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I remember when we were going together. I said, "This is terrible. I'm going home to Arkansas, and I'm going to try to run for office, and I feel terrible that you're going to do this, because you ought to be doing it, too." The only thing that anybody can say anymore, after all I've been through, that makes me mad, is when somebody suggests that the only reason she can do this is that she's my wife and First Lady. If she hadn't been my wife and First Lady, she could have done it 25 years ago. Now, that's the truth.

So, thanks. We're in a hard fight. We're a little ahead. I think she's going to win. I think the Vice President and Senator Lieberman are going to win. But I think the big problem is making people understand, number one, this is a gift, this moment—countries just get a moment like this once every 50 years or so—and number two, understanding what the nature of the choice and the consequences are. I am absolutely convinced, if people get the feeling this is a really important election and then have a pretty clear idea of what the choices are and what the consequences are, we're going to do great.

Clarity is our friend; cloudiness is our foe. And you helped us tonight by making sure that she'll be able to hold up her end of the deal in New York. I just want to urge you to keep doing whatever you can and not just financially, I mean really just talking to people. People have got to understand, this is a big deal. I mean, I feel that we spent so much time just trying to get all the things going in the right direction and get the country coming together and giving people a sense of possibility again, and I think people have that. They have this. Why do you think the issues are so important?

One reason Al Gore got such great ratings out of the speech at the convention, and it lasted more than Governor Bush's did, is it was more specific. I once said to him, I said, "the Presidency—the election for President is the world's greatest job interview. And sometimes people forget that. You're asking people to hire you. And unlike a lot of other jobs, you get to both interview for the job, and tell people at the same time what you think the job is. And it changes over time."

So that's what we're doing. You've done a good thing here, helping Hillary tonight. She won't let you down. And we need every great soul we can get in the Senate. You're doing a good thing by helping our side in this election. You've just got to make sure that we have—that people really understand and care about it.

I've lived long enough now to see tragedy change things. I've seen Senator Kennedy go through tragedy after tragedy and keep serving, but the times that he had to serve in changed. He's going to have the best time to be a Senator that he's had since the first term he was in the Senate, if we win the White House, if we pick up some Senate seats, we pick up some House seats. It will be the best time you've had since you started.

And you have to wait a long time when things go bad to make them just right again. And so I say to you, not in a maudlin way, that this is a gift. We have been given a gift. If I had any role in it, I'm grateful. I did the best I could, and I've got a few more cards to play before I'm done. But you've got to make sure you do this election right, because it may be 50 years before we get another chance. We've got to do it right.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:22 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Senator Edward M. Kennedy and his wife, Vicki; Terence McAuliffe, chair, 2000 Democratic National Convention; and Jim Lehrer, who moderated the first Presidential debate.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Congressional Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters

October 5, 2000

"Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Act"

The President. Good morning. I want to thank Senator Daschle and Congressman Gephardt and the distinguished Members of the House and Senate who have come here today for a meeting on education. And I want to direct my remarks toward that and then call on Senator Robb and Representative Berkley to talk. But before I do, I would like to say a few words about the "Breast and

Cervical Cancer Treatment Act," which passed the Senate unanimously yesterday.

This bill will help thousands of low-income women with cancer get the early, affordable treatment which can save their lives. I just spoke with Speaker Hastert, and he said that he expected the bill to pass the House immediately, so that help can start flowing to women for whom it could be a matter of life and death.

I was glad to include this initiative in my budget, and I'll be proud to sign it into law. It is a good example of how we can work together for the good of the American people.

Education Legislation

Unfortunately, so far we still don't have that same approach on our most important priority, education. So far, the majority party has not joined us in providing the investments necessary to support a strategy that has been working to improve our schools for 7 years now. We have pursued this strategy relentlessly, under the leadership of Secretary Riley, and we have pursued investments which will support that strategy. Every year we've had to fight for them, but every year we've been successful in the end in getting enough bipartisan support to prevail.

Unfortunately, this year education seems to be almost the only thing on Capitol Hill where they don't want to spend a lot of extra money. As all of you know, lots of extra money has been added to many appropriations bills; billions of dollars has been spent on special projects and other things that cannot possibly be characterized as the Nation's highest priorities, over and above what were the budget limits back at the beginning of the year when we didn't know that the budget would be in as good a shape as it's in.

We have worked over the last several years to restore billions of dollars in educational funding, and we are prepared to fight for it again. I'd like to explain why and talk about the latest evidence we have that our strategy is working.

For 7 years we've had a straightforward approach. We've worked to increase standards, raise accountability, and make critical investments in education. We promoted standards in every State, required States to identify failing schools and make efforts to turn them around. We've increased Head Start dramatically and begun to provide funding for after-school and summer school programs. We have worked to connect 95 percent of our schools to the Internet, and we provided more choice through charter schools. We've hired more teachers and improved teacher quality. We're gaining ground.

For example, in 1993 only 14 States had real standards and a core curriculum. Today, 49 States do. In 1993 only 14 percent of our schools and 3 percent of our classrooms were connected to the Internet. Today, 95 percent of the schools and 65 percent of the classrooms are connected. In 1993 there was only one charter school in the entire country. Today, there are 1,700. In 1993 there was no Federal funding for after-school and summer school programs. Today, there are 600,000 children in such programs instead of on the streets. In 1993 there were no nationally certified master teachers. Today, there are almost 5,000, and by the end of the year, there will be well over 10,000.

All over the country States are turning around troubled schools. And I might say, this is due in no small measure to the leadership of the Secretary of Education, who will be talking later to the press about the report I'm going to discuss. But since 1993, he has reduced, by two-thirds, regulations imposed on States and local school districts under the previous administrations. And a new GAO report just came out showing that 99 percent of the funds appropriated by the Congress for the 10 largest Federal education programs actually are received by the local school districts for the purpose for which they were intended.

Math and reading scores are now rising across America. Some of the greatest gains are in the most disadvantaged schools. The number of students taking advance placement tests has increased by two-thirds in 8 years, the increase among Latino students, 300 percent; among African-American students, 500 percent. College exam scores are rising—entrance exam scores—even though more students from more disadvantaged backgrounds are taking the tests. The high

school dropout rate is down, the college-going rate at an all-time high.

But no one believes that we have finished the job of renewing American education, so that all students can get the world-class skills they need. The students who went back to school this fall are the biggest, most diverse group in our history. We owe it to them to make sure they're prepared to succeed in the high-tech information society in which they will live. That's what we have to do.

For example, we've been working for years to reduce class size, because study after study from Tennessee to Wisconsin to California has shown that smaller classes boost test scores and learning, especially among the most disadvantaged students who need the most personal attention. Two years ago we launched a class size reduction initiative to put more teachers in the classroom and train better those that are already there. It has allowed school districts across our country already to hire 29,000 new, well-trained teachers.

Today the Council of Great City Schools issued its second annual report on the results of the class size initiative. Last year alone, according to the report, 25 of our biggest city school systems used Federal funds to hire more than 2,700 teachers and to train 25,000 more. In Philadelphia, the teacher-student ratio in kindergarten and first grade has been cut to 15 to 1. San Francisco used the funds to get eighth grade math and language-arts classes down to 20 to 1, from a high of 33 to 1.

Just as all previous academic studies have shown, urban schools across the country report that test scores are up in smaller classes. Student confidence and teacher morale are higher; disciplinary problems are down. Michael Casserly, who runs the Council of Great City Schools, is with us today. I want to thank him for his commitment to our schools, and I want to thank him for this report, which he just gave me. And as I said, he and Secretary Riley will be discussing it later out in front of the White House.

I have been fortunate to visit schools like the ones documented in this report. From small-town Kentucky to inner-city New York, around the country, what you see clearly, based on the evidence, is an education revival, not an education recession. The report is more unequivocal proof that cutting class size and investing in teacher quality does produce results, whether the schools are urban or rural, large or small. But every year we have to fight the majority in Congress for funding the class size initiative. The budget proposed by the Republican leadership does nothing to meet our goal of hiring 100,000 new teachers to reduce class size in the early grades.

Our budget would help build or dramatically remodel 6,000 schools and repair another 5,000 a year for 5 years. Their budget fails to guarantee investment in building or modernizing classrooms, although our school construction deficit is now $127 billion. And I do believe that we have a bipartisan majority in both Houses for this initiative if we could just get it to a vote.

The budget also shortchanges funding for after-school programs and for teacher quality. We have a proposal that could allow us to put over 2 million kids in after-school programs. It underfunds our GEAR UP program, denying as many as 600,000 children help in preparing for college. And perhaps worst of all over the long run, it walks away from our $250 million commitment not only to identify failing schools but to help them turn around, or to shut them down and reopen them under new management.

It fails to give middle class families a $10,000 tax deduction for college or to provide a tax credit to help local school districts build new schools. And it fails to fund our billion-dollar initiative for teacher quality.

We get returns on every cent we spend for teacher quality. We should be using some of it to reduce the number of uncertified teachers in our classrooms. In the schools with the highest minority enrollment in this country, students have less than a 50 percent chance of having a math or a science teacher with a license and degree in the field. There is no excuse for this. We have the money to address it. We can do better, and we must.

We have lots of evidence now if you invest more in schools and teachers, if you demand more of them, you can turn schools around and change young people's lives for the better.

Now, as I said, this is not a strategy for micromanaging our schools. We've reduced regulations on them by two-thirds. It is a strategy for making national priorities out of what educators have told us and proved time and time again will work to give all our kids a world-class education.

Everyone here is committed to staying at the negotiating table until we have an education budget worthy of America's children in the 21st century. We're going to keep fighting to strengthen accountability, to hire 100,000 new teachers, to help communities build or modernize schools, to expand after-school programs and college opportunities, to put a qualified teacher in every classroom in America. That is our commitment. We owe it to our children to keep it.

Now I'd like to call on Senator Robb, who has been a real leader in this effort, to speak.

[*At this point, Senator Charles S. Robb and Representative Shelley Berkley made brief remarks.*]

The President. Let me just say in closing, obviously we wanted Representative Berkley to speak because she's been a leader in this whole effort for smaller classes, more teachers, and modernized schools and because she represents a district which is exhibit A of the problem. But it is a national problem.

We wanted Senator Robb to speak because he has been a leader in the school construction and class size initiative but also because he's a former Governor who, while he served, clearly had one of the finest records in America in education. And I say that because one of the things that we keep being told by the leadership is that somehow we're, again I'll say, "trying to tell the States what to do." We have three people here who were Governors for a total of 20 years, and we know we have not designed programs to micromanage education. What we have done is listened to educators, looked at the results, and we understand there's a national priority here.

Look, when I became President, Federal spending as a portion of all the education spending had dropped below 6 percent. When President Johnson was here, it was 9 percent. And we, first of all, had to turn it around when we got the budget under control. We've got the budget under control; we've got it back up to 7 percent. It's still just 7 cents on the dollar.

We have got to spend this money where it will have the biggest impact on learning for children. That's what this is about. And so I just wanted to make that clear. I thank them for what they've said, and I thank all the others who have taken the trouble to come here today and stand here, because we feel very, very strongly about this.

Now, I've said before, I'm a little concerned about some of the money that is being spent in these appropriations bills, but I've always been willing to work with Congress. I know there are always some special projects, but surely to goodness, if we're going to have however many billion dollars there are in special projects that don't reflect national priorities, we could come up with the modest amount more necessary to fund a truly aggressive education budget that would get the job done.

Thank you.

Situation in Yugoslavia

Q. Mr. President, the situation in Belgrade appears very critical. Citizens have stormed the Parliament building. What message today, sir, do you have both to those folks who have stormed the Parliament and to President Milosevic himself?

The President. The United States stands with people everywhere who are fighting for their freedom. We believe in democracy. I have said before, the opposition candidate who, according to all unbiased reports, clearly won the election, obviously also has strong differences with us. This is not a question of whether he agrees with us. All we want for the Serbian people is what we want for people everywhere, the right to freely choose their own leaders.

And it's been a hardcore dictatorship. They had an election. The election results were then, apparently, altered and then—now the court has made this decision. I think the people are trying to get their country back. And we support—we support democracy and the will of the Serbian people.

Q. Sir, will the U.S. in any way intervene if force is used against the citizens in Belgrade or other parts of Serbia?

The President. I don't believe it's an appropriate case for military intervention, and I don't believe that the United States should say or do anything which would only strengthen Mr. Milosevic's hand. The people of Serbia have made their opinion clear. They did it when they voted peacefully and quietly, and now they're doing it in the streets because people tried to—there's been an attempt to rob them of their vote.

And I think if the world community will just stand with—stand for freedom, stand for democracy, stand for the will of the people, I think that will prevail. It did all over Eastern Europe. We've had a peaceful transition, democratic transition, with an election in Russia. The world is moving toward freedom and democracy, and the United States should support those forces, and we will do so strongly.

Yes.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, the latest crisis in the Middle East comes at a politically sensitive time in Israel and, actually, for this country, as well. Do you still hold out hope that before you leave office a comprehensive peace agreement can be reached, or is there a point where you just say it has to wait for the next President, the next Congress, and the next Israeli leader?

The President. Well, first of all, the timetable has to be dictated by the leaders in the Middle East. But the answer to your question is, we know what the issues are; we know what the differences are. And what my obligation will be, and what the next President's obligation will be, is to do whatever we can to either help make the peace agreement or make sure it takes hold.

But our timing should be completely irrelevant to this. I should be available around the clock, every day, as long as I'm here, and we should try to do it as soon as we can because it will keep more people alive and give a much brighter future to the people in the Middle East. So our timing here should be completely irrelevant to that. But let's get back to basics here. The first thing we've got to do is to stop this violence and to get beyond it.

Now, yesterday Prime Minister Arafat—I mean, Chairman Arafat and Prime Minister Barak—excuse me—and Secretary Albright had what I think was a very productive meeting. They made clear commitments which they communicated from Paris to their people to take steps to shut this violence down. They're trying to work out a process, in which we've offered to be involved, that would evaluate what happened and why, and what went wrong.

But the most important thing is to stop people dying and then to get back to the negotiating table. So the commitments that were made yesterday and communicated by the leaders back to the Middle East now have to be implemented on the ground. That's the most important thing. There will be ample time for reassessments. There will be ample time for evaluation. But the most important thing is to stop the killing and the dying and the violence.

Now, the next most important thing is to get on with the peace process. That's, by far, the next most important thing, because it's obvious that on both sides, there's still underlying anxiety and fear and misunderstanding. And we've just got to get beyond all this. We've come too far in the last 7 years, 7½ years now, to turn back. We've just come too far. We've got to stay after this.

Oil Supply

Q. Mr. President, the United States has taken steps to increase the oil supply. Do you feel the United States Government can still do more? Is there anything else your Government can do in the United States or abroad to increase the oil supply?

The President. Well, I'm going to watch it every day. We've been fortunate that the price has dropped several dollars a barrel, after the last step we made. But there are still significant questions about how soon the product will be—can go to the refinery and whether we not only can get fuel but fuel oil out of the refinery and into the supply chain in time to make sure there's no adverse price impact for the winter. I do think we're going to have enough supplies to get through the winter. And I'm just going to watch it every day and do what seems indicated.

I would just say this, since you raised that question—and then I have to let these Members of Congress go, and Mr. Casserly and Secretary Riley will go out and talk more about the education report—but what I would hope is that what we're going through here would prompt the majority in Congress to work with us on some longer term strategies on which we ought to be able to agree.

We are very close to the development of very high mileage vehicles with fuel cells, alternative fuels, blended fuels. We are within sight of cracking the chemical mystery of the conversion of biomass to fuels at a ratio that would make it—change the whole future of this issue. Right now it takes 7 gallons of gasoline to make 8 gallons of ethanol or any other biomass fuel, but the chemists believe they can get the conversion down to one gallon of gasoline for 8 gallons of fuel. When that happens, then all of you will drive to work every day with the equivalent of 500 miles a gallon. And this will be a very different world. We will be living in a different world when that happens.

And we ought to be investing money in that. There are technologies available today off the shelf that pay out in 2 years or less that would permit us to dramatically reduce energy consumption in homes, offices, and factories all over America. We ought to give people a tax break to buy them, and we ought to do it now. We ought to create a market that will move quickly to a very different energy future that will actually grow the economy faster.

So you know where—we differ over—and there are some production incentives we could adopt now that we agree on. The most significant difference we have I think is over whether there should be drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. And that's an issue that's being debated in the election; the American people can draw their own conclusions. I think we're right. They think they're right. They can hear the debate. But that should not be an excuse to walk away from the long-term elements of an energy strategy that I've been trying to pass for more than 2 years, that we can do today, at very modest cost and enormous return.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:27 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Michael D. Casserly, executive Director, Council of Great City Schools; President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro); Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; and Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel.

Remarks to the Conference on the Progressive Tradition in Princeton, New Jersey

October 5, 2000

Thank you very much. Thank you for the wonderful welcome. Thank you, President Shapiro, for your distinguished leadership here and the vital work you did during the course of our common Presidencies. It occurred to me that this might be the only place in America where people thought Woodrow Wilson got a demotion when he was elected President of the United States. [*Laughter*]

Thank you, Dean Rothschild. And thank you, Ruth Miller, for putting off your retirement so I could come here today. I want to thank Professor Sean Wilentz for putting on this conference and for his many acts of generosity and kindness and support for our efforts over the last 8 years.

I'd like to thank the Congressman from Princeton, Representative Rush Holt, for coming here. Thank you. I know this is not really a political event, but I can't help noting that Rush Holt is the only bona fide scientist in the Congress, and Lord knows, we need at least one.

Another Member of Congress wanted to come here today, Senator John Edwards from North Carolina, a good friend of mine, whose daughter Katherine is in the freshman class. And I promised to give his excuses to his daughter and the rest of you, but they are voting in the Senate today. And part of the Progressives' tradition is showing up. [*Laughter*] And so he's showing up down in Washington.

And I thank you, Katharine Strong Gilbert, for giving me this Whig-Clio Award.

You know, James Madison is a very important figure to every American and every President who cares, in particular, about the framework and history of the Constitution.