

Week Ending Friday, May 26, 2000

**Remarks at a Reception for
Representative Joseph M. Hoeffel
in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

May 19, 2000

Thank you, Joe. Thank you for inviting me here, giving me something to do so I didn't have to do the wash this afternoon. [*Laughter*] Marcel, I thought you did a great job. Thank you for your leadership of our party. I thank Chaka Fattah, my good friend. We just came from his district where we did an education event. And I want to thank Ron Klink for joining us today and for making this race for the United States Senate. If he gets enough funding to get his message out, I predict to you he'll win. And I hope you'll help him do it. Thank you, Ron.

I'd like to thank all the other candidates and legislators and other officials who are here. My good friend Marge Mezvinsky, I thank her for coming here. Marjorie is—our children are good friends, and so we always have something besides politics to talk about. There have been occasions in the last 8 years when that's been a great blessing, I might add. [*Laughter*]

I am glad to be here for Joe. I was glad to have a lunch in city hall earlier for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. You may know that if we pick up about five seats, we'll be in the majority. And if we hold the seats that represent swing districts like this one, we will almost certainly do that, because we're bound to win more than five. We just have to hold what we have as well.

And I want to just make a couple of points here. First of all, I appreciate what he said about working. My big problem is not that I don't have anything to do, it's that I can't bear to go to sleep now, because I realize I've just got about 8 months left, and I want to get the most out of every day. But yesterday we signed a bill that you were very much involved in, a historic piece of legislation to

open trade with Africa and the Caribbean Basin. To be—if they do things that will help educate their people and give them healthy children, and to do more to help our neighbors in the Caribbean and Central America and in Africa—a truly historic piece of legislation.

And we signed another good bill earlier in this session to lift the earnings limit for Social Security retirees, so once you become eligible to draw, you can go on and earn all the money you want to. And that will become increasingly important when all the baby boom generation reaches retirement. And under present projections, there will only be two people working for every one person drawing Social Security. So we're actually capable of doing things, even in this partisan election year atmosphere.

But I think that how much we get done at the end of the year depends in part on whether I'm modestly successful—as Joe said, we tend to be—in the budget process, but also in part on what the American people are telling their Representatives in Congress about this election season.

And I'll be quite brief, because I realize I'm sort of preaching to the choir here—if you weren't for him, you wouldn't be here. And our friends in the press will say I came here and we raised money, so they probably won't give my arguments out for him. And that's not a criticism, there's only so much they can report. But I think it's important that you understand that for me, as someone who is not a candidate, but is still a citizen, I consider the election of 2000 as important as the election in 1992 or 1996. And I want you to understand why.

In 1992 the people took a chance on me and Al Gore. You all heard then-President Bush refer to me as the Governor of a small southern State. I was so dumb and inexperienced, I thought it was a compliment. [*Laughter*] And I still do.

But anyway, you took a chance on me. I said, "Look, we've got to have a different economic policy. We've got to have a different crime policy. We've got to have a different welfare policy. We've got to get really serious about education. But we've got to get the economy going again or the rest of this stuff won't amount to anything, we'll just all be up here making speeches about it."

And so the people of America and the people of Pennsylvania and, overwhelmingly, the people of Philadelphia and surround took a chance on us. And then we had some very tough decisions. The budget, the vote Marjorie cast, legendary around here—I got tickled the other day, Hillary and I were with somebody, some political expert, who said, "You know, if it weren't for your first 2 years, you'd have the highest approval ratings in history." I said, "Yeah, and if it weren't for my first 2 years where my approval ratings went down because we made the hard, right decisions, the last 6 years wouldn't have occurred."

I say that to make this point. What's that got to do with Joe and this election year? The issue before the American people is not whether we will change. We will. Things are changing too much for us, there is no such thing as a stand pat, status quo. That's not the issue. The issue before the American people is how we will change, and whether we decide that our main mission is to make the most of this magic moment of prosperity.

What are we going to do with the longest economic expansion in history? What are we going to do with the fact that crime is down for 8 years in a row? What are we going to do with the fact that welfare rolls have been cut in half? What are we going to do with the fact that we have a mechanism for giving our children health insurance, and we've immunized 90 percent of them for the first time in history? What are we going to do with the fact that we've set aside more land in the continental United States than any administration in history, except those of the two Roosevelts? What does all this mean? What do we propose to do with it?

My strong belief is that we should use this moment to take on the remaining big challenges facing the country, because that's the way we can build the future of our dreams

for our kids. And that means we have to keep changing, but we have to keep going in the same direction. And that's why Joe's election matters a lot to me, because I think he represents what I believe is the right direction.

And it's important to me that all of you understand that while I am immensely gratified by the support I have received from people all across America, and especially here—which has been unbelievable here—the things that have happened have happened because we had a good team, not just because I was President, and they've happened because we did the right things. And therefore, it's real important, I will say again.

In many ways, we are being tested as severely in 2000 as we were in 1992. You know, when people feel a sense of desperation and they think the wheel is running off, it doesn't take all that much courage to change. I was the beneficiary of a difficult situation, and the people said, "Well, he may be the Governor of a small southern State; he may be a little young; he may be a little of this; I haven't voted for a Democrat in a long time, but he does seem to have thought through this matter; he does seem to have some idea about what should be done about the economy. I think we'll take a chance on him."

Now, because we've had 8 good years, we've got young multimillionaires now who have never been involved in the stock market that didn't grow like crazy; who have no memory of what it was like when we quadrupled the debt in 12 years and had a \$300 billion annual deficit. And it is very important that people understand what this election is about.

There may be people up there that think you couldn't mess this economy up if you had every effort to do so. I don't agree with that. So I think it's important that Joe be reelected because he represents not only—he's a good man with good ideas, but he has the right ideas. You heard him say—I think we ought to have a targeted tax cut to help families with their most pressing needs: with college education for their kids; long-term care for parents and disabled family members; with child care for those who need that. But I don't think we ought to have an across-the-board tax cut that's so big that it will put

us back into deficits. We just shouldn't do it. We shouldn't do it.

On the other hand, I think we ought to keep investing in education, but I think we ought to invest in what will bring results and not just have money untied to results. Let me give you an example. In 1996 the Congress voted for a request I had to require all the States to identify the schools that were not learning—not producing kids that knew what they were supposed to know, failing schools, schools that were low performers—and then to develop strategies to do something about it.

I have been trying for 2 years now to go to the next step and say, "You ought to end social promotion and require people to turn these schools around or shut them down. But we should provide funding for after-school programs, for summer school programs, for mentoring programs, and programs to help turn these schools around." Now, let me just give you one example.

Kentucky set up a system like this. In 1996 they identified 170 low performing schools or failing schools. Within 2 years 91 percent of the schools were off the list. I was in such a school, where over two-thirds of the children were eligible for free or reduced lunches; where within 4 years—listen to this—an elementary school—within 4 years this school, which had been miserably failing, produced the following results: They went from 12 percent of the kids reading at or above grade level to 57 percent; they went from 5 percent of the kids doing math at or above grade level to 70 percent; they went from zero percent of the kids doing science at or above grade level to 64 percent—within 4 years. Why? Because they had a system, and because they held the kids to high standards, and because they believed they could all learn, and because we put teachers in the classrooms to make the classes smaller and gave them the money for after-school and summer school programs.

Now, why am I telling you this? Because beginning with the Presidential campaigns and going down to the congressional campaigns, if you listen to the rhetoric of both parties, everyone sounds like they're saying the same things today—we want high standards; we want accountability; we want results;

we've got to support education—but there is a practical difference. We're for putting 100,000 teachers into the schools to make the classes smaller because that works; they're not for doing that. We're for helping cities like Philadelphia, where the average school building is 65 years old, build or modernize schools. We're for helping these schools where there are more kids in house-trailers than in the school building, build new schools. They're not for doing that. We believe that we ought to specifically fund after-school programs for every child who needs it. They think that we ought to just bundle up the money and send it down to the States and hope it all comes out right.

And they've accused me of trying to be America's principal; that's not true. We have eliminated, this Democratic administration has eliminated, two-thirds of all the regulations that were imposed on schools, school districts, and States when I became President. We've cut more regulations than any administration in modern history. But we have not given up requirements based on what local educators and research say works. And so there's a big difference.

I think he's right about that. We agree about that. But I'm not going to have a vote in Congress in 2001. It's important that he does. And it's important you understand the differences from top to bottom, in economic and education and all these other policies.

But that's what I want you to think about. We can win the Senate if Ron can get enough money. We can win the House. We can win the White House. But the people have to decide what the election is about.

You think about this. There's a lot of things—if somebody says, "Well what kind of car are you going to buy?" the first thing you have to ask yourself is, what kind of car do you need? And then you say, well, what kind of car will you want? And then you say, well, can I afford that car? [*Laughter*] Then after you ask those questions, it more or less answers the beginning question, right? Who are you going to vote for for President? Well, what do you think the election's about? What do you want for your country? Can you afford what they're promising? What are the consequences?

If you ask the right questions, they get you the answer where you start. The same thing for Congress. If somebody asks you why you came here today, you say, "Because I like my Congressman; he's a good man. He's attentive to his duties. He's got the right ideas. He'll change in the right way. And I do not want to see America or our State or this congressional district blow the best chance we have ever had to build the future of our dreams for our children."

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:30 p.m. in the Grand Ballroom A at the Wyndham Franklin Plaza Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Marcel Groen, chairman, Montgomery County, PA, Democratic Committee; and former Representative Marjorie Margolies-Mezvinsky. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Statement on Assistance To Support Efforts To Stabilize the Situation in Sierra Leone

May 19, 2000

I have authorized the Department of Defense to provide up to \$20 million in defense goods and services to support efforts by the United Nations and other international forces to stabilize the situation in Sierra Leone. This assistance, which we will provide on a nonreimbursable basis, will include military transport, supplies, equipment, and services, so the international community has the capabilities it urgently needs.

Our African and other partners have taken a stand to restore peace and hope to Sierra Leone; we will stand with them. Sierra Leone's people have suffered far too much for far too long, and they need immediate assistance to prevent a return to full-scale civil war. We have a genuine opportunity to make a difference, to give them a chance for a better future, and to aid the cause of stability and democracy in Africa. We will do what is necessary for Sierra Leone so the international community can get the job done.

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

Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Dinner in Chicago, Illinois

May 19, 2000

Thank you very much. Senator Durbin, thank you for those wonderful remarks and for your friendship. I want to begin by joining everyone else in thanking Fred and Ken for opening their beautiful home. I don't know what to make of Torricelli's remark about the concrete. *[Laughter]* Since I'm the only guy here that's not running for anything, I'm probably the only person to get away with cracking a joke about it, but I'm going to let it go, anyway. *[Laughter]*

I will say this, Senator Torricelli, in your shameless pander to Mayor Daley—*[laughter]*—referring to Chicago as the greatest city in America, I took the precaution of sending a note to the people who tape all my remarks to make sure we delete that so it can't be played in Newark the next time you run for election. *[Laughter]* And I might say, I got the mayor to approve of that before I did it. *[Laughter]*

Let me say to all of you, I am so proud to be here with these members of our Senate caucus and with our candidate. I want to thank all the host committee, not just Fred and Ken, but Joe and Yvonne, Lou and Bette. And I thank you, Joe Cari, for the work you do for our party every day. I could talk all night long just about the people who have been introduced tonight.

Tom Daschle is an extraordinary leader and one of the best people I think I've ever known. I'll never forget going to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota with him. The night before we went to visit Mount Rushmore, and I told him, I said, "Tom, you win six Senate seats and we'll put your face up there, too." *[Laughter]*

Senator Torricelli has really been—you can tell just from the way he spoke up here tonight that he's so laid back and passive, it's amazing—*[laughter]*. I can't thank him enough for pushing all this.

I thank my good friend Carl Levin, who's here from Michigan, one of the States where I think we'll win a Senate seat, and he'll have a genuine partner after this election. And Senator Bayh, who, like me, was a Governor,