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Week Ending Friday, February 4, 2000

Remarks to the Community in Quincy, Illinois

January 28, 2000

Thank you very much. I think I should begin by thanking you all for waiting in this cold weather all morning. Your welcome to me has been so warm, I don't care what it's doing outside; inside, it still feels like Florida to me here. I thank you very much.

I want to begin by thanking your mayor, who flew in here with me today; and your fine Congressman, Lane Evans; our two United States Senators, Senator Durbin and Senator Fitzgerald; Congressman Shimkus; Congressman Hulshof; thank you all for being here. Let's give them a big hand here today. [*Applause*] Didn't Kayt do a good job? [*Applause*] All I can tell you is that when I was her age, I could not have given a speech anywhere near that good; so she's well on her way.

I want to thank all the people that gave us our music: the Quincy High School Band, the Quincy Park Band, the Quincy Notre Dame Marching Band. Thank you all very much. I want to thank all the people who are here today who represent State and local government and the people of this community, the police officers, business leaders, day care providers, AmeriCorps members, and other public servants, the students, the teachers, all represented up on this stage today. And, of course, "Mr. Quincy" there. Thank you very much, sir, for being here.

Ladies and gentlemen, last night when I gave the State of the Union Address, I was fulfilling a requirement of the United States Constitution that requires the President to report every year on the state of the Union. Then, I wanted to come out today to the heartland of America to say what that was all about. Maybe we ought to change the Constitution, Senators and Congressmen, to require the President to come to Quincy the day after the State of the Union Address every year.

You know, I never will forget the night I actually did talk to the mayor and Senator Paul Simon, who was not pretending to be me, and you were going through that horrible flood, and I monitored your progress, and this community became a symbol of hope and what people can do when they pull together. I loved hearing the mayor today again recount the rich heritage of your city, the Lincoln-Douglas debate, the Underground Railroad, the sanctuary offered so long ago to those fleeing religious persecution.

I loved driving here from the airport today and remembering the bus tour that Vice President Gore and Hillary and Tipper and I took in 1992 through so much of this part of America, and I saw so many of the same pictures all along the way: young children out with their signs; people saying, "My birthday's August the 19th, too"; some people like my dog; some people like my cat; some people like them and don't like the President very much. The whole day was wonderful. It was a wonderful thing.

And I think that what you show here today and every day is that when we join hands and join hearts, we can climb any mountain and turn back any tide. That is what our Nation has proved these last 7 years. And as I look out here on all of you, I see fresh evidence of what I said last night, folks: The state of our Union today is the strongest it has ever been, thanks to you.

If you saw the speech last night, you know that I quoted President Theodore Roosevelt, one of my favorite predecessors. He's the last sitting President to come to Quincy. I don't know what the others were thinking about. [*Laughter*] But Roosevelt had a great quote at the dawn of the last century, which was a time that has a lot of parallels to our present-day experience. He reminded us that "a growing nation with a future must always take the long look ahead." And what that

means is, you know, when you folks were worried about the flood taking your town away, everybody concentrated and went to work. And then when you had all the problems and you needed the ferry and the mayor said the river was 6 miles wide, everybody concentrated and went to work. Sometimes people get in trouble not when times are tough, but when times seem to be so good people think they don't have to do anything, they don't have to worry, they don't have to work together.

And what I want to tell you is, never in my lifetime have we had the combination of economic prosperity and social progress with so little internal crisis or external threat, and I know from my experience that we should be using this time wisely to deal with the long-term challenges and seize the long-term opportunities that the children of Kayt's generation will have to deal with in the new century; and that's what I want the American people to support.

I want you to support us in saying we made a mistake to quadruple the debt of the country. Now we're paying off the debt; let's stay at the job until America is debt-free for the first time since 1835. The number of people over 65 is going to double in 30 years. I hope to be one of them. The baby boomers must not—we must not—impose the burden of our enormous numbers in retirement on our children. That means we need to take the interest savings from paying down the debt, put it in the Social Security Trust Fund, take it out to 2050, then the baby boomers' retirement will not impose a burden on our children and our children's ability to raise our grandchildren.

We need to make sure every child in this country starts school ready to learn and graduates ready to succeed and has access to a college education. Now, I just want to mention one of your schools, because I hear people all the time saying, "Aw, the President acts like we can turn schools around; that's not true." Well, it is true. I believe all children can learn. I believe all schools can work.

Washington Elementary School, here in Quincy, a few years ago was in trouble; today, it's one of the best-performing schools in your school district because you've got a good principal, community involvement; you've got money from our program to reduce class size with more teachers, to expand after-school programs, and now you've got a successful situation. I'm telling you, I only wish Washington, DC, worked as well as Washington Elementary School. And I want to thank the principal, Terry Mickle, for being with us today. Let's give her a hand. [*Applause*]

So, what I've asked the Congress to do is to invest more in Head Start, invest more in these after-school and summer school programs, invest more in helping more schools turn themselves around, and to give the American people, for the first time, a tax deduction for the cost of college tuition, to open the doors of college.

The other thing that I hope we can do is to give more families the tools to succeed at home and work—to lengthen the life of Medicare for 25 years; to give people on Medicare the right to a voluntary prescription drug program—too many of our senior citizens need this medicine and cannot afford it; it's the difference in what kind of life they can have. And I hope you will support our efforts to achieve that.

There's just one other issue I want to mention today, because it affects a lot of people in this neighborhood. A few years ago, before I ran for President, I had the honor of coming to southern Illinois, to Senator Simon's hometown of Makanda, because I was head of something called the Lower Mississippi River Delta Development Commission. And I found that the counties in southern Illinois had unemployment rates as high as they did in the Mississippi Delta and the South, where I came from.

One of the things that really bothers me about this astonishing economic recovery of ours is that not everybody has participated in it. And I think all Americans will support us in saying that this is the best time we'll ever have—with unemployment low and growth high—to go into these inner cities, into these small rural towns, into these Native American reservations, and help turn their economies around, and give people who are doing well incentives to invest there, to start businesses there, to put people to work there. If we don't do this now, we will never

get around to it. We can bring free enterprise and hope to people who have never had it.

We also have to recognize, as I said last night—and I want to emphasize here, in this part of America—that the farmers of this country by and large have not participated in this economic recovery, because they've had floods, they've had droughts, and after the economies in Asia collapsed, farm prices went in the cellar. And for the last 2 years, we have seen in Washington at the end of every congressional session, everybody scurrying around trying to come up with enough money to give to the farmers to keep thousands upon thousands upon thousands from going out of business.

The freedom to farm bill, in bad times—the so-called freedom to farm bill could become a freedom to fail bill if we don't make some changes in it. And so I say here, in a town where most people are not farmers, but where we're in a part of America where most people come from farming stock, I want you to support us in trying to change the farm law in Washington so that farmers in America who work hard and are the most efficient in the world can make a decent living out here. And I hope you'll help us.

We have to provide income assistance when farm prices and farm incomes fall. We have to stay, and keep, with the same loan rates for the USDA commodities at the 1999 levels, so we won't drive them down even lower. We've got to make it easier for farmers to help build up our environment. You know, if they conserve land, we ought to help them do that. And when prices are low, that's a good, cheap way to guarantee they can make a decent living, and we don't drive them even lower with overproduction.

We ought to give them a better crop insurance program, which increases the subsidy we give to help people buy crop insurance. You know, a lot of times when you see at the end of the year, and Congress has to give a lot of money to farmers, it's because they can't buy insurance the same way businesspeople up and down this street can buy insurance against theft, or the building burning down. And we need to help farmers with that.

So I want to ask you to support our efforts to help the farmers. If we're going to be one community here, we have to reach across—racial lines, yes, and religious lines, yes, but also to people who don't do what we do for a living, don't live like we do every day—they live in rural areas; we live in towns; they live in big cities. We've got to understand that we're a strong country when we all work together and we give everybody a chance to rise.

I remember when you were going through this flood here. I would go to big cities on the east coast or the west coast, and I would say, "They need your help. It's going to cost a lot of money. It's going to be partly your money; they're part of your country." And people in cities that couldn't find Quincy on a map would cheer, because they knew they were part of your American family. If we can keep that attitude in good times, America is going to do fine.

But I ask you—it's getting cold, and I want to let you go, but you just remember—if you don't remember anything else I said today, you remember how you were in the flood. And remember that when you have the chance of a lifetime to do good, you cannot be lulled into complacency.

You have a chance—we all do—to give our children a debt-free America, with world-class education, that takes care of our seniors, that brings opportunity to people who haven't had it, that seizes the challenges of a new era. And we ought to take that opportunity. We owe it to children who will follow us 50 years from now. And I will do all I can to honor the spirit, the values that I have seen in this wonderful park today.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:55 p.m. in Washington Park. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Charles W. Scholz of Quincy; Quincy Junior High School freshman class president Kayt Norris, who introduced the President; community activist/philanthropist Joe Bonansinga, known as "Mr. Quincy"; and former Senator Paul Simon. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Statement on the Resignation of Senior Adviser to the President for Policy and Strategy Douglas B. Sosnik

January 28, 2000

It is hard to believe that in just a few weeks Doug Sosnik will be leaving the White House. As happy as I am for Doug and his wife, Fabiana, that he is taking on an exciting new challenge with the National Basketball Association, I am not looking forward to his departure, because he has been such an important part of virtually everything we have worked on over the past 6 years.

Doug has that increasingly rare attribute—a "passion for anonymity"—and a self-deprecating style that has made him perhaps the least known, most influential person in our community.

What is known about Doug is certainly true: He has been an invaluable source of policy and political advice for me and my staff, a wise and steady counselor, and a reliable, yet not-too-successful, player of "hearts."

What is not so well known about Doug is his sense of history and of the moment; his humor and skill at bringing people together, cutting through the clutter and getting things done; his desire to mentor young and new staff members, many of whom have Doug to thank, not only for helping them join this administration but for helping them succeed as well.

An expert in the combative world of politics, Doug represents what is best about politics—a recognition that the root of the word is "people," and doing good things for people is what it's all about.

He would never say it about himself but, to borrow a phrase from his new life, I hope that more people coming into careers in public service will "be like Doug."

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

January 29, 2000

Good morning. Two nights ago, in my State of the Union Address, I asked the American people to heed the advice of President Theodore Roosevelt at the dawn of the last century and take "the long look ahead." The long look ahead to the great challenges we face and the great opportunities we can seize in the 21st century. That requires us to set new goals for our Nation and take the right first steps to achieve them.

We must ensure that every child begins school ready to learn and graduates ready to succeed. We must help every family succeed at home and at work—and that no child is raised in poverty. We must make America the world's safest big country, lead the world toward shared peace and prosperity and to the far frontiers of science and technology. And we must do all this while maintaining the fiscal discipline that brought us to this rare and promising moment we enjoy.

Seldom in our Nation's history, never in my lifetime, have we enjoyed so much prosperity and social progress with so little internal crisis or so few external threats, with 20 million new jobs, the fastest economic growth in 30 years, the lowest unemployment in 30 years, the lowest poverty rates in 20 years, the lowest minority unemployment rates on record, the first back-to-back surpluses in 42 years. And next month, the longest economic growth in our history.

It's important to remember how this happened. It began in 1993 with a new economic plan that cut the deficit while making investments in our people and our future. When deficits fell, interest rates came down, mortgage payments came down, lower car and student loan payments resulted, there was greater business investment, more jobs, more economic growth. So this fiscal discipline has moved us from record budget deficits and high unemployment to record budget surpluses and unimagined economic strength. Now is not the time to change course.

In the well of the House of Representatives 2 nights ago, I challenged Congress to move forward on important priorities without giving up this fiscal discipline. If we will stay this course, we can pay the country's debt off for the first time since 1835, over the next few years.

Today I am pleased to announce that congressional leaders from both parties and both