

Michigan State University T-shirt to honor the school's men's basketball team's appearance in the Final Four of the National Collegiate Athletic Association tournament. This transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 29.

### Remarks at a Reception for Governor Frank O'Bannon

March 28, 2000

You know, when Evan was talking about how he's trying to recover from having given a keynote speech—[*laughter*]—I bombed; he didn't. [*Laughter*] He was actually very good.

But I am delighted to be here for Frank O'Bannon, and with Judy and Lieutenant Governor and Mrs. Kernan. I want to thank Evan Bayh and Susan for being wonderful friends to Hillary and me for many years now. And I want to thank Senator Birch Bayh for his service to America and for also being my friend for 20 years now.

Every now and then, I remind Birch that in 1980 he came to Arkansas; we dedicated an ethanol plant. And you may or may not know that the Agriculture Department is funding research into how to more efficiently convert gasoline to ethanol or, you know, how to do it with less fuel. Now the ratio's about 7 gallons to 8. They tell me within a year or two, we'll be down to 1 gallon to 8. And Birch and I were just 20 years ahead of our time. [*Laughter*] But I'll always be grateful to him for many things in his service, and I'm delighted to be here.

Thank you, Mike Sullivan. Thank you, Mark Weiner. Thank you, Robin Winston. And I want to say a special word of thanks to Joe Andrew for working so hard for the national Democratic Party. And I saw three of your House Members here earlier: Pete Visclosky I know is still there, and Baron Hill and Tim Roemer may or may not still be here, but they were here earlier.

I am delighted to be here. You may wonder what I'm doing here; I'm not running for anything this year. [*Laughter*] Take a good look at me; I'm the only politician you'll see this year you don't have to give a contribution to. [*Laughter*]

I was a Governor for 12 years, and they were some of the happiest years of my life.

I would have never tired of doing the job. The voters would have gotten tired of me long before I got tired of the job. [*Laughter*]

And you know, I have worked very hard for the last 7-plus years to try to turn our country around and to try to get governing right. Now, there are not many votes in governing, really, when you talk about it. But if you've got a job and you do it well, there are votes in it. That's why Evan Bayh was elected and overwhelmingly reelected and then sent to the Senate. That's why Frank O'Bannon was elected, and why I think he'll be reelected—because they believe in governing.

After all this time I've been President, I can say there are a lot of things about this job that are much more than just policy, times when a President has to speak to the Nation about a crisis or in the midst of a collective grieving or just speak for the Nation when you have to take a stand. But a lot of what determines the success of our enterprise is whether we show up for work every day and treat our work like your work, like a job.

And the difference in political work and other work is that you have more leeway to define the job. In other words, you have to decide what it is you're going to do if you're Governor or President, except you've got to sign the bills or veto them, as the case may be, and make the appointments. But otherwise, you have to decide.

And I think I know a little bit about that. I served with over 150 Governors. And Frank O'Bannon is a very good Governor. I know.

I would also tell you that the tradition that he and Evan established in Indiana of fiscal responsibility and focusing very sharply on the most important things the government should do, and not defending everything that government ever did in the past, is one I tried to carry on. You know, we now have the smallest Federal Government since 1960, when Dwight Eisenhower was President and John Kennedy was running for the White House. We've gotten rid of hundreds of programs, and I'll give \$5 to anybody here who can name three of them. [*Laughter*] See? [*Laughter*]

I say that because when I became President, we had to do two things at once. We had to get this deficit under control and balance the budget. But we had to keep investing in education. We had to keep investing in health care for children. We had to keep investing in the environment. We had to keep investing in science and technology. We had to keep, in short, preparing for the future. And that's what Governors have to do.

Now, one of the ways that we did that was, for example, in the area of education, we gave the States more funds and set higher goals, but we got rid of about two-thirds of the Federal regulations. And I could give you lots of other examples where, in effect, we did the right thing, but only if the Governor does the right thing.

When we passed the welfare reform bill, we said, "Okay, here's the deal: If you're able bodied, you've got to get some training, and then if you get a job, you've got to take it. But we won't ask you to hurt your children. We'll leave your children with their guaranteed nutrition and health care, and we'll spend more on child care and transportation. We'll invest more in you. But if you can go to work, you've got to do it." Well, all that had to be designed and implemented by the Governors.

When we passed the Balanced Budget Act in 1997, we had the biggest expansion in federally supported health care since Medicaid in 1965, when we passed the Children's Health Insurance Program to allow the children of families that were working families—so their incomes were too high to get Medicaid coverage, but their incomes were too low to afford health insurance, and their employers weren't providing it. So we had the money to provide them health insurance. But the program was to be designed by the Governors.

In other words, a lot of what we have tried to do to have a more vigorous but a more disciplined Government has required us, here in Washington, to make his job even more important. And it's very important that everybody understands that; it really matters who sits in these Governors' chairs today. It matters what their values are. It matters what their vision is. And it also matters a lot whether they show up every day.

This is not a job for someone who is faint-hearted or disinterested. It's a job—particularly if you live in a State like Indiana or Arkansas, where people actually hold you accountable, and you can't get elected on television. [Laughter] You know? It really makes a difference. [Laughter]

I remember when I ran for President in '92, Governor Bush used to—I mean, President Bush used to refer to me as the Governor of a small southern State, in sort of drippingly negative overtones, you know? [Laughter] And you know, I was so dumb, I thought that was a good thing. [Laughter] You know, I was proud of it. I thought—and I think it's very important. If you care about the education of our children and if you care about whether the poorest of our children have access to health care, if you care about whether we can preserve a clean environment and grow the economy, you have to care about who the Governor is.

And I think most Americans may not fully appreciate the extent to which, over the last 7½ years, the reason this whole deal has worked as well as it has is that we've had good Federal policies, but we have done more and more of it in partnership with the private sector and with State and local government.

And so I wanted to come here because I genuinely like and admire Governor and Mrs. O'Bannon. And I genuinely believe that they should break that record that goes back to the 1830's. And that's the last thing I want to say about all these races in 2000.

I worked as hard as I can to turn this country around and to get us moving in the right direction. But all the really big benefits are still out there.

We've got the longest economic expansion in history. What are we going to do with it? We're going to give all of our kids a world-class education. Are we going to make America the safest big country in the world? We're going to get the country out of debt for the first time since 1835. Are we going to bring economic opportunity to poor areas that haven't felt it yet? I can just go on and on and on.

That's what will be decided in the year 2000. And I hope that the electorate will want to vote for people from top to bottom

like these two men here, who are serious about the work they do and for whom winning an election is just a prelude to the most important thing, which is the job. Because you know, this is a chance in a lifetime we have. And I've lived long enough now to know that these things come, and they go. The good news is bad times don't last forever. But good times don't either. And so when they come along, you have to focus and move, act.

So this is a big deal, this election. One of the reasons, apart from all my personal feelings about him, that I want Al Gore to be elected President so bad is he understands the future, and he knows how to get us there. And that's what we ought to be thinking about. Who understands the future? Who can get us there?

And your presence here says you know that about your Governor. But when you go back to Indiana, I hope you'll give that as a reason for the rest of the folks sticking with him, without regard to party. If you're producing, if you're serious, if you care about the future, stick with him.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:52 p.m. in the Columbia A Room at the Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill. In his remarks, he referred to Judy O'Bannon, wife of Governor O'Bannon; Lt. Gov. Joseph E. Kernan and his wife, Maggie; Senator Evan Bayh, his wife, Susan, and his father, former Senator Birch Bayh; Michael J. Sullivan, general president, Sheet Metal Workers International Association; Mark Weiner, treasurer, Democratic Governors' Association; Robin Winston, chairman, Indiana State Democratic Party; and Joseph J. Andrew, national chair, Democratic National Committee. Incumbent Governor O'Bannon is a candidate for reelection in Indiana. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 29.

## **The President's News Conference**

*March 29, 2000*

**The President.** Good afternoon. Please be seated. I would like to begin by saying that yesterday's announcement that OPEC members will increase oil production is good news for our economy and for the American consumer. These increases should bring lower

prices, which will help to sustain economic growth here in America and also, and very importantly, throughout the world.

It will also, I hope, bring relief to hard-pressed truckers in this country, who have been especially hard-hit, and others who have high fuel costs, by providing a greater balance between oil production and consumption.

While home heating costs and the price at the pump are both expected to fall in the next few weeks, I urge the oil companies to do everything they can to bring the savings to consumers as quickly as possible. Meanwhile, we will continue to monitor developments in world markets closely.

Since January, our administration has taken significant action to address high oil prices, from helping more low income and elderly citizens to pay their heating bills, to calling for the creation of a regional market reserve in the Northeast, to asking Congress to immediately reauthorize the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

It is also very, very important for Congress now to act on my proposal to strengthen our long-term energy security, including new tax incentives and investments to support domestic oil producers and to promote the development and use of alternative fuels and more efficient energy technologies. We can become much more energy efficient and support economic development if we do.

Congress also has an opportunity and a responsibility to make progress on a number of other important issues for the American people this year. First, we must work together to reduce the staggering toll of gun violence in America by passing my proposal for more prosecutors and stronger gun enforcement and by finally passing a strong juvenile justice bill that closes the gun show loophole, requires child safety locks for all handguns, and bans the importation of large capacity ammunition clips.

For 9 months now, key congressional Republicans, egged on by the NRA, have stood on a bill and stopped it from being considered by keeping it from coming out of conference onto the floor of both Houses for a vote. Fourteen days ago a House resolution passed with bipartisan support, sponsored by Representative Zoe Lofgren of California. It