

is all about. And I want to implore you to use this millennial year of 2000 to ask all of our fellow Americans to think about those who could be a part of what we celebrate and thank God for every day, but aren't yet. If we make them a part of it, we'll really give a gift to our children and to the 21st century.

Thank you, and God bless you all. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:48 p.m. at the Bell Podium at the New York Stock Exchange. In his remarks he referred to civil rights leader Rev. Jesse Jackson and his wife, Jacqueline; and Richard Grasso, chairman and chief executive officer, New York Stock Exchange.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Reception in New York City

January 13, 2000

The President. Thank you. First of all, let me say I've had a good time tonight. I've enjoyed taking the pictures with all of you, and it's the only way I get to make absolutely sure I meet everyone. [Laughter] So I'm sorry that we had to do it so quickly, but at least I got to see all of you briefly.

I want to thank John and Margo for opening their beautiful home for us and for being my wonderful friends for a very long time now. And I want to thank the other cochairs of this event for the efforts that you made and the success that you had. And I would like to just take a moment to say some things that may be obvious to all of you about why I think it's important that you did this tonight.

When I ran for President in 1992—and I'm quite sure that most people in New York could not imagine voting for a guy who was Governor of a State that many people here couldn't find on a map, you know—[laughter]—as President Bush said, a small Southern State. [Laughter] Let me say something else—I know I usually get on—[inaudible]. I keep reading—several times in my tenure, for various reasons, the press has said that I was a lame duck, and now they say I really am because I only have a year to serve.

You know what a lame duck is, really? That's when you're supposed to show up at

an event, and you do, and nobody else is there. [Laughter] So you all were immensely reassuring to me tonight, and I thank you. I'll sleep well tonight. I thank you very much.

But let me say to you—

Audience member. [Inaudible]

The President. Listen, that is—part of the reason we're here tonight; it's a high-tech economy, you know all these cell phones—

Audience member. Buy a 500 share. [Laughter]

The President. Even I know its—[inaudible]. The thing that I want to say about it, just very briefly, why I hope you will—if somebody asked you tomorrow why did you come, apart from you wanted to get a picture, or you wanted to say something to me about a particular issue—Cyprus or something else—I'll say more about that in a minute—I just want you to remember, 7 years ago, when I ran for President in 1992, we had economic distress, social division, political conflict, and Government was discredited.

And the only reason I ran—I was actually very happy at home in my job, raising my daughter, with my friends—some of whom have become your friends, some of you in the last 7 years. But it really bothered me because I knew this was a great country that had more strengths and more potential for the 21st century than at any time in our history, and I felt we had an obligation to the rest of the world because this is the only place that has the kind of economic strength we have and political strength, and also we have people from everywhere else on Earth living in America. We have people from everywhere else on Earth, nearly, in this room tonight. [Laughter] And that's very important.

So, anyway, we set about our work. And the reason this is so important is now the American people have to decide whether to ratify the approach that has had such a large role in producing the last 7 years or take a different approach. John talked about we've gone from a big deficit to a big surplus. We've got the first back-to-back budget surpluses in 42 years, and in the last 2 days we actually bought in Government debt before it was due, for the first time in the history of the United States. We're going to get this country out of debt.

And all of you know we've got the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years and the longest—in just a few weeks, we'll have the longest economic expansion in the history of America, including the times we were fully mobilized for war. And I'm grateful for that. And I'm grateful for the fact that we have the lowest welfare rolls in 32 years and the lowest murder rate in 30 years and all of those things.

But what I want to say to you is, elections and public work are just like your work—it's really always about tomorrow. And I appreciate what John said about the job that we've done. But I never will forget when I was thinking about running for a fifth term as Governor—we used to have 2-year terms, and then we went to 4-year terms—I went out to the State Fair. And this old man in overalls came up to me and said, "Are you going to run for another term?" And I said, "Well, I don't know. If I run, will you vote for me?" He said, "I guess so. I always have." [Laughter] I'd been in 10 years. And I said, "Well, aren't you sick of me after all these years?" He said, "No, I'm not, but nearly everyone else I know is." [Laughter] So I got my feelings hurt. I said, "Well, don't you think I've done a good job?" He said, "Yeah, but that's what I hired you to do." [Laughter] He said, "You drew a check every 2 weeks didn't you?" It was a very interesting encounter.

So every time we come around to a decision, we always have to think about the future. And the only thing I want you to think about is this. This is the only time in my lifetime when we have had at the same time dramatic economic progress, dramatic decline in our social problems, the absence of an internal crisis, and the absence of an external threat to our existence. We have never had all those four conditions at one time. Therefore, we have the opportunity of a lifetime to chart the future of our dreams for our children here at home and to be the world's most responsible nation abroad.

A lot of you came up to me, some talked about the Middle East peace process, which I'm heavily involved in—I hope and pray we can reach an agreement between Syria and Lebanon and the Palestinians in Israel in the next several weeks. And several of you talked

to me about how we've made some progress in repairing the breach between Turkey and Greece, but we haven't done enough on Cyprus. You think about it—there's no other place in the world where people would come and talk to the head of a country and talk about these things. And it's a great privilege to be an American, to live in a country where we have people from everywhere and where our country has the opportunity and the responsibility to try to move the world toward greater harmony, to go beyond the racial and ethnic and religious conflicts that have caused so much turmoil in the world. And I think that's important.

We have an opportunity to do the same thing here at home. We have an opportunity now—the reason I'm here today in New York is I came to the Wall Street Project, sponsored by Jesse Jackson, Sandy Weill, and Dick Grasso—now, that's an interesting trio. [Laughter] And why are they doing that? For the same reason that I'm going around America trying to get changes in the law and new investments and tax incentives to invest in areas and people that have been left behind, because we'll never have the opportunity we have right now, today, to give people who have been poor and forgotten a chance to be part of this free enterprise economy. If we don't do it now, we'll never get around to it—we'll never get around to it.

Let me just mention two or three more issues. We've got the most diverse group of young people in our country's history and the largest number of students. We've got the best system of college education in the world, and we have effectively opened the doors of college to everybody, although I'm going to propose some things to make it more affordable in the State of the Union. But no one believes we've done what we need to do to give every child a world-class education, kindergarten through 12th grade. Until we do that, we won't be secure in the 21st century.

The number of people over 65 is going to double in the next 30 years. I hope to be one of them. [Laughter] And I'm trying to get the Congress to take the Social Security Trust Fund out beyond the life of the baby boomers and to add to the life of Medicare and to let elderly people on Medicare who can't otherwise afford it buy insurance so

they can have prescription drugs when they need them. These are big issues.

And just one more—I could mention four or five more—I want to mention one more. I had an incredible experience this week, which I hope every one of you will have at some point in your life if you have not already. I flew in very late at night into the Grand Canyon. And I spent the night in an old lodge built in 1905, with a balcony right over the edge of the Canyon. And I spent an hour in the morning watching the Sun rise over the Grand Canyon.

Thirty years ago, when I was a much younger man, I spent 2 hours crawling out on a ledge to watch the Sun set over the Grand Canyon. And it's a source of infinite humility. People ask me all the time about my legacy. It took millions of years to form the Grand Canyon; doubtless in a few thousand no one will remember that I did a lot to save it or expand it, you know. It's not about your legacy; it's about your life.

But if you go to the Grand Canyon and you watch the sunrise or the sunset and you see that it took millions upon millions of years for all these layers of rock to form and they're different colors and different shapes, so when the Sun sets you watch the light come up out of the Canyon and, when the Sun rises, you watch the light dive down into the Canyon, and it's like watching this breathtaking, constantly changing painting, there's nothing like it anywhere in the world.

And I went out there because I added a million acres to the land we're protecting, almost doubling the size of the Grand Canyon. And when we did that, our administration has not protected more land in the lower 48 States than any administration in history except those of Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt. [*Applause*] Thank you. You don't have to clap for that, but I like it. [*Laughter*]

But here's why I make this point. When I ran for office in 1992 I used as my theme song that old Fleetwood Mac song, "Don't Stop Thinking About Tomorrow," and all during the times I've been President, the good times and bad, I have hammered my Cabinet and my staff to remember why we came here. I was immensely gratified when, a couple of years ago, a scholar of the American Presidency said that we had—and this

was 3½ years ago—already kept a higher percentage of our promises to the American people than the previous five administrations he'd studied.

And it's not a mystery. We just sort of showed up for work every day, and no matter what else they were lobbying in, we just kept working and kept working. The reason I think it's important you're here tonight is this: Just remember, for all the good things that have happened, what we have basically done is turn the ship of state around, got the country going in the right direction, and got it coming together.

We now have a chance to think about these big things—I mean really big things. Just think about it. We could make America the safest big country in the world. We could prove forever that you could grow the economy and improve the environment. We could move beyond our own racial and religious and ethnic conflicts and basically make a lasting peace in other parts of the world. These are things we could do. We could prove you could educate all children. We could prove you could bring free enterprise to poor people. These are things we can do.

But they won't happen unless we make a decision, as a people, in this election that we will not be devoted, distracted, or divided by the good times before. Now, there are a lot of young people here, and I'm glad that you're here. But everybody over a certain age can cite some personal experience when you made a big mistake in your life because you thought things were going so well that there were no consequences to the failure to concentrate. Everybody over a certain age—[*laughter*]—isn't that right? I have about 10 laws of politics, one of which is, you're always most vulnerable when you think you are invulnerable.

This country will never get an election like this again in our lifetime, when all these things are in alignment. And now we have to make a decision about what we want to do for our children and our grandchildren. And it's not as if we don't know what the great opportunities and the great challenges of the next 30 or 40 years are going to be. So we have no excuse. We know.

So if somebody asks you why you came tonight, say, "I got to see the President, and

he told a joke or two, and we took a nice picture. But I care about the America and the world my children and grandchildren are going to live in, and I want us to use this election to take what Theodore Roosevelt called almost 100 years ago, the long look ahead.”

Thank you very much.

Audience member. One or two questions.

Judicial Nominations

Audience members. [*Inaudible*—so much about the future and one of the reasons I think everybody is here is because of their concern. And one of the key things that keeps coming up in this election is not about the next 4 years. I think it has a great effect on the Federal judiciary for the next 30 years. I don’t know the statistics, but I know the Supreme Court is basically—I just wondered if you could comment on this.

The President. I think a lot of people have not given much thought to this, but when you vote for—now, this is a self-interested statement I’m about to make. When you vote for the Senate—[*laughter*—and when you vote for President, one of the things you should know is, I have appointed a very large number of judges. In spite of the fact that I think the Republican Senate has been way too slow in considering our nominees, I’ve appointed more than 40 percent of all the judges in the city today but only two members of the Supreme Court.

Most people believe there will be at least two, and maybe as many as four members of the Supreme Court retire in the next 4 years. That means—and there are only two groups of people that matter then—the President who nominates, and the Senate who confirms.

And all these people have been pretty honest, I must say. The candidates have been pretty honest. Governor Bush said the other day that the two people on the Supreme Court that he most admires were Clarence Thomas and Justice Scalia. That’s what he said. So he’s sending you a signal. He said, “I want you to know that so you’ll know who I’ll appoint to the Supreme Court if I get elected.” And you have to assume—I can tell you that the people who are in the Presi-

dent’s party are more likely to vote to confirm his nominees, whether or not they agree with him.

So you need to think about that. What do you want in a Supreme Court judge? Do you care if they repeal *Roe v. Wade*, or not? Do you want them to? Do you not want them to? It’s a big issue. And nobody is talking about it yet, but you should be aware that this is not an idle, sort of sideline conversation. This is a real, significant possibility. And so it’s something you should think about. And there’s not just that, there are all the civil rights cases and a lot of other issues that are big, big issues. So you should know that.

The power of the President—I really tried to—and my judgments were much less politically controversial than previous judges, both Democrat and Republican, because I focused on getting people who had good skills and were highly regarded by the American Bar Association, even though there were more women and more minorities in my appointees than anybody in the past, they also had the highest ratings. So I tried to keep it out of politics. But it could get very political very fast, and the public would be making a mistake if they didn’t take into account these things as they voted.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:05 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to reception hosts John and Margo Castsimatidis; civil rights leader Rev. Jesse Jackson; Sanford I. Weill, chief executive officer, Citigroup; Richard Grasso, chairman and chief executive officer, New York Stock Exchange; and Gov. George W. Bush of Texas.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report Required by the Ratification Resolution of the Chemical Weapons Convention

January 13, 2000

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Attached is a report to the Congress on cost-sharing arrangements, as required by Condition 4(A) of the resolution of advice and consent to ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical