

routes and provide even more efficient service, laying the foundation for high-speed rail. With this major funding increase this year, we can help ensure a thriving passenger rail system for many years to come.

NOTE: A portion of the President's statement was also made available on the White House Press Office Actuality Line.

Statement on Floods in Southern Africa

February 28, 2000

I am deeply saddened by the devastation caused by flooding in southern Africa, which has worsened over the past few days. Almost a million people in Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa, and Zimbabwe have lost their homes or their livelihoods, and tens of thousands of people in Mozambique are stranded in flooded areas and require urgent rescue.

Today we are allocating \$1 million, through the U.S. Agency for International Development, to support aircraft for critical search and rescue operations and the delivery of relief supplies. In addition, we have already provided over \$1.8 million to fund air transport, prevent disease, deliver supplies, and support relief efforts. Two aircraft from the Department of Defense are on the way to deliver shelter materials, blankets, and other relief supplies. Also, we are dispatching a disaster assistance response team to the region to determine other ways that we can help our friends in southern Africa.

The thoughts and prayers of the American people are with the people of the region as they cope with this disaster.

Remarks to the Democratic Governors' Association Dinner

February 28, 2000

Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the warm welcome. Thank you for this wonderful book. Governor Patton, Mrs. Patton, Governor Davis, Governor O'Bannon; to B.J. Thornberry, and all the officers of the DGA; and especially my great friend Mark Weiner. I want to acknowledge also the presence—Mark Weiner did

a good job tonight, and all the rest of you did, raising this money. I thank you for that.

I want to acknowledge the presence in this audience of the man who was the executive director of the DGA when I was a member, my good friend Chuck Dolan. I thank you for being here and for all you did for us. And all my colleagues—I know there are five or six Governors out there who are former Governors with whom I served—thank you for being here.

I want to acknowledge the Governors who are retiring. Governor Rossello, thank you for everything you've done. And Governor Carper and Governor Carnahan are going to be Members of the United States Senate, and that will be a good thing for the Senate, a bad thing for the Governors.

I want to say a special work of thanks to the man who nominated me to be vice chairman of the DGA in 1979, Governor Jim Hunt, one of the finest people I ever met in my life. Thank you, Jim Hunt, for what you did.

You know, I will treasure this book. I have a first edition of "Profiles in Courage," but not one signed by John Kennedy. Hillary says that the reason I admire John Kennedy so much is he's the only person to ever serve as President whose handwriting was even harder to read than mine. [*Laughter*] But I can recognize the signature, and I thank you.

President Kennedy once said, "The party which, in its drive for unity, discipline, and success, ever decides to exclude new ideas, independent conduct, or insurgent members is in danger." Well, thanks to the Democratic Governors, to your new ideas, your independent conduct, and your willingness always to try to do better and to be different, the Democratic Party is in no danger. We're stronger tonight than we have been in many, many years, thanks to you.

As President, I have been deeply indebted to my service as Governor. It has stood me in good stead. And I have been deeply indebted to so many of you for the friendship, the advice, the counsel you have given me, and to so many who were members of this organization with me who continue all during these years to call with a helpful word or sometimes just a word of friendship and support.

Thanks to our partnership and the hard work of the American people, our country is in good shape at the dawn of the new millennium. We have 21 million new jobs, the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 30 years, the lowest crime rates in 25 years, the lowest poverty rates in 20 years, the lowest Hispanic- and African-American unemployment rate ever, and the longest economic expansion in history. We are well-positioned for this new century.

And I am very proud that there is in this country, embodied in the service of the Democratic Governors, a new Democratic Party, committed to new ideas and the old principles of opportunity for all, responsibility from all, and a community of all Americans. I am proud of what we have done together.

But you came here tonight because we're raising money for the elections of 2000. And as dearly as I loved every single word Paul Patton said, and I'll treasure it for a lifetime, and he'll never be able to get away from it because, everywhere I go, the White House Communications Agency captures things on film—I've got a movie, a color movie of Paul Patton, and the next time he gets mad at me, I'm going to play it for him. *[Laughter]* I will treasure everything he said for a lifetime. As much as I treasure and as much as I have loved being President, elections are about the future. And in this election season, those of you who are running and those of you who are serving and not running must be very active in defining the choices for the future.

Last night at the dinner at the White House, I reminded all the Governors that we are now in the longest economic expansion in history, and it's easy to feel comfortable and confident, maybe even a little complacent. But the last time we had the longest economic expansion in history was in the decade of the 1960's, between 1961 and 1969.

In 1964, when I graduated from high school, America was still profoundly sad about the loss of President Kennedy, but very optimistic and very united behind President Johnson; absolutely convinced we'd just have high economic growth with low inflation from now on; absolutely convinced that we

would solve the civil rights challenges of our age through the Congress; absolutely convinced that we would prevail in the cold war as a united nation.

Within 2 years, we had riots in the streets, and the country was divided. Within 4 years, Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy had been killed, Lyndon Johnson said he wouldn't run for reelection. The country was split right in two. We had a Presidential election which for the first time in a long time was about the politics of division. You remember the election of 1968? Vote with the Silent Majority. And it was us and them. If you weren't in the Silent Majority, presumably, you were in the loud minority. I know; I was one of them.

And in just a few months, we lost the longest economic expansion in history. And we've had decades of us and them elections and us and them politics in Washington, DC. I ran for President because when I was a Governor, I could not have survived practicing politics the way it was done here very day, and I was sick and tired of people all caught up in the Washington political game, deaf to the voices of the people like those in Appalachia that Paul Patton introduced me to.

On that hot day in Hazard, Kentucky, which I'll never forget because it was so hot, I saw people like the people I grew up with. They don't want much from us. They get up every day and go to work, and they obey the law, and they pay their taxes. All they want us to do is to work as hard at our job as they work at theirs and to pay attention to what their concerns are and to think about how their children are going to do better.

And I came to Washington determined to do that. I am profoundly indebted to every Governor who served with me, who helped me, and to all of you since. But what I want you to remember is elections are about the future and so is governance. And don't you dare be complacent about this. I have waited for 35 years for my country to be in shape again to build the future of our dreams for our children. Our party can lead the country to do that. We're going in the right direction. We have the right ideas. We have the right values. And you have to lead to make sure it happens.

And you have to be willing to do things that may not grab the headlines all the time. We have to take what Theodore Roosevelt said at the dawn of the century: "A growing country with a young spirit should always take the long look ahead." Today some of you came in to see me, including Governor Carper and former Governor Dukakis who is here tonight, to talk about my Amtrak budget. Well, that's not a headline grabber, but it's important to the future that America have a high-speed rail system that guarantees our energy security and our safety and our strength. It's part of our long look ahead.

It's part of our long look ahead that we recognize that we've got the lowest female unemployment rate in 40 years. That is the good news. The challenge is that nearly every family in nearly every income group is having some difficulty balancing the burdens of raising their children and succeeding at work, and whenever this country has to make a choice—any family—we lose.

And we have to do more to help people to succeed at home and at work. We have to do more to bring economic opportunity to the people and places that have been left behind. If we can't bring free enterprise to Appalachia, to the Mississippi Delta, to the inner cities, and to the Indian reservations of this country now, we'll never get around to it. And the Democrats ought to lead the way. Everybody deserves a chance to work who is willing to do so.

Jim Hunt said something today I want to emphasize. We started out together in 1979, and we all wanted—especially in the South, where we knew we had to do it—we all wanted to make education better. But we really didn't know how to do it, especially with all the kids from all the different backgrounds, the different economic and racial and religious and ethnic backgrounds, with all their different burdens that they carried from home to school.

But we don't have an excuse anymore. Now, we know what works. We know how to turn around failing schools. We know all our kids can learn. And we know how to invest in it. We know how to demand high standards. We know what to do. We in the Democratic Party have to lead America to excellence in education for every single child

in this country, across all the lines that divide us.

When I became President, there were a lot of people that never thought the crime rate would go down again. But we know how to do it. We know you've got to put more police on the street, people who are trusted by folks in a community, who work with them, who know how to prevent crime as well as catch criminals. And we know—even in the South, we know—we've got to do more to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and away from children. We know what works. The Democratic Party ought to lead the country to making this the safest big country in the world. We owe that to our children.

We know that, in the digital economy the Governors came here to talk about, you do not have to weaken the environment to improve the economy. In fact, we know that we can improve the environment and the economy at the same time. There is a \$1 trillion market in the world today for environmental technologies that avoid the worst consequences of global warming and clean up local air and water systems and preserve the land—\$1 trillion market. We know that. And a lot of our friends in the other party don't know that yet. The Democratic Party ought to lead the way to a 21st century economy that proves we can have the strongest economy in history and the cleanest environment in history. We ought to lead the way to that sort of future.

And we know, even those of you that come, as I do, from a landlocked State in the middle of the country, that there is no more artificial dividing line between foreign policy and domestic policy. We know that our welfare is tied to the welfare of people all around the world. That's why I've worked so hard for peace in every region of the world and why I've worked to expand trade and why I believe we ought to take advantage of an agreement that finally opens China's markets to us, the way our markets have been open to China for decades now; why I believe we ought to continue to work to rid the world of weapons of mass destruction, chemical and biological terrorism; why we ought to adopt the test ban treaty—even though the Senate voted against it last year—because we

have got to make a safer world if we want our kids to live on safer streets and have a safer future in every State in the United States of America.

And, finally—you know, I get apprehensive when people start giving me gifts, even one like this that I treasure. That's the kind of thing that they ought to do for you when you're not around anymore. I have to pinch myself; I'm still alive, I'm still here. [*Laughter*] I hope to be a useful citizen when I'm no longer living in the White House. But if the good Lord came to me tonight and said, "I'm sorry, you can't finish your term. You're out of here tomorrow morning. And I'll only give you one wish. I'm not a genie; you get one wish, not three," I would set aside everything I just said to you and pray that America could find a way to overcome the profoundly ingrained tendency of people everywhere to distrust people who are different from them by race, by religion, people who were gay, all these things that are different.

Why? You've been here talking about the Internet economy. I've got a cousin in Arkansas who plays chess once a week with a guy in Australia over the Internet. People are being drawn together as never before. I was in poor villages in Africa where the school buildings had maps that still had the Soviet Union on it. But because they're getting computer hookups, pretty soon they'll just be able to print out maps that are new, and those poor little kids in those little villages will be able to learn the same geography our kids do in our finest schools.

We are being drawn together as never before, and yet we are bedeviled by the oldest problems of humankind. Sunday I'm going to Selma to be with Governor Siegelman and the veterans of the Selma march 35 years ago. For me, particularly because I'm from the South, it is a signal honor. And we will celebrate all the great things that have happened in the last 35 years to bring us together.

I see Governor Barnes out there from Georgia. He went in on a great vote that carried in two African-Americans to statewide elected office in Georgia, and there are things like that happening all over America. Governor Locke out there—the first Chinese-American Governor our country ever

had. Governor Cayetano from Hawaii—a Philippine-American. But it is still true that even in America—we had kids at a Jewish community center in California, little kids shot at just because they were Jewish. A Filipino postal worker killed just because he was Asian and worked for the Federal Government. All those fine people killed in the middle of the country by that man who said he belonged to a church that didn't believe in God but did believe in white supremacy. Matthew Shepard stretched out on a rack in Wyoming.

Now, most of the news in America is good. But I am telling you, we're a smart people. You can't keep us down no matter what, as long as we've got our heads on straight. But the Democratic Party ought to take the lead in reminding us that one of the things that we have learned as we've unlocked the mysteries of the human gene is that we are genetically 99.9 percent the same and that the differences among individuals within racial groups are different—are greater than the differences from group to group.

Whether we like it or not, we're all in this boat together. And those of you who have been in the Oval Office know that I keep on the table there a moon rock that Neil Armstrong gave me on the 30th anniversary of the landing on the Moon. It's a lava rock that is 3.6 billion years old. And whenever anybody gets all hot and lathered up in the Oval Office in a meeting and they act like the whole world is about to come down, I say, "Time out. See that rock? It's 3.6 billion years old. Now, we're all just passing through. Chill out." [*Laughter*]

But even though we're all just passing through, every minute, every hour, every day is precious. So I ask you all, apart from everything you do on all these issues I mentioned, model that, model one America. Remind people that if you believe everybody counts and everybody ought to have a chance, then you've got to believe we're all better off when we help each other instead of looking down on one another.

That's another thing the Democratic Party has stood for. We lost a lot of Presidential elections because we stood for it, but we're coming back now because we stand for it. You've got 13 seats up in 2000 and 36 up

in 2002. I'm going to help you with the 13, and when I'm just a citizen, I'll help you with the 36 if you want me to. But we will never have a national Democratic Party that's as strong as it ought to be until we have a majority of the governorships again, and until we can prove, where people live, that we care about them, that we can produce for them, that we reflect their fondest hopes and deepest values. You can do that.

You have helped me to help America. You have immeasurably enriched my life. You've been good to me and Hillary and Al and Tipper. And for all that, I am profoundly grateful. I will treasure this book for the rest of my days and my friendships and, seriously, what Paul Patton said. But America is always about tomorrow. So be proud of what we've done, but keep your eye on tomorrow and lead the American people where we ought to go.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:17 p.m. at Union Station. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Paul E. Patton of Kentucky, chair, Gov. Gray Davis of California, vice chair, B.J. Thornberry, executive director, and Mark Weiner, treasurer, Democratic Governors' Association; Governor Patton's wife, Judi; Governors Frank O'Bannon of Indiana, Pedro Rossello of Puerto Rico, Thomas R. Carper of Delaware, Mel Carnahan of Missouri, James B. Hunt, Jr., of North Carolina, Don Siegelman of Alabama, Roy Barnes of Georgia, Gary Locke of Washington, and Benjamin J. Cayetano of Hawaii; former Governor Michael Dukakis of Massachusetts; and astronaut Neil Armstrong.

Remarks on Departure for West Palm Beach, Florida, and an Exchange With Reporters

February 29, 2000

Medicare and Tobacco

The President. Good morning. I would like to say just a couple of words about two subjects vital to the health of the American people: Medicare and tobacco.

Throughout the life of this administration Vice President Gore and I have done everything we could to protect our children from the dangers of tobacco. Five years ago, we put forward a landmark rule affirming the

FDA's authority to regulate tobacco products.

Since that time, the tobacco industry has fought our efforts at every turn. I am heartened today by news reports that the Nation's leading cigarette maker is now willing to accept Government regulation of tobacco.

If Philip Morris is ready to support the FDA provisions of the tobacco bill the industry and the Congressional leadership killed just 2 years ago, that is an important step forward.

Every day, 3,000 young people smoke for the first time, and 1,000 of them will die earlier as a result. We have a duty to do everything we can to save and lengthen their lives by protecting our young people from the dangers of tobacco.

I also want to comment briefly about an important new report I am releasing today on the future of Medicare. I am pleased to be joined here today by some of the Nation's foremost leaders on behalf of our senior citizens, along with a number of seniors who know from their personal experiences what Medicare means to their lives.

In the 34 years since it was created, Medicare has eased the suffering and extended the lives of tens of millions of Americans. It has given young families peace of mind knowing they will not have to mortgage their children's future to pay for their parents' health care.

If we want our children to have the same peace of mind when our generation retires, we must act now to strengthen Medicare. When I became President, the Medicare Trust Fund was scheduled to go broke last year, 1999. Because of the tough actions we have taken, the life of the Trust Fund has been extended by 16 years.

Still, we must do more. The Trust Fund is projected to go broke now by 2015, and the new report I am issuing shows why. Not only will the senior population nearly double over the next 25 years, but already today, in 40 of our 50 States, 1 in 10 Medicare beneficiaries is 85 years of age or older. This is the fastest growing group of seniors, and they require the greatest amount of care. And they will spend—consider this—almost a