

As a son of Poland, Pulaski knew well the desire for freedom and self-determination. He fought bravely beside his father and brothers in his native land, defending Poland from the aggression of neighboring empires with such skill and valor that he was known throughout Europe for his military exploits. Ultimately outnumbered by opposing forces, he escaped to France, where he met Benjamin Franklin and offered his services in behalf of the American Revolution.

Upon his arrival in America, Pulaski told General Washington that he had come to defend liberty and "to live or die for her." True to his word, he fought valiantly as a brigadier general in our Continental Army and made the ultimate sacrifice for our Nation's freedom during the siege of Savannah.

More than two centuries later, Americans and Poles alike remember with pride and gratitude the outstanding service General Pulaski gave to both his native and adopted lands. Today the United States and Poland enjoy freedom, prosperity, and the prospect for a bright future as allies in NATO, thanks to the unwavering commitment of patriots and heroes like Casimir Pulaski.

**Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton,** President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim Saturday, October 11, 1997, as General Pulaski Memorial Day. I encourage all Americans to commemorate this occasion with appropriate programs and activities paying tribute to Casimir Pulaski and his contributions to the cause of American freedom.

**In Witness Whereof,** I have hereunto set my hand this ninth day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-second.

**William J. Clinton**

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NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on October 14.

## **Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner**

*October 9, 1997*

Thank you. Only a fool would speak after both a Baptist minister and a rabbi. [*Laughter*] Thank you, Steve. And I thank Vernon and Ann for having us here. Hillary and I and Chelsea, we've been here a lot over the last several years. This has often been a home away from home and on occasion, in difficult times, a real refuge for us. This is the largest crowd with whom I have ever dined in this room, with the fewest number of people related to Vernon and Ann. [*Laughter*] But we're all family in a way here, and I thank you for being here.

I thought what might be good to do tonight is maybe I would just talk a couple of minutes and follow up on something that Vernon and Steve talked about, and then see if any of you had any questions or comments you wanted to make or anything you wanted to say.

Let me begin by thanking you for helping tonight and, for many of you, over many years. I've been feeling rather nostalgic lately, as you might imagine. Last week was the sixth anniversary of the date I declared for President. And we just took Chelsea off to school. A couple of days from now is my 22d wedding anniversary. I'm not feeling so young anymore. And almost five-eighths of my Presidency is over, which I have a difficult time believing.

Let me tell you why I think what we're doing is important. I never will forget when I was trying to make up my mind whether to run for President in 1991. I didn't especially feel compelled to do it. I was having the most wonderful time of my life as a Governor, enjoying enormous success, great approval from our people; our family, our friends, everything was going great. I was very concerned then that our country seemed to be sort of lurching toward this new century and this incredible new era without any real strategy for how to proceed.

And I was also concerned, very frankly, about the quality of the political debate in Washington in both parties. It seemed to me kind of stale and not very helpful. There was a lot of emphasis on what I thought of as

“old think,” you know—liberal-conservative, left-right, in yesterday’s terms—and a whole lot of emphasis on the politics of personal destruction which, regrettably, I have not quite succeeded in eliminating from Washington. It may be part of human nature.

I read a great biography of General Grant the other day, pointing out that his commander in the Union Army, even though he kept winning and his men loved him and everybody thought he was great, was trying to replace him until finally he won at Vicksburg and no one could question whether he was the lead dog in the hunt—whereupon the guy immediately rushed to Lincoln and started talking about how great he was. So maybe this is just part of this town and the way it works.

But I didn’t like it very much, because it seemed to me then—it seems to me now—that we have all these incredible opportunities, but we have to be thinking about them in the right way. There is a great role and a need for two parties in this country, but they need to be having a principled debate about the future, not yesterday’s debate about things that don’t really matter anymore.

And so, I set about doing what wound up winning the campaign in ’92, saying that we had to focus on keeping the American dream alive, reasserting America’s leadership in the world, and rebuilding America’s community at home, and that we needed to focus on the future, not the past; on change, not the status quo; on unity, not division; on policies that helped everybody, not just a few. And I think it’s fair to say it’s worked pretty well, because not only is the economy doing well but crime has dropped for 5 years in a row. We have the biggest drop in welfare rolls in history now—3.6 million people tonight are living in families with payrolls who were living in families with welfare checks 4 years ago. That’s something our country can be proud of. We have advanced the cause of the environment and public health. The country is better off.

But if I look ahead to the future, I will say again, the reason this is important, why you’re here tonight, and the reason it’s important that we continue to be active in the political process and not be apologetic or be-

lieve there’s anything wrong with it, is that we still have these huge decisions to make and we desperately need a principled debate about the future. That’s what we owe our children. That’s what we owe this country.

Now, let me just give you a few. The major challenges confronting America for the remainder of this century and for the foreseeable future will be those posed by the globalization of the economy and the society, and the changing nature of the way we work and live as a result of the information and technology revolution. Among other things, one big challenge will be how do you maintain individual opportunity and give everybody who is willing to work a chance with all this dynamism in the economy, number one. Number two, how do you make sure that we have the requisite set of policies—and maybe most important—to keep this economy going and competitive? That’s what I think the fast-track issue is about. Number three, since we have a higher percentage of Americans than ever before in the workplace, how do we help people balance better the demands of work and family, since the most important job anyone ever has is still raising children properly? Nothing else compares to that. If we fail at that, we can all work like crazy, and then when we’re gone, the whole thing will crater.

On the other hand, people shouldn’t be asked to choose and face not succeeding as a parent because they can’t balance these demands. That’s why I worked so hard for the family leave act and the Kennedy-Kassebaum health care bill and the part of the balanced budget that will enable us to provide health insurance for 5 million more kids and working families who don’t have it, because we have to find a way for people to succeed at rebuilding childhood in America and strong families and still keep growing this economy like crazy.

The third thing that I want to say—or the fourth one, on globalization—we also, it seems to me, as Americans, have to put our minds more to bringing the strategies that have brought so many of us so much prosperity into the areas that have not been affected one way or the other by the good things that are happening. And I think we shouldn’t miss that. There are areas that have not been af-

fectured one way or the other, that just are still static, and they are a great market for America. They're a great growth potential. They're a great potential strength for our future. So, there's that set of challenges.

Then I think we have a set of generational challenges. I think we have to not only preserve Medicare and Social Security for future generations but we have to do it in a way that frees us up to focus on the fact that an enormous number of our children are still born into and reared in poverty and are, therefore, relatively disadvantaged compared to those of us who are not young. And we pay a big price for that.

The next big challenge I think we have is how do we deal with the very real and, I'm convinced, quite profound environmental challenges that will be presented to the world if China, India, and other countries grow quite wealthy, if they all get rich the same way we did? The President of China is about to come visit me, and we once had an interesting conversation in New York, when he said, "Sometimes I think the United States is trying to contain us. And we don't want to be a threat to you, and we don't want you to think we are." And I said, "The only threat you propose to us right now is I'm afraid you want to get rich the same way we did, because if you do it in exactly the same way we did, all your cities will be clogged with pollution and will be heating up the atmosphere so fast that nothing I do will turn it around." And I could tell he'd never thought about it in those terms.

This climate change issue I think is a very real issue. It's only one of many environmental challenges we have to face, but we have to prove that we can do it in a way that permits us to continue to grow the economy and doesn't make us look like we're trying to hold down people in countries that at long last are beginning to come into their own and give their kids a better future. It's a huge challenge. Science and technology—how are we going to deal with the potentials of it? Are there ethical dilemmas? I think there are. I've talked about them in some cases. But the United States has to maintain its leadership in these areas.

Just two more that I think are very important. The world we're living in now with no

cold war and no clear divisions gives us both an enormous opportunity to advance peace and freedom and democracy and our own security and prosperity, but it also presents us with a whole lot of new challenges that cross national lines. I don't know how many of you saw the article that was in our local paper within the last 2 weeks about how the South American drug cartels are linking up with the Russian mafia gangs who are far more diversified in their operations. So, they're becoming a cash cow for people who don't have as much money but have more connections in more different illegal and violent activities. That's just one little example of what happens.

If you break down all these barriers to information, to movement, to money—all the things that are making it possible for many of you to do so well in the world—organized forces of destruction can equally take advantage of those declining barriers to cause us new and different problems. So you will have—in our lifetime, we'll have to face problems of terrorism, organized crime and drugs, and ethnic and racial and religious hatreds, spawning wars; not to mention the fact that diseases will travel across international borders more quickly, especially if there are compounding environmental problems.

These are new challenges. We have to be thinking about them. We cannot afford to be mired in a debate that either makes us smaller than we are, keeps us torn up and upset all the time, or distracts us away from the real challenges of our people. And I have to say, you know, you've all heard me say this in the beginning, but I think the two most important things that we can really do for our own people are make sure that we give genuine excellence of education to every child and give everybody in America the opportunity to go to college who is willing to go and work for it, and find a way to make a strength rather than a weakness of our diversity.

I can't tell you—I don't want to embarrass him, but I had a wonderful talk with Dr. Wong at dinner, whom I admire so much, and he was telling me that he and the President of China graduated from the same university from the same department a few years

apart. So we have an American, who has done a great thing in our country, who can be a part of our attempts to have a peaceful future with China.

We also have people from India, from Pakistan, from every country in Latin America, from every country in Europe, from every country in Africa. This is an incredible gift, and we should not blow it. And a lot of people think I talk about this more than I should, but it's great. If you saw what I saw and the way I see it, how much time I have to spend getting people around the world to stop killing each other and essentially stop behaving on primitive or childish impulses, whether it's in Bosnia or the Middle East, or Rwanda and Burundi, or Northern Ireland, and you realize that these people—oftentimes they go along for years and they do just fine, and then something snaps, they're poorly led, and they disintegrate into destructive behavior. We need to be able to be a model to the world that will stand as a stern rebuke to that kind of conduct so that we can spread it around.

Now, these are the kinds of things that political debates ought to be about. We will always have a difference with our friends in the Republican Party, but it's not yesterday's difference. Fundamentally, I believe that what we stand for is—if I could just sort of ad lib with the quote that Steve gave about relationships—what we believe is that our individual lives are more fulfilled when we work together through strong units—families, communities, businesses—and that Government is one of those, and that there are some things we have to do together that we can only do through Government, that we can't do in other ways.

And I say that as the man who downsized the Government more than President Reagan did, gave more authority to State and local governments, and privatized more operations than President Reagan did, but stood strongly for doing more in education and health care and research, in science and technology, in environmental action than Presidents of the other party and Members of Congress of the other party.

I think this is what we're about. And we have to be—we have to imagine the future and then try to define it. And we should welcome a principled debate on the other side. We should welcome debates within our party. I noticed there has been a lot of publicity lately about the debates within the Republican Party about whether they should just keep on their Government-hating tirade or whether they should have a more sophisticated view, and they're debating that. I think that's a healthy thing for them. And it will be a good thing for the country.

We need this. And that's what you're contributing to. I'm telling you, if we find a way to really provide opportunity for everybody, if we find a way to resolve our intergenerational responsibilities, if we can find a way to grow the economy and preserve the environment and even improve it, if we can keep America ahead of the curves and live together as one country, and finally, if I or my successors can persuade a heavy majority of the American people that we have to lead in this world that we no longer dominate—the most frustrating thing for me in terms of communication is, no matter how many talks I give or how many times I give this speech, most Americans, I think, still don't—they may trust me to do it, but they still don't necessarily agree that it's in our interest to be involved in an aggressive way with other countries and their future. But if we can do these things, the best days of this country are still out there.

And that is what your contribution is about. It's about giving us a chance to do that, and I hope you'll be very proud of it. You ought to be happy with the results today, but the main results will come when most of us aren't around anymore. And that's just as it should be.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:35 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to Steve Grossman, national chair, Democratic National Committee; dinner hosts Vernon Jordan and his wife, Ann; President Jiang Zemin of China; and dinner guest Dr. C.J. Wong.

**Remarks on Internal Revenue  
Service Reform**

*October 10, 1997*

Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Vice President, for your work. Mr. Secretary, thank you. Mr. Summers, Mr. Sperling, Commissioner, Mr. Tobias, members of the task force, employees of the IRS who are here today, and others who are concerned about this. And especially I thank the Members of Congress who are here who are supporting this endeavor and the others in Congress, including Senator Kerrey and Congressman Portman, who have shown such interest.

Let me say, as someone who had not worked in Washington until I became President, I have spent most of my life talking to people who were on the receiving end of the IRS for good or ill. And I took particular interest in the recent congressional hearings into the problems of IRS policy and some specific examples of taxpayer abuse. Like most Americans, I was genuinely angered by the stories of our citizens harassed and humiliated by what seemed to them to be an all-powerful, unaccountable, and often downright tone-deaf agency.

And since I took office, as has already been said, our administration has worked hard to give the American people an IRS that is fairer, more efficient, easier for the public to understand and to deal with, with the electronic filing and filing by telephone, with the second Taxpayer Bill of Rights, with our efforts to reduce the conflict between the IRS and people's religious expression, just to name three examples.

It is clear that we have more to do. The IRS should be above reproach. Americans who work hard and pay their taxes deserve to be treated fairly, and no one should ever have a home, a car, a livelihood threatened by unaccountable actions of Government. Abuse or bullying or callousness by officials of our Government are unacceptable whenever and wherever they occur. If they occur once, it's once too many. But especially in connection with the IRS, it is important that they be rooted out.

Let me say that it's important, too, for the American people to know that the IRS is made up overwhelmingly of hard-working

and dedicated people who put in long hours in public service. The vast majority of them do their jobs well, and the vast majority of them were just as outraged by the case studies profiled in the congressional hearings as other Americans were.

It is clear that in spite of our best efforts in the past, there remain significant problems and challenges at the IRS. That's why last May the Vice President and the Secretary of the Treasury initiated their effort to deal with problems, many of which have been a long time in the making but which have to be addressed, and addressed now.

Their initiatives will take significant steps toward ending abuses, protecting taxpayers, and making the IRS more customer-friendly. Their recommendations are strong and sound and I believe represent the right way to reform the IRS. I'm instructing that they be put into effect just as soon as possible, and I'm asking Congress to pass legislation where necessary to make them the law of the land. And again, I thank the Members here who have agreed to support that endeavor.

Let me say, I can't go over all 200 recommendations, although I hope that most of them will be widely reported to the American people. But let me give you just a few. The package of reforms says to every taxpayer, first, you will have a tax collection agency that is reinvented so that it serves its customers and taxpayers every bit as well as the best private companies serve their customers. As the Vice President said, reinvention begins with a ban on the use of dollar goals to evaluate IRS employee performance, goals that can give some IRS agents the wrong incentives, just as parking ticket quotas can give police officers the wrong incentives. And the IRS will trim paperwork, increase hours, make sure that phones are answered, expand electronic filing, and move toward a systematic review of all taxpayer penalties.

Second, you have rights as a taxpayer that will be protected. I'm calling on Congress to pass a new—the third—taxpayer bill of rights, to build on the law I signed last year. This will extend the refund period for taxpayers with health problems that keep them from seeking refunds in a timely fashion, it will protect innocent spouses from paying for