and women had given up on them. They deserve, at the least, the most we can give—the Medal of Honor.

I would like now to ask the military aides to read the citations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:45 p.m. in a pavilion on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Brig. Gen. David H. Hicks, chaplain, USA, who gave the invocation; Secretary Cohen's wife, Janet Langhart Cohen; and Secretary West's wife, Gail.

Videotape Remarks to Participants of the Scripps Howard National Spelling Bee

June 21, 2000

I'm glad to have this opportunity to welcome all of you to Washington and to the 73d annual National Spelling Bee.

In 1961, when I was about your age, President Kennedy said we should think of education as a private hope and dream, which fulfilled can benefit everyone and strengthen our Nation. That's even more true today. Your long list of accomplishments, uncommon dedication, and commitment to learning will serve as a lifelong asset to you and to your communities.

Regardless of who wins today, you should all be proud of your achievements. You've come a long way. So I join your parents and your teachers in congratulating you. Your commitment to excellence spells success in the years ahead, not just for you but for all America.

Thank you, and good luck today.

NOTE: The address was videotaped at approximately 5:30 p.m. on May 11 in the Map Room for later broadcast. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms Report

June 21, 2000

Today's report by the Treasury Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) demonstrates that our administration is tough on gun traffickers who peddle guns to criminals and young people. Between July 1996 and December 1998, ATF initiated more than 1,500 firearms trafficking investigations, resulting in Federal convictions of 812 criminals to a total of 7,420 years in prison—with an average sentence of 9 years.

Gun trafficking puts thousands of guns onto our Nation's streets and contributes significantly to our Nation's gun violence problem. The investigations documented in today's report involved the diversion of more than 84,000 firearms from the legal to illegal market. The report shows that loopholes in our laws help make gun shows and corrupt gun dealers major channels for gun trafficking. Many of the diverted weapons supplied by traffickers were later used to commit serious crimes, including homicides, robberies, and assaults. Each gun put into the hand of a criminal represents the possibility of one more life lost, one more family destroyed.

Through tough enforcement and smart prevention, we have reduced gun crime by 35 percent and increased Federal gun prosecutions 16 percent since 1992. There is more we can do to keep guns out of the wrong hands. I will continue to press the Congress to fully fund my $280 million gun enforcement initiative, to add more ATF agents and inspectors to crack down on gun traffickers, corrupt gun dealers, and armed gun criminals, as well as hire more Federal, State, and local gun prosecutors to put more gun criminals behind bars. But Congress must also close the deadly loopholes in our laws that make guns accessible to criminals and children in the first place. Congress should move forward to close the deadly gun show loophole once and for all and pass other stalled commonsense gun measures without further delay.

Remarks at an Irish-American Democrats Dinner Honoring Terence McAuliffe

June 21, 2000

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. First of all, let me say, I had to rush over here from another event, and I didn't

have time to go change my tie. [*Laughter*] I thank you for letting me come anyway.

Thank you, Stella, for everything you said and for everything you've done these last 4 years. Thank you, Chris Dodd, for being willing to take the chairmanship of the Democratic Party when they said our party and its President were dead as a doornail, and we proved that we had a little Irish left. [*Laughter*] And you've been great, and I'll never be able to thank you enough.

We have some other people here I want to acknowledge: the best Secretary of Education in the history of this country, Dick Riley is here; Congressman Joe Crowley from Queens. Congressman Jim Maloney from Connecticut is here, I think. Where are you, Jim? [*Applause*] Lieutenant Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend from Maryland.

Let me say—I'm going to do a little pander here—I'll be bad fooled if someday we're not out here campaigning for her on the national ticket.

And now we come to the would-be, want-to-be Irish—[*laughter*]—and some very good friends of Ireland, Senator Chuck Robb of Virginia. I've said this every place I could, but one of the things the Irish admire are people of conscience who do what they think is right against all the odds. I could make you a very compelling case that based on his constituency and the people arrayed against him, that Chuck Robb is the bravest person in the United States Senate. He needs your help to be reelected, and I want you to help him.

Congressman Donald Payne from New Jersey, a true friend of ours, thank you. And Representative Sheila Jackson Lee from Houston is here. Our present Democratic chair and the former mayor of Philadelphia, Ed Rendell. The first time he ran for mayor he spent half his advertising money trying to convince people he was Irish. [*Laughter*]

Then we have, I see John Raffaelli back there, the Italian-Irish—[*laughter*]—Tim Chorba over there; Rashid Chaudary the Pakistani-Irish—[*laughter*]. I'm saying this for a point. I'm getting to McAuliffe here in a minute. [*Laughter*] I want to say three things very briefly.

First of all, I want to thank you. Thank you for giving me the chance to serve as President. Thank you for supporting me. Thank you for helping us to make America's role in the Irish peace process a constructive one and to do the things that have been done here in the United States. It's been an unbelievable experience. We've still got a lot to do, and it's also been a lot of fun. And it wouldn't have been any of that if I hadn't had the support of the American Irish, and we hadn't been involved, as we've had the chance to be, in the Irish peace process. It's been a wonderful experience, and I'm very grateful to you.

The second thing I want to say to you is that the President may get all the blame when things go wrong, but he also gets the credit when things go right. And very often a lot of other people are involved, without whom none of that would have happened. And I want to mention two people in particular because they both need your help.

One is, when I took all that flack for getting involved in the Irish peace process, and I was being ridiculed by the members of the other party—Secretary Baker, a man I actually like quite a lot, did call it "Gullible's Travel." None of the elitists really thought I ought to do it. But all us blue-collar rednecks thought it was a pretty good idea.

But I want you to know that it was tough. And there was a huge part of the permanent Government that thought I had taken leave of my senses. And I want you to know that Al Gore stood with me in that. And you need to know that.

The second thing I want to say is that I'm especially proud of the work that my wife did in Northern Ireland with the Vital Voices, the women, the Protestant and Catholic women. And they need your help, and they deserve it.

And I want to say one other thing about the peace process. One of the reasons that I wanted to do this, quite apart from my Irish roots where the Cassidy family goes back to Fermanagh—[*inaudible*]—and they've given me a little water color of the 18th century farmhouse. It's the oldest house we can find that has any ties to anybody that's kin to me that at least will admit it. [*Laughter*] When

I got elected President, I had all these relatives turn up, you know. [*Laughter*] It was kind of weird.

I did get a letter, you should know, though, from an 88-year-old woman in northern Louisiana who explained to me—and she sent an identical letter to the other person—how I was the 12th cousin of the great mystery writer from Mississippi, John Grisham. And my mother's parents were Cassidy and Grisham. And of all the people—and I wrote John a letter, and he's a wonderful guy, used to be a Democratic legislator in Mississippi, which was almost an oxymoron for a while, but we're coming back. [*Laughter*] And I told him that I was delighted, not only because I liked his books but because of all the relatives that had turned up, he was the only one who had any money. [*Laughter*] So I liked that.

But I felt, in addition to wanting to do this, that if we could make it work, this old, old conflict, with its legendary, sometimes romantic, often horrible ramifications, that the United States could then go to other places in the world and make the same argument—that if the Irish could do it, you could do it.

You might be interested to know, you might remember that not very long ago, around last Christmas, I went to Kosovo, after the war was over. And we're still having a lot of trouble there, but the wounds are fresher there. And I got everybody in the room, the leaders of all the various sects—the various Kosovar Albanian groups and the Serbian groups and the minority groups there—there are several other ethnic minorities there—and we're sitting around a little table and metal chairs in this little airport room. And I said, "Look, let me tell you something. I've been working for all these years on the Irish peace process." And I said, "Here's the deal they've agreed to: the principle of consent, majority rule, minority rights, shared decisionmaking, shared benefits, and ties to their neighbors that they have ethnic and religious ties to."

I said, "Now, you can have that deal today, or you can air all your grievances and whine and beat the table and walk away and refuse to talk to each other and keep letting people die around the edges. And 20 years from now somebody else will be sitting in metal chairs like this, making the deal. And the deal will be majority rule, minority rights, shared decisionmaking, shared benefits, and ties with your neighbors. You can do it now, or you can do it later. But you look at what the Irish did—that's what you're going to have to do. You can do it now, or later. I'd advise you to do it now, while the rest of the world still cares a whole lot about you."

If this hadn't happened in Ireland, I could not have made that speech. And you need to know that.

Now, the next thing I want to tell you is, I realize I'm preaching to the saved here, and I don't need to give you a campaign speech for Al Gore or for our candidates for the Senate or the House. But I want to tell you, I worked as hard as I could to deal with the big problems of this country, to turn the country around, to get it going in the right direction. Nothing lasts forever. If you've ever been through bad times, you thank God for that. But when you have good times, you really have to cherish them and make the most of them.

This country has the chance of a lifetime now to build the future of our dreams for these children. People ask me all the time, who do you think is going to win the election? And my answer is, it depends on what the people think the election is about. Often, the answer depends upon the question you ask. And what this election ought to be about is how are we going to make the most of this moment of promise for all the people of this country? How are we going to fulfill our responsibilities to people around the world, to build the kind of world we want our children to live in? How are we going to deal with these big things?

So, I'm for Al Gore because he's by far the most effective Vice President in the history of the country. He's done more good and had more impact in that job by far than anybody who ever had it. Because he will keep the prosperity going, because he wants to spread it to people who haven't been part of it, and because he understands the future and knows how to get us there—so I'm for him.

But the things I want you to remember about this election are these: It's real important. There are profound differences between our candidates. And number three, only the Democrats want you to know what those differences are.

You watch these guys campaigning; you'd think they'd never even had a primary and made those commitments. Like all of this just sprung—and it's flattering, and I suppose we should be happy about it, but you need to go out there and tell people about that. We're for a Patients' Bill of Rights, and they're not. We believe that everybody on Medicare ought to have access to prescription drugs they can afford, and they don't. We're for an increase in the minimum wage, and they aren't. And I could go on and on.

But this is very important. Look, we don't have to run these elections the way some of these sort of tormented elections have been run in the last 20 years, where each candidate was trying to convince the people that their opponent was just one notch above a car thief. I mean, this doesn't have to be a negative campaign. Nobody has to be smeared. You can say, "Look, we've got honorable people from the top to the bottom on both sides. All we have to do is assume they mean what they say, see what they've said, see what they've done, compare where they are and where they want to go. Let the American people make up their mind." It ought to be a serious election, but a decent one. But don't pretend there are no differences, and don't let anybody tell you when you point out the difference that that's a negative campaign.

Because there are people here who want the voters to believe there are no real consequences to which way they vote. And that is not true. I've done everything I could do to turn this country around, to keep it going. I'm going to do everything I can in the next 7 months I have. But you've got to do your job and give the election back to the people, but tell them there are real consequences and real differences, and they need to face up to what they are and vote—[*inaudible*].

Now, what's all this got to do with Terry? A lot. [*Laughter*] A lot. I told somebody the other day, I think there's a real difference in whether somebody who's done well in this country and made some money, got a world of friends and contacts, is out there raising money to get himself another tax cut, or to try to get the people who work in this hotel an increase in their wages, or give them a tax break so their kids can go to college, or trying to make sure all working people can afford to give their children health insurance.

And in the system we have, I wouldn't still be here doing what I'm doing if he didn't do what he's done. You'd be amazed how many conversations we have where we're just talking about the issues. Well, how are you doing with the Middle East peace process? Are you going to get that Patients' Bill of Rights or not? So the first thing I want you to know is this guy believes in what we're doing. If he didn't, he could be over there in the other party and he'd be making more money, out of raising all this money, than he's going to do because of me and what he's doing for the Vice President.

The second thing I want you to know is that he and I have one thing in common that maybe shows that we both need help. [*Laughter*] But we're crazy enough to think that this is fun and that we're lucky to be doing this. I can just tell you from my point of view, one or two little other breaks in life and I'd still be home doing deeds and real estate transfers, you know. [*Laughter*] People say, "Oh, hasn't it been horrible?" I say, "Are you kidding? I could be home writing deeds." [*Laughter*]

You need to know—McAuliffe goes out to L.A., and they say we're having trouble financing the convention. He's there 3 hours and total strangers are walking up to him on the street throwing money at him. I mean, it's unbelievable. [*Laughter*] Why? Because he's having a good time, obviously doing what he believes.

It is a great gift to be able to make people believe that they can do something important and enjoy it at the same time. It is a great gift to make people believe that they have something unique that they can contribute. It is the true mark of leadership, since none of us is indispensable—me included—none of us have the whole truth, and all of us have something to give. He is better at making people understand that than any human being I have ever known.

And Stella was up here bragging about how he had intelligence and energy and charm. And I thought, where's the blarney part? [*Laughter*] But I'm telling you, I know this guy. I know him well. And he's kind of hot right now because he's raising all this money and having a good time doing it. But what you need to know is, he believes in what he raised it for. He believes in what we've done here these last 8 years. And he knows that we couldn't have done it if he hadn't done what he did.

And he's given in unique ways thousands of us a chance to be a part of changing America for the better. And I think that's something that his wife and his children and his family and his friends ought to be very, very proud of. Because this is a better country today because of Terry McAuliffe.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:15 p.m. in the Rooftop Ballroom at the Washington Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Stella O'Leary, president, Irish-American Democrats; John D. Raffaelli, partner, Washington Group; former U.S. Ambassador to Singapore Timothy A. Chorba; and Rashid Chaudary, president, Raani Corporation.

Remarks at a Hillary 2000 Dinner

June 21, 2000

That was one of my great jokes—[*inaudible*]—that I intended to be president again next year, president of the Senate spouses' club. [*Laughter*]

Let me say that I love coming to this magnificent home. I'm always so happy here. It's a happy place. I love being here. And now I'm here as surrogate-in-chief. Hillary is in New York tonight, and I was delighted to come by and have a chance to talk to you at the table.

I would like to just say a couple of things. First of all, thank you. I am very grateful that I've had a chance to serve as President. And I'm grateful that I had a chance to get elected in a moment where I felt that I had some ideas that would change the country for the better—and only after I've had years and years and years and years of working seriously on these ideas so I could test them, and it turned out most of them worked out pretty well. And I feel good about it.

We've still got a lot of good things going, and I think a lot of good things are going to happen in the next 7 months. You may have seen yesterday the House—the Senate passed the hate crimes legislation I've been pushing for 2 years. A couple of days before that, the House reversed itself and decided to leave my process of creating national monuments to protect land for all time to come alone. We're moving on a lot of the fronts that I hope we'll have some progress on. I think we will.

The second point I'd like to make is that people come up to me all the time and say, "Well, who is going to win this election or that election or the other"—except I always say Hillary now, but apart from that—and I believe that very strongly. But I think my experience has been that the outcome of elections are largely determined by what the voters believe the elections are about.

That's what you were talking to me tonight on the New York City—what you think the election is about may determine more than anything else which candidate you vote for. And what I have been trying to hammer home all across the country, to all kinds of audiences—partisan audiences, nonpartisan audiences alike—is that this election must be about what we're going to do with our prosperity.

Eight years ago when we were in deep trouble—the economy was down; society was divided; we had all kinds of difficulties—everybody knew what we had to do. We had to roll up our sleeves and get out of the ditch. We had to turn things around. We had to put things moving in the right direction. Well, now things are moving in the right direction, and the real question is, what do we do with it, not just the budget surplus but the confidence, the capacity, to deal with the challenges facing the country, to deal with the big opportunities out there?

And if the American people think that is what we should do, then we're going to have a very good election. Because that means it's no longer necessary to have one of these sort of mudslinging campaigns where everybody tries to convince everybody else that their opponent is just one step above a car thief.