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HUGH RODHAM EVENT AT  
SOUTH BEACH

PHOTOCOPY  
PRESERVATION

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY  
AT EVENT FOR HUGH RODHAM  
SOUTH BEACH, FLORIDA

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you so much. I am delighted to be here. And I want to start by both thanking so many of you in this room who have helped Hugh during his campaign. I know that for many of you, it started out as quite a commitment, because you liked him, you enjoyed him, you believed in him. And it has grown.

And you have done a great job. And for all of you individually, those of you representing the various groups that are here, women's groups, labor unions, civic groups, I just want to thank all of you from the bottom of my heart. You made a great investment in a great man who would be just a dynamite Senator for the State of Florida. (Applause.)

It would be nice if your great Senator, Bob Graham, had some support in Florida. And he has that from the people of Florida, but when he goes to Washington, he gets his vote cancelled. And he is truly one of the absolute treasures of the United States Senate. So among the many reasons to support my brother and to vote for him and send him to Washington on November the 8th is because you will then have two Senators, not one cancelling out the vote of Bob Graham on all the important issues facing America. (Applause.)

I also wanted to come to give you a report, a progress report about what has been accomplished in the last 20 months. Because when my husband was here campaigning two years ago to become your President, he promised that he would get the economy moving again, he promised that he would try to bring us together, and he made some specific promises. And the vast majority of them have already been fulfilled. (Applause.)

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And one of the important tasks that Democrats have between now and election day is to spread the word. First, to know it; and then, to spread it, so that all of our friends and neighbors know what has been done.

If this were 1992 instead of 1994, and I were standing in front of you on behalf of my husband -- not just on behalf of my brother -- I would tell you what Bill Clinton told you, that we needed to get our fiscal house in order, that we needed to get crime under control, that we needed to reform health care and welfare, that we needed to reinvent the way government worked and how it spent our money.

On every one of those promises, we have made progress. Let's just look quickly at where we have come from and where we are today. The President's economic plan cut \$255 billion from federal spending. And, you know, every time I hear the other side talk about the economic plan, for which not one of the other party voted for in Congress, I am reminded about what they said during the time it was being debated. Do you remember that? That this would destroy the economy, this would drive up unemployment, this would drive up inflation.

And instead, what are the facts? Not only did this President cut federal spending, unlike his predecessors, who talked a good game but didn't get it done, he has sparked an economic recovery that has led to 4.3 million new jobs in the last 20 months. (Applause.) And the deficit now has gone down for three years in a row. That has not happened since Harry Truman was President.

You know, when Harry Truman was alive, a lot of folks gave him a hard time, for those of you old enough to remember. He couldn't do anything right. There wasn't a single newspaper or columnist who thought he had a chance of being reelected. But he got up every single day and went about the business of making the government work better for ordinary tax-paying Americans.

And despite all of the odds, he pushed the ball forward, because he understood, as this President does, the buck really does stop on the President's desk. So there hasn't been a President since Harry Truman until Bill Clinton came along who has actually brought the deficit down three years in a row. (Applause.)

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And then, we have lots and lots of people in public life over the last years who loved to talk tough about crime. They talked and talked and talked. And they didn't do very much, did they? We kept watching the odds shift against law enforcement and law-abiding citizens. You know, in the 1950s, there were three police officers for every serious felony. By 1992, when my husband ran for President, there were three serious felonies for every police officer.

In the 1950s, the police officers not outgunned or outmanned. By 1992, they were facing 15-year-olds with assault weapons. And, you know, there was all this tough talk. But it was Bill Clinton who said, "Washington has had a crime bill sitting around for six years. Let's get it passed. Let's begin to make good on the promise of controlling crime." (Applause.)

And what does that mean? That means more police. The President promised 100,000 more police on the streets. That's what the crime bill delivers. More punishment. The President promised it. You've got three strikes, and you're out, if you're a violent offender. You've got all kinds of new punishments for people, including juveniles, in the crime bill and prevention. Prevention means, let's try to be smart, as well as tough. Let's figure out ways to try to get to kids and get them off the streets, instead of letting them roam the streets, causing trouble for the rest of us.

So police, punishment, prevention. It's in that crime bill. But my goodness, wasn't that a fight. It was a constant struggle. And the reason is -- let's just be blunt about it. Because this President wanted to ban assault weapons, which meant that the National Rifle Association would not support the crime bill. Now, nobody is against law-abiding people having their weapons.

But there are two points to be made. Most of those assault weapons, which I have seen in police storage rooms that were taken off of 14-year-olds and 17-year-olds, have only one purpose -- that purpose is to kill as many people in as short a period of time.

And what had we done was to make a clear stand that we finally had to draw a line. And this President was tough enough to draw it. And he has taken a lot of heat for it. But I, frankly, am looking forward to not having to hear about 15-year-olds with tech 9s any time in the future. It

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is time we stood up to that kind of mindless violence.  
(Applause.)

You know, any time you try to do something, you're going to cause controversy. If you didn't try, you wouldn't be controversial. And certainly, with respect to the crime bill, that was the case. But I'm pleased that we're finally going to be able to start making a difference. No, it's not going to happen overnight. We did not get into this situation overnight, and we certainly didn't get into it in the last 20 months. The problems in our country which for too long were pushed under the rug have been building up over the last 10, 20, 30 years. But finally, we have a President who wants to do something about it.

And that is the same on all of the other issues, issues that make a difference in people's lives. It will now be easier for the children of working people and middle-class families to get college loans at lower interest rates. That makes a difference. (Applause.) It will now be possible for young people to join a domestic peace corps called "Americorps."

This year, there will be 20,000 young people working around our country helping to solve problems and earning money to go to colleges. Do you know that in the first year of its existence, Americorps has more young people involved than the Peace Corps ever had in any year? And by 1997, there will be over 120,000 young people helping in old people's homes, helping in hospitals, helping with the back log in our courts, helping clean up the environment. What a great investment. And this is something President Clinton promised and something he has already delivered. (Applause.)

There are so many examples of that. You know, I could go down the list. And I wished I talked like -- you know the man that used to do those commercials that talked real fast, like the fastest auctioneer you ever saw?

Because I could talk about how there will be thousands of more young kids in Head Start, which is so important in getting them off to a good beginning. I could talk about how, for the first time, there is now education legislation passed by this Congress because of this President that sets standards for our kids to try to meet and gives schools the help that they require to be able to assist the

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children but also does something else which is very important. For the first time, we're providing opportunities to young people who don't go onto college.

I personally am about fed up with the idea that the millions and millions of our young kids who graduate from high school and go to work go into the trades, do something that is important that builds the buildings that we all like to live in and work in don't deserve the same sort of help as the kids who go onto four-year colleges. And under this President, they're going to be able to get apprenticeships and loans for their particular education and training. (Applause.)

So there is no argument about what has been accomplished. All of the people who study Congress say this has been the most productive Congress in decades. Now, that message doesn't get across, because there has also been a whole lot of arguing and much more partisanship than I wish and much more playing with the rules, so that votes don't happen because of filibusters and other kinds of, you know, techniques that they can use up there.

But that still didn't stop this President. He still got most of the legislation he wanted to get through. And on two big pieces, we moved health care farther than it has ever been moved before in the history of our nation. (Applause.) We didn't get health care reform. And I went back, and I read President Truman's speeches just the other day. He tried three times. He tried in 1945, he tried in 1947, he tried in 1949. My goodness. If I said what he said back then, the people would really look at me oddly, because he went after the folks who were on the other side with a vengeance. He named names.

But it has been hard in order for this country to live up to the other half of Social Security, which is health security. But we're going to keep going. We are not giving up. And we will achieve universal health care coverage that is affordable to us as Americans. (Applause.)

We will also in this next session of Congress do something that again, people talked about but never got around to really doing. And this, welfare reform, another one of the issues this President has taken on. And while all of that has been moving through Congress, he and Vice

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President Gore have had remarkable results in changing the way the federal government operates.

I want you to hear this. Because, you know, it is real fashionable to just knock the federal government and knock the Administration. And there's more than enough room. But as my brother said, before Bill Clinton got to Washington, the stories of the \$900 toilet seats and \$500 screwdrivers were legion. And all of us just shook our heads and said, "Well, that's just the way they are there." And we resented it.

But what the President and the Vice President set out to do was to reinvent the way government works. Let me just give you a few of the things that have already been accomplished. The federal workforce has been cut by 70,000. Before they are over, it will be cut by 252,000 jobs. And you know what that money's being used for? That money is being used for the crime bill, to help pay for police, to help pay for prison construction. It's a pretty good trade. I would rather have a policeman on the beat than a \$500 screwdriver in some bureaucrat's hand in someplace in Washington. (Applause.)

But in addition to that, by the time this President finishes in the next few years, the federal workforce will be smaller than any time since the early 1960s. And furthermore, those \$500 screwdrivers that get us all angry, within the last few days, procurement legislation, which changes the way the government buys things like screwdrivers, has passed the Congress and will be signed into law.

Now, that's not a sexy issue. You're not going to hear jokes about it on late night television. But it is the kind of issue that if you know about it and you tell other people, they're going to realize that, you know, Bill Clinton is serious about changing the way things work. And it is beginning actually to show results.

So from my perspective, coming back to Florida to campaign with and for my brother, to make a progress report to you, I just want you to think of two things. First, this is a President who has made good on what he said he would do. It has not been everything that he wanted or we wanted. Those 4.3 million jobs haven't touched everybody who needs a job.

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And we still have not recovered from the stalling of wage increases that took over in the 1980s. People still are not getting paid what they deserve to be paid. We know that. That is on the agenda. But at least the jobs are coming back. Unemployment has dropped two full points in this country. Those are millions and millions of families that are better off than they were before.

But when you make change, it's always hard. And when you make change at a time of change and uncertainty, it's even harder. If my husband when he had been elected had decided he would spend his time traveling around the country making great speeches, really telling people what they wanted to hear, like some people who have been in the position have done, he would be immensely popular right now, because he can give a great speech. And he connects with people because he cares about people.

And, you know, the popularity ratings would be up in the sky somewhere. But he has this old-fashioned idea that he was elected to do a job, not just give speeches. And when you move from giving speeches and rhetoric to making policy and politics, it is not a pretty sight. You remember that old saying: "There are two things you should never watch being made -- sausage and legislation"? (Laughter.) There is a reason for that. It is not a straightforward line. It is messy. There are starts and stops. There are arguments. There's all that.

But that's the way democracy is. And at the end of the day, this President has a lot to show for the fact he stayed and fought it out. And we will as a country have a lot to show for it, because he's not only moving the country forward on the economy, he's working hard to keep us together, to stand against the tide of divisiveness and negativism that Hugh was referring to.

Because we are at part a hopeful and optimistic people. That's what Americans are. We believe that we can do better, that our children can do better, if we play by the rules, and we get out there every day and work. That's what this President was brought up believing. That's why he gets up every day no matter what arguments or criticism is flying his way. Because just like Harry Truman, he keeps his eye on where he wants this country to be.

Because every day, somebody comes up to him and

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says something that reinforces his feelings about what's important. They might be walking through the ground floor of the White House and seeing the tours and having a man grab his hand and say, "Mr. President, thank you for the Family and Medical Leave Act. I just found out my little girl here in this wheelchair is dying. And if it hadn't been for that law that you signed after it had been vetoed before, I might have had to else lose my job or else keep my job and never spend time with my child."

Or it might be someone who walks up to us in a restaurant and says, "Mr. President, I looked for work for two years and couldn't find it. Now, at least, I've got a job again." Or it might be somebody who writes us and talks about a problem that has been solved that nobody would deal with until Bill Clinton came to town.

So every day, he knows we are making progress together. He will not give into the cynicism. He will remain an optimist, because he thinks America's best days are not just behind us, but also ahead of us. But the only way we can do that is by having you support the agenda of this Administration, candidates like Hugh Rodham who stand for positive politics, and a President who's keeping his promises every single day.

Thank you all very much. (Applause.)

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