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is in our fundamental national interest. So, with President Pastrana and with our Congress, we must and we will intensify this vital work.

Remarks at a Reception for Representative Sheila Jackson Lee in Houston, Texas

January 11, 2000

Thank you very much. Well, first of all, let me say I am delighted to be here and delighted to see such a large crowd. I keep reading in the Washington press that I am a lame duck, whatever that is. [*Laughter*] But I think what it means is that someday you show up, and no one else does. [*Laughter*] So it's delightful to see you here.

Let me say, I am also profoundly grateful to Jenard and Gail for opening their magnificent home to us tonight. And I did try to come once before and was unable to do so. So, Gail, I'm glad your mother came twice. Thank you, Ida. And I'm glad you hugged me and kissed me. I feel much better now. Thank you. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank Mayor Brown for being here. He has done a superb job for Houston. I'm very proud of Lee Brown. You know, he was our drug czar in the national administration before he got elected mayor. He proved that there was life after Washington. [*Laughter*] And I hope it's catching. [*Laughter*] I'm very proud of him.

I want to thank Lloyd and B.A. Bentsen for being here, and I don't want anybody to forget that this great economic recovery started on Lloyd Bentsen's watch and started before I ever took the oath of office, when Lloyd Bentsen announced we were going to cut the deficit by $500 billion. The stock market boomed. Interest rates went down—[*inaudible*].

One of us needs to show respect for the other. You know, the other night they had this big dinner honoring Lloyd, and I called in, and I lathered all over him and said all these incredible things. And then I got off the phone and he said, "Now, who was that guy again?" [*Laughter*]

I want to thank my friend Billie Carr, who taught me a lot of what I know about politics. I love you and will always love you all my life. Thank you for being here. And thank you, Kathy, for singing. And I'd also—I've got something special I want to say about Sheila Jackson Lee, but I will introduce it by saying I'm glad Goldie Hawn came all the way from California to be with us tonight.

And here's what the relevance of this evening is to me. I was nominated for President, effectively, on June 2, 1992, because I won the California, Ohio, and New Jersey primaries, and numerically had enough votes to win the nomination on the first ballot. Now some of you may remember there was a guy from Texas named Perot who was also running, who was the rage of the moment. And the next day—this was supposed to be a happy night in my life, but that night on television and the next day, all the news stories were: Clinton wins the nomination, but he's dead meat; he can't be elected President, he's running third, everybody really wants to vote for Perot.

So it was not the happiest election evening headquarters we had in Los Angeles at the Biltmore Hotel—the old Biltmore downtown. And everybody I knew was around there feeling sorry for themselves. I thought it was pretty good. After all, I had gotten nominated, and I figured we had a few months to fix it.

And Goldie Hawn and Chevy Chase showed up to tell me that they didn't think we were going to finish third. I have never forgotten it. I never will. I thank you for being here tonight. Thank you.

Now what's that got to do with Sheila Jackson Lee? A lot, because Sheila Jackson Lee also sticks. You know, I hate to tell you this. Sometimes we make jokes about you behind your back. [*Laughter*] Why? Because you have one pace—fast; and one pressure level—hard. [*Laughter*]

But let me tell you, this Representative from Congress—and I know a little something about the burdens that are imposed on Members of Congress, so let me say I'm delighted that Elwin and Jason are here tonight. And I want to thank them for the contribution they have made to the welfare of the people of this congressional district and the people of this country, because it is very difficult to have a family and serve in Congress.

Much harder than most people know. It is very hard, and I thank you, sir. Thank you, Jason. Thank you.

But a lot of people think I came down here because they also went to Yale Law School. That had nothing to do with it. [*Laughter*] Your Member of Congress is immensely well-educated. She is very attractive, and she is very articulate. But the best thing about her is, she fights, she works, and she doesn't give up.

There are a lot of smart people in the world; there are a lot of attractive people in the world. The people who make a difference are the people who take whatever the opportunities and the burdens life gives them, and they fight for their dreams and for the welfare of other people. And that's the kind of Member of Congress Sheila Jackson Lee is.

Now all of you know that, but no longer than she has been in Congress that she really has established a truly astonishing record across a very wide range of issues. I can't think of any Member from any district that's been there the length of time she has that's done so much in so many different areas. And I appreciate that—in housing, in mental health services—especially in mental health services for children, something that I think is profoundly important. She's the leader of the congressional children's caucus and a great leader doing the things that we think need to be done to reduce violence against children; to have sensible measures to keep guns out of the hands of criminals; to have after-school programs for children; to have mental health services in our schools for the children who need them. And in all of these areas she has actually had an impact. It's not just—because she doesn't just give a speech and then go away. She understands that words just drift into air and disappear unless they're backed up by deeds, and not just one day's worth but consistent, systematic, determined effort. Fast and hard. [*Laughter*]

I loved it—on the way over here tonight, my Chief of Staff and I, John Podesta, were sitting in the car saying, "I wonder what old Sheila is going to ask us for tonight." [*Laughter*] Then we pull up in the driveway, and there's Mayor Brown and Sheila. And I said, "My God, they want me to move the Capitol to Houston." [*Laughter*] If she decided that was the right thing to do, I wouldn't bet everything I own against it getting done. [*Laughter*]

I say this with respect. You see, I think—and I know I can say this for Lloyd Bentsen, who is one of the finest public servants I've even known—public service is an honor. And most people who do it are honorable people. But the special people who do it are not only honorable and passionate, they stick, and they work, and they get things done.

The reason I asked him to be my first Secretary of the Treasury is I thought he was the best Senate Finance Chairman I could ever imagine. And I knew if I named him to be Secretary of State—Treasury—people would be serious. They'd say, "this guy really is putting the economy first. This President really is gong to turn the economy around."

Serious people are people that are not only smart and articulate, they get things done. That's what Sheila Jackson Lee does. I could give you a lot of other examples. She's been so active in Africa and the fight against AIDS in Africa, in the Africa trade bill, and trying to pass the Caribbean Basin Initiative trade bill and just on and on and on. She is the ranking member of the subcommittee of the Judicial Committee on Immigration, a big deal for Texas and to the United States.

Yes, we should enforce our immigration laws. And people who wait their turn should not be discriminated against by people who don't. But we should never forget, looking around this room, that we are a nation of immigrants. Except for the Native Americans, we all came here from somewhere else. And even they did, but it was across a landmass that no longer exists many millennia ago. And we should never forget this. All of us, one way or the other, got here by the grace of God from somewhere else.

And so, what—we've tried to make it clear that America is stronger because we're a nation of immigrants, that our freedom to practice our faith is stronger because we welcome people of all faiths to our country, and offer them the protections of our Constitution for their religious and cultural practices and their right to free speech. And she carries the banner of protecting those values in the United States Congress.

Like I said, she just got there. Another thing I said to my Chief of Staff, I said, "you know, if Sheila had been in Congress for 20 years, It would take me 3 hours to introduce her." [*Laughter*] She will have done so much by then, we'll just have to forego the introduction. [*Laughter*] This is very important. We need people like this.

You know, I read—as a lot of you know, I read a lot of American history, and I spent a lot of time—when I was asked by one of the major magazines to write an essay on the person I thought should be considered the person of the century. And Time magazine selected Mr. Einstein, which I think is a good selection. They could have selected Gandhi; that would have been a good selection. They could have selected Franklin Roosevelt or Winston Churchill. I argued for Roosevelt. I spent a lot of time. I went back, and I reread a lot of the things I'd read about Roosevelt.

I'll tell you an interesting story. Shortly after Roosevelt contracted polio—keep in mind, he was almost 40 years old when he got it. He had run for Vice President of the United States at the tender age of 38. He was a dashing, handsome, thin man; he cut a great figure on the campaign trail in 1920. And he seemed to have the world at his finger tips. And there he was, just a couple of years later, hobbled by polio.

And he nourished the dream for many years that he would, in fact, walk again. And he also knew that, whatever happened, he had to keep fighting. So at length, he decided he would take an office in New York, in a highrise, and he would actually try to go to work there. But because he wanted to leave open the possibility of walking again, he would not be seen in his wheelchair.

So he had these big braces, and at the time they were heavy and awkward and impossible to navigate. And he walked into this New York highrise the first day, and he got up, and he fell flat on his face. And there was no one there to pick him up. And everyone was staring at him. Now keep in mind, just a year or so he had run for Vice President. And even though the Democrats had lost, no one thought it was his fault. And he was alone, lying on his face in New York. And he pushed himself up off the floor and threw his head back and laughed and smiled and drug himself across the floor to the wall, straightened his braces out, and pulled himself up.

What is the lesson in that. Life is 50 percent what happens to you, and 50 percent in how you respond to what happens to you. You can lose a lot of options in life, but as long as you're breathing and thinking, you've still got some left—a large number. The thing is to make the most of the moment, with heart.

I think that your Member of Congress has done that. I admire her, and I'm honored to be here for her tonight.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:50 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to reception hosts Jenard and Gail Gross; Mrs. Gross' mother, Ida Fink; Mayor Lee P. Brown of Houston; former Secretary of the Treasury Lloyd Bentsen and his wife, B.A.; Billie Carr, chair, Texas Democratic Committee; gospel singer Kathy Taylor-Brown; actress Goldie Hawn; Reform Party founder H. Ross Perot; actor Chevy Chase; and Representative Jackson Lee's husband, Elwin C. Lee, and son, Jason C.B. Lee.

Remarks to the Texas Legislative Victory Fund in Houston

January 11, 2000

You know, when Debbie got into that, how we were probably related to each other—[*laughter*]—I did not know where she was going with it. I thought she was going to do some hillbilly shtick about how our eyes were too close set—[*laughter*]—or I could offer to play you that banjo song from "Deliverance." I didn't know what was going on there for a while. [*Laughter*] And after I became President, I found that I had all these relatives I didn't know existed. [*Laughter*] They just kept cropping up all over. And most of them had more limited resources than I did.

I'll tell you one real quick story. I did get one letter from a woman way up in her eighties in northeast Louisiana who showed me how John Grisham and I were like tenth cousins. And I wrote him a letter and said, "Praise God, you're the first one that has any money"—[*laughter*]—"come to the White House tomorrow." [*Laughter*] And it was