But you get the point. If you want children in West Virginia to have good health care, it doesn't matter what we do in Washington, even if we have good policy, unless the Governor cares enough to make sure that maximum efforts are made in an intelligent way to take care of the families. And West Virginia is just like Arkansas. You've got a whole lot of people who work like crazy, work 40 or 50 hours a week for low incomes, who cannot afford health insurance. This is a big deal to you.

So what I want to say is, obviously, I'm interested in the races for Congress, especially one Senate race, and I'm passionately committed to the campaign of the Vice President and Senator Lieberman. But I'm telling you, I spent a dozen years as a Governor, and I worked with some of the ablest people I ever met in that period, and I think I know something about West Virginia. It really matters. You need somebody that is creative, aggressive, and consistent, somebody that understands the economy, education, and health care. He does. He should win, and I hope you won't quit helping him tonight.

I know this is a close race. Listen, it's hard to beat any incumbent Governor when the economy is doing well. I used to tell everybody, "If the economy was better, I could have a lobotomy and get reelected"—[*laughter*]—when I was running. It's hard. But he is doing very well, and he's doing very well because people sense these things about him. So we still—we've got more than a month left in this campaign, folks. And if you can give him any more money, you ought to. And if you can't give him any more money, you ought to go home and start talking to people about why this matters.

But I'm just—we have got a chance here to see States that have been left out and left behind for a long time if we could just keep this economy going, really balloon, and do well. But it will matter profoundly who the Governor is. And I think, again, you need somebody that understands how Washington works and how it affects West Virginia, somebody that's committed to jobs, schools, and health care, and somebody that's intelligent, creative, aggressive, and consistent. He is.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:05 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to reception hosts Senator John D. Rockefeller IV and his wife, Sharon; Republican Presidential candidate Gov. George W. Bush; Gov. Tony Knowles of Alaska; and Gov. Cecil H. Underwood of West Virginia. Representative Wise is a gubernatorial candidate in West Virginia.

Remarks at a Reception for Representative Joseph Crowley

October 10, 2000

Thank you. Let me say, first of all, I am delighted to be here for many reasons. First of all because I love Rosa, because—and Rosa does that sort of "born in a log cabin" routine better than anybody I know—[*laughter*]—what she neglected to tell you was that her mother, the seamstress, is the best politician I have ever met in my life to this day—[*laughter*]—and because her husband, the man who shares this house, Stan, had so much to do with my becoming President in 1992 and is now, tonight in Florida working with the Vice President as he prepares for this important debate, and has also helped my friends Tony Blair and Prime Minister Barak and other good people around the world, and because Rosa's been there for 8 years now with me working on many of the things that have helped turn our country around.

I'm here because I really like Joe Crowley, because he's been real good to Hillary, which means a lot to me—[*laughter*]—and because—I'll tell you another Queens story, because I love Queens. And in early '92, you know, we were pretty desperate to get press in early '92. I mean, here I was from Arkansas; nobody in New York knew who I was.

Harold Ickes says, "We're going to meet with the Queens Democratic Committee, and Tom Manton is for you, and I think they will endorse you." I said, "They're going to endorse me?" I was like fifth in name recognition in New Hampshire at the time. And he said, "Yes. Yes, it's going to happen. But we're going to take a subway out there," which I thought was great. I like to ride the subway.

So we took a subway there, and there was this typically passive New York press person

with us with a camera, in my face, lights everywhere, and all these people who had been sort of uprooted on the subway watching the filming of this thing, thinking, "Why are they taking that guy's picture? Who is this strange person they've got this camera on?"

So then we walked down this beautiful tree-lined street, and we walked up some stairs. I remember—whoever—the Queens Democratic meeting was on the second floor of some building, and all of a sudden they introduced me, and I was terrified, right.

So I'm walking down the aisle, and I passed this African-American guy, and he reaches out and puts his arm around me and says, "Son, don't worry about it. I was born in Hope, Arkansas, too, and we're going to be for you." [*Laughter*] True story.

So the rest is history, as they say. So I'm deeply indebted. I am grateful to all these Members of the House of Representatives who are here. Whatever success I've had as President would have been literally impossible without them, both in the majority and maybe especially in the minority, because virtually every good thing that's happened in Congress in the last 6 years would not have happened if they hadn't known for sure that my veto would be upheld. That was the only incentive to work with us to make constructive progress. So if it hadn't been for them, it wouldn't have happened.

Now, I just would like to say a couple of things. First of all, I do feel an enormous amount of gratitude for what's happened in the last 8 years. This last week has been an emotional roller coaster for me because we had that stunning election in Serbia, validating the stand the United States took, year-in and year-out, when it was very unpopular, sometimes in our country, for the freedom of the people of Bosnia, the freedom of the people of Kosovo, the principle of democracy in Serbia, the idea that Europe ought to be united and democratic and whole. And I was so happy.

And we had about 30 minutes to celebrate before all hell broke loose in the Middle East, where I have worked as hard as I could to find a just and lasting peace. And Joe, we talked a lot about Ireland tonight. Let me just say briefly on Ireland first, I'm very pleased about how far we have come. We are not out of the woods yet. We have still got to get this police issue right. It's got to be done right, but I hope that people on both sides and particularly some of the people on the other side—for most of you—who have been talking about, well, maybe they would bag the Good Friday agreement, I hope they have been watching what is going on in the Middle East, and I hope they understand how easy it is to let these things get away from you.

Keep in mind, these people are represented by teams that sat at Camp David, and they've been working together for 7 years. They know each other's children. They know how many grandchildren they have. And still, think about how quickly it slipped.

So I say to all of you interested in peace in Ireland, I'll keep working on it, and you keep working on it, and just remind them that it's a fragile thing. And sometimes you're most vulnerable in life when you think you're least vulnerable. We cannot take our good fortune for granted.

Now, on the Middle East, I don't want to say too much except we had a pretty good day today. And we, our whole American team, we've been working like crazy for the last several days trying to help do our part. I just have to believe they're not going to let this thing spin out of control.

But there are lots of things going on there, including things that are not apparent, developments in other countries that are having an impact on this. So we're working as hard as we know how to end the violence and get the folks back to the negotiating table, and I hope you will all say a prayer for that.

Let me just say a word about this election. No one in America understands as clearly as I do how important this election is, not just for President and Vice President but every Senate seat, every House seat—nobody.

And since we're in the business of being humble here, because you realize how quickly things can change, it's important to recognize that—I'm absolutely convinced the only danger we have in this election is if people will think the consequences of their vote are not particularly significant, and our crowd may not go, and some may not understand what the consequences are. But I'm telling you, we have never had a better chance to

literally imagine the future we want to build for our kids and just go do it. But if we're careless with it, it could get away from us.

So you've got these huge economic differences. Rosa mentioned that. You know, I just got back from Jay Rockefeller's house. At least one of you was there with me tonight. And Jay Rockefeller, you know, he pays those taxes George Bush wants to cut. [*Laughter*] I told old Jay tonight, I said, "You know," I said, "I just came over here because I'm busy in Washington, and I felt the need to go on vacation. And I really wanted to see Versailles, and I couldn't, so I thought I would come to your house instead—next best thing." [*Laughter*]

But I want you to think about it. I mean they want a tax cut that's way bigger than the one our side wants. We want to have as much as we think we can afford to pay for college education, long-term care if somebody in your family is sick, child care, retirement savings. But we want to save something to invest in education and health care, and we want to keep paying down the debt.

Now, this is an interesting juxtaposition. The Democratic Party is now the fiscally conservative party in America and has been for some time. Why? I must say, the first person I ever heard argue this case was former Congressman Joe Kennedy from Boston. But it's true. If you pay down the debt and you keep interest rates lower, that does more to help lower income working people and middle-class people than anything else, because it grows the economy quicker; it gets labor markets tighter; it raises wages at the low end, creates more jobs there; and it spreads the benefits broadly.

Now, if they get their way, you cannot cut taxes as much as they say they're going to, partially privatize Social Security, which costs another $1 trillion—something they never talk about. Although I was proud to see the Governor acknowledge that in the last debate—said—"Well, where are you going to get the money?" He said, "Out of the surplus."

So if you have a $1.6 trillion to $9 trillion tax cut and a $1 trillion Social Security privatization program and then you've got all these other spending programs they promise, you're back in deficit again.

I believe that the Gore-Lieberman economic plan, which the Democrats broadly support, would keep interest rates about a percent lower over a decade, and I believe that's about $390 billion in lower home mortgages, $30 billion in lower car payments, $15 billion in lower college loan payments, not to mention lower credit card payments, lower business loan costs, and higher growth. So we've got a big choice here.

You know, there are still neighborhoods in New York, in New York City and in upstate New York, in Buffalo, in Rochester, in other places that have not fully participated in this economic recovery yet. One of the good bipartisan things we're trying to do is to pass this new markets initiative that all the New York delegations have been so helpful on, that Speaker Hastert and I have worked on. But in order for it to work, the overall economy has to be working. In order for it to be attractive for us to give extra incentives to people with money to invest in the areas that aren't growing, the overall economy's got to be working.

This is a huge deal. It may be the biggest difference. And you've got to make sure people know that between now and the election. David Bonior, he's actually—he's got a race out there in Michigan. He lives in a competitive district. There's no way in the world he wouldn't win with the biggest percentage of the vote he has ever had if the people of his district clearly understood the difference in what their economic plan would do and what ours would do for their long-term welfare.

I could go through the education issue, the health care issue. You know, we're for the Patients' Bill of Rights, and they aren't. And if you want to know why, look at the Medicare budget they voted out today.

We're trying to put some money back in the Medicare program. We actually cut it too much in the Balanced Budget Act of '97. We want to see it fairly distributed. We want to take care of the hospitals, the urban hospitals, the rural hospitals, the teaching hospitals. We want to take care of the nursing homes and the community providers.

Fifty-five percent in their budget goes to the HMO's, the same people they killed the Patients' Bill of Rights for—big difference

here. The American people need to know that.

The prescription drug plan—Joe's been active in this, and Rosa talked about it. I'm so glad about this. This business of being able to go to Canada and buy the drugs, they tried to water that down. They have fooled with it a little bit—considerably.

But do you ever wonder what this prescription drug deal is all about? Do you really know why we're fighting with them? Here's the deal. Here's the real deal on prescriptions. The drug companies aren't for a Medicare prescription drug program that all seniors can voluntarily buy into.

Now, that doesn't make any sense, does it? Did you ever see anybody that's in business that didn't want more customers? Did you ever meet a politician that didn't want more votes? Right? Did you ever meet a car salesman that didn't want to sell more cars? Did you ever see anybody running a media empire that didn't want their audience share to go up?

Here's why. Here's the deal. You need to know. Why are drugs cheaper in Canada than they are in America, even though they're made in America? Why are they cheaper in Europe, even though they're made in America? Because it costs a lot of money to develop these drugs, then they spend a lot of money advertising them, but America is the only country in the world that doesn't have price controls.

So if they develop some great new drug, they've got to get us to pay, all of us, all the money they put in, in development and advertising. Once they do that, it doesn't cost anything to make another pill. Once you get your embedded cost back, another pill is cheap. Then they can afford to sell them under price controls throughout Europe, Canada, and elsewhere.

So when—I'm saying this so you don't have to demonize the drug companies, so you'll understand. So they've got a real problem. What is their problem? They think, if Medicare can buy drugs for millions and millions of seniors who need them, Medicare will acquire so much market power—they know this is not price fixing; this ain't close to price fixing—but we'll have a big buyer. And they know Medicare will acquire so much market power that maybe they will be able to get American seniors drugs made in America almost as cheap as they can get them in Canada. And they're afraid that their profit margins will go down so much that then they won't have the money they would like to have either for profits or research or advertising.

Now, that is a real problem for them. But can the answer to their problem be to keep seniors who need it from getting the medicine they need? That's my problem. The Republican plan only covers half of the seniors who need the coverage. And this idea that you can have a private health insurance policy that people can afford to buy that's worth a flip is just not true. The insurance companies—I just jumped on the health insurance companies. Let me brag on them. They have been perfectly honest. They say there is not an insurance market out there for prescription drugs that people can afford. That's what they said.

So I'm just telling you this because this is the kind of thing—I get frustrated because I don't think most people really understand what the nature of the fight is. You don't have to demonize the drug companies. Lord knows, I'm glad they're here. They do wonderful work. They employ tens of thousands of people. I'm proud they're American, and I would help them solve their problem.

But the answer to their problem cannot be to keep seniors away from the medicine they need. Now, that's what this is about. And he's out there, trying to do the right thing. [*Laughter*] Oh, come on, you're time and a half my size; don't whine. [*Laughter*]

Now, wait a minute. This is a big deal. You all have got friends all over America. You've got people living in these battleground States. I'm telling you, if people know what the differences are, Senator Lieberman and Vice President Gore win. We win the House. We pick up at least four, maybe six, Senate seats if they know.

We are for hate crimes legislation; they're not. They gave us a vote in the Senate. It turned out it wasn't real. Some of their guys got well on the vote. It's 57–42 for the hate crimes legislation. But when it comes time to leave it in the bill, poof! It vanishes. Now, we've got to find some bill to put it on, and

their leadership doesn't want it on any bill. People need to know that.

You know, there are lots of differences here in terms of our ideas of one America, in terms of our ideas of health care policy, in terms of our education policy. I'm just telling you the differences are clear. Those are just three.

You mentioned gun safety. Did you see that ABC—did anybody see that ABC special Peter Jennings did on the NRA? Did you see it? Did you see all those people there, good Americans, going to these NRA conventions? They're good citizens. And Peter Jennings going around interviewing them, saying, "Do you really believe that Al Gore will take your gun away?" "Absolutely; I do. Bill Clinton and Al Gore, they're a threat to our second amendment rights."

There's not one living, breathing American that missed a day in the deer woods because of me. But 500,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers could not get handguns because of the Brady bill. So, the program says that when Mr. LaPierre said that I wanted those people to die in some of those horrible shootings so then I would have some political basis to take people's guns away, their membership went up 200,000 according to the ABC—[*inaudible*].

Now, let me tell you something: The American people are smart and solid, and they nearly always get it right if they've got enough information and enough time. But you know, that's just not true. And it's not true that Al Gore proposed to take their guns away. What he said was, "If you're going to buy a handgun, you ought to have a license like you have to drive a car, that proves that you don't have a criminal background; you've got enough sense to use a gun safely." That's the radical idea he proposed.

Will any one of those NRA people lose their guns? Not unless they're crooks and shouldn't have it and present a danger to society. So I'm just imploring you. You came here tonight. Every one of you are politically active; you all show up. Every one of you know scores of people that will never come to a deal like this, not a time in their lives. But they will vote. They want to believe they are good citizens. They are good citizens. They're patriotic. They love their country. They'll vote. But if they don't hear from you, they might just be getting this stuff over the air waves.

So I would just say to you, this is a profoundly important election. Just remember the Middle East: One day we're about to make peace; the next day we're trying to keep people from killing each other. You cannot predict the future. Life is a funny thing.

We may not have a time like this again in our lifetime. And as a nation, we will not forgive ourselves if we squander this opportunity. The public needs to clearly understand the differences, the choices, the consequences. I am completely comfortable with whatever decision they make if they do.

So that's the only thing I would like to ask you to do. Think of everybody you know, anywhere in this great country, between now and the election, and every single day, for the next however many weeks we've got—5 weeks and some odd days—take some time to make sure that they understand the differences, the choices, the consequences. And we'll have some more people like Joe Crowley in the Congress and a great celebration in the Presidential race on election eve.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:35 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to reception hosts Representative Rosa DeLauro and her husband, Stanley Greenburg; her mother, Luisa DeLauro, member, New Haven, CT, Board of Aldermen; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel; former Deputy White House Chief of Staff Harold Ickes; Queens County Democratic Organization Chair Thomas J. Manton; Republican Presidential candidate Gov. George W. Bush; ABC News reporter Peter Jennings; and National Rifle Association Executive Vice President Wayne LaPierre. Representative Joseph Crowley is a candidate for Congress in New York's Seventh Congressional District.

Statement on Suspending the Immigration of Persons Impeding the Peace Process in Sierra Leone

October 11, 2000

I have signed a proclamation suspending the entry into the United States, as immigrants and nonimmigrants, of all persons—