

Charter schools are living proof of what parents and teachers can do to reinvigorate public education. Investing in them means investing in accountability and excellence and a much better future for our children.

But just as our children are returning to class, the Republican leadership's risky tax cut plan would undermine these investments by forcing deep and irresponsible cuts in education and other important national priorities. So, as Congress comes back to Washington, let's remind them what the creators and the students of America's charter schools already know: We're all accountable for our children's future, and an investment in it is our best investment in all our future.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Edgartown School in Martha's Vineyard, MA.

Remarks at a Victory 2000 Dinner in East Hampton, New York

August 28, 1999

Thank you. Let me thank all of you for the wonderful welcome you have given to Hillary and to me, and to the cause that we come here to advance tonight for the Democratic Committee and for the Senate Campaign Committee and for our prospective candidate from New York over here. [*Laughter*]

This is a very special night for me for many reasons. Most of you—and perhaps some of you know this, but Liz Robbins has been a friend of Hillary's and mine for about 20 years now. And she and Doug have brought a lot of light into our lives, and I want to thank them for opening their home to us. You know, this is kind of a—if you've ever hosted one of these deals—[*laughter*—you know, the nice wears off after about 10 minutes, and you start thinking about it. And you think, "If it's a bust, I'll be humiliated; and if it's successful, they'll destroy all the hedges." [*Laughter*] So I think we ought to give them a hand and thank them for doing this. [*Applause*]

I also want to thank all the people who—starting with the folks—the singer—and the Turtle Crossing restaurant for donating the food, and all the people who served us here

tonight. Thank you all very much for what you've done. I appreciate it very much.

We have mentioned our New York State chair, Judith Hope, and Governor Romer and Joe Andrew and Beth Dozoretz and Andy Tobias, all the people from the DNC, I thank them.

I'm very grateful to the Members of Congress who are here—to Senator Torricelli and Senator Lautenberg and Congressman Forbes; and Congresswoman McCarthy, who had to leave. I'd also like to acknowledge a presence that you won't be hard to find in the former Congressman, Tom McMillan from Maryland, and the former Chairman of the President's Council on Physical Fitness. Thank you, Tom, for being here. And Mark Green, the New York City comptroller, thank you very much, Mark, for being here—the consumer advocate.

And I love Phoebe Snow. And she has been so good to me, and so good to the Democratic Party, and she has sung a lot of different songs. Those of you who know a lot about American gospel and music may know that "His Eye is on the Sparrow" was perhaps Martin Luther King's favorite hymn.

But if you think about it, it's a pretty good reason for being a Democrat, because our eye is on the sparrow, and all the other people around, and we figure—most of us who can afford to be under this tent tonight—that if they do well, God has given us enough gifts that we're going to do just fine. If ordinary folks do well and the conditions of the country are good, then those of us who have the resources and have been gifted with certain talents and certain training, we're going to do very well. And so the hymn was a good setting for our meeting here tonight.

I will be very brief. I want to make a case for our party in the coming election. I think that the First Lady made a pretty good case for herself—[*laughter*—but I'd like to say a word or two about that. And I want to talk about you and what you're going to do between now and November of 2000. And I'll do it quickly.

When I was elected in 1992, the people of New York and the people of the United States took a chance on me and Al Gore, because they were worried about the direction of the economy and the direction of the

society and the fact that we were becoming more divided when we should become more united. And we made an argument and said we would challenge the country to change. And the country took a chance.

And when we moved to Washington, we challenged the Democrats to take the lead in restoring fiscal responsibility. I didn't think you could ever be the progressive party in the country if the wheels were running off the economy. And we quadrupled the debt in 10 years, 12 years. And interest rates were too high. And so we challenged our Democratic Party.

We challenged the Democratic Party to take the lead in ending a welfare system that was dysfunctional. We challenged the Democratic Party to put a human face on the global environment, but not to walk away from global trade. And we asked the Republicans to discard their hatred of government, and their blind faith that the only thing that would ever matter was having more tax cuts. And we asked them to abandon wedge politics.

I think it is very interesting—when the history of this era is written and people write the history of New York politics, it will be very interesting that New York gave us two party switches based on principle: Carolyn McCarthy switched from the Republican to the Democratic Party and ran for Congress—and ran for Congress when she paid the highest price a human being could pay, and she realized she had to do more to ask her country to be a community and to adopt responsible, commonsense legislation to protect people from the kind of madness that she and her family suffered. And Michael Forbes, under even more difficult political circumstances, changed parties because he couldn't believe that the majority party in Congress, in the face of the American Medical Association and 200 consumer groups, would continue to walk away from a Patients' Bill of Rights, and walk away from its responsibility to educate all of our children for the 21st century. I thank them both, and I think they represent the future of America.

Now, the reason I say that is, you took us on faith. And then in 1996 New York was very good to Bill Clinton and Al Gore again, because you had a little more evidence.

[*Laughter*] Now it's not even open to doubt. It's our record against their arguments. And we now have over 19 million new jobs and the highest homeownership in history and the fastest business growth in history and the lowest minority unemployment rate ever recorded and the lowest crime rate in 26 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 32 years.

And even when they have fought us along the way, we've continued to stand up for peace and freedom and justice all around the world. And the politics of inclusion works—America has not been hurt or weakened because we've asked for every law-abiding American, without regard to their race or their gender or their sexual orientation, to be treated like decent human beings in this country, to end hate crimes, to end abuse, to end bigotry. This is a stronger country because of it.

So there is no argument anymore. That's the first thing I want to say. If people ask you why you showed up here tonight, say, "Well, I took a chance in '92, but there's no argument anymore—it works. Why weren't you there? That's why I was." If anybody asks you why you were here, you ask them why weren't they here? Because there is no argument about that.

The second thing I would like to say is, all elections are about tomorrow, and they should be. I remember one time when I was trying to run for a fifth term as Governor. I went out to the State Fair in Arkansas, and this old boy in overalls came to me, and he said, "Bill, are you going to run again?" [*Laughter*] I said, "I don't know, but if I do, will you vote for me?" He said, "Yeah, I guess so. I always have." [*Laughter*] And I said, "Well, aren't you sick of me after all these years?" He said, "No, I'm not, but everybody else I know is." [*Laughter*] And I said, "Well, don't you think I've done a good job?" He said, "Sure, but that's what we hired you to do." He said, "You drew a check every 2 weeks, didn't you?" Interesting point. All elections are about tomorrow, and they should be.

Now, we have a record. You don't have to guess about us. But every one of us, starting with Vice President Gore, all the other Democrats as far as I know running for any

office—certainly including Hillary—are dealing with what I think are the most important big questions of the future. And I'll tell you what I think they are—and I'm not running for anything—but I don't want to see all this work we've done derailed. And I don't want to see all the progress my country has made sacrificed. And believe me, there is still a war going out there for the conscience, the soul, and the future of this country.

You know, the country is working now. So what are we going to do with this prosperity? I think we have an obligation as Americans, those of us who are of age, to think about the children who are here and the long-term challenges facing America. We have never had a chance like this in my lifetime. And we've still got some big, long-term challenges. I'll just mention three or four. The aging of America: twice as many people over 65 in 30 years; under present circumstances, Medicare goes broke in 15 years, Social Security in 34 years. The children of America: over 53 million children in our schools this year, the most diverse student population ever, the highest percentage whose first language is not English. It is a godsend of opportunity in a global economy if we give them all a good education. Keeping the economy going, and that means two things, one of which Hillary already mentioned—bringing opportunity to people and places that haven't had it yet.

Do you know that upstate New York, if it were a separate State, would rank in the bottom five in this country in job growth in the last 6 years? And I'm not proud of that; I've worked hard to drive unemployment down everywhere. But there are small towns in New York; there are inner-city neighborhoods in every big urban area in the country; there are Indian reservations; there's the Mississippi Delta; there are places that have not felt this prosperity. If we get investment there and growth there, we will have more growth without inflation.

The other thing we have to do is to keep paying this debt down instead of driving interest rates up with that tax cut that they have proposed. You know, people say, "Oh, they never have any big ideas." Here's a big idea: We can be out of debt in 15 years for the first time since 1835, and our grandchildren

will have lower interest rates and more prosperity and a more harmonious society as a result of it. That is a big idea, and it is worth hanging on to.

So I say this to you because, yes, we have done a good job the last 6½ years and, no, you don't have to guess anymore. But we need to focus on the future. So when you leave here, and they ask you why you came, tell them, "I took a chance on those rascals, and it worked out just fine." [Laughter] Tell them that they don't have to guess anymore. And tell them you care about your children's and your grandchildren's future.

The last thing I want to tell you is, when I met Hillary in 1971, we started a conversation about this stuff that was going on at 1:30 last night, 28 years later. [Laughter] And we were walking yesterday, we took a walk and I said, "You know, I hope you're not tired of this after all these years." She said, "No, I still—it's very interesting to me." She said, "You may be a lot of things, but you're not boring, which I appreciate." [Laughter]

So, I want to tell you something. Here's what I want to tell you: I have known thousands of people in public life, literally. I probably know more people in public life than anybody else here. I have known—I've served with over 150 Governors. I have known lots of Senators. I've known lots of House Members. I've known State representatives and mayors. I still believe it is a noble calling, being in public service. And you should not even judge all Republicans—I'll say this for Michael Forbes' benefit—by the tone set by the leadership of their party in the Congress. Most people I've known in public life were honest, hardworking people who got up every day and did what they thought was right, to the best of their abilities.

But there is a genuine big debate. If you want somebody that's thought about this stuff and worked hard and always tried to do it for other people for 30 years, who has more heart, more intelligence, more ability, and more commitment than any person I have every known, of all the thousands I have known, then you ought to send her to the Senate and give her a chance to serve.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:45 p.m. in a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Liz Robbins and Doug Johnson; singer Phoebe Snow; and former Gov. Roy Romer of Colorado, general cochair, Joseph J. Andrew, national chair, Beth Dozoretz, national finance chair, and Andy Tobias, treasurer, Democratic National Committee.

Remarks at a Saxophone Club Reception in East Hampton

August 28, 1999

Thank you. First of all, I would like to thank Wyclef and the band; they were magnificent. Weren't they unbelievable? Let's give them another hand. [Applause]

You were up there doing your thing, and I was sitting here thinking about what I was going to say. And I couldn't concentrate for wishing I was 25 and out there again. [Laughter] You were terrific! Thank you so much.

I want to thank all the leaders of the Democratic Party who are here. I want to thank Judith Hope. You know, people always say, "Well, you know, Hillary, is she going to run, is she not going to run?" Well, she spent all these years in Arkansas. Judith Hope was 20 years old before she ever left Arkansas; we're just following her lead. [Laughter]

I want to say, also, how very grateful I am to all the Members of Congress—Senator Lautenberg, Senator Torricelli, Congresswoman McCarthy, and Congressman Forbes—for being here. I think it says a lot about Long Island and the State of New York that the two most prominent people to switch from the Republican to the Democratic Party in the last couple of years are Carolyn McCarthy and Michael Forbes from Long Island.

One switched—you know, we're having a good time tonight, so nobody wants to talk too much about issues, but Michael Forbes switched because the Republicans are killing the Patients' Bill of Rights, and patients are getting the shaft out there in the health care system all across America; and because they have a budget and tax plan which will cut education spending when we should be investing more in the education of our children.

And Carolyn McCarthy quit because after her intense personal agony, she just got sick and tired of their leadership killing common-sense things like closing the loophole that stops us from doing background checks when criminals buy guns at gun shows and flea markets, and it's wrong.

And I say that to make this point. I am so profoundly grateful to the people of New York for being so good to me and Hillary and to Al and Tipper Gore and two Presidential elections and one magnificent convention and one very bracing primary in 1992. The people of New York have been good to me and have made it possible for us to do what we have worked hard to do in the last 6½ years.

And I want you to think about just a couple of things, especially the younger people here. I'm not running for anything. [Laughter] Kind of hate it, actually—I wish I still could, but I can't. [Laughter] But I have worked all my life to try to bring people together and move people forward and bring out the best in people. And when New York took a chance on me and Al Gore in 1992, that's exactly what it was. We said, "Vote for us. We'll take the country in a different direction. We'll ask the Democrats to be for fiscal responsibility and bringing the crime rate down and changing the welfare culture and having a humane trade policy. And we'll ask the Republicans to stop badmouthing the Government and dividing people by race and gender and sexual orientation and other things. And we'll try to bring this country together and move it forward."

But you couldn't know. You took a chance. And we've been down there working for 6½ years now. And the first point I want to make is, you're not taking a chance anymore. You know we have the longest peacetime expansion in history, the highest homeownership in history, the lowest minority unemployment in history, the lowest crime rate in 26 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 32 years. This country is moving in the right direction. You took a chance, and you were right. And the Democratic Party has moved this country forward.

The second thing I want to say is—even more important—is that we just made the