NOTE: The President spoke at 10 a.m. in Presidential Hall (formerly Room 450) in the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to adoptive parents Dawn and Steve Keane, and their children Sean, Brian, and Sarah, who introduced the President. The transcript made available by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Remarks to the Fall Meeting of the Democratic National Committee

September 24, 1999

Thank you. Well, I'm glad to see you. And I seemed to have recovered enough of my voice to get through this, so I'll try to do that.

Governor Romer, Representative Sanchez, Mayor Archer, Joe Andrew, Andy Tobias and Beth Dozoretz, and all of our team. I wanted to begin by saying a simple thank-you to all the members of the DNC and to the leaders. I want to say a special word of thanks to the finance staff, with whom I have been dealing a lot lately; we've been working hard. And they've done a very good job, and we've done a good job under pretty difficult circumstances, raising the funds that our candidates and our party needs. And I want to thank them for their work.

I want to congratulate the convention team that was announced, Governor Romer, Lydia Camarillo, Don Foley, all the others; thank you for your determination to make Los Angeles a great success. And I want to thank my friend of many, many years, Roy Romer, for the work that he has done for our party.

I will recommend to the DNC tomorrow that, as Governor Romer moves on to this new responsibility, we elect Mayor Rendell of Philadelphia to the position of general chair. For those of you who know him, he has provided an absolutely astonishing leadership for us there. We've not had a Governor in Pennsylvania since I've been President. In the last election we carried the greater Philadelphia area by 370,000 votes, I think, about 20,000 votes more than our margin in the State of Pennsylvania. And in the city of Philadelphia, in 1996, for the first time the Vice President and I had the same victory margin that President Kennedy did in 1960, when there were 400,000 more people there. I say that to tell you I think our party has been well led and will be well led.

I just want to mention one thing that Roy Romer will always have on his résumé. In 1998, when we gained five seats in the midterm elections, though we were outspent by $100 million—$100 million—and all the pundits said—I want you to remember this, as you're treated to more punditocracy over the next year—[*laughter*]—all the pundits said we were going to be wiped out. They were on all these shows, ''I believe they'll lose 20 seats.'' ''No, I think they're going to lose 30 seats.'' [*Laughter*] ''No, I believe they might lose more.'' ''And they're certainly going to lose five or six in the Senate. They'll never be able to stop anything there.'' I heard it for a year.

It was a terrible Senate election for us in terms of who was up, who was not. We lost no Senate seats. We gained five House seats, and it was the first time since 1822 that the party of the President had won seats in the midterm of a second term. [*Applause*] Thank you.

So for all of you that were part of that, I thank you. I thank you. And I want to just take a few moments to try to talk about where we are in this moment as a country, as a party, by referring briefly to the recent past and by looking at the present and the future.

When I first announced for President—it's amazing how much quicker things are happening now. You know, I did not even announce for President until October of 1991. It's September; I feel like I've been going through this campaign all my life. [*Laughter*] And I'm not even running. [*Laughter*]

But anyway, back to the subject at hand. In 1991, when I announced, I asked for change in our party, in our national leadership, and in our country. I asked America to embrace the new challenges that we faced with new ideas based on old-fashioned values of opportunity for all, responsibility from all, and a community of all Americans.

I asked that we have a new role, a clearly defined role, for our National Government, that didn't say we could solve all the problems, but didn't say we could walk away from them either. I asked us to stop demonizing Government, on the one hand, but to stop

defending everything Government did, on the other, and instead to focus on what we could do to give the American people the tools to meet their challenges, to solve their problems.

And then I asked the Vice President to join the ticket. We put out our economic plan, and we asked the American people to give us a chance to put people first. People gave us a chance in '92. We made a lot of very tough decisions. We passed an economic plan, I would remind you, with not a single Republican vote, with the Vice President breaking the tie in the Senate. And they told everybody in America we'd raise their taxes—even though, for most people, we hadn't—and that it would be a disaster and that a recession was on the way.

Then we passed a crime bill to put 100,000 police on the street, to ban assault weapons. We passed the Brady bill. They told everybody in America we were going to come take their guns away. [*Laughter*] Didn't they? And in 1994, they put out their ''Contract With America,'' and they thumped us good—they beat us good—because the voters had not felt the benefits of the economic plan. We had just passed the crime bill a couple of months before, and for all they knew, some Government bureaucrat was going to knock on their door and take their guns away. Probably—that alone probably cost us the House of Representatives. And everybody said—same crowd said, ''Oh, these guys can't win, they're history.'' Remember that? All their, ''It's over.''

I always believed if we got up every day and thought about the American people, the kind of people I met in New Hampshire that were being evicted from their homes, and we just thought about the people that nobody else in Washington seems to think about and we kept asking ourselves, what is the right thing to do for them, that we could marry good politics and good policy, and it would work out all right.

Well, 1996 came around. And the economy was cooking, and the country was pulling back together. And I went to New Hampshire, where they beat a Congressman who voted for the crime bill with the assault weapons ban in it. And I never will forget this. I went in '96 to New Hampshire—you know I have a special feeling about the place. [*Laughter*] They voted for me twice, and they normally don't vote for Democrats.

And I got all these people there, and a bunch of them were kind of big, old rural guys in their plaid shirts, obviously hunters. And I stood up before this crowd in New Hampshire, and I said, ''You know, in 1992 you voted for me to give me a chance. Then in 1994, you beat a Congressman who voted for my crime bill—I caused him to get beat—because they told you that we were going to take your guns away. And I feel terrible about it. So here's what I want you to do. If any one of you suffered any inconvenience at all at hunting season since we passed that bill, I want you to vote against me, too. But if you didn't, they lied to you, and you need to get even.'' [*Laughter*]

And so a majority of the voters in New Hampshire, a State where both independents and Republicans outnumbered registered Democrats, agreed. Then in 1998, as I said, under the leadership of our team, we ratified the course the country was on.

I think it is very important—a lot of you, almost all of you come from somewhere else. You actually live in America, with real people. [*Laughter*] And you go about your business every day. And it seems that a huge part of our job every year is to make sure that people can think for themselves and follow their own instincts and see the world as they experience it and not be swayed too much either by the financial advantage of other side or the conventional wisdom that emanates out of Washington. So I want you to be of good cheer and proud, because America is a better place than it was in 1992.

You know, I saw a survey the other day that said that times had been so good for so long, the American people couldn't remember when it was bad and tended to give everybody good ratings on the economy—Bush, Hoover, the whole crowd. [*Laughter*] It's been good a long time. [*Laughter*]

So let's take just a little walk down memory lane here, shall we? [*Laughter*] In the 12 years before I become President, the administrations told the American people the Government was the problem, and they railed against the Government. But under them the Government got bigger, not small; and the

deficits got bigger. They said that supply side economics would overcome the laws of arithmetic—[*laughter*]—that if you cut taxes and increased spending, it would somehow balance the budget. And boy, we stuck with that theory for a long time. We just kept doing the same thing over and over again. And after 12 years, we had quadrupled the debt of the United States of America. We had very high interest rates.

And it actually did work in the short run. My retired senior Senator, Dale Bumpers, used to say, ''If you let me write a couple billion dollars' worth of hot checks, I'll show you a good time, too.'' [*Laughter*] So, you know, it worked for a while; I mean, you know, we had all this money, and who knew where it came from? They just kept throwing this old money out there at us.

And so we got out of the early recession and got through '84 and got through '88. Then, lo and behold—but we never could get a recovery really going. We kept falling back, kept falling back. And lo and behold, after the '88 election, we found ourselves in the worst recession since the Great Depression. And wages were stagnant, and unemployment was high. And unlike previous recessions, we couldn't exactly go into deficit spending, because that's what got us there in the first place.

So the Vice President and I went to the American people, and we said, ''Look, we're going to have to get rid of this thing, and here's our plan to cut it in half, and after we do that, we'll go on and get rid of it. We've got to do it because otherwise, for the people who care about the business economy; we're never going to get interest rates down; we're not going to be competitive in the global economy. And for our liberals that want the Government to have money to invest in social programs and education, we're never going to do it because the budget's paralyzed by the deficit.'' And we'd gotten to the point where we were spending about 15 cents of every dollar you pay in taxes just to pay interest on the debt.

So we said, ''We'll find a way to do it. It won't be easy, and we'll make a lot of people mad. We might have to get rid of a bunch of stuff. But if you vote for us, we'll go after the deficit. We'll continue to invest in the education of our children, science and technology, and helping the environment. But we'll get rid of a bunch of stuff, too. And we'll give you a new Government that's smaller, but more active in the ways it needs to be.''

And the people gave us a chance. And it was an argument when we were elected; that is, we made an argument to the American people. And in '94, in their lives it was still an argument. And we won the argument in '92; we lost the argument in '94. But the reason we won it in '96 and '98 is, it wasn't an argument anymore. There were facts out there in people's lives. So the debate took on a whole different turn when people's lives, real people's lives, had been changed.

And now we have the longest peacetime expansion in our history, instead of the worst recession since the Great Depression. We have over 19 million jobs, instead of a handful. We have rising wages instead of stagnant wages. We've got the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, the lowest welfare rolls—rates in 32 years, and the lowest crime rate in 26 years. Folks, this is not an argument anymore. It's a fact, and you should be proud of it. [*Applause*] Thank you.

Instead of a $290 billion deficit, we've got a $99 billion surplus, and projected surpluses into the future for years. The air is cleaner. The water is cleaner. The food is safer. We've cleaned up 3 times as many toxic waste dumps as they did in 12 years. Ninety percent of our kids are immunized against serious childhood diseases for the first time in the history of this country. Nearly everybody now can afford to go to college because of the HOPE scholarship and the other college aid we've provided.

The strategy has been validated. You can get rid of the deficit and still invest in the things you have to invest in. We've eliminated hundreds of programs but nearly doubled investment in education, while getting rid of the deficit. You can expand trade in ways that help ordinary people. You can balance the environment and the economy, and you can balance work and family.

And I think this is very, very important for the American people to make the decisions now about where we go from now to 2000, because, you know, a lot of political

rhetoric, since people always want to change—and that's a good thing, not a bad thing, by the way. But a lot of political rhetoric is premised on the fact that we were all born yesterday; the older I get, the more I wish that was true. [*Laughter*] It would be nice for individuals like me but very bad for a country. So we can't allow a collective amnesia here.

There is a history here. There was a clash of ideas. Then there was a test of ours, just like there was a test of theirs. So the question is not whether we're going to change but how are we going to keep changing.

Here, now, what are we going to do with this surplus? I vetoed their tax bill yesterday; you all know that. But, you know, I will say again, I still believe there is the opportunity for us to work together. This is not an election yet. I mean, the election may be going on in the newspapers every day, but here, in the minds of the American people, they still think we should be drawing a paycheck to work for them. Where you live, for most people, the election is not going on. If you live in Iowa or New Hampshire, it's already going on. If you live in Arkansas, you're still worried about the price of cattle, you know?

So we got hired to show up for work, and we still get a paycheck here every 2 weeks—all these guys in Congress and me—we still get paid. And I believe that it is imperative—the reason I vetoed the tax bill is it would make it impossible for America to meet our long-term challenges, and we can do a lot of that now, before the next election.

What are they? Number one, the aging of America. We're going to double the number of people over 65 in 30 years. I hope to be one of them. [*Laughter*] The aging of America; that's a big problem not only for those of us in the baby boom who are going to age but for our children and grandchildren. Why? Because we're the biggest generation in American history until the kids that are now in school. They're bigger than we are, but it took that long.

So now that we have the funds, I believe we ought to save Social Security. By that I mean I think we ought to—[*applause*]—thank you. By that I believe we ought to do some special things. Most importantly, we ought to run the life of that Trust Fund out at least 50 years. That will take you through the life span of the baby boomers when the generational balance will tend to right itself.

I think we ought to do something for elderly women who are retired. They're the fastest group of seniors, and they tend to be poorer than the rest of our seniors and living on their own. And I personally would like to see the earnings limitation lifted, because I think we ought to encourage our seniors who want to work—who want to work—to work, and not penalize them for doing so.

I think we ought to do something about Medicare. It's supposed to go broke in 15 years. And as all of you know if you deal with health care at all, in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, as we feared, the one thing that hasn't worked out very well is, it's clear to me that the cuts in Medicare, in terms of teaching hospitals, rural hospitals, therapeutic services, nursing homes, that the cuts were too severe. And we have to put some more money back in it.

So we've give the Congress a plan that would lengthen the life of the Medicare Trust Fund to 2027, and that's the longest it's been alive, believe me, the Trust Fund, in—[*inaudible*]—who knows when. And it would provide for a modest, affordable, but significant prescription drug coverage.

Now, this is a big deal. If you were designing a Medicare program—if there were no Medicare and we were creating it today, we would absolutely have a drug benefit in it, because a lot of people can stay out of the hospital; a lot of people can stay alive longer; a lot of people can stay healthy longer. We would never consider having such a program without covering prescription drugs. And because we don't, about 75 percent of our seniors don't have affordable, adequate coverage.

And we can do this now. And we can do it without breaking the bank, because there are also some structural changes we can make which will save a lot of money over the next few years.

I believe—that's the first thing. I think we need to meet the challenge of our children's education. We have the largest and most diverse group of children in the history of America. Every one of them needs a world-class education—every one of them. If we—

if I had allowed this tax bill to become law, we would have had to have huge cuts in education or spend one-half of the surplus attributable to Social Security taxes, which would have really put us in a pickle, with the seniors about to retire, the baby boomers about to retire.

So I gave the Congress a plan that would save Social Security and Medicare, continue to invest in education and defense and the other things that are important, and do it in a way that over the next 15 years would pay down the debt so that in 15 years, for the first time since Andy Jackson was President, we'd be out of debt as a country—debt free.

Now, they think that's a bad idea on the other side, and they're supposed to be the conservative party. Why should the progressive party be for getting us out of debt? Why should the Democrats be for—I mean, we're supposed to be more liberal than them. We want to help poor people. Why in the wide world should we be for that? I'll tell you why. We live in a global economy where interest rates are set globally.

You saw what happened to Asia a couple of years ago, when everybody, all of a sudden, overnight, decided it wasn't such a good place to invest, and all of a sudden, all of these countries that thought they were doing a good job woke up with a severe headache.

And we've seen this sort of thing happen. No, the decisions aren't always rational or fair. But we know that money is an international commodity, and interest rates, therefore, are globally set, although we can all influence them. Obviously, the Federal Reserve can influence them; others can.

If we could take ourselves out of debt, publicly held debt, which is what I propose, for the first time since 1835, here's what would happen. For the next generation, even if we had a recession and we had to borrow some money then later to keep things going, interest rates would be much lower, because the Government wouldn't be competing with you for the money. That means all the working people, people like those who work in this hotel here, their credit card bills would be lower. Their monthly car payments would be lower. Your home mortgage payment would be lower. Your college loan payment would be lower. All the people we represent would be better off if we could have long-term low interest rates and lower inflation. And that's why we ought to be for this.

Now, people that have lots of money and don't have to work very hard—I hope I'll be one of them one day, too; I doubt it—[*laughter*]—you know, they're okay with high interest rates. They just move their money around and make more money. But we should be for this conservative position, because we have a progressive conscience and heart.

And so this is a plan that the Vice President and I and our administration have asked Congress to adopt. There are plenty of things that we can work together with the Republicans on, to work this out, but we ought to save Social Security and Medicare, keep investing in education, and get this country out of debt.

And if we could make an agreement—I might say, there's another reason the Republicans ought to be for it. So if we could make this agreement and keep the thing going on, then all their campaign speeches for the 2000 elections would make more sense. [*Laughter*] Because right now, every one of their Presidential candidates is out there telling us that they want to spend more money on defense or pay our service men and women more; you know, they don't want to stop investing in education or whatever it is they're saying out there. And every one of them are for this tax bill that I vetoed. And if it became law, they'd all be stuck. Every one of their campaign speeches would be bogus, because there would be no money to pay for all these things they're out there promising the voters. So they ought to be for what I'm doing, too. I'm saving them a red face in 2000. [*Laughter*] Everybody ought to be for it.

But just think of this: Think of how proud we can feel if we were to lift the burden not only off the baby boomers but off our children and grandchildren of the baby boom retirement by saving Social Security and Medicare, if we were to guarantee a generation of lower interest rates and greater investment and more jobs and higher incomes by getting this country out of debt; if we really committed ourselves to a world-class education for every child in this country, without regard to their race or their background or

where they lived. These are big things, and we have to lay the foundation now.

And as you look ahead, just remember there really are differences between these two parties that are honest and heart-felt. You know, we want to save Social Security, not privatize it and leave individual seniors to the luck of their own investments. We want to save Medicare, not force seniors, by pricing systems, into managed care plans. And the people that want to do that don't even want to vote for a Patients' Bill of Rights. We want a real, enforceable Patients' Bill of Rights, and their leadership and a lot of their folks are still trying to find a way not to do that.

Keep in mind, this is the party that opposed family and medical leave before. Now they're against the Patients' Bill of Rights. Remember how they told us family and medical leave is going to bankrupt the country; it's a terrible thing. Millions of people—millions of people have taken time off now—millions—because of a baby being born or a parent being sick—millions of people. And every year, we've set a new record for new small businesses formed. They were wrong, and we were right about that.

We want to close the gun show loophole in the Brady bill. Why? Why? We want to do that because now 400,000 people who have criminal backgrounds or were otherwise unfit to get a handgun have been blocked by the Brady bill, but as they know that, more and more people are going to use the gun shows or the urban flea markets. So we want to close the loophole and do background checks.

It's the same old thing, you know, and the same old crowd's against it. And it's so interesting, it's funny to me—when they were against the Brady bill, they told us that crooks didn't buy guns in gun shops anyway, so the Brady bill was a total waste. It was just a burden on poor gun shop owners and poor gun buyers because no crooks—the guns—the crooks, they said, they all get their guns at the gun shows and the flea markets. [*Laughter*] That's what they said then.

So now, I say, ''Okay, let's do the background checks,'' and they say, ''Oh, we can't do that. It's too burdensome.'' And when we asked the leadership of the other party to do it, when we asked the candidates running for President to do it, they flew like a covey of quails back to the nest of the NRA. There are differences between the two parties.

And again, in '92, it was an argument, because this issue of what is a sensible way to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and children had not been seriously debated for 30 years, since—or then, 24 years, since Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King were assassinated. And we had a brief, all-too-brief burst of focus on this, thanks to the leadership of President Johnson, who, like me, came out of a hunting culture and, like me, understood what was true about what the other side was saying and what was not. As a result, they don't like either one of us very much. [*Laughter*]

But I'm telling you, folks, this is a big deal going forward. This is a big deal. We have given you the lowest crime rate in 26 years by doing what law enforcement people and community leaders say makes sense. But this country's still too dangerous. There are still too many people getting killed, with people that have mental health problems walking around with guns.

A lot of these horrible killings we're seeing here, we need to do more to help these people; we need people identifying these people and getting them help quicker and doing things. You're trying to stop some of this stuff from going on. But you know, we can create a country in which everybody that wants to go hunting, can go hunting, everybody that wants to be a sport shooter can do it, and we can still stop putting weapons into the hands of children, criminals, and people who are unstable. We can do that.

We got the crime rate down to a 26-year low, but it's too high. We can make this the safest big country in the world. And the American people will make that decision in the next election by the decision they make. There are honest differences between us.

And what I want to say to you is, thank you. Let's get as much done as we can. People still, where you live, most of them don't think we're in a Presidential election. That's something that happens after the conventions. They think that they're paying good taxes to pay our salary, and they'd like us to work a while longer. And so let's do that.

And as you go into the next election, don't fight with people when they say we need a change. Tell them we certainly do; we always need a change. The question is not whether we're going to change but what kind of change we're going to make. And are we going to change based on all the good things that are going on in America now? Or would we instead take a U-turn and go back to the stuff that got us in so much trouble before the Vice President and I came here and got the help of the fine Members of Congress and others who have worked with us? That is the issue. And you don't have to argue so much anymore. You've got evidence.

Now, we'll be at a financial disadvantage, of course. One of the interesting consequences of the recovery of our administration, the economic recovery we sparked, is we've given all those Republicans a lot more money to spend on politics. [*Laughter*] You know, every time I see the total amount of money they're spending, I think, there's one more statistic for our economic plan. [*Laughter*] And some more evidence that some folks never learn. So we'll do that.

The last thing I want to tell you is, be of good cheer. Let me tell you something. I come to this hotel and give a lot of speeches, as you might imagine. And today I came in, and they had six working people from the hotel in their uniforms to greet me, not the executives, not the management, people that work here. And they gave me my very own employee ID card. [*Laughter*]

They're the people we're fighting for. You just imagine you had an employee ID card every day when we fight for the minimum wage and we fight to save and reform Medicare and Social Security and we fight for the education of our children, when we fight to let disabled people keep their Medicaid when they go to work, so they can go into the work force. We fight for all these things. When we fight for one America across all the lines that divide us, when we fight for the ''Employment Non-Discrimination Act,'' when we fight for the hate crimes legislation, when we fight for these things, it's because we identify with each other.

It's a long time between now and November of 2000. In June of 1992, you know where I was in the polls? Not behind, third—third. [*Laughter*] This is not a horse race. You don't collect any money if you show. [*Laughter*] But you know what I thought? I'll never forget, June 2, 1992: We win the California primary, and we win in New Jersey, and we win in Ohio, and we have enough votes to be nominated on the first ballot. And the story the next day is, ''Oh, but we did exit polls in California, and what they really want is Mr. Perot, and not Governor Clinton.'' And you know, I got that probably because I'd had such wonderful national press during the entire nominating process. [*Laughter*]

But then, what happened? Then the election started for the real people. Then it wasn't—they weren't, you know, sort of saying, ''Well, this is what I've heard,'' and this is sort of this vaguely—thing; then it became real. And people began to look and listen. And they opened not just their minds but their hearts, and they get—feel about these things, you know. And the American people nearly always get it right. That's why we're still around here after all this time. That's why we're still around here. It's the longest lasting great democracy in history. They nearly always get it right.

But you have to help them make sure that they hear every element of our side. A lot of times, young people come to me and ask me for advice on running for office. And I say, I always had one rule: I wanted to make sure that by election day, everybody that voted against me knew exactly what they were doing. [*Laughter*] You think about that. In a democracy, that's what you want. That's what you want.

Our party has been revitalized. People all over the world now are trying to do their versions of what we have done, to marry fiscal responsibility and a strong national posture involved in the rest of the world with compassionate policies at home that bring people together and lift people up. And it's working.

You think about having your own employee ID card. And let's not ever forget who we're here for, why we belong to our party, and why we did all this. And let's just work like crazy, keeping a good frame of mind. And I'll bet you anything, it will come out all right.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:50 a.m. in the Jefferson Ballroom at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Roy Romer of Colorado, general chair, Representative Loretta Sanchez and Mayor Dennis W. Archer of Detroit, general cochairs, Joseph J. Andrew, national chair, Andrew Tobias, treasurer, and Beth E. Dozoretz, national finance chair, Democratic National Committee; Lydia Camarillo, chief executive officer, and Donald J. Foley, chief operating officer, 2000 Democratic National Convention; and Mayor Edward Rendell of Philadelphia.

Remarks at a Democratic Business Council Luncheon

September 24, 1999

Thank you. You think that story John told was true? [*Laughter*] I just—you better keep that Republican's name secret, or they'll subpoena him before a committee, before you know it. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank all of you at the DBC. I want to thank my long-time friend John Merrigan, and Mitchell Delk, and my good friend Jan Jones, and all the others who have been involved with the DBC. I want to thank our finance people, starting with Beth Dozoretz and Frank Katz, and going through all of the people who have worked on this event.

I want to thank all of you who give so consistently to our party, to give us a chance to get our message out. Thank you, Joe Andrew; thank you, Lou Weisbach, Lottie Shackelford, Janice Griffin. Thanks, Secretary Slater, for being here and for being there for me for nearly 20 years, now. And I want to say a special word of thanks to Roy Romer for his wonderful service to our party. Thank you very much. Thank you.

Our former chair, Don Fowler, is here. We've got a lot of other good folks here. But I wanted to say to all of you that I think it's quite important how you think and how you talk about were we are, where we've been, and where we're going. So if you will forgive me, I will get down to business. I'm sorry I'm a little late, but I had to spend an extra amount of time at the DNC, because they had a big crowd there, and I wanted to make sure they were thinking right about the moment. And I feel the same way about you.

In 1991, I asked the American people to give me a chance to be President. And I said, "If you'll vote for me, I'll do my best to change our party, to change our national leadership, to change the direction of our country. I think we need new ideas for the new economy and all of the new challenges in our society and the world at large. But they have to be rooted in old values of opportunity for all, responsibility from all, and a community of all Americans."

And I asked the American people to give me a chance. And I made an argument for them about what I would do. Then, when the Vice President joined the ticket, we reissued our economic plan and asked the American people to give us a chance to put people first. And I would like to ask you to think about that.

John said we brought the economy back and brought the Democratic Party back to the center. I think we did bring it back to the center, but I prefer to think of it as pushing the Democratic Party forward into the future, by getting out of making what seemed to me to be completely false choices. If you hang around Washington long enough, you learn that putting people and issues into categories—I'm sympathetic with people in Washington because they have to deal with so many people and so many issues—if you put everybody and every thing in a little box, it saves you the trouble of having to think. But it's a very poor way to run a country and to make decisions about the future of the country.

So we said, "Hey, give us a chance. We believe that the Democratic Party can be probusiness and prolabor. We believe we can be for family values and be against discrimination against women or gays or anybody else. We believe we can be for one America and still celebrate our diversity. We believe you can grow the economy while you improve the environment, not degrade it. We believe that we'll have a better work place if we also help workers to succeed at home in their parental responsibilities. We believe these things. We believe we can prevent crime and be tough on criminals who should be punished."

And so, we made this argument. And the results speak for themselves. But I want to