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least half of this funding would go to support State and local conservation efforts. I hope we can make this, too, our gift to the future.

Now, I'd like to call on Governor Leavitt to make some opening remarks, and I want to thank you again, sir, for what you said last night. It was terrific. Welcome.

[*At this point, the roundtable discussion began.*]

The President. I would just like to make one comment—and then I know Governor Leavitt has got an agenda—about the role of government in the new economy. All of you will be thinking about this. I think we need to think about how we can reasonably make more new markets or help to facilitate them; how we can remove barriers without undermining public interest to the private sector's development; and how we can make government more user-friendly. And I'll just give you a couple of examples.

One of the biggest fights we had here when we overhauled the telecommunications law, for the first time in 60 years, was the insistence, that we in the administration had, that we let as many entrepreneurs into this unfolding new business as possible. And now, everywhere I go, I see people who are doing terrifically well; have hired huge numbers of people, who didn't even have businesses 5 years ago, because we got Federal legislation that had an entrepreneurial focus. And I think all of us should be sensitive to that, because I know Tom Friedman talked to you the other day; he's one of many people who points out that, even though more of our growth than ever before is in private sector jobs, the role of government, while different, is still profoundly important. And if you make the wrong call on some of these things, you wind up paying for it for a long time to come.

We just had a financial—totally bipartisan financial modernization act pass the Congress last year that, I believe, is an example of removing impediments without undermining the public interest. We enacted the Community Reinvestment Act, but I think that we took a set of barriers out of the way of our financial institutions in maximizing the digital economy.

And then we've also tried to make Government more user-friendly. We have more and more people filing their taxes electronically and relating to us in a lot of other ways. And I saw an article in my weekly reports just last night that at least one of you has already cleared the way for people to vote electronically, which will be an interesting challenge. If somebody wants to explain to me how we can do that and meet all the security needs, I'd be interested in it. Because I think, clearly, we're all going this way. I know many of you have advance voting. And interestingly enough, it's just to make government more user-friendly, and it's changing politics.

There's one State here where a congressional race was decided in the last election because of advance voting, and there was a totally different result on election day than in the advance voting period. But we all are going to have to be very creative.

The other thing I think we have to do is not shut ourselves out of any part of the world, and I want to talk to you more later about the importance of bringing China into the WTO, which I feel very strongly about, and I hope we'll have a chance to talk about that.

Thank you very much. We'll let the press leave, and we'll go on with the program.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:40 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Michael O. Leavitt of Utah, chairman, and Gov. Parris N. Glendening of Maryland, vice chairman, National Governors' Association; Gov. Angus S. King, Jr., of Maine; and Thomas Friedman, foreign affairs columnist, New York Times. The President also referred to LIHEAP, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

Statement on Funding for Amtrak

February 28, 2000

There has never been a better time to expand our investment in Amtrak and the Nation's passenger railways. The number of Americans relying on Amtrak has continued to grow for 3 years in a row. And through sound financial management, Amtrak continues its movement toward viability.

Therefore, this year I am asking Congress to increase Amtrak funding by more than $400 million, or more than 70 percent, in order to make investments to expand Amtrak

routes and provide even more efficient service, laying the foundation for high-speed rail. With this major funding increase this year, we can help ensure a thriving passenger rail system for many years to come.

NOTE: A portion of the President's statement was also made available on the White House Press Office Actuality Line.

Statement on Floods in Southern Africa

February 28, 2000

I am deeply saddened by the devastation caused by flooding in southern Africa, which has worsened over the past few days. Almost a million people in Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa, and Zimbabwe have lost their homes or their livelihoods, and tens of thousands of people in Mozambique are stranded in flooded areas and require urgent rescue.

Today we are allocating $1 million, through the U.S. Agency for International Development, to support aircraft for critical search and rescue operations and the delivery of relief supplies. In addition, we have already provided over $1.8 million to fund air transport, prevent disease, deliver supplies, and support relief efforts. Two aircraft from the Department of Defense are on the way to deliver shelter materials, blankets, and other relief supplies. Also, we are dispatching a disaster assistance response team to the region to determine other ways that we can help our friends in southern Africa.

The thoughts and prayers of the American people are with the people of the region as they cope with this disaster.

Remarks to the Democratic Governors' Association Dinner

February 28, 2000

Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the warm welcome. Thank you for this wonderful book. Governor Patton, Mrs. Patton, Governor Davis, Governor O'Bannon; to B.J. Thornberry, and all the officers of the DGA; and especially my great friend Mark Weiner. I want to acknowledge also the presence—Mark Weiner did a good job tonight, and all the rest of you did, raising this money. I thank you for that.

I want to acknowledge the presence in this audience of the man who was the executive director of the DGA when I was a member, my good friend Chuck Dolan. I thank you for being here and for all you did for us. And all my colleagues—I know there are five or six Governors out there who are former Governors with whom I served—thank you for being here.

I want to acknowledge the Governors who are retiring. Governor Rossello, thank you for everything you've done. And Governor Carper and Governor Carnahan are going to be Members of the United States Senate, and that will be a good thing for the Senate, a bad thing for the Governors.

I want to say a special work of thanks to the man who nominated me to be vice chairman of the DGA in 1979, Governor Jim Hunt, one of the finest people I ever met in my life. Thank you, Jim Hunt, for what you did.

You know, I will treasure this book. I have a first edition of "Profiles in Courage," but not one signed by John Kennedy. Hillary says that the reason I admire John Kennedy so much is he's the only person to ever serve as President whose handwriting was even harder to read than mine. [*Laughter*] But I can recognize the signature, and I thank you.

President Kennedy once said, "The party which, in its drive for unity, discipline, and success, ever decides to exclude new ideas, independent conduct, or insurgent members is in danger." Well, thanks to the Democratic Governors, to your new ideas, your independent conduct, and your willingness always to try to do better and to be different, the Democratic Party is in no danger. We're stronger tonight than we have been in many, many years, thanks to you.

As President, I have been deeply indebted to my service as Governor. It has stood me in good stead. And I have been deeply indebted to so many of you for the friendship, the advice, the counsel you have given me, and to so many who were members of this organization with me who continue all during these years to call with a helpful word or sometimes just a word of friendship and support.