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of America, the long-term environmental challenges of the country.

I want Hillary to talk about all of this, but I tell you, how elections come out—I've been involved with them since I was—the first election I ever worked in, I was 8 years old, passing out cards at the polling place for my uncle who was running for State legislature. They had 2-year terms, and his wife made him quit after one term because she didn't like politics very much. [*Laughter*] But the lesson did not spread to our branch of the family. [*Laughter*]

But I'll tell you what I've learned in all that long time: The winner is often determined by what the people believe the election is about. And I can tell you that for 30 years, from the first time I ever met Hillary, the first thing she ever talked about to me—the welfare of children, and how families cope with work and having kids and succeeded in both ways. I've watched her for 30 years work on foster care, on adoptions, on health care for kids.

And during the period when I was Governor, because of the adversity we faced in our home then in Arkansas, she went on a bunch of big corporation boards; she went out working on how to find—get jobs into places that had been left behind. And when I ran for President, as Governor, the whole thing had turned around, in no small measure because of a lot of the work she had done in the rural areas and the small towns, in the left-behind areas of our State.

So I'll tell you two things. If you want somebody that understands how to try to create economic opportunity in places that have been left behind and if you want somebody that has spent a whole lifetime always sticking up for kids, for families, and for the proposition that every child matters, she's the best person in America New York could send to the U.S. Senate.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:30 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Leslie and Patty Woodcock, and their daughter, Christine Woodcock Dettor, who introduced the President; dinner cochairs Sandy Souder and Sarah Nichols; and Kelly McDonald, who sang a song for the President.

Remarks on the Legislative Agenda

September 5, 2000

Thank you. First of all, I want to thank Senator Daschle and Leader Gephardt for the work they have done and the statements they have made. And I also want to thank Senator Reid and Representative Bonior for their role in the leadership of our party in the House and Senate, and Mr. Podesta and Mr. Lew and Secretary Summers and others were in the meeting that we've just completed.

What we're trying to say is that we are committed to breaking the legislative logjam, but we have to move forward with fiscal responsibility, with responsible tax cuts, and with public investments that give all our people a chance and fuel our prosperity. For 7½ years now, we have followed that program, and it has worked very well for America. It has paid enormous dividends.

Unfortunately, the strategy pursued by the Republican leaders in Congress, I believe, would squander that remarkable success. Month by month and bill by bill, they are attempting to spend our projected surplus for years to come, an estimated $2 trillion, on massive and reckless tax cuts for the privileged few. This isn't fiscally responsible. It isn't fair, and it doesn't even take into account that cost that would follow on their plans to partially privatize Social Security, or any spending promises they have made to the American people in this election season.

I believe we owe it to our children to stay on course to pay off the national debt over the next 12 years. If we do it, interest rates will stay low; businesses can grow; generations will know that Social Security and Medicare will be there for them. And I might add, as the Council of Economic Advisers reported to me, it amounts to a tax cut, because paying off the debt, as opposed to spending it all, will keep interest rates, at a minimum—one percent lower a year, over the next decade—and that is worth $250 billion to the average American families in this country in lower home mortgages, $30 billion in lower car payments, and $15 billion in lower college loan payments. So that's a $300 billion tax cut real people get, just by doing

the right thing, and I think it's important that we never forget that.

As Dick said, the American people want us to address the pressing issues that affect their daily lives. Yesterday we celebrated Labor Day. Today it's time to honor the labor of the American people who sent us here. We should do it by raising the minimum wage by a dollar. Congress should stop holding up the process and make it the first order of business.

We should also have sensible tax cuts in the areas of health care, college tuition, long-term care, the environment, and of course, the new markets tax cut, which is a tax cut that all of us support for upper income people to encourage them to invest in lower income people in lower income neighborhoods that have been left behind by our prosperity.

Congress should pass a strong Patients' Bill of Rights, and Senator Daschle, I hope we'll hear that comment that you said over and over again, that the Republican National Committee—the Senate Committee has now identified our bill as the real Patients' Bill of Rights, and I want to thank them for that and ask them to vote accordingly, now that we're back in business.

Americans and people with disabilities should not have to wait another year for an affordable voluntary Medicare prescription drug benefit. The money is there. We ought to do this, and we ought not to be wasting a lot of time seeing how much we could parse down what is something clearly a life-or-death matter for so many Americans. Our Nation's 44 million uninsured citizens shouldn't have to wait for a significant expansion of health care.

We have a proposal on the table that would allow the States to enroll the parents of children who are eligible for our Children's Health Insurance Program. We have a proposal on the table that would allow people between the ages of 55 and 65 to enroll in Medicare if they lose their previous health insurance and give them a tax credit to make it affordable. Now, these proposals could take care of 25 percent, and I might say the most needy 25 percent of those 44 million Americans without health insurance. We have the money to do it.

We need to keep working to put 50,000 more police on the street. The 100,000 police program has worked very well. We have the lowest violent crime rate in 27 years now, and we need to keep doing what has worked. We should also pass commonsense gun safety legislation and, I hope, the hate crimes bill. I applaud the Senate for passing the hate crimes legislation, including the Republicans who joined our unanimous Democratic caucus in voting for it—or virtually unanimous—and I hope that the House will follow suit.

We need to strip out the anti-environmental riders and press for cleaner air and cleaner water. We need to pass the measures that will enable the American people to combat global warming, and we need to approve permanent conservation funding to protect our natural heritage. We also need to strengthen our laws for providing for equal pay for equal work, pass debt relief for the emerging democracies, normalize trade relations with China.

Most important, we should not forget that the Congress comes back at the beginning of the school year, and there are pressing educational needs for America. The children of this country need more teachers and smaller classes in modern classrooms. We need to continue to support 100,000 good new teachers to reduce class size, and we need Congress to determine finally we're going to do our part to help the school districts of this country replace broken-down buildings and trailers with modern classrooms. Again I will say, we believe in sensible tax cuts for middle class families that make education and long-term care more affordable, not cuts that threaten our prosperity.

Last week I vetoed the Republican estate tax repeal, not because I don't favor reform of the estate tax laws but because absolute repeal is not fiscally responsible, and it's not fair. It was a budget buster that ignored 98 percent of America's families.

Now, later this week, the Republicans say they are going to vote to try to override my veto of the estate tax repeal. Needless to say, the small number of people that are affected have an enormous amount of influence, especially if they can convince a lot of other people that they are affected by the law. But I think it's very important for the American

people to remember something else about the estate tax repeal: It is not a bill standing on its own.

Many of these bills they've passed—it's very much—what they've done this year is better politically for them than what they did last year. Last year they sent me a bill down here that was obviously very big and unwieldy and uneffective.

This year, as Mr. Gephardt said, they're sending them down here in discrete bills. And every one of them appeals to some constituency or another. But when you add them all up, it's still part of a $2 trillion plan that would wipe out the entire projected budget surplus. And I will say again, that is before we agreed to take Medicare spending off budget, the Medicare taxes, before they had to pay for a privatization plan for Social Security, and before they had to pay for any of their spending plans. They take away all the money that the country would have in a balanced budget to invest in education and health care and the environment for a decade. It is wrong.

Now, they've got a right to try to override any veto that I make. That's the way that the Constitution works. But I wish they would try just as hard to muster up the two-thirds to raise the minimum wage for people that are working 40 hours a week, the students that are still sitting in crowded classrooms and trailers, the patients fighting for the health care they need, the seniors struggling to pay for prescription drugs.

You know, if my health holds up, I'll probably be one of those people that will be fortunate enough to have some estate tax to pay one day, or my heirs will. But I'd kind of like to see us spend a little time—we seem to spend all of our time fighting in Congress over what they want to do to help people who, like me, that America has been very good to. I think we ought to spend a little more time working on the minimum wage, the schoolchildren, the people who need the Patients' Bill of Rights, the seniors who need the prescription drugs.

This is a great and good country. We should be fair to everybody. I'm for changes in the estate tax. All of us are. They all voted for it, but the Republicans wanted an issue. They want it to be an all-or-nothing thing, and I just don't think that the most fortunate people in this country should be the only ones that are considered here.

I think the folks that don't have anybody up here lobbying for them and the folks that don't have the ability to contribute to any of our campaigns, but to keep this country going day-in and day-out, their kids deserve a good education too; their parents deserve medicine too; and they deserve to have the protections that the Patients' Bill of Rights gives that the rest of us can buy. That's what I believe, and we've got 5 weeks to give it to them, and we ought to just saddle up and do it.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:07 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to the Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee.

Proclamation 7337—Health in Aging Month, 2000

September 5, 2000

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

At the beginning of the 20th century, there were only 3 million older Americans; today, at the dawn of the 21st century, there are 34 million older citizens in our Nation, and we anticipate that, by the year 2050, one in four Americans will be 65 or older. We can be grateful that because of extraordinary advances in medicine, technology, and science, as well as increased public awareness of the importance of good nutrition and physical fitness, these older citizens are now living longer, more active, more productive lives than any previous generation.

The dramatic increase in the life span of our citizens, however, presents us with new challenges. While Americans are no longer dying from many of the diseases that affected previous generations, they must now contend with chronic conditions such as arthritis, osteoporosis, heart and lung disease, dementia, and stroke. These conditions are major causes of disability and death in our Nation,