thing is a legitimate issue and we have to address it.

In the next few days we're going to do more in the Congress to do this, but I think—I'm talking about this is going to be an ongoing effort. It's going to take about 10 years, I think, to just keep pushing at it as we learn more and more and more about how to do it. And if the people in the country get the sense that this is a dual commitment on our part and that we're passionate about both, I think that is not only the winning position, I think, more importantly, it is the right position.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:20 a.m. in Salon One at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Mark Nichols, chief executive officer, Cabazon Band of Mission Indians.

Remarks in the Arts and Culture Session of the Democratic National Committee's Autumn Retreat on Amelia Island

November 1, 1997

[*The discussion is joined in progress.*]

Q. With regard to the national, also looking to the international, I have a couple of questions I'd like to ask the President. What impact do you think on our culture and our arts Cuba will have after Castro?

The President. Well, if you think baseball is an art form, and I do—[*laughter*]—it will be huge. [*Laughter*]

No, to be more serious, there are a lot of Cuban artists, Cuban musicians. All you have to do is look at the impact of South American, Central American music and arts in the United States now—Caribbean art. I think it's obvious that it will be significant. It will be one—when we get back together with more normal relations with Cuba, it will be one of the principal benefits of it.

Let me say, if I might, on the general point, Glenn made the points that I wanted to make about this. The assault on the NEA and the NEH needs to be seen against the background of the apparently less ideologically driven reduction in the availability of music and art generally in the schools, in the public schools, which we saw because of financial problems and other decisions being made.

If you look at what's happened—and let me explain that. The cutting of the budget of the NEH and the NEA and the attempt to do away with them basically had two legs of support, not one. There was obviously the sort of right-wing ideological attack based on the symbolism of some controversially funded projects, photography exhibits or whatever. Beyond that, there were Members of Congress, with the deficit being what it was, making the same sort of judgments that school board members made all across America: "I can't dismantle the football team and the basketball team; I'll get rid of the arts and the music program for all the kids, because, by definition, most of them aren't all that good in art and music. And nobody is going to come down on me if I do it. And I don't have to take on any institutional interests to do it. And after all, it's just a piddly amount of money."

Now, I think because the Balanced Budget Act has been passed and we've cut the deficit by more than 20 percent and because we have taken on the ideological argument, I think, and, first of all, tried to respond to some of the more legitimate concerns about how the projects were funded and, secondly, tried to reaffirm the positive notions that what the NEA and NEH has done—I think at the national level we've sort of stemmed the hemorrhage. I would submit that that's not nearly enough, first of all, because it's only a small portion of the more. And secondly, because I think what you said is terribly important. We have all this data that kids that come from different cultures with different languages have their language facilitation, their ability to learn English, to read in English, to think and relate to people in a new culture dramatically accelerated if they're more proficient and more exposed to music and arts and other ways of hooking their mind in.

We have a lot of evidence that kids from very difficult situations do much better in math if they have a sustained exposure to music, for reasons that are fairly obvious, if you think about it.

So what I would like to ask all of you to do—I'd like to invite you to do something.

I don't have an answer; this is not a set-up deal. I never thought about it until I realized I was going to come do this panel. I have given a lot of thought to what our gift to the next century ought to be in terms of our approach to the arts. And yes, I'm glad I stood up for the NEA and the NEH, and I won a political battle—fine. It's one percent of the more.

What should we do with this one percent of the money? If we want more than this, what case should we make for getting more? What would we do with it? And in a larger sense, what should our mission be in terms of the public role of the arts, particularly for our children? What arguments could we make to make the schools have it a priority again?

I see something like the Harlem Boys Choir or all these incredible arts programs in New York or whatever, and I feel two things: I am exhilarated, like we all are, but then I wonder how many other little kids are going out there to some other school every day where they still don't even have a music teacher. And what about them?

That's not an argument not to do what's being done, but I would invite you—a lot of you know so much more about this than I do, but I'm telling you, I've been in school after school after school after school where the buildings are old, and they can't be maintained, and they shut down the music and arts programs, and they shut down, by the way, all the recreational programs except for the varsity sports, which I also think is a mistake.

People are whole people. Even poor kids—you talked about this—it's hard to say, "Why spend money on the arts when you have problems with welfare and poverty and all that?" Because poor people need their spirits nourished. Most children are not all that conscious of being poor unless they're genuinely deprived or brutalized. But when they grow up, they remember experiences that lift their spirits when they're young.

So I guess what I'm saying is, we need an affirmative strategy. We played good defense, and we won—big deal. How would you go to a conservative Republican group in town X and argue that this investment ought to be made either in the National Endowment of the Arts or in the community, or that the arts and music programs ought to be restored and here's why. That's what we need now, and that's what we ought to be doing now. We shouldn't be playing defense with this issue.

I mean, so what? You won a fight in Congress over one percent of the money. It was very important symbolically because it gave dignity and strength and integrity to your efforts, and I'm very glad we fought it. It also makes a lot of difference to some programs in the country. But we need an affirmative strategy for the next century.

And I hope one of the things that will come out of this seminar is that some of you will come out of this being willing to work with our Millennium Project and with the White House generally to get off the defense and get on offense. And I don't mean to hurt anybody else. I don't see this as necessarily a big political winner for us. I'm not interested in the politics of this. I'm just talking about what's right for the children and the future of this country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:50 a.m. in Plaza One at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Glenn D. Lowry, director, The Museum of Modern Art.

Message to the Congress Transmitting Line Item Vetoes of the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 1998

November 1, 1997

To the Congress of the United States:

In accordance with the Line Item Veto Act, I hereby cancel the dollar amounts of discretionary budget authority, as specified in the attached reports, contained in the "Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 1998" (Public Law 105–65; H.R. 2158). I have determined that the cancellation of these amounts will reduce the Federal budget deficit, will not impair any essential Government