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to want to learn. You've still got to be disciplined enough to be willing to work. But if you get your heart and your mind engaged, there should be no barrier to letting you live your dreams tomorrow. And we're going to do our best to take the barriers down.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:35 a.m. in the gymnasium. In his remarks, he referred to Darnell Curley, teacher, and Wilma Durham and Art Bridges, co-principals, Frank W. Ballou Senior High School; Mayor Anthony A. Williams of Washington, DC; Arlene Ackerman, superintendent, District of Columbia Public Schools; Angela Lee, director of government affairs for the District of Columbia, AT&T; and Julie Evans, chief executive officer, NetDay.

Statement on the Retirement of Representative Bruce F. Vento

February 2, 2000

I was saddened to learn that Representative Bruce Vento has been diagnosed with lung cancer and will retire from Congress at the end of the year. Since he was first elected to Congress in 1976, Bruce Vento has served the people of his Minnesota district with great distinction. A true champion of the environment, he has steered into law more than 300 bills protecting our natural resources. He has also been a tireless advocate in combating homelessness.

Bruce Vento has made a significant contribution to his country, not only as a United States Congressman but also as a Representative to the Minnesota State House and as a science and social studies teacher for 10 years. He will be greatly missed by his colleagues in the House of Representatives and his constituents in Minnesota. Hillary and I wish he and his family the best as they work to fight this terrible disease. We look forward to his continued public service even after he retires from Congress.

Remarks to the National Conference of State Legislatures Dinner

February 2, 2000

Thank you very much. Representative Mannweiler, thank you for that fine introduction—reminding me of my days as Governor, which, on some days up here, have looked pretty good. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank you for meeting me when I came in, along with your president-elect, Senator Jim Costa; vice president, Senator Steve Saland; my longtime friend Representative Dan Blue, your immediate past president; John Phelps; Bill Pound. I brought with me my Assistant for Relations with State and Local Governments, Mickey Ibarra, Matt Bennett, and others from the White House. And I want to tell you, I'm delighted to be here on your 25th anniversary.

One of the most impressive things that I found out in preparing to come here tonight is that more than 260 Members of the United States Congress are former State legislators and NCSL members. And I see a number of them out here tonight of both parties. I'm almost tempted to finish my State of the Union Address. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank you for two things: first of all, for working with us to try to get the right balance between the Federal Government and State and local governments. And your president talked a lot about that; there's no need in my repeating it. But when I came to Washington, I felt very strongly that the National Government should actually do a lot more in some areas but that we should proceed in a different way, and that because of the size of the deficit, which was then $290 billion and projected to be over $400 billion this year, we were going to have to find a way to increase our investment in education and cut the size of the deficit, shrink the size of the Government, and forge more partnerships with State government and with local government.

So we did what your president said, with the unfunded mandates. But we also worked out the partnership in welfare reform, which many people said would never work and result in terrible injustice to children. And as all of you know, it hasn't worked that way. We have about 7 million fewer people on welfare and 2 million fewer children in poverty, the lowest poverty rate among children in more than 20 years. The only thing I would say is, I hope all of you will fully spend all those TANF funds to make sure that we actually are doing right by the kids as we move

their parents from welfare to work. But it has been by any measure a uniquely successful partnership between the National Government and the States and our private sector friends who've been hiring people from welfare to work. And I thank you for that, because it's enabled us to be more active in so many areas, with the smallest Federal Government in 40 years.

The Federal Government is now as small as it was, in terms of employment, when Dwight Eisenhower was spending his last year in the White House. And yet we are more active than ever, in part because we're trying to strike the right balance.

The second thing I want to thank you for is your trust for representative democracy initiative—you mentioned that a little bit, Mr. President—to help educate young people about government, democracy, the value of public service. I think that sometimes our young people believe either that government is not a good thing to be involved in; that people unlike them get involved in it; or that if they did get involved, what they did wouldn't make any difference. And nothing could be further from the truth.

We're around here as a nation after more than 224 years now, because more than half the time, more than half the people turned out to be right on the really big issues. There is no place in the world that is a better example of what free people can do when they work together.

And if you look at the obstacles we've overcome in more than 200 years, I frankly think that a lot of this fashionable cynicism is a kind of a self-indulgent arrogance that has no place in America. And I respect what you do. I thank you for what you do. I believe in it. And I want the young people of this country to understand exactly how the system works, because that's why they're enjoying the benefits of freedom and prosperity they are today. So I thank you for that initiative, and I hope you'll bear down on it.

America has come a long way, and the whole nature of governance at the State and national level has come a long way since you got started 25 years ago. Twenty-five years ago, in 1975, IBM came out with a new computer; it weighed 50 pounds and cost about $9,000. Americans were watching "M*A*S*H" and "All in the Family." "Jaws" was on the silver screen—now being replayed on cable, I might add. John Denver and Elton John were the top stars. The Steelers had just defeated the Cowboys in Super Bowl X.

Well, a lot has changed. A lot has changed in just the last 7 years. Seven years ago, when I first spoke to the NCSL, there were 50—50 sites—webpages, on the World Wide Web. Today, there are over 50 million, in only 7 years.

In the last 7 years, our scientists have discovered the genes that are high predictors of breast cancer and Parkinson's and Alzheimer's. They're now actually experimenting with gene therapies to block the defective genes at the source so they can never replicate themselves, so that people can be treated for cancer without breaking down the rest of their bodies. Phenomenal things have happened, and the speed of change is accelerating.

Seven years ago I felt that America was the best positioned country in all the world to take the plunge into the 21st century but that we had put off making hard choices for too long. And I said—I'd like to quote what I said then—that "we have to keep pace with the economic changes going on in the world by decreasing the deficit, lifting the skills and wages of workers, opening opportunities for people who work hard and play by the rules."

Seven years ago we had a roadmap to take us in that direction. Today we can all be pleased by the results. I did some interviews yesterday, with three major newspapers and with BusinessWeek, and they all asked me who was really responsible for the longest economic boom in American history? And I said, "Well, a lot of people. That's the way it is in a democracy."

You have to give credit to all those American industries that restructured in the painful years of the 1980's. You have to give credit to the American workers, who acquired enormous employment in the 1990's and, unlike any previous economic expansion, understood the international economy and did not make excessive wage demands so that they would bring on inflation and kill the recovery. And you have to give credit to the high-tech sector in America, which is 8 percent of our

employment, 30 percent of our growth, and technology is rifling through every other part of the economy. One of the reasons most economists didn't predict that we could grow this far, grow this fast, have unemployment this low without inflation, is that nobody figured out how to measure the productivity gains from the explosion in information technology. You have to give credit to Alan Greenspan; you have to give credit, in my view, to my predecessors, as well as to our administration, because we fought for open markets. And we don't still have a consensus in America on what the right trade policy ought to be. But I'm telling you, I'd be very surprised if there's a person in this audience that's not wearing something that was made in another country. And imports have given us more consumer choice at lower prices, and they have helped to keep inflation down, which is critical to keeping the growth going.

But one big thing that really mattered was that we took office committed to getting rid of this deficit. And the minute we announced the plan to do it, interest rates dropped, investment went up, and we've had an investment-led, private sector-led boom because we got rid of the deficit. The Federal Reserve responded, and Chairman Greenspan deserves a lot of credit, because traditional economics said, you better stop this economic recovery, because nothing can go on this long; America's going to be consumed by inflation. But he had the courage to look at the evidence over the arguments of the past, to see that something fundamentally different was going on in our economy.

And you've all seen it manifested in your State treasuries. And now, every time the legislature meets, you're beset with what I would call high-class problems. [*Laughter*] Are you going to spend this money on colleges, on elementary and secondary education, on the environment; are you going to give tax cuts? What are you going to do with this money? Listen, for 10 years I had the other problems. These are high-class problems. [*Laughter*]

So I am grateful, and I think there's plenty of credit to go around. But one of the things we know about the National Government is that if we don't do our part, everything else can be thwarted. The main purpose of the National Government is to—beyond protecting the national security of America—is to establish the conditions and give people the tools to make the most of their own lives, to be a catalyst for new ideas, and to be a good partner with you, with local governments, and with the private sector. And we have tried to do that.

And as a result of everybody doing their jobs, over 20 million more Americans have jobs. And we have the lowest unemployment rates in 30 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 30 years, the lowest crime rates in 25 years. And that is a good thing.

But I just want to ask you the same question I asked the Congress and the country at the State of the Union Address: Now what? What are we going to do with this moment of prosperity? What are you doing with it back home?

You know, my experience—and I think anybody over 30 in this audience tonight can identify with this—is that sometimes you make the worst mistakes in life when things are going so well, you think nothing bad can happen. There's hardly a person that's lived very long that can't remember a time in his or her life when things were just perking along and you just did not want to think about the hassles of what lay just ahead. And so it was easy to just break your concentration, become diverted, maybe even become a little self-indulgent, and not to think about those things that were plainly out there.

And so what I've been trying to say to all of us is, without regard to our party or our philosophy or our differences, we ought to be able to agree on what's up the road, because some things are indisputable. We know the number of people over 65 is going to double in the next 30 years. I hope to be one of them. [*Laughter*] And we know it's going to change everything.

We know that we've already got the biggest and most diverse group of children in our schools we have ever had. And we know, therefore, educating them to world-class standards is a greater challenge, and yet it's more important than ever. We know that.

We have known for a decade, now, that if you want to have a job with prospects of moving on and doing better, even a high school education is not enough. You need to

have at least 2 years of post-high school education. And we ought to open the doors of college to every American. We know that. This is not something that's debatable. These are things we know.

There are a lot of other things that I'd like to just mention to you, but the main point I want to make, more than any other, that I would urge on you in your work, is that in my lifetime we have never had the opportunity or the responsibility we now have to shape the future of our dreams for our children. This is the last time we should pick to be lackadaisical, to be blase, to do what seems to be easiest at hand, instead of taking what Theodore Roosevelt called the long look ahead, and saying, "What are the big challenges? What are the big opportunities for the 21st century?"

We should work together to make sure every child starts school ready to learn and graduates ready to succeed. We should work together to open the doors of college to all. We should work together to make sure every disadvantaged kid in this country has a mentor when he or she gets to middle school, that can help them learn, help them get through those tough years, and prove to them they can go on to college if they'll stay in school and do what they should do.

We should work together to bring economic opportunity to the people and places that have been left behind. That's what our new markets tour is all about. Today I was with two heads of big on-line companies, talking about bridging the digital divide in our schools. If we can't bring economic opportunity to the people and places that have been left behind, from our poor rural areas to our inner cities to our Indian reservations, if we can't do that now, when will we ever do it?

We know right now that a higher and higher percentage of parents are going to be working while they're raising their children. And we ought to know, if we've been paying attention, that most of them are having a hard time doing it, even the ones that are making a pretty good living, and that America has fewer supports to help people to succeed both at work and in raising their children than in other advanced countries. Now, we know that now.

Now, we also know that we need to find a way to balance work and family that doesn't mess up the jobs machine that brought us to the dance we're enjoying today. So we need to focus on that. It's a huge deal.

We know there are still too many children in this country that are born in poverty and that we are so wealthy we no longer have an excuse for that. We can find a way to lift all of our children out of poverty, and we ought to do that. Every kid at least ought to have a decent start in life. These are things that we know right now.

We know that there are even more people without health insurance than there were when I tried to fix the problem and failed in 1993. One of my friends in Congress said the other day, he said, "You know, they told me way back in '94, when we voted on it," he said, "They told me if I voted for the President's health care plan, the number of uninsured people would go up." And he said, "Sure enough, that's what happened. I voted for it, and the number of people who are uninsured went up." [*Laughter*]

So I decided to come back and ask the Congress to do specific things. We've had a lot of bipartisan support for letting people keep their health insurance when they change jobs; for making sure things like mammographies and tests for prostate cancer are covered in Medicare. And the Congress, on a bipartisan basis, a majority of both parties in both Houses, in 1997, in the Balanced Budget Act—which kept our recovery going—provided the Children's Health Insurance Program that you are running, that you have more than doubled children's enrollment in, in the last year—going from 1 to 2 million children. The money's there to insure 5 million, especially if you get the kids that are Medicaid-eligible into Medicaid. So I urge you to bear down on that.

And I'm trying to get another option for you that will allow parents to get into the Children's Health Insurance Program that covers their children. If we did that, we could cover 25 percent of all the uninsured people in America, and those that are most needing of it, lower income working people and their kids.

So these are things we know. We know now we can get crime down—something we

didn't really know 7 years ago. Most people didn't really think we could drive the crime rate down. It's gone down 7 years in a row, partly because of the economy but partly because law enforcement is better at what they do now, and communities are smarter about working with law enforcement—the 100,000 police, all the preventive strategies for our kids. The Brady bill's kept half a million people with criminal records from getting handguns. I hope we can take the next steps on that, because I believe we can make America the safest big country in the world. And I think we ought to set a big goal there. If we know we can get crime down, then we don't just have to keep wringing our hands about it and hoping something happens. If we know we move in the right direction—it goes down every year—why don't we set a goal worthy of the American people?

Wouldn't it be nice if kids could walk to school again without fear? If you could send your kid to the city park again without worrying? Wouldn't it be nice? I am telling you, it is possible. But we have to have the discipline to do it. And unless we set a goal, and go forward, we won't reach it.

I believe we know something else that I want to emphasize. I believe we know that we can grow the economy and improve the environment. I believe we know we can meet the challenge of global warming by reducing greenhouse gases and grow the economy. But it won't happen by accident. And I don't think we should do it with huge energy taxes and onerous regulations. I think we should use the science and technology we now have to rifle the improvements in the new economy throughout this country, until we have proved it.

Let me just give you one example. I was out, a couple years ago, in California, in what's called the Inland Empire, east of Los Angeles, an industrialized area on the end of the rail line out there, where they had built a low income, or low to moderate income housing development that the Energy Department, HUD, and the Home Builders participated in—an unusual political alliance. The Home Builders is not the most Democratic organization in America.

But I loved working with those guys. They were terrific. You know what, they went out there, and they built lower income housing with good insulation, the most up-to-date lighting that kept out 4 or 5 times as much heat and cold—windows, I mean, the most up-to-date windows—and the most modern lighting; otherwise low-cost housing. And they said to the prospective buyers, "If you move into these houses, we'll guarantee you that your average utility bill will be 40 percent less than it would be in a house with this much floor space in any other part of California." After 2 years, the utility bills are averaging 65 percent less. And that's just one example.

So I say to you, this can't all be done at the Federal level. We don't have to do this with regulation and taxes. But we do have to do it. And we ought to have a bipartisan consensus—this will generate jobs—that we're going to continue to improve our own environment, and we're going to continue to fight the problem of climate change by generating jobs in a whole new sector of the economy. There's a $1 trillion market out there worldwide. It could keep this economic growth going another 5 years, if we actually get serious about it.

And there are lots of things you can do at the State level. I see my good friend, Congressman from Iowa out there, Congressman Boswell. We were working on the development of biofuels. You know, they always have a big fight in every election in Iowa about ethanol. And the politicians go to Iowa and say they're for ethanol, and maybe hope the people on the coasts aren't watching. [*Laughter*]

Now, why is that? Because you do actually gain something out of ethanol, but it's not very efficient right now. I've supported it for 20 years, so I can say this. I believe in it. But it takes about 7 gallons of fuel to make 8 gallons of ethanol. Scientists are now working on cracking the molecular challenge, and when they do, they'll be able to make about 8 gallons of ethanol with 1 gallon of gasoline. When you put that with the Detroit auto show cars that are coming out right now, getting 70 or 80 miles a gallon, it'll be like getting hundreds of miles for a gallon of gasoline.

This is something that is right ahead of you. And every State ought to be examining,

right now, what you can do to be on the forefront of that, to work with us. And I'm telling you, the rewards will be immense. The energy revolution has the capacity to do for the American economy in the next 10 years what the digital revolution has done for it in the last 10 years—if we make the most of it.

Now, the last thing I want to say is this. If the good Lord came to me tonight and said, "I know you're having a lot of fun being President, but I've decided that your time is up, and you can't finish your term. But I'll be like a genie. I'll give you one wish for America." I would not wish for any of the things I've just said. I would wish for America, that we could somehow purge ourselves of our fear and mistrust and hatred of our fellow citizens who are different from ourselves.

If you were following these events in the press, you know that we've hit a little bit of a rough patch in the Irish peace process, something I've worked on ever since I got here, that we're struggling to try to resolve the remaining differences between the Israelis and the Syrians in a very difficult environment, which saw the death of three Israeli soldiers just a couple of days ago; that we continually fight to restrain the consequences of tribal conflicts in Africa and the awful religious and ethnic wars that have gripped Bosnia and Kosovo. And you can be very proud that your country has tried to ease these burdens elsewhere.

But even here at home, you see in place after place the resurgence of hate crimes or just old-fashioned bigotry. And it's as if there's something deep within the human psyche; it's almost the oldest problem of human society. We feel comfortable with our crowd, and we don't feel comfortable with people that aren't like us. And the easiest way to tell whether somebody's like us or not is to look at what color they are. And the next easiest way is you find out whether they've got an accent or what their religion is. In Washington, it's what political party you belong to. [*Laughter*] Not so bad out in the States, I hope.

As I said in my State of the Union Address, the most important fact I learned last year was from a geneticist, an expert in the human genome, named Eric Lander, who's a professor at Harvard, who Hillary had to the White House for a lecture. And the last thing he said was that we are genetically 99.9 percent the same. The thing that I didn't say in the State of the Union that I also want you to know, which drives the point home, is that Dr. Lander also said that if you took a bunch of people in various ethnic groups and you put them in different groups—like if you put a lot of northern Europeans over here, 100 northern Europeans, and 100 Hispanics, and 100 Asians, and 100 Africans—listen to this—he said that the genetic differences among individuals within each group would be greater than the genetic differences between the groups.

Now, that is very important for us to know, because it means that science is approaching what religion has always taught: that we are all the children of God. You remember what Einstein was asked, when he was asked—what Einstein said? He was asked if he believed in God. He said, "Nothing this complicated could have happened by accident,"—[*laughter*]—"nothing this well-balanced, nothing this harmonic. Nothing this—this just couldn't have happened by accident."

It's very interesting to see that the far reaches of science are now telling us what religion has always taught: that the most important fact of life is our common humanity.

Most people run for the State legislature because they're close to the people they represent. You are constantly looking for ways that effectively bring people together, that reconcile competing claims, that allow people to move forward. That is the spirit that I keep trying to hammer home here in Washington. The further you get away from the people, the easier it is to try to be effective by dividing people, because you're afraid your folks can't see you, and you can't always touch them, and you're a lot more likely to get that 15 seconds on the evening news if you're cutting somebody a new one than if you've got your hands open to shake hands with somebody. [*Laughter*]

So, I say that to say to all of you to, in your own way, however you can, from whatever your perspective is, you ought to be working on building that one America, too, because it's really easy for people to indulge

themselves in fights and falling-outs that they shouldn't have when times are good, because they think there are no consequences to it. There are always consequences. And we will never forgive ourselves if we don't make the most of this opportunity.

I'll just close with this. A young child, who is the daughter of a friend of mine, when the family spent some time with Hillary and me and my extended family over Thanksgiving, this 6-year-old girl looked up at me one day and she said, "How old are you anyway?" And I said, "I am 53." And she said, "Oh, that's a lot." [*Laughter*]

It's enough to remember this. I was a young man when we had the longest previous economic expansion in our history, that, in economic terms, lasted from 1961 to 1969. When I graduated from high school in 1964, we had absorbed the awful trauma of President Kennedy's assassination, and we were moving forward trying to advance the cause of civil rights and lift up the poor. We had low unemployment, low inflation, and very high economic growth. And everybody thought it was going to go on forever. And within 2 years, we had over a half a million people in Vietnam, dividing the country. We had riots in our streets, making people believe that the civil rights issues could no longer be resolved in our legislative halls. We had an alienated citizenry.

And it has taken—I have waited—as an American, not as President, as an American—I have waited 35 years for my country to be back where it was, in terms of opportunity for us to work together, to respect our differences of opinion, to understand nobody's got a monopoly on truth, but to recognize that, my God, there's no place on Earth that's as blessed as we are.

And all that remains is whether we will be wise enough to make the most of it. I ask you to help us be that wise, and to do your part.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:05 p.m. in the East Hall at Union Station. In his remarks, he referred to Indiana State Representative Paul Mannweiler, president, California State Senator Jim Costa, president-elect, New York State Senator Stephen Saland, vice president, North Carolina State Representative Dan Blue, immediate past president, Executive Clerk of the Florida House of Representatives John Phelps, staff chair, and William T. Pound, executive director, National Conference of State Legislatures; and Eric Lander, director, Whitehead/MIT Center for Genome Research. The President also referred to TANF, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

Remarks at the National Prayer Breakfast

February 3, 2000

Thank you, and good morning. Senator Mack, Senator Lieberman, Mr. Speaker, Congressman Doyle, other distinguished head table guests, and the Members of Congress and the Cabinet, my fellow Americans, and our visitors who have come from all across the world. Let me thank you again for this prayer breakfast and for giving Hillary and me the opportunity to come.

I ask that we remember in our prayers today a people who are particularly grieved, the men, women, and children who lost their loved ones on Alaska Airlines flight 261.

And let me say to all of you, I look forward to this day so much every year, a little time to get away from public service and politics into the realm of the spirit and to accept your prayers. This is a special year for me because, like Senator Mack, I'm not coming back, at least in my present position. And I have given a lot of thought to what I might say today, much of it voiced by my friend of 30 years now, Senator Joe Lieberman, who did a wonderful job for all of us.

The question I would hope that all of my fellow citizens would ask themselves today is: What responsibilities are now imposed on us because we live at perhaps the greatest moment of prosperity and promise in the history of our Nation, at a time when the world is growing ever more interdependent? What special responsibilities do we have?

Joe talked about some of them. We—I sometimes think in my wry way, when Senator Mack referred to his cousin, Judge Arnold, a longtime friend of Hillary's and mine, as being on his far right and that making it uncomfortable, I laughed to myself. That's why Connie wanted him on the bench, so he would get one more Democrat out of the public debate. [*Laughter*] But I wonder