

Allies and good people in that region for humanity and for freedom.

Well, what's happened since then? Our troops are on the ground in Kosovo, doing another job every bit as vital, working to help the people there rebuild their lives and build a lasting peace. Now our Allies and partners have taken on the lion's share of the burden. Since the end of the conflict, our European Allies and others are supplying 85 percent of the troops and nearly 85 percent of the police on the ground. Our share of international assistance for Kosovo is now well under 20 percent.

It's been a fair burden sharing because we bore the majority of the responsibility for the military conflict that made the peace possible. But it's still important that we do our part. Our presence is vital, for our forces symbolize something fundamental about the promise of America, the possibility of true peace and, frankly, the confidence your presence gives to others because nobody doubts that if any job can be done, you will do it. Our forces in Kosovo are doing a terrific job under still difficult circumstances. We must give them the tools to succeed and the time to succeed.

Yesterday the Senate of the United States, in bipartisan fashion, cast a profoundly important vote. They affirmed our Nation's commitment to stay the course in Kosovo, rejecting language that would have called our resolve into question, permitting people to say, had it passed, that the United States would walk away from a job half-done and leave others to finish. But the Senate said, "No, we won't walk out on our Allies. We won't turn our back on freedom's promise. It may be a difficult job, but we started it, and we intend to finish it." And I would like to thank the Senators, Republicans as well as Democrats, and the American leaders around the country, Republicans as well as Democrats, who took this position to stand by you until the mission is completed.

In 1963, on Armed Forces Day, a great American veteran, President John Kennedy, said that our service men and women "stand as guardians of peace and visible evidence of our determination to meet any threat to the peace with measured strength and high resolve. They are also evidence of a harsh

but inescapable truth, that the survival of freedom requires great cost and commitment and great personal sacrifice."

We're a long way from the cold war world in which President Kennedy spoke those words. But today, the words are still true, where you stand as freedom's guardians in a world where communication is instant but so is destruction, a world where the threats of the last century have largely been vanquished but the timeless demons of hate and fear and new destructive possibilities rooted in new technologies and new networks are with us, in a world where millions still struggle for liberty, decency, and the very basics of life.

Today America thanks you for your commitment, renews our pledge to stand with you, and asks you to continue to do your best and give your best for freedom. The last 50 years are proof that when you do your job, and we support you, the world is a much, much better place.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10 a.m. in Hangar 3 at Andrews Air Force Base. In his remarks, he referred to former Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. David C. Jones, USAF, (Ret.), and Gen. John M. Shalikashvili, USA; President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Luncheon in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

May 19, 2000

Thank you so much. I told the folks at our table here that I have been in this room many times. The first time I came here was long before I was President, but I've been here a lot since I've been in office. I've been to a lot of dinners, lunches, meetings. I love this city hall, and I love this room, and I never tire of coming here.

I want to thank all of you, and in their absence, the mayor and your former mayor as well, Ed Rendell. He's doing a great job

as the chairman of the Democratic Committee. I thank the Pennsylvania and Philadelphia officials who are here. And I particularly want to say how much I appreciate my good friend Susan Bass Levin, running for Congress in New Jersey, and Pat Casey and Ed O'Brien, running here. I thank Bob Borski and Bob Brady and Chaka Fattah and Ron Klink for being my friends and allies in the United States House.

And let me say to all of you, this is an important occasion, and I want to say just two personal words, if I might, before I begin. First, I'd like to express my deepest condolences for the crash of Pier 34 last night, the loss of life, the people who have been injured. The Coast Guard has been up here helping with the search and rescue, and I've been informed and kept monitored on it. But I know it's a painful thing for the city, and I just wanted to tell you how sorry I am.

I'd also like to say to the Casey brothers here that Hillary and I send our prayers and best wishes to your mother and your father. He has been astonishing these last 7 years. I think his survival and courage in the face of his illness is as important as the remarkable persistence he showed in his political career.

I'm going to—Congressman Borski was saying, I've been to a lot of great events in Philadelphia. We've had a lot of hot rallies and enthusiastic moments, but this is a fairly early period in the election process. And so I'm going to do something a little unconventional today, but what I would like to do is to kind of just have a talk with you as a person who is not on the ballot this year. And most days I'm okay about not being on the ballot. [Laughter] The other days that I'm not okay about it, you have the Constitution to protect you. [Laughter]

What I'd like to do is just take a little time to have a talk. I would like to tell you what I think this election is really about, what the big issues are, and without going into an enormous amount of detail, what the major differences are, because this is a profoundly important election. We're electing a President who will serve the first full term of the 21st century. We have a chance to change control of the House of Representatives with

a shift of just five seats. We have a chance, believe it or not, to be even-up, or even to be one ahead in the United States Senate, which is why Ron Klink's election is so important.

And I can tell you, I think I know a little something about Pennsylvania. You've been very good to me and voted for me twice. It's my opinion that if his race is competitively funded, I believe he'll win. And so I hope you'll help him be competitive, because we need to win. I was just sitting here thinking off the top of my head, there are one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight other seats that could shift from Republican to Democrat. There is, I think, a reasonably good chance that five of them will do so, if our candidates are well funded.

There are about four seats that the Republicans believe they have in play, and I think a better than 50–50 chance only one of them will shift and maybe none. I think the Senate candidate in New York's doing a pretty good job of trying to hold on to—[laughter]—and a number of you in this room have helped her, and I'm very grateful for that as well, and I thank you.

So this is a big election. Now, very briefly, here's what I want to say to you about it. But I do want you to try to remember some of these things, because people are going to talk to you about this, and they're going to ask you why you came, and they're going to ask you why you are where you are.

It's clear that our country's in better shape than it was 8 years ago, that we are moving in the right direction, that we not only have the longest economic expansion in history and the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years. We've got declining poverty, declining inequality, the lowest minority unemployment rates we've ever recorded. We have the highest homeownership in history. We've got the lowest crime rate in over a quarter century—8 years of decline in a row—welfare rolls about half the size they were 7½ years ago. Ninety percent of our kids are immunized against childhood diseases, with over 2 million kids with health insurance that didn't have it before. And I could go on and on.

We set aside more land than any President in history, any administration in history, except those of the two Roosevelts, in the continental United States, something I'm quite proud of.

Now, the first point I want to make is, a lot of you have been very good to me over many years, and you have supported me, and you have been my personal friends. And I am very grateful for that. And you might have been, without regard to the ideas we had or the policies we advocated. But the results would not be this, what they are, if we hadn't stood for the right things. So what has happened is far bigger than my Presidency.

Al Gore deserves a lot of credit for it. He's had, by far, more influence on the affairs of the Nation than any person who ever served as Vice President in that job—by far, not even close. The Congress deserves a lot of credit for it. The other people who helped—those of you that helped us to be elected and reelected. It was a common endeavor, but the consequences that flowed from it happened because what we did was right.

And we were right in the economic fight of '93, when not a single Republican voted with us. We were right in the crime bill fight in '94, when a handful of them voted for us but not many. We were right to insist that if we're going to reform welfare and require able-bodied people to work, we shouldn't hurt the kids. We should guarantee their food and their medicine and that their mothers have child care and transportation if they're going to go into the workplace. And I could give you dozens of other examples. So there is a difference.

Now, I believe the outcome of this election will be determined, in large measure, by what people think the election is about. No one else will ever tell you that. They'll say, "Well, this week Bush is up; Gore is down. Last week Gore was up; Bush was down. Next week it will be something different. The Democrats are here. The Republicans are there." You hear all this handicapping. I believe that in important elections, as you get toward the end, the people come to some sort of conclusion about what the stakes are, what is it about anyway. And the question that they ask and answer may determine the people they vote for.

I believe that this question is, what are we going to do with this moment of prosperity? Most of us have never seen anything like it in our lifetime. Something like this comes along once in a lifetime. What is it that we propose to do with it? And I hope the answer is, as I said in the State of the Union, we're not going to squander it. We're not going to indulge ourselves with it. We're going to take on the big challenges and seize the big opportunities so that we can build the future of our dreams for our children.

Now, if that's the question, then I believe the Vice President will be elected, because he understands the future and he knows how to get us there. I believe the Democrats will win the congressional races, because they're right on the issues. But the question is important. Now, let me just give you a couple of examples.

Clearly, one big issue is, how can we keep this economic growth going, and can we extend it to people in places that have been left behind? Big question. Is there any difference in the approach of the two parties? Absolutely. What's our belief? Our belief is that we ought to have a targeted tax cut that will help people do the essential things: take care of elderly or disabled family members; send their kids to college; pay for child care; help them raise their children if they're making very low incomes. But we ought to save enough money to also invest in education and new technologies and scientific and medical research, and most important, we've got to keep paying this debt down to keep the interest rates down.

You see right now, every time the Fed meets, there's this big debate about whether they should keep raising interest rates, because how long can this economy grow without inflation. If we keep paying the Government's debt down, we can make it possible for you to borrow money at lower interest rates to finance personal costs like cars and homes or expansion of businesses. This is a big deal.

Their position is, we should have a huge across-the-board tax cut and other costly items that I believe would ensure that we would go back to deficit spending and that would drive interest rates up again. It would

make it very difficult to keep the expansion going.

Now, I do have some hope that we'll have a bipartisan agreement on what I call the new markets initiative to help provide incentives for people who invest in the neighborhoods in America, in urban American and rural America, that haven't grown. But we still won't be able to get that done unless the overall economy keeps growing.

So there's a huge difference here in economic policy, and it cannot be papered over. And the people need to sort of say, "Well, do we think this whole thing is an accident, or do we think this economic policy is on automatic, and you couldn't mess it up if you tried. And therefore, there are no consequences?"

I can tell you, I don't believe that. I have worked day and night for 7½ years to make good economic decisions for America. And I believe it is imperative that we have a tax cut that we can afford, that we invest as much as we can afford but that we keep paying this debt down, and make sure that even as we save Social Security and Medicare for the baby boom generation, we're continuing to keep the economy strong.

And there is a serious difference here in economic philosophy. And so you can decide whether you would like to go back to the—their theory is that if they have a huge across-the-board tax cut, and people with a lot of money, including more than half of you in this room who would get a lot of the money—if you get even more and have lower taxes, that you will invest it, and even if interest rates go up and inflation goes up, that it will be all right.

I believe that we ought to confine the tax cut to what we can afford, keep investing in education and technology, and keep this debt coming down because that's going to keep the economy stronger. And it's a big tax cut. You know, the average person is paying \$2,000 less in home mortgages, \$200 a year less in college loan payments and car payments than they would have paid if we hadn't gotten rid of the deficit. So it's a big deal.

Now, this is not what you see in the daily headlines, but it's a serious issue. And you guys—you ought to be discussing it.

The second thing is, how are we going to deal with the challenge of the aging of America? Now, this is beginning to be discussed in a serious way in the headlines, and I like that. That's good for America. There are two big—from our point of view—the next President and the next Congress will have to deal with the challenge of the aging of America primarily in three ways. One, the big issue is, how are you going to reform Medicare, and are you going to add a prescription drug benefit? Two, how are you going to make sure Social Security doesn't go broke, and what else do you want to do with it? And three, how are you going to help people deal with elderly or disabled family members that need long-term care?

Now, on those issues I think there are differences, and I'll just go through them real quick. There is a chance that we'll reach a bipartisan agreement on a long-term care tax credit. If so, I'll be thankful for it. It's a good thing to do, and we ought to do it.

On Medicare, our differences, largely, today are over the nature of the structural reforms on Medicare, because I think it's important not to mess it up. And the truth is, I think a lot of the health care providers need more money to pay for the Medicare program, not less. And I believe we should add a prescription drug benefit which I think, over the long run, will save money, because we would never design a program for seniors today that didn't have prescription drugs.

Thirty-five years ago, when we set up Medicare, it was basically to help people when they got real sick, for doctor bills and hospital bills. Now, when people are living longer than ever before, we want to keep people well and minimize the costs they impose on the health care system and increase the length and the quality of their lives.

So we've got a big difference between the two parties on this. They say we should help people up to 150 percent of the poverty line with their medicine, but it would be too costly to go above that. We say half the people in the country who lack affordable prescription drug coverage—half—are over 150 percent of the poverty line. And if you're living on \$15,000 a year and you've got a \$300-a-month drug cost or a \$500 a month cost, you

don't have much money left, and you should get help, too.

They say our program is too costly. We say theirs doesn't really do the job and that we have the money and we set it aside, and we can pay for it and still pay the debt down and still—and I think I ought to get some—I think we, the Democrats, including the Vice President and the Members of Congress, should be entitled to the benefit of the doubt on this. Why? Because when we took office in '93, Medicare was supposed to go broke in '99, last year. Now it's projected to be alive and well until 2024. So we have shown that we can control costs, make tough decisions. And as I said, I'm not sure we didn't overdo it. I think we're going to have to give the health care providers a little of that money back. We tried to do it in the budget last year.

But that's a big difference. Now, on Social Security, there's a very interesting debate emerging where the Republican position is essentially for younger people paying into the Social Security system—younger is, I guess, a relative term. I think younger is anybody today younger than I am. [Laughter] But it hasn't been worked out yet, but basically, they say, "Look, we'll guarantee everybody who is on Social Security now and people who are near retirement, their retirement benefits. And everybody else, we're going to give them 2 percent of payroll back and let them invest it, because they can get a higher rate of return than Social Security could." And it sounds reasonable. And a lot of you who have made money in the stock market, it may sound great to you. And they point out Social Security is supposed to go broke in 2034, that the baby boomers, when they retire, there will be two people working for every one person retired. And the rate of return that you get for your investment in Social Security they say is very low.

Now, here's what we say, generally, although there are differences in our crowd about this, what we say is: You can't measure Social Security's rate of return the way you do everything else, because a third of Social Security money goes to take care of disabled people. Don't forget that. This is not just a Social Security retirement program. This is a program—if you have a child who—God

forbid—has a paralyzing accident and you're in a limited income group, Social Security will help you. A third of this money goes to people with disabilities. So a lot of these arguments that are made about what a bad investment Social Security is obscure the fact that it is something all of us pay to benefit the minority of us that are going to have something really difficult happen to our family members.

But if you just look at the retirement fund, they say, "Well, the stock market always outperforms Government investments over a 30-year period," which is true. We say, "What about the poor suckers who retire in the bad times when they don't get the 30-year period?"

Let me just say—and they say Americans ought to be able to create wealth; lower income Americans ought to be able to create wealth, just like we can. And they're right about that. But there's another way—but we say there's another way to do it. This is a serious debate.

Here's what I want to tell you. Here's the problem with the proposal that they made, in my view. Keep in mind, Social Security is supposed to go broke anyway in 34 years, right? So if you give everybody under 40, or everybody under 50, 2 percent of their payroll back, you will shrink the number of years it takes for the thing to go broke, because there will be less money being paid into Social Security.

So they have to pay what are called big transition costs if they want to guarantee the Social Security payments for everybody that retired or is about to retire—hundreds of billion of dollars. If you put that on top of the big tax cut they proposed, we'll certainly be in deficits. If the economy goes down, all these discussions become academic, because the numbers just get terrible. You may think this is a highly technical discussion, but this is your life we're talking about here.

Here's what I think ought to be done. I think that we should allow low income people a chance to accumulate wealth, but we ought to do it outside the Social Security system with the proposal I made the year before last to let people set up savings accounts. And I think—and something else you should know—if Congress would simply vote to put

the interest savings that we get from paying the debt down because of your Social Security taxes into the Social Security Trust Fund, we could take the life of the Social Security Trust Fund out way beyond the life expectancy of the baby boom generation.

If you spent money directly to give lower income people money to save and invest, you could give them a chance to participate in the wealth of the country, and you could, in other words, fix the problem without running the risk. And the only problem would be for that is that those of us in higher income groups would not get 2 percent of payroll that we pay in Social Security to invest in the stock market, but most of us have already got money or can find money or have the capacity to save.

So this is a big difference. And I welcome this debate, but I believe we have the better side of the argument here. I hope you can see—I'll just give you—economic policy, Medicare, Social Security, huge differences. I haven't even talked about the environment, where there are massive differences, or whether we're going to continue to provide more affordable health care for working families and children, where there are huge differences, or whether we should pass hate crimes legislation, where there are huge differences, or Patients' Bill of Rights or raise the minimum wage.

What should our crime control policy be? When I was walking the streets with Ed Rendell in 1991, people just took a chance on this. We've now had 8 years of declining crime in a row. What works? A comprehensive policy: Put more police on the street; punish people who should be punished; enforce the laws that are there; have common-sense measures to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and children. That's our policy.

Their policy is—I have to drag them kicking and screaming to get any more for police—increase the penalties for everything, do nothing else to help keep guns out of the hands of criminals and children. I think we should close the gun show loophole. I think that people that get handguns ought to have a photo ID that proves that they don't have a problem in their background and that they can use the gun safely. I think that's reasonable.

I think we ought to put 50,000 more police on the street. Even our Democrats who disagree with me on the gun issue are for putting more police on the street. So there's a difference between us and them on crime.

And let me tell you an issue that almost is never at stake in an election, but we have serious differences on world peace and security this year. Yesterday—I don't know if you saw it, but I'm very grateful—I had a handful of Republicans, and I want to thank them for joining the overwhelming number of Democrats in voting to support the mission we undertook in Kosovo. I know it wasn't popular when I did it, but it was the right thing to do. A million people got run out of their homes because of their religion and their ethnic background. The last time we let that happen in Europe and didn't do anything to stop it, the results were not salutary. And I'm proud of what we did in Bosnia and Kosovo, and it was the right thing to do. A majority of our party was for my position. A majority of theirs was against it.

They defeated the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. I think that's a terrible mistake. I think we should continue to reduce the risk of nuclear weapons. They believe it's an anachronistic document. They honestly believe that. It's not a personal attack. I'm saying we have honest differences. The only place where our party is still divided over trade—and you all know about that—I'm for the China trade agreement because I think it's a good deal, economically, and I know it's important to our national security.

But that masks a larger issue that I urge you to look for also in this election, which is that we Democrats, even those who disagree with me on China, we believe it's going to be impossible to create a global economy without also having some sort of global society. And therefore, we believe we should be moving toward not only an integration of the global economy but a lifting of labor standards, an abolition of child labor, an abolition of other labor abuses, lifting of environmental standards across the world, so that people all over the world share this. And I think our party is united on this. Most of the folks in the other party think that that will probably happen anyway if there's more trade, and we shouldn't push it.

Now, I know most of you probably thought you were just coming to a political rally today and not a seminar on trade and all this other stuff. [Laughter] But I'm telling you, this is what the election is about. If you're worried about how your kids and your grandchildren are going to live and what kind of country you're going to live in, it really matters. There are differences in economic policy, differences in how we'll handle the aging of America, differences in how we'll handle health care, the environment, minimum wage, other family-related policies, and big differences in what we want to do in education, which I didn't even get into.

Philadelphia, the average school building is 65 years old. We want to help you build and repair thousands of schools in this country. They think it's not a Federal responsibility. We want to give families a \$10,000 tax deduction to send their kids to college. That's a tax cut we're for. So far we haven't sold them on it. So there are big, big differences.

You look at the kids in this room—I'm just telling you, I worked for 7½ years to try to turn this country around. And I'm not on the ballot, and I'm talking to you as a citizen. I have waited all my life to see our country in a position to build a future of our dreams. And what I hope will happen is that we will not have a mean election. We don't have to say they're bad people. We should assume they're honorable people and that they mean to do exactly what they say. And they should assume the same about us. But we should deal with everything they say, not just what comes out in the general election, as opposed to the primary. It ought to be a comprehensive record here. But we should assume we have two honorable people running for President, honorable people running for Congress. We intend to do what we say; they intend to do what they say. And you need to say, where are the differences and what are the consequences?

And when you leave here, if somebody asks you what do you think the election is about, I hope you'll say, "It's what are we going to do with our prosperity, whether we're going to build the future of our dreams for our kids. I want to vote for people who understand the future, who can take us there. I don't believe we ought to jeopardize the

economic policy that has brought us this much prosperity. I think we ought to deal with the aging of America in a way that helps promote both opportunity and guarantees for people who need it. I think we ought to do more to improve excellence in education for everybody. We ought to bring economic opportunity to the people who have been left behind. I think the Democrats are right on these things, and that's why I'm staying here. Look at the minimum wage. Look at Patients' Bill of Rights. Look at all these other issues." That's what I hope you will say.

But whatever happens, I hope every single solitary soul you talk to between now and November, you will tell, "Look, do not blow this. This is the American people's chance to conduct vastly important job interviews that will determine what kind of people we're going to be in 10, 15 or 20 years. And we've never had a chance like this before, at least in my lifetime, so I want us to make the most of it."

We need a Democratic majority in the House. We need to win these other elections—not for partisan reasons but because the divides between us, I think, are clear, and I believe we're right. If you think that, don't leave your activity when you walk out the door here. Keep talking about it.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:18 p.m. in Room 202 at City Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor John Street of Philadelphia; Mayor Susan Bass Levin of Cherry Hill, NJ, candidate for New Jersey's Third Congressional District; Pat Casey, candidate for Pennsylvania's 10th Congressional District, his father, former Gov. Robert P. Casey of Pennsylvania, and his mother, Ellen; Ed O'Brien, candidate for Pennsylvania's 15th Congressional District; and Representative Ron Klink, candidate for U.S. Senate from Pennsylvania.

Remarks at Mayer Sulzberger Middle School in Philadelphia May 19, 2000

Well, one thing I can say is, I'm glad I didn't have to run against Toya Doe for President of the United States. [Laughter] Didn't she do a wonderful job? I thought she was great. She was terrific. Thank you.