go up forever. Now we know we can bring it down. I think we ought to commit ourselves to making America the safest big country in the world. When I was running in '92, everybody said we've just got to get the deficit down, got to try to balance the budget. Now, we can imagine making America debt-free. We can do things that are not imaginable at the moment if we will have good ideas and work on them in a disciplined way.

So I think that the other candidates ought to follow the Vice President's lead and tell us where they stand on these crime issues, and on the other issues as well. There will be clear choices here. Will we have commonsense gun laws, or Government by the gun lobby?

I'll never forget when I went to New Hampshire in 1996. Just for all you elected politicians who think you can't survive this stuff, they voted for me by one point in '92, and I was grateful, because they normally vote Republican. So my first meeting, we had a couple of hundred—largely men—in this audience in their plaid shirts, waiting more for deer season than the President's speech. [*Laughter*] And so I told them, I said, ''You know, in '94 you beat a Democrat Congressman up here, and you did it because he voted for the Brady bill and the crime bill and the assault weapons ban. And I want you to know he did that because I asked him to. So if you have, since 1994, experienced any inconvenience whatever in your hunting season, I want you to vote against me, too, because he did it for me. But if you haven't, they lied to you, and you ought to get even.'' [*Laughter*]

In New Hampshire, our margin of victory went from one percent to 13 percent. You can do this. Tell the American people the truth about these things. Just go out and tell people the truth about these things.

I feel the same way about welfare. I had to veto two bills that the Congress passed, because I thought they were too tough on kids. They took the guarantee of nutrition and health care benefits away from children. After we put that back in, I believe the welfare reform bill was right because I thought we ought to require able-bodied people to work, and because letting the States have the money for the benefits was not a big deal since the States had radically different levels

of benefits anyway. And remember, in our welfare reform bill, we left the States with the same amount of money they had in February of 1994 when the welfare rolls were at an all-time high, even after the rolls dropped, so that they could be free to put the money back into training, to child care, to transportation, to the things people need.

We've still got work to do to make sure that work pays. With the strong support of the DLC back in '93, we doubled the earned-income tax credit; then we raised the minimum wage; we put more into child care. But I want to do some other things.

First of all, we are changing the rules so thousands of poor working families won't be denied food stamps as they are today just because they own a reliable car. We're going to change those rules, and we should be for them. We're also going to get rid of some of the old reporting rules and launch a national campaign to make sure that working people know there is no indignity in taking public assistance to help feed their children if they're out there working 40 hours a week. And finally, let me say I hope you will really give a lot of thought to the project that Al and I and others were on last week. How can we go across that bridge to the 21st century together? How can we bring the spark of enterprise and opportunity to every community? There are still a lot of people that haven't participated in this recovery, and a lot of places that we didn't visit last week. There are still a lot of small and medium-sized towns that lose just a factory, but have real trouble restructuring their economy.

We presented this new markets initiative which I said I think is very good, because it will give the same incentives to people nationwide that they only have in the empowerment zones today to invest in those markets. But we need to do more. A fertile, fertile ground for DLC endeavors is involving everyone—every single American who is willing to work—in American enterprise. We can do that.

And let me just make one last point as we segue into the next part of the program. The DLC now takes a lot of justifiable pride in the fact that the ideas we have long championed are now being debated in Berlin or London or some other world capital. But that's not why we got into this. We got into this to prove that politics had a positive purpose in the lives of ordinary citizens. And therefore, it is far more important for us what is happening in Sacramento or in countless other legislatures and city halls across America. You are still on the frontline of the battlefield of ideas. You must lead us forward.

I have taken enormous pride in the work of Lieutenant Governors like Cruz Bustamante and Kathleen Kennedy Townsend. I have taken enormous pride in watching mayors like Kirk Wilson in Austin and Don Cunningham in Bethlehem. I see my former colleagues in the Governors' Association continuing to do remarkable things and people in other State offices. Don't forget that.

I close with these words. Robert Kennedy, who I believe was trying to do something like what we've been doing when his life and career were cut short in 1968, said, "Idealism, high aspiration, and deep conviction are not incompatible with the most practical and efficient of programs. There is no basic inconsistency between ideals and realistic possibility, no separation between the deepest desires of heart and mind and the rational application of human efforts to human problems." That is a good statement of what we believe and what you were doing.

I thank you for your hard work, and I ask you to remember—you can celebrate our achievements all you want, but the American people hire us for tomorrow.

Thank you, and God bless you.

[*At this point, the conversation proceeded.*]

The President. Well, first of all, I would like to thank Kirk and Don and Ember and Mike for their presentations. They pretty well made the point I was trying to make, that—and I think they're four people who could do just about any job. And I think that the jobs they are doing are changing people's lives.

I would just like to make a couple of points about what was said by each of them. First of all, if I could go back to the point I made about paying the debt down and the general condition of the economy—if we can keep

this going, pretty soon this peacetime expansion, which is the longest peacetime expansion in history—we'll have the longest expansion of any kind in our history, including wartime, pretty soon. Now, I do not for a moment believe we have repealed all the laws of economics. But I do believe that the technological revolution underway in America, and the fact that we have relatively open borders, and, therefore, have consistent competition, has kept inflation down as we've had growth.

But if you look at what they said from the perspective that I have to take every day, you know, we sit around here all the time and we argue, how much more can the American economy grow without getting inflation going up. And you remember, every time the Federal Reserve meets now, that's the big argument—people say, are they or are they not going to raise interest rates? Well, there's no evidence of inflation now, but surely we can't keep doing this on and on and on.

We've now got unemployment under 5 percent for 2 years in a row. Well, if you think about it, how could we continue to grow without inflation? And if you posit for the moment the potential of technology, there are the following ways: You can look at what Austin is doing—you have to continue to expand the base of people that make a living in the most powerful part of the economy now. Eight percent of our economy is in high-tech, 30 percent of our growth. And since it, by definition, is—the whole thing that makes it work is continuing explosive increases in productivity. So that's one thing you can do.

The second thing that you can do is to sell more of what we make around the world, which is why I've tried really hard to build a consensus among our party and to reach out to the others, by continuing to expand trade, but to do it in a way that lifts labor and environmental standards around the world, so it's a race to the top, not a race to the bottom.

The third thing you can do is to reach out to discrete population groups, and that's what Michael does. The two biggest discrete population groups in the country that are still not in the work force are the people who still haven't moved from welfare to work, although we moved another million and a half last year. And they are the hardest to reach. That's why what you said about the work force act is so important. Every Governor now has been given the opportunity to work with labor commissions and others to design a training program that we hope will eventually lead to a lifetime educational training program, so that whenever anybody's changing jobs at any age, they'll always be able to get the training they need. But the two big population groups anywhere are people on welfare and disabled people who want to go to work.

One of the things that I think will come out of this Congress, there appears to be almost unanimous bipartisan agreement that we ought to let people on disability who get Medicaid health insurance keep their Medicaid when they go in the work force. Now, that's a good deal for the States, because we're going to pay their Medicaid anyway—State and Federal Government—but if they're working, they'll be paying taxes back. They'll be happier; they'll be part of it.

Seventy-some percent of the people who are disabled in this country want to go in the work force. I met—in New Hampshire, I met a guy who was an Olympic skier once who had a terrible skiing accident, was confined to a wheelchair. He had $40,000 in medical bills a year, and that was slightly more than he was going to make on his job. We're better off if he takes a job. But on the welfare—I don't want to minimize the difficulty of this—he's got a big challenge now, because most of the easy movement from welfare to work has occurred. So if you want to move people now, you've got to really work at it.

And then, to go to what the mayor of Bethlehem said, the other thing we've got to do is to find a way to enable people who lose their economic base to create one more quickly. People like me who come from the Mississippi Delta area—I see Mr. Eastland over there—that's what happened to us. We never—we lost the economic base that once gave everybody a job, even though a lot of those people were working for substandard livings, and we—that's a part of our country that's not yet reconstructed its economic

base. That's why I think the DLC ought to be working on it.

The reason we were celebrating East St. Louis the other day is it was the first—this Walgreens store is going to anchor this big development down there—it's the first development they've had in decades. Not years, decades. We cannot afford, in an economy that's moving literally at the speed of light, to wait decades to figure out how to bring enterprise to places that have been left behind. We have to figure out how to do that better. And what you're doing will work, but it needs to be done everywhere.

The last point I'd like to make is that, going to what Ember said, when I became President, there was one charter school in the whole country—one—in Minnesota. Minnesota was also the first State in the country to have statewide school choice before the charter schools; Arkansas was the second—I stole the idea from Minnesota. So I said, well, let's have 1,000 charter schools. Then I asked the Congress to give me enough money to help people set up 3,000 charter schools for this next year. We're going to be at 1,500 this fall. I think next year will be actually quite close to 3,000 nationwide, which is enough to have a profound impact.

But we won't really have a successful system until the things that make the charter schools work can be found in the other schools. And the voucher movement will never go away if people feel that they're trapped in failure. I've worked for school choice, I've worked for the charter schools, I believe in accountability. Actually, there is no evidence—and there is quite a bit of evidence out there now on how well kids do who opt out and go to private schools—there is no evidence that they're doing better. But if people feel their schools are unsafe or they're inadequate, the voucher movement will be out there, and it will be a difficult political issue for Democrats, for Republicans, for people who love public education.

We have got to prove that—the one thing that we have never done—and I've worked for 20 years on this deal now, more than 20 years now—we have not succeeded as a country in taking what works in public education in one place or two places or 10 places, modifying it for local conditions, yes, but implementing it somewhere else. And so you have to assume that parents and others who would go to the trouble to set up the charter schools wouldn't go to all the trouble unless they were committed to learning, unless they were really committed to what works.

But if I could have waved a magic wand as Governor when I was Governor and solved any problem in my State, it would have been that. I had poor little rural schools, I had some schools in poor urban areas that were doing stunningly well. But I never could either set up the systems or set up the incentives or convince people that everybody else ought to run through what they were doing and do it. Because this is not rocket science. This is not the same as walking on Mars within 5 years. In some ways, it's more difficult because it deals with the human psyche and all these human difficulties, but people can understand what works.

And I just think that the work you've done in Minnesota and what you're pushing now, this whole concept of charter districts—I never even thought about it before you said it today—but that's the sort of thing we need to be doing. We will never bring everybody into the big tent of our prosperity until we have not only the best higher education system in the world, but the best elementary and secondary education system in the world.

And you've got to give this lady and her colleagues in Minnesota an enormous amount of credit for what they have done now for more than a decade to make us think about this. But if I could say to all of you at the grassroots level, if you can figure out a way to make economic change faster, to bring opportunity to where it doesn't exist, and to bring more uniformity of excellence in public education—if we could do those things, if that could be a huge part of the DLC's crusade for the next decade, I wouldn't be a bit worried about America's future.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3 p.m. in the Baltimore Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Al From, president, Democratic Leadership Council; Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante of California, who introduced the President; Gov. Parris N. Glendening and Lt. Gov. Kathleen Kennedy

Townsend of Maryland; Gov. Roy Barnes of Georgia; Gov. Mel Carnahan of Missouri; Gov. Thomas R. Carper of Delaware; Gov. Tom Vilsack of Iowa; Mayor Kurt Schmoke of Baltimore; Maryland State Senate President Thomas V. (Mike) Miller, Jr., and House Speaker Casper R. Taylor, Jr.; civil rights leader Jesse Jackson; Mayor Debra Powell of East St. Louis, IL; Mayor Kirk Watson of Austin, TX; Mayor Donald T. Cunningham, Jr., of Bethlehem, PA; Minnesota State Senator Ember Reichgott Junge; Georgia State Labor Commissioner Michael L. Thurmond; and Hiram Eastland, founding member, Mississippi Democratic Leadership Council.

Statement on the Proposed "African Growth and Opportunity Act"

July 14, 1999

This week Congress has a chance to pass a bill that can transform our relationship with an entire continent for the better. The "African Growth and Opportunity Act" promises a new partnership with Africa based on mutual respect and mutual responsibility.

Last week African nations signed two significant documents—a cease-fire in Congo and a peace agreement ending the war in Sierra Leone. With these agreements, and with democratic government in Nigeria and a new leadership in South Africa, we have an historic opportunity. The United States must do everything we can right now to support the efforts Africans are making to build democracy and respect for human rights, advance peace, and lay the foundation for prosperity and growth.

This bill supports education and job creation so that all of Africa's children can grow up educated and productive. It supports better health care and the flow of ideas and technology that will help Africa's doctors save more lives.

This bill has strong bipartisan support in Congress, nearly unanimous support from the nations of Africa, and brings together a broad group of concerned citizens on both continents—from Jack Kemp and Andrew Young to the African Association of Women Entrepreneurs. It represents an effort to build a partnership with African nations that involves listening and working with them. It serves America's national interests in creating new markets for American goods and services; in building strong, reliable, and democratic partners overseas; and in creating a more prosperous and stable world. I urge Congress to seize this opportunity by passing the "African Growth and Opportunity Act."

Statement on the Deutch-Specter Commission Report

July 14, 1999

I welcome the report of the Commission To Assess the Organization of the Federal Government To Combat the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (the Deutch-Specter Commission).

The Chairman, John Deutch, the Vice Chairman, Senator Specter, and other commissioners have provided a comprehensive study of how we should organize the U.S. Government to deal with the threat of proliferation, which poses one of the most serious challenges to national and international security that we face.

The Commission's report contains a number of interesting recommendations and observations that deserve serious consideration. I have asked my National Security Adviser, Samuel Berger, to coordinate an interagency review and assessment of the Commission's recommendations and report back to me within 60 days with advice on specific steps.

Executive Order 13130—National Infrastructure Assurance Council

July 14, 1999

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including the Federal Advisory Committee Act, as amended (5 U.S.C. App.), and in order to support a coordinated effort by both government and private sector entities to address threats to our Nation's critical infrastructure, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. *Establishment.* (a) There is established the National Infrastructure Assurance Council (NIAC). The NIAC shall be composed of not more than 30 members appointed by the President. The members of the NIAC shall be selected from the private