

and I think it's absolutely terrible that you have to license your cars and have a drivers license—[laughter]—and that we regulate travel in any way, shape, or form. It is an unconscionable burden, and we're going to get rid of all of it. We have 8-year-olds out their driving cars at 100 miles an hour; that's good, it's their constitutional right to do it. [Laughter]

You're laughing. That's their position, isn't it? I mean, you would think—if a politician stood up and said that, you would think they had a screw loose. [Laughter] But this is a huge issue. Now, we're not talking about confiscating anybody's guns. We're not talking about interfering with anybody's hunting rights or sporting rights.

When we passed the Brady bill—Chris and Sam will remember this—their argument against the Brady bill was, "This won't do you any good, because no criminal ever goes to a gun store to buy a gun." You remember that? That was their big argument: "They're not dumb enough to do that." Okay? Five years and 400,000 rejected sales later, with a 25-year low in the crime rate and violent crime down even more than non-violent crime, they no longer can make that argument.

But now we say, okay, there are more and more people, since we're checking on them, who are buying guns at the gun shows and the flea markets. We'll give you that much, so let's go check them. They say, "Oh, no, goodness, no, we couldn't do that." Or if the—"It's okay if it's over-the-counter at a gun show, but not if it's in the parking lot."

Now, you may have this image that there's a sort of a—maybe a convention center in Hartford, where there's a gun show, and it's two blocks out to the parking lot and you don't want to make the guy take the automatic check—that's not what goes on. Most of these gun shows, they're down little country roads, and you turn right and you're in a little field. You know, you back up on both sides of the lane and you open your trunk, and you get down your pickup. So if you're out in the parking lot, it means you're walking around to the front of the car. This is—this is just—it just doesn't make any sense.

But what I want to tell you is, we have—I think the defining difference between the

two parties today is no longer what they used to say about us. We proved we're more fiscally responsible than they are. We've got a more fiscally responsible program right here. We have proved that we can grow the economy. We've proved that we're for sensible defense spending. We've proved that we can do the things that we're supposed to do in foreign policy that—it's really almost, the most important thing is how we define community and what our mutual responsibilities are to one another.

That's what the Patients' Bill of Rights is about. It's true. We'll have to pay out—you know, it'll be a buck or two a month. Our estimate is that the Federal health insurance program costs less than a dollar a month more, now that we have the protections of the Patients' Bill of Rights. So that means that everybody that doesn't ever need the Patients' Bill of Rights—who's a Federal employee—is getting socked for about \$10 a year. I think it's worth it. I think it's worth it as a part of our shared responsibility to protect people.

So if you close this gun show loophole, 90-plus—95 percent, maybe more, of those people are honest as the day is long, and they'll have to hang around and wait for their background checks to be done. And sometimes it'll be a little bit of a pain—to increase the chances of saving 13 kids a day? I think it's worth it.

This is really what's going on. It's no longer—it's not a question even about tax cuts. We're for tax cuts. The question is, how big should they be; what are our other responsibilities; how should they be structured? And what I want you to understand is that these ideas matter. It matters whether we give out all this Federal money in education and tell the locals of the States, "Just do whatever you want to with it"; or whether we say, "We think you ought to end social promotion, but have mandatory summer schools for kids who fail." We shouldn't declare them fit. And we think we ought to have every school district that needs an after-school program ought to have one, and we're going to give you money to help you. It's our definition of community.

It's not us telling them how to run the schools. This is what local research shows

works. So when you leave here, I hope you will be able to tell people why you came today. And I hope you will be able to tell them why I'm doing this, even though I'm not running for reelection. I've spent my whole life believing that ideas matter. It really matters what America does collectively.

And I have tried to get my party to change. We now have the smallest Federal Government since John Kennedy was President. We are not the party of defending every big Government program that was done yesterday. We are not the party that believes Government can do everything. We are the party that believes the Government has the responsibility to give people the tools and to create the conditions so that as a community we can go forward and everybody has a fair chance. And every one of these issues embodies that.

So I thank you for being here. And I hope you'll come to more, and I hope you will stay with us. I'm grateful that I've had the chance to be President. And I'm nowhere near through. I've got a more ambitious agenda today, than I did in my first year.

But the most important thing is to keep this going. The next elections matter; the people matter; the ideas matter. This is a better country than it was in 1992. We tried it their way. This is a stronger, better country. And every time we've had a fight about whose ideas were right and whose were wrong—if you measure up to what was the impact of our economic plan, our crime bill, the insistence we made in welfare, that we not get rid of the guarantees of health care and nutrition for our children—all of these things—our approach turned out to be right for America. And I want you to go out and tell people that. When they ask you why you came, tell them I gave a pretty good talk, but the most important thing was we are right for our children and the 21st century.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:15 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to luncheon hosts Francine Goldstein and Sandra Wagenfeld; event cochairs Ronni Ginott, State chair, Women's Leadership Forum, and Martha Aasen, delegate, State Democratic Central Committee; First Selectman Diane Goss Farrell of Westport; Joseph J. Andrew, national chair, and

Beth Dozoretz, national finance chair, Democratic National Committee; former Representative Barbara B. Kennelly; State Attorney General Richard Blumenthal; State Treasurer Denise L. Nappier; Senator Dodd's wife, Jackie Marie Clegg; soprano Jessye Norman; actress Cicely Tyson; Edward L. Marcus, chair, Connecticut State Democratic Party; and Myra J. Irvin, section 8 rental assistance program manager, Hope, AR, Housing Authority.

### Remarks at a Production of "The Iceman Cometh" in New York City

June 28, 1999

Thank you. Wow! I would like to thank Bill Haber and Kevin and all this magnificent cast for giving us too much to think about. [Laughter] Here we are, all reliving our entire family histories—[laughter]—trying to come to grips with some little common element. And now you're supposed to think about being good citizens. [Laughter]

I want to thank Senator Torricelli and Senator Lautenberg and Senator Schumer; Congressman Gephardt, I know is here, and I think Congressman Kennedy is. There are a lot of people here from the New York and New Jersey and Connecticut delegations. I saw Congressman Rangel, Congressman Payne, Congresswoman Lowey.

Let me just say to all of you, these people have made a great sacrifice to give us this gift and to give the DSCC and the DCCC this gift. You know, Monday is their day off, and they couldn't even wait until the normal time to start; they did it in the middle of the afternoon. We took a day out of their lives, and they have given us something immeasurably more valuable. So I think we should give them another—[applause].

I hope that as you leave here you know how grateful we all are for the work you have done to help us do well in the coming elections, in the Senate and the House elections. I hope that you saw this morning the announcement that—we did our annual review, our so-called midsession review, and it turns out our surplus will be \$20 billion more than we thought this year. And tomorrow I'm going to announce our Medicare reform program, which our Democrats support, that will include for the first time a prescription drug

benefit for seniors, which I'm very proud of and which I think is important.

If we can prevail upon our friends on the other side in the Congress to go along with us, just generally with the budget and Social Security, we'll have another \$155 billion to spend on children and we'll be out of debt as a nation for the first time in forever; in 15 years, we'll be totally out of debt. So I'm happy about that. And I feel very good about the fact that all of this is benefiting all kinds of ordinary citizens.

But I'd like to just mention one other thing. We saw in this magnificent opus of Eugene O'Neill's something about the fragility of life, the frailty, the brittleness, the tenderness, the weakness that makes life more interesting than politics sometimes—nearly always. [*Laughter*]

One of the reasons that I became and stayed a Democrat is that I always felt that our party was more interested in people, in their individual struggles, and we always thought everyone should have a chance. And I'd like to just, before you leave, ask you to remember one or two things of which I am especially proud for our party, as we have tried to deepen the meaning of freedom and responsibility and bring more people into our national family and our sense of global community.

The first is that it was 30 years ago today, not very far from here, that the Stonewall riot occurred, which sparked the gay and lesbian civil rights movement. I'm proud of the fact that the Democratic Party has been clearly and unambiguously for the elimination of all forms of discrimination, for the "Employment Non-discrimination Act," for the "Hate Crimes Prevention Act," for the proposition that every law-abiding person in this country ought to be treated with equal dignity.

Today, we are struggling in Kosovo—a very small place, a very long way away—for the proposition that people ought not to be slaughtered because of the way they worship God or their racial or ethnic heritage, as we have done in Bosnia. Today, we're working, along with our friends in Ireland and Great Britain, in the 11th hour of an Irish peace process. Today, we hold our breath with anticipation as the new government is about

to take hold in Israel, and I hope and pray that we will see a culmination of the peace process there.

And I'm proud of the fact that our party has stood for the proposition that people ought to be able to get along based on their common humanity, across all the things that divide them, and that that's a—[*applause*]—of intensity we're striving for.

Let me say one other thing. We've been through a lot as a country in the last several weeks: the difficulties of the conflict in Kosovo; also the difficulties we face at home, especially after the horrible loss of those children's lives at Littleton. I am still hoping that the members of the other party will decide that they really are the candidates of law and order and will join us in our attempts not only to support community policing, which means that we stand against abuses and for building bridges in the community, but that we ought to give the police a chance and the children a chance by having sensible restrictions to keep guns out of the wrong hands.

Finally, let me just say I'm profoundly grateful to the people of New York and this wonderful city for being so good to Hillary and me and to the Vice President and Mrs. Gore; for the Broadway night we had in '92 in the campaign; for the magnificent convention; for two great electoral victories; for a 50th birthday party I had here, which I will never forget—I can still remember when that happened.

I hope you will continue to stand for these things, which deepen the meaning of the word, "America." We have a lot to think about in this play; we have a lot to be grateful to these gifted people for. You have a lot to be proud of in supporting our party and our ideas and our values. And you have done a good thing here today by giving us a chance to reflect the views of most Americans in the United States Congress.

I thank the Members of the House and the Senate who are here. Again, I thank you. Good evening.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:42 p.m. in the Brooks Atkinson Theatre. In his remarks, he referred to producer Bill Haber and actor Kevin Spacey. The President also referred to DSCC, the

Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and DCCC, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.

### **Remarks at a Majority 2000 Dinner in New York City**

*June 28, 1999*

Hello, everyone. I really came over here just to have a chance to shake hands and say hello, because you were all in the theater, so you heard me speak and I don't think you should have to endure two speeches.

I would like to say again how much I appreciate the leadership role that you assumed in making this evening a great success. I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did. And again, I want to thank the cast and all the people who put the production on. I thought it was magnificent.

But mostly, I came here to thank you for making this a success and for helping Mr. Gephardt and the other Members of our congressional leadership here very happy and giving them a chance to have a good November next year.

Thank you, Congressman Engel, Congressman Kennedy, Congressman Rangel, Congresswoman Lowey. Thank you all very much. Congressman Payne, thank you.

God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:30 p.m. at the Supper Club.

### **Remarks Announcing a Medicare Modernization Plan**

*June 29, 1999*

Thank you very much, and good afternoon. I would like to welcome all of you to the White House. I appreciate the presence here of Secretary Shalala, Secretary Rubin, Deputy Secretary Summers, Social Security Commissioner Apfel, OPM Director Janice Lachance. I thank all the people on the White House staff who are here who worked so hard on this proposal, including our OMB Director Jack Lew; and Gene Sperling, Bruce Reed, Chris Jennings, and of course, John Podesta.

I welcome the leaders of groups representing seniors, the disability community, and the health care industry. I would especially like to welcome the very large delegation of Members of Congress who are here today. Four of them were here at the inception of Medicare—Senator Kennedy, Congressman Dingell, Congresswoman Mink, and Congressman Conyers. This must be a particularly happy day for them.

I thank the Senators who are here—Senator Daschle, Senator Roth, Senator Kennedy, Senator Conrad, Senator Baucus, Senator Dorgan, Senator Rockefeller, and Senator Breaux.

I thank the Members of the House here. There are a large number of Democrats here, and I think virtually all the Members of the leadership—Mr. Gephardt, Mr. Bonior, Congresswoman DeLauro, Mr. Frost, Congressman Rangel, Congressman Lewis. I would like to thank the Republican House Members who have come—Mr. McCrery, Mr. Whitfield, and Mr. Thomas, especially.

When Senator Breaux and Congressman Thomas issued their commission report, I said that I would do my best to build on it; that I had some concerns about it, but that I thought that there were elements in it which deserved support and serious consideration. Their presence here today indicates that we can all raise concerns about each other's ideas without raising our voices; and that if we're really committed to putting our people first, we can reach across party lines and other lines to work together.

And I am very grateful for their presence here and for the presence of all the Members of Congress here from both parties. It augers well for this announcement today and for the welfare of our Republic. [*Applause*] Thank you.

In just a few days we will celebrate the last Fourth of July of the 20th century—223 of them. Our Government, our country was created based on the ideal that we are all created equal, that we should work together to do those things that we cannot do on our own, and that we would have a permanent mission to form a more perfect Union.

The people who got us started understood that each generation of Americans would be called upon to fortify and renew our Nation's

most fundamental commitments, to always look to the future. I believe our generation has begun to meet that sacred duty, for at the dawn of a new century, America is clearly a nation in renewal.

Our economy is the strongest in decades, perhaps in our history. Our Nation is the world's leading force for freedom and human rights, for peace and security—with our Armed Forces showing once again in Kosovo their skill, their strength, and their courage. Our social fabric, so recently strained, is on the mend, with declining rates of welfare, crime, teen pregnancy, and drug abuse, and 90 percent of our children immunized against serious childhood diseases for the first time in our history.

Our cities, once in decline, are again vibrant with economic and cultural life. Even our rutted and congested interstate highways, thanks to the commitments of this Congress, are being radically repaired and expanded all across America—I must say, probably to the exasperation of some of our summer travelers.

This renewal is basically the consequence of the hard work of tens of millions of our fellow citizens. It is also, however, clearly the result of new ideas and good decisions made here in this city—beginning with the fiscal discipline pursued since 1993, the reduction in the size of Government, and controlling spending while dramatically increasing investments in education, health care, biomedical research, the environment, and other critical areas. The vast budget deficits have been transformed into growing budget surpluses, and America is better prepared for the new century.

But we have to use this same approach of fiscal discipline plus greater investment to deal with the great challenge that we and all other advanced societies face, the aging of our Nation, and in particular, to deal with the challenge of Medicare, to strengthen and renew it.

Today I ask you here so that I could announce the details of our plan to secure and modernize Medicare for the 21st century. My plan will use competition and the best private sector practices to secure Medicare in order to control costs and improve quality.

And it will devote a significant portion of the budget surplus to keep Medicare solvent.

But securing Medicare is not enough. To modernize Medicare, my plan will also create a much better match between the benefits of modern science and the benefits offered by Medicare. It will provide for more preventive care and help our seniors afford prescription drugs. The plan is credible, sensible, and fiscally responsible. It will secure the health of Medicare while improving the health of our seniors. And we can achieve it.

The stakes are high. In the 34 years since it was created, Medicare has eased the suffering and extended the lives of tens of millions of older and disabled Americans. It has given young families the peace of mind of knowing they will not have to mortgage their homes or their children's futures to pay for the health care of their parents and grandparents. It has become so much a part of America, it is almost impossible to imagine American life without it. Yet, life without Medicare is what we actually could get unless we act soon to strengthen this vital program.

With Americans living longer, the number of Medicare beneficiaries is growing faster, much faster than the number of workers paying into the system. By the year 2015, the Medicare Trust Fund will be insolvent—just as the baby boom generation begins to retire and enter the system, and eventually doubling the number of Americans who are over 65. I've often said that this is a high-class problem.

It is the result of something wonderful—the fact that we Americans are living a lot longer. All Americans are living longer, in no small measure because of better health care, much of it received through the Medicare program.

President Johnson said when he signed the Medicare bill in 1965, “The benefits of this law are as varied and broad as the marvels of modern medicine itself.” Yet modern medicine has changed tremendously since 1965, while Medicare has not fully kept pace.

The original Medicare law was written at a time when patients' lives were more often saved by scalpels than by pharmaceuticals. Many of the drugs we now routinely use to treat heart disease, cancer, arthritis, did not