

**Remarks to the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus Institute Dinner**

*May 18, 1995*

Thank you, Admiral, for that introduction; and thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for that rousing welcome. Can we do this again tomorrow night?

Thank you, Admiral; thank you, Gloria Caoile; to all the Members of Congress who are here. I thought I had a list of all of them, but I can look outside there and see I don't. I have seen Congressman Mineta, Congressman Matsui, Congressman Underwood, Congressman Kim, Congressman Faleomavaega. I see Congressman McDermott out there—your Medicare hearing was great—*[laughter]*—I watched you on C-SPAN—all the Members of Congress. I want you to know I'm watching you all the time on C-SPAN. *[Laughter]* I see Senator Inouye and Senator Robb, and there may be others here, and if I have not mentioned you I am sorry, I apologize.

I'm delighted to see your co-emcees here. First, Ming-Na Wen, whom I first saw in the wonderful movie, "Joy Luck Club," when Amy Tan came to the White House and showed it. And then, my daughter makes me watch "ER" whenever I can. *[Laughter]* I was tired when I got here, and then I shook hands with her and my blood started pumping, so I feel so good. *[Laughter]* I'm especially glad to see George Takei, because I came here to talk about how we're going to take America into the 21st century, and he's already been there. *[Laughter]* This may be largely an academic exercise to him.

I'm glad to be joined by Secretary of Transportation, Federico Peña, and by Phil Lader, the SBA Administrator, and many others whom I will mention in a moment who are here tonight. And I also—I met the board members, or at least several of them, on the way in tonight. I want to thank all of you for serving and for constituting this organization.

Hillary and our daughter, Chelsea, just got back from a remarkable trip to Southern Asia. They went to India, to Pakistan, to Bangladesh, to Nepal, and to Sri Lanka. I got a few shirts and a lot of pictures out of it—

*[laughter]*—and a world of education, because I watched several hours of rough film footage of their trip, and I must tell you that it was an immensely rewarding thing for them and for us, and I hope and believe it was good for the United States.

We are at an extraordinary moment in our Nation's history, not only for the Asian Pacific American community but for all of our people who understand that we're going through profound changes, economic and social changes, that we have great problems and great challenges but, frankly, more opportunities than any other country if we understand what an incredible resource our people are, and how fortunate we are, on the verge of a totally globalized economy, to have, perhaps, the most diversified citizenry anywhere in the world.

If we understand that we don't have a person to waste, and that we have to face our challenges together, there is no stopping the United States. I have been particularly gratified to have the services of so many people from the Asian-Pacific American community in our administration. Many of you out here, I see, have accepted various appointments to boards and commissions, and many of you work full-time for the White House or the administration, including Doris Matsui in Public Liaison. *[Applause]* Listen, she gets a hand when I'm in the non-Asian crowds. I think she must be the best politician in the White House, certainly the best politician in the Matsui family.

I see Congressman Pastor out there, an Hispanic-Asian-American Congressman; Maria Haley, with the Export-Import Bank; Ginger Lew at the Commerce Department; Denny Hiyashi of HHS; Debra Shon with the Trade Representative's Office; Paul Igasaki of the EEOC and Edward Chow of Veterans Affairs. And tomorrow I will get a list of everyone in my administration I have omitted to mention tonight, and I will eat a lot of crow.

We are a nation of immigrants. Not very many of us can trace our lineage back originally to this continent. It is a good thing to recognize and celebrate that fact. That was the purpose behind Congressman Horton's tireless efforts to have the month of May des-

ignated as Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month.

I want to add my sincere congratulations to the well-deserved recognition Congressman Horton is receiving tonight. He did America a great service with this action. Thank you, sir. Stand up. Thank you. [*Applause*]

The month of May has great significance in Asian-Pacific American history. The first week of May in 1843, the first Japanese arrived in America. On May the 10th, 1869, Golden Spike Day, the Transcontinental Railroad, built in large measure with Chinese labor, was completed. Today, more than 150 years later, nearly 8 million Asian-Pacific Americans can trace their roots to Asia and the islands of the Pacific.

As we face the challenges of the global economy in the information age, we turn to you for hope and inspiration. You know well about overcoming barriers and embracing change. You know well about the importance of preserving the traditional values of family and hard work, and sacrifice today for a better future tomorrow. And, yet you have shown the most remarkable ability to adapt to changing circumstances of perhaps any group of your fellow Americans.

Some of you are fifth generation citizens; others are the first in your families to call yourselves Americans. But all of you have a legacy of being willing to work hard to overcome obstacles to pursue the American dream. As immigrants and the descendants of legal immigrants, you understand, perhaps more than most, what it means to take on the responsibility of facing up to building a new life in a difficult and new circumstance.

As we debate immigration policy in this country—and we should—and we all know that we have a problem of illegal immigration which undermines the support that has traditionally existed in America for legal immigration, at least in modern times, we should all remember something that President Kennedy once said in describing the value of immigration, and I'd like to quote, "Immigration gave every old American a standard by which to judge how far he had come, and every new American a realization of how far he might go." It reminded every American, old and new, that change is the essence of

life and that American society is a process, not a conclusion. Let us remember that today in this time. We welcome your creativity, your contributions, and your criticisms as we struggle to prepare all Americans for the coming century.

For the past 2 years I have been focused—some would say obsessed—with getting our people to do the things that I believe we must do to move into the next century. I think that what we have to do does not fall easily into the categories of established political debate, or even into the established agendas of the political parties. The future should not belong to Republicans or Democrats, it should belong to all Americans who are willing to do what has to be done to keep the American dream alive.

In the next century, we have to face the fact that we will have more opportunities than ever before but that there will be challenges that are different than we have faced before. We will have to face the fact that wealth and success will not only depend upon hard work, it will require more smart work. We will have to face some new and different challenges to our security, for the information age requires us to be more open, more flexible, more mobile, to be able to get more information more quickly, to democratize access to all kinds of facts that previously were the province of the privileged few.

But we know that as we do that, we give rise to new security challenges, for the open and flexible and fast-moving society is very vulnerable to the forces of organized destruction. We saw that most heartbreakingly recently in Oklahoma City. We live with the bitter aftertaste of the World Trade Center. And our hearts ache with the Japanese people when they endured the ability of one fanatic to go into the subway and break open a vial of poison gas and kill several people and hospitalize hundreds of others. All this is a reminder that in the 21st Century we may be beyond the cold war, we may succeed—and that's what my recent trip to Russia was partly about—in completely removing the burden of the nuclear terror from our children and our grandchildren. But we cannot avoid organized, destructive, evil forces that will come at us in different ways, with the proliferation of biological and chemical

and perhaps even small-scale nuclear weapons. That is what we must fight against. We must fight to protect the benefits of the open society with genuine security for all of our people.

I think you could argue that the last 2 years have been a good down-payment on the future we are trying to build. Our economy has produced 6.3 million new jobs. Finally, after years of stagnation, we're beginning to produce high-wage jobs in the economy again. Our deficit is down by over \$600 billion over a 5-year period. Today, our Government's budget would be balanced, today, but for the interest payments we are required to make this year on the debt run up between 1981 and the end of 1992. So we are moving in the right direction.

We are shrinking the size of the Federal Government. It's over 100,000 people smaller than it was when I came here, and we're going to shrink it by much, much more. But I would say to you again, in the wake of what we have seen in terms of expressed animosity toward our Government, the people that are working for our Government, therefore, are doing more work with fewer people. They, too, are being more and more productive, and they are entitled to our respect, not our condemnation. They are Americans too.

The Small Business Administration, for example—its administrator is here, Mr. Lader—is having a huge reduction in its budget, but they've increased their loan volume by 40 percent. That is the kind of thing we see going on all over the Government. We have done what we could to support small business. It is really the engine of opportunity, historically, for the Asian-Pacific American community. In the budget in 1993, we increased the expensing provisions for small business by 70 percent, and adopted for the first time a capital gains tax for people who really invest long-term in businesses, who hold the investment for 5 years or longer.

Now, the SBA loan application has gone from an inch thick to a page long, and you can get an answer in a week instead of 2 or 3 months. We know that these are the kinds of things that we ought to be doing throughout the Government to create opportunity.

Perhaps more importantly because so many of you will make the most of it, we saw in the last 2 years the biggest expansion of trade opportunities in a generation in America, with the passage of NAFTA and GATT, and with the Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation group really getting organized for opening trade and tearing down trade barriers first in Seattle and then in Jakarta, where some of you were as we committed ourselves to an open trading system by the year 2010 for all the Asian-Pacific countries, including the United States of America.

We have done what we could to make it easier for working families to deal with this world of new challenges and changes, with dramatic increases in education and training opportunities, with the Family and Medical Leave Act, with tax reductions for working families with incomes of under \$28,000 a year, so anybody that works full-time and has children in the home should not live in poverty. If we want to reward work and family in this country, we ought to reward work and family. We shouldn't just talk about it. We ought to do it. And if you work full-time, you ought not to be in poverty if you have to go home at night to children who deserve a decent future.

As well as anyone else, you know that we must do more in education to raise the quality as well as the quantity of education in America, and so we have tried to do that. We've expanded educational opportunity, everything from more people in Head Start to lower-cost college loans for young people who go to college, better repayment terms. But we also have begun to give funds to States for the first time to really raise the standards of excellence in education.

Let people decide at the local level how to achieve these new standards, but to finally, finally, fully measure our children by global standards of excellence, so that we will know whether our schools are doing the job. And if they aren't, we will know what we have to do about it. This is an investment we must continue to make, even as we downsize the Government. We have to continue to invest in the education of our people. That is our future.

Indeed, if you ask me what the greatest threat to the preservation of the American

dream in the next century is, I would have to say it is that the middle class is splitting apart instead of swelling and coming together. From the end of the Second World War until about 15, 16 years ago, American incomes grew together without regard to income group, and we also were coming together. That is, incomes were going up, and the poorest people's incomes were going up a little faster than middle class people and the wealthiest people's incomes were.

So, we were increasing equality and increasing growth at the same time. For the last 15 years, that has all changed, partly as a result of our going into a global economy, partly as a result of the dramatic explosion in technology, putting higher and higher premiums on high skill levels, and the ability to learn for a lifetime. We see now, today, that slightly more than half of our people are working harder for the same or lower wages they were making 10 years ago.

So that, while in the last 2 years we've had more small businesses formed than in any period in history, we've seen more new millionaires in America than at any time in history, a cause for celebration, we see more and more and more people going home at night after a hard day's work, sitting down with their families, wondering if they'll be able to guarantee their children a better opportunity, wondering if, as hard as they've worked, somehow they've done something wrong and failed. They haven't failed. What we have done is failed to keep up with the changes in the global economy which require every advanced country to have a system of lifetime education and training available to all people so they can move into higher paying jobs.

The dispute we are having today, which I hope will be very short-lived, over the so-called rescission bill in the Congress, which I have said I will have to veto if it comes to me in the present form, is not a partisan dispute. I say it is not a partisan dispute. There were members of both parties in that conference committee that produced this final bill.

It is a dispute about yesterday's politics and tomorrow's politics, for I believe we, whether we're Democrats or Republicans, have to keep bringing the deficit down, and

we have to be prepared to make tough, sometimes unpopular budget cuts to liberate the American economy from the crushing burden of debt we have sustained in the last 12 years. We cannot continue this way. We've brought it down a lot. We have to continue until this budget is brought into balance. We must all do that.

But in a time when we are cutting spending, we have to be more careful with the dollars of yours that we do spend than ever before. If we are going to spend less and cut the deficit, what we have to spend must be spent with even greater care. And my dispute with the bill produced by the conference committee is not how much money was cut. In fact, I have offered even greater cuts. We have to start now to cut more spending. My problem is when the bill moved from a public process to a private process, over \$1 billion in educational opportunities were taken out of the bill, and \$1 billion-plus of pork was put back into the bill, everything from a special Federal grant to a city street, to nine specific road projects in a single congressional district, to \$100 million for one courthouse in return for cutting out over \$200 million to make our schools safe and drug-free, cutting out funds to give our children a chance to work in community service and earn college education, cutting out funds to train our teachers to meet international standards of excellence instead of just to continue to do what's being done in schools when it's not good enough. And I could go on and on.

So the issue is not cutting spending. I am for that. And it is not a partisan issue. Both parties were represented in the conference committee. It is about the old politics against the new politics. If we're going to have the courage to cut this deficit and to make unpopular spending cut decisions, then every dollar we do spend should be spent to take us into the 21st Century, to raise incomes, to create jobs, to give us a better future. That is what is at stake here, and we must fix it.

And let me say one other thing that we must focus on and that I hope you will all be thinking about and celebrating tonight. As we define our security as a people and our strength as a people, we have to protect ourselves against destruction from within and

without. That's what the crime bill is all about, putting more police on the street, having more prisons, having more prevention programs. It's what the anti-terrorism legislation I sent to the Congress is all about. But let us never forget the real security we have as Americans comes from the positive things about this country. The real security we have as Americans comes from the fact that almost all of us are devoted to our families, raise our children as best we can, put in a full day's work every day, pay our taxes as best we can legally, and otherwise obey the law and respect the differences in this country.

Now, we have free speech and free association. And we are proud of our differences. I am proud of the fact that you live in a country which encourages you to gather here because you share a common ethnic and geographic heritage. I am proud of that.

I am proud of the fact that Hispanics and African-Americans and Polish-Americans and other Americans have that same opportunity. I am proud of the fact that people who have different religious convictions that lead them to different political conclusions have the freedom to organize and speak their mind even if they think I am wrong on everything. I am proud of that. That's what America is all about. I am proud of that.

But every group should remember one thing: There are very few countries in the world where you have as much freedom to do as many different things as you do in this country. There are very few places in the world that are blessed with respecting diversity as we do in this country. And so, there should be a limit on the extent to which we go beyond celebrating our diversity to glorifying division. There should be a limit to the extent to which we go beyond disagreeing with our opponents to demonizing them.

You know, I'll just give you one example from my own experience. There's not a politician in this audience—I don't believe, including me, so I will only criticize myself, I have done this—there is no telling how many times in my life, just since I've been President, I have been so proud of being able to get the Congress to pass budgets that reduce the size of the Federal Government by 270,000 while we're taking on a higher work load. And I go around and brag about it, and

I don't know how many times I have used the term, "Government bureaucrat." And you will never find a politician using that term that doesn't have some slightly pejorative connotation. That is, we know taxpayers resent the money they have to pay to the Government, and so we try to get credit by saying we're being hard on bureaucrats or reducing bureaucrats.

After what we have been through in this last month, after what I have seen in the eyes of the children of those Government bureaucrats that were serving us on that fateful day in Oklahoma City, or in their parents' eyes who were serving us when their children were in that day-care center, I will never use that phrase again.

I had to face the fact that I was out there trying to get some political credit from my fellow citizens by implying that people who are in a certain category were taking their money for no good reason. Well, we have to downsize the Government. We have to have early retirement programs. We have to stop spending on some of the things we're spending on. And the Democrats and Republicans both have to get on that program, and we have to work together on it. But we should never—and everybody has got one story where some person working for the Federal Government or a State or a local government has been unreasonable in pursuit of a regulation or unreasonable in enforcement of the law or just not polite to someone when they came in.

But remember, most of those people are just like most of you: They love their children; they get up every day and go to work; they do the very best they can; they try to do honor to this country. And they take those jobs knowing they will never be rich, but drawing some fulfillment from the fact that they are serving the public. And that's just one example. All of us should now begin to think about this again, about the way that this country works and that we can celebrate our diversity and our differences, but we have to be connected in a seamless web of commitment to common values with a common vision of the future.

Yes, we've got a lot of problems. But we've had worse problems in the past. Yes, we have problems of getting along together. But noth-

ing compared to the shame of what happened to Japanese Americans during the Second World War.

There is nothing wrong with this country that we can't fix if we have the right attitude and enough courage and vision and willingness to think in new terms about a new future rooted in old values. That is what Asian-Pacific Americans are most famous for among your fellow citizens. And so I ask you to help lead us into that future.

Thank you and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:37 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency. In his remarks, he referred to Adm. Ming Chang, USN, Ret., acting chairman, Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus Institute; Gloria T. Caoile, dinner chair; actors Ming-Na Wen and George Takei; and author Amy Tan.

### **Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Law Enforcement Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters**

*May 19, 1995*

**The President.** I asked the heads of all of these major law enforcement organizations to come and meet with me in the White House today for two reasons. First, some of our work to enhance the safety of America's police officers and America's citizens and to better protect the police officers, to help them protect us, a lot of that work is under attack.

Some in Congress want to undermine our efforts to put 100,000 police officers on the street. Some want to repeal the Brady bill, even though it's stopped over 40,000 fugitives and felons from purchasing weapons last year alone. And some want to repeal the ban on deadly assault weapons, even though it is helping to protect the lives of innocent police officers and children on our streets.

I want to enlist these leaders' continued support in fighting these misguided attempts to roll back the clock in the fight against crime. And I want to make it clear that if Congress gives in to the political pressure to do this and repeals any of these measures, I will veto them in a heartbeat. In any fight between our country's law enforcement and

the Washington gun lobby, I will side with law enforcement.

Secondly, I want to discuss the attempts by a vocal minority to run down our police officers for their own benefit. The people who tried to make police officers the enemy when we were having a lot of controversy in this country back in the 1960's were wrong, and the people who are trying to do it today are wrong.

I don't care if you want less Government or more Government. I don't care if you favor repeal or retention of the assault weapons ban. Whatever you believe, no one has a right to attack those who uphold the law. Police officers risk their lives to protect our lives. They're on our side. I hope anyone who thinks otherwise has learned a valuable lesson in the debate in this country in the last couple of weeks.

I hope the NRA knows by now that anyone who pretends that police officers are the enemy is only giving aid and comfort to criminals who are really the enemy. I am glad the NRA apologized for the cruel attack on law enforcement officers in their fundraising letter on Wednesday. However, I note today that yesterday they seemed to be bragging about how much money they made from the fundraising letter in which they attacked police officers as "jackbooted thugs."

Now, if the NRA's apology is sincere, what they ought to do is put their money where their mouth is. They ought to give up the ill-gotten gains from their bogus fundraising letter, for which they have already apologized and acknowledged as inappropriate. They ought to turn that money over to the organization that helps the families of police officers who died in the line of duty. They made the money by attacking the police. They admitted they did the wrong thing. They ought to give the money up. That would show true good faith and would set the basis for an honest and open dialog in this country about issues that ought not to divide us by party, by region, by ideology, or in any other way. They ought to give the money back.

Thank you.

### **National Rifle Association**

**Q.** Do you think they will?

**The President.** I don't know.