

that continued production from the naval petroleum reserves is in the national interest.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Albert Gore, Jr., President of the Senate.

Remarks in Portland, Maine

October 7, 1996

The President. Thank you. Thank you. Hello, Maine! Hello, Portland! Thank you. Thank you. I have had a wonderful day today. I started off, as you know, in Hartford where we had the debate last night. I hope you got a chance to watch it. And then I went to Stamford, Connecticut, where 2,500 business executives, some of whom had never supported a Democrat before, announced their support for the Clinton/Gore ticket and the direction that we're going.

And then I went to Manchester, New Hampshire, where 5 years ago to the day—to this day 5 years ago—I came to New England and began my campaign for President. And now here I am with you in a State which can claim a lot of responsibility, if you think I did all right last night, because George Mitchell played Senator Dole in all my practice sessions and beat my brains in. And I thank him for that. Thank you.

I'm glad to be back; I'm glad to be back in Maine. I thank Mayor McDonough for coming out to meet me and, thank you, my long-time friend, Libby Mitchell, for your exuberant beginning of this rally tonight. Thank you, Victoria Murphy, for your work for the Democratic Party. And I'd like to thank the other elected and some former elected officials who are here, including former Governor Ken Curtis, a long-time friend; your State treasurer, Sam Shapiro—thank you, Sam; Andrew Ketterer, the State attorney general; Bill Diamond, the secretary of State; Dan Gwadosky, the speaker of the house, and Mark Lawrence, the Democratic senate leader. Thank you all for coming.

I'd like to thank the Windham Chamber Singers for singing tonight, the Westbrook High School Marching Band, the South Portland High School Marching Band. I'd like

to thank Mark Persky for being the emcee before we started. And I'd like to say a special word of thanks in a serious way to everyone who has been involved in the cleanup of the spill. Thank you all for your hard work. We're going to do fine.

I'd also like to thank Governor Brennan for giving me some good Maine lobsters. They'll be on Air Force One going back to Washington tonight when I leave.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is a good week for my family. Hillary was here about a week ago. And she told me she had such a good time I thought I'd come back and see for myself. And I must say I never dreamed that this whole place would be full. I'm gratified by your presence. And I know you're here because you care about your country and you want to help us build that bridge to the 21st century.

I hope you will remember, those of you who live in John Baldacci's district, that when the chips were down and when our friends in the other party passed that budget, which here we are on the eve of the 21st century, cut education by \$30 billion, cut the student loan program, cut Head Start—

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. —cut environmental protection by one-third, cut funds for cleaning up toxic dumps by a third, ended the guarantee of Medicaid for medical care for seniors in nursing homes and poor children and families with disabilities, and of course, in spite of what they say, did cut Medicare \$270 billion, and then they shut the Government down to try to make me sign the bill—I vetoed it, but John Baldacci upheld the veto. He made it possible for this country to start going in the right direction.

I have known Joe Brennan a long time. We served as Governors together. We have been friends for many years. He has always believed that education was the key to our future. He has always believed we could grow the economy and preserve our environment. He has the values, the vision, and the direction that will serve Maine well in the United States Senate, and I hope you will send him to the Senate on November the 5th.

And finally, let me say on a purely personal note, I first met Tom Allen in 1968. We were much younger then. [*Laughter*] He doesn't

have any gray hair, and I'm fairly bitter about that. But if you send him to Congress, it will take care of it and equalize things.

From the first day I met Tom Allen, he talked about Maine. He had Maine in his bones, Maine in his blood, Maine in his dreams. He spent his life here serving you. I hope you'll let him serve you in Washington because he will represent your interests and never forget his roots and advance your cause.

I want to say one other word about Senator Mitchell. In addition to doing a masterful job of playing Senator Dole in our debate preparations, I'm sure that all of you know that I've asked George Mitchell to make himself available and the parties in the Northern Ireland peace process have asked him to try to broker a peace there. It is a difficult situation. The conflict goes back hundreds of years. We had another painful setback today, but if anybody can bring people together and get them to reason and listen to their hearts and think with their minds and go forward and let go of the past, it is George Mitchell. And I thank him for that.

I'd also like to say I'm grateful for all the people in Maine who are doing better and who have new jobs. But I want to thank all the folks here on the platform and George Mitchell for talking to me about the interests and the welfare and the future of the workers at the Hathaway Shirt Company. I thank him for doing that, and I'm for you, fellows. We'll do what we can to help. Thank you for being here.

Ladies and gentlemen, last night we heard two very different visions of our future. I thank Senator Dole for being a part of this debate, and I felt after it was over that both of us were able to demonstrate that we can disagree strongly and firmly without letting our political dialog disintegrate into a rude shouting match. We can be civil and decent to one another and build this country together, and that is a good thing. That is a good thing.

Four years ago, I ran for President at a time of high unemployment and rising frustration. I was determined to change this country, to turn our country around to make sure that when we enter the 21st century, we would be driven by a vision of the Amer-

ican dream alive and well for everybody willing to work for it; of an American community that is coming together instead of being torn apart as so many people in the world are today by their racial, their religious, their tribal differences. In this country, it doesn't matter if you believe in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights and you're willing to show up tomorrow and be a good citizen, everybody can have a place in America. And that's the way I want it to stay.

And I wanted to keep our country the strongest force for peace and freedom in the world. So I came to Maine, and I said, "Vote for me, and we'll change the way politics works. We'll have a simple strategy: opportunity for all, responsibility from all, and an American community in which everybody has a role to play." I promised you that we would have a Government that was smaller and less bureaucratic, that responded to the needs of people and gave people the tools they need to make the most of their own lives.

Well, 4 years ago, you took me on faith. But now, there's a record. You heard a little about it already tonight. No matter what others may say in the debate, there is a record: 10½ million more jobs, record numbers of new businesses and exports of American products, 4½ million new homeowners, incomes on the rise for the first time in a decade. The typical American family with an increased income of \$1,600 after inflation since our economic plan passed 3 years ago.

Last week we learned that in 1995 we had the biggest drop in poverty and the biggest drop in income inequality among working people in 27 years, the biggest drop in childhood poverty in 20 years, and the lowest rate of poverty among American seniors since we began to keep statistics. We are on the right track to the 21st century.

And here at home we are beginning to come together around our basic values. For 4 years in a row, the crime rate has dropped; the welfare rolls are down by almost 2 million; child support collections are up by almost 50 percent; and for the first time in 20 years—in 20 long years—the rate of the number of out-of-wedlock births is going down. This country is on the right track. We

are moving back to our roots and forward into the future in the best way—together.

The question before the American people now is, what path will we take to the 21st century? Will we stay on the path we're on, or will we take a U-turn to the policies of a failed past? Do we believe we have to build a bridge to the past, or are we going to build a bridge to the future? Do we believe that we're better off when we just give each other a good letting-alone, or do we believe, as I do, that the First Lady is right: It does take a village to raise our children and build our country and move us forward.

My fellow Americans, we are better off than we were 4 years ago. But the real question is, what are we going to do for the next 4 years to build that bridge to the 21st century. We have to keep going. We cut the deficit by 60 percent. It's the first time the deficit's gone down in each of the 4 years of a President's term since before World War II; in fact, before the Civil War. But we have to finish the job.

We ought to balance the budget and do it in a way that protects education, the environment, Medicare, Medicaid, and research. We can do that. And we can give targeted tax cuts to families for education and childrearing and buying that first home, and still balance that budget. Will you help me build that bridge to the 21st century? [Applause]

To help our families succeed at home and at work, we passed the family and medical leave law, which 12 million people have already taken advantage of. We've raised the minimum wage for 10 million hard-working workers. We passed the Kassebaum-Kennedy health reform bill, which says to 25 million Americans you can't lose your health insurance anymore just because you changed jobs or because someone in your family has been sick.

Just recently, I signed a bill I was particularly proud of, which says that mothers and their newborn babies can no longer be forced by insurance companies out of the hospital after a day. It says that health insurance policies have to bear fair consideration for people in families that have mental health challenges. And it says, finally, something that's very important to me, and I know very im-

portant to my fellow Arkansan, Libby's husband, Jim Mitchell; it says, finally, after all these years, to the Vietnam veterans whose children were born with spina bifida because they were fighting for our country and were exposed to Agent Orange, finally we're going to give you the medical help with the disability support your children deserve. It is high time. We are moving in the right direction.

So we've made a good beginning, but we have to do more. We ought to expand the family and medical leave law to say you don't lose your job if you take a little time off from work to take your children or your parents to regular doctor's appointments and to go to the school to meet with your child's teacher. It will make America a stronger place.

We ought to amend the law for people who have to work overtime to give them, not the employers but the people, the chance to decide whether to take their overtime pay in money or in extra time with their children, their parents, their spouses, if there is an illness at the home and they need it.

We ought to take the next step in health care reform and recognize that people should not lose their health insurance when they're between jobs. My balanced budget plan contains the funds to help people between jobs keep health insurance for their families up to 6 more months. It could help 5 million people a year, and we ought to do it.

We've got the crime bill coming down for 4 years in a row. If we can do it for 4 more years, the American people might actually feel safe again on their streets, in their schools, in their homes, in their neighborhoods. We can turn the crime problem around in every place in the country. The next big step is to keep on until we put all 100,000 police on the street so we can get that crime rate down, tackle the problem of gangs, and make America as safe as it ought to be again.

We have reduced the welfare rolls by nearly 2 million. I signed an historic welfare reform bill. And I want to tell you just a minute about that. It was a little controversial, I know. But I want to tell you why I signed it and why I think it's the right thing to do.

The bill says the National Government will continue to guarantee to poor families medical care and nutrition and if the parent goes

to work will provide more money for child care than ever before. But it says the portion of the monthly welfare check itself that used to come from the Federal Government will now be sent to the States and States and local communities like Portland will have 2 years to figure out how to turn that welfare check into a paycheck to liberate people and give them a chance to succeed at home and at work, the same thing we want for others.

But, as I have said over and over again to those who crow about the bill, the bill is the beginning not the end. If you're going to require people to go to work, they have to have a job and the training and the ability to go to work. I have a plan to put a million more jobs out there for welfare recipients in a partnership with the private sector. Will you help me build that bridge to the 21st century? [*Applause*]

And finally, let me say to all of you as important as all of this is, we have to remember the fundamental facts of this time. The fundamental fact is whether you live in the smallest town in Maine or Arkansas, whether you live in the biggest cities of America, we will live in a time where all of us will be dominated by the explosion of information and technology, by the breaking down of national barriers in economics, by the traveling of information, ideas, money, and technology across national borders in the speed of light.

I just approved a few months ago a joint research project with IBM. We are developing for the next couple of years a supercomputer that will do more calculations in one second than you can go home and do on your hand-held calculator in 30,000 years. That is just one example of what is happening in the world.

At the National Institutes of Health we are investing in the human genome project which, in a matter of a few years, will enable parents and their newborn babies to take home with them a genetic map of the child's body so that we will know how best to raise each of our children individually, what kind of nutritional needs they have, what kind of exercise needs they have, what kind of medical care they will need. We will be able to expand the quality and the length of life as never before, because of education and research.

That means more and more and more, people will need to understand and know and learn for a lifetime, and that means that there is no more important issue before the American people to build that bridge to the 21st century than making education our highest priority.

So I want to ask you this: I want to—I have so many things I could talk to you about that until dawn tomorrow, but there are three things I want to talk to you about:

Forty percent of the 8-year-olds in this country cannot read a book on their own. I have a proposal to mobilize an army of AmeriCorps volunteers, reading specialists, and others to work with parents and teachers to make sure that by the year 2000 every third grader in this country can pick up a book and say, "I can read this all by myself." Will you help me do that? [*Applause*]

Two: Technology gives us a chance to do something we have never been able to do before in the history of America. It gives us a chance to democratize and revolutionize education. If we can see that every classroom in America not only has computers and software and trained instructors who understand it all and at least can keep up with their computer-literate students but also that every classroom is hooked up to the information superhighway, to the Internet, to the World Wide Web, to all of these networks.

Do you know what that means? Even if you don't understand anything about computers, here's what it means. It's simple. It means that for the first time in history, the children in the most remote districts in America, the children in the poorest school districts in America will have access to the same learning in the same time at the same level of quality as the children in the wealthiest public and private schools in the United States do. Will you help me build that bridge to the 21st century? [*Applause*]

And finally, as Governor Brennan said, we have to make college available to all. I want to make, in 4 years—in just 4 years, we can make 2 years of education after high school as universal as a high school diploma is today by simply saying, you get a tax credit, a dollar-for-dollar reduction on your tax bill for the typical cost of a community college tuition

in America. Will you help me do that? [Applause]

The second thing we ought to do—the second thing I propose to do is to make it easier for even more families to save money in an IRA but then to withdraw from that retirement account without a penalty if the money is used to buy a first home, to deal with a medical emergency, or to pay for a college education. Will you help me do that? [Applause]

And finally, it seems to me that this country would be much stronger if everybody got to deduct up to \$10,000 a year for the cost of any college tuition, any cost of education after high school, and it's paid for in our balanced budget plan. Will you help me build that bridge to the 21st century? [Applause]

My fellow Americans, last night was a good night for the American people because we got to hear a discussion of the fundamental choices before us: Are we on our own, or do we believe it takes a village? Are we going to build a bridge to the past or build a bridge to the future? And if we build a bridge to the future, is it going to be wide enough and strong enough for every American to walk across?

If the answer is yes, then the best days of this country are still ahead. That is my commitment to you. I hope you'll help me build that bridge for 29 more days.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:10 p.m. at Hadlock Field. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor John F. McDonough of Portland; State Representative Elizabeth Mitchell; Victoria Murphy, chair, State Democratic Party; Tom Allen, Democratic congressional candidate; and former Governor Joseph Brennan. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on Signing the Maritime Security Act of 1996

October 8, 1996

Today I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 1350, the "Maritime Security Act of 1996." This Act sets the course for America's merchant marine into the 21st century.

The American flag must always sail in the sea lanes of the world. In recent years, our country has again been reminded of the critical role played by the U.S. merchant marine in protecting our interests and the security of our allies. The enactment of this legislation is the culmination of a long, bipartisan effort. It will ensure that the United States will continue to have American flag ships crewed by loyal American citizen merchant mariners to meet our Nation's economic and sealift defense requirements.

The American merchant marine is an important component of the sealift needed by the Department of Defense. By contracting with the owners and operators of U.S.-flag commercial vessels, the Government will gain access to a fleet of modern commercial ships, along with the sophisticated intermodal transportation system supporting it. The Government also assures that the seafaring men and women who crew these commercial ships in peacetime will be available to crew the Government's reserve sealift ships in times of crisis.

This Act extends to seafarers the same basic reemployment rights that apply to reserve members of our Armed Forces in time of war or national emergency. American merchant mariners have always responded to the call in times of crisis, and they deserve the assurance that their peacetime jobs will be there when they return.

The Maritime Security Act will protect American jobs and maintain a U.S. presence in international maritime trade, ensuring that vital imports and exports are delivered in both peacetime and wartime. The Act reaffirms our Nation's resolve to maintain a strong U.S.-flag presence on the high seas for our continued national security and economic growth.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
October 8, 1996.

NOTE: H.R. 1350, approved October 8, was assigned Public Law No. 104-239.