

WLF, 6/20/96

White House

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

**First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton's
Remarks to the Women's Leadership Forum
Boston, Massachusetts
June 20, 1996**

Hello. Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you I am just thrilled to be back in Boston and to have the chance to see so many of you who are both long time friends of both mine and my husband's and people whom I am delighted to be able to be getting to know. I want to thank Vicki for that introduction, and more than that I want to thank her for her friendship and for her support and the fun I always have with her.

I don't know how many of you have been lucky enough to spend time with Vicki, but you always laugh. I mean it is one of the great joys of my time in Washington.

I am so pleased to be here with another friend of mine, Theresa Hines. Theresa is a woman of great integrity and commitment and Massachusetts is not only very lucky to have John Kerry as your Senator, now and into the future, but to have the talents of Theresa Hines as well.

I also am pleased to share this platform with Elaine Shuester, who works so hard on this event, Joan Menard, who is doing a marvelous job here in the state democratic party. Don Fowler, who has traveled and worked tirelessly on behalf of the National Democratic Party. Angela Mineno, who I am always pleased to be with. She and her husband have just given great leadership to this wonderful city. Shannon O'Brien, and Carol Pensky, who is the national chair of the Women's Leadership Forum. And to all of you who had anything to do with pulling this event together and creating this extraordinary turnout.

I want to thank you for your contributions but more than that for the leadership and for the example you are setting, as to what women can do in politics and the opportunities available to all of us. The Women's Leadership Forum and network '96 have made it possible for thousands and thousands of women around the country to be involved. I have attended events like this in Miami and in Washington, in Philadelphia, and in New York. On Monday I'll be in Seattle and then in a few weeks later in Los Angeles,

and San Francisco, it is spreading like wild fire from one side of the country to the next.

Women want to be involvement in the political decision-making of our country. And the reason, I believe you are here, is the reason I am here -- we have a clear vision about what we want our country to be, and we know we have to fight for that vision; we cannot leave it to others. We must be among those who stand up and say, "Here is what we want for America in the 21st century."

Women have always played a critical role in the life of our country. We may not have always been in elected office, as many of you in this room are, we certainly may not have been among those who helped to fund political campaigns in the past, but we've been there on the front lines year in and year out. As volunteers and participants, working on behalf of causes and candidates, in whom we believed. And at every critical point in American history, women have been catalysts for change.

I think often about the last hundred years, as we are about the end this century, and at so many points women were there to help set the direction this nation would take. Think about the similarities that exists between our time and the so called progressive era of a hundred years ago. We were in the midst of a great change in our country, we were moving from an Agriculture society to an industrial one. People were leaving farms and rural areas to move to cities. Immigrants were flooding in to places like Boston, there was so much change, and much of it seemed to create problems for people as they attempted to make sense of what was happening in their lives.

We also saw the women, coming to the forefront to say that we had to provide for each other, that it wasn't enough just to succeed on one's own but we had to lend a helping hand. Women like Jane Adams in the settlement houses of Chicago, or Eleanor Roosevelt in the tenements of New York City. And so many others like them, who appreciated that when change was occurring at a rapid rate, we needed to do more than just stand by and watch it happen, we had to meet the challenges of our time, and we had to protect the values that we cherished. We had to provide both for opportunity and responsibility as we worked to create stronger communities and families.

Jane Adams once compared government and politics, to what she called "enlarged housekeeping". She thought women could help make government run more effectively if they were involved in the political process. She, like many other women of the time, understood that new times demanded new responses from all of us.

The first demonstration ever held at the White House was when the suffragettes chained themselves to the White House fence. Even the President didn't like that very much. He looked outside the window and could not understand what all the fuss was

about. But we know, because we owe those women and others like them the right to vote, and their willingness to take risks on behalf of opportunities for the rest of us.

At this time, we are faced with new challenges, and once again men and women are called to meet them. We have a rich legacy of commitment and action. Seventy-five years after the vote however, many women do not feel they have a stake in our political process. Fifty-four million women chose not to vote in the 1994 elections. Part of what the Women's Leadership Forum and network '96 is about is bringing to all women, wherever they live or work, the message that it does matter. The political process affects our lives in ways we may not even be aware of.

And it is critical that the people who are elected to office understand what is at stake, as we draw to the end of this century. Often times in election years people will stand before audiences, like this, and say "This is one of the most important elections we face". I am going to do that because I believe that with all my heart. This election is about two very distinct visions of the future. It is about who we are and who we want to become as a people and as a nation. It is about what legacy we will leave our children and grandchildren. And it is about whether we will choose to live in a society divided by income, and race, and religion, or one that works to live up to our time honored principles of inclusion and compassion, and to build a better community for all Americans.

In the face of all the changes that are occurring all around us, I think we should just look at the challenges we face because they are not just challenges for elected officials, not just for the President, or for Senator Kennedy or Senator Kerry, or your state representatives, they are challenges for all of us. And this election will determine in large measure whether we face up to our challenges or walk away from them. And if we do face up to them, whether we do so with our values in mind as to the kind of nation we want to build.

The first challenge, which the President referred to in talking about what we face as a nation in the State of the Union, is to cherish our children and strengthen our families. There is nothing more important than how we care for each other and how we raise our children.

And you know talking about family values is not enough. We have to act in ways that value families. And by November, based not on talk and not on action, I believe Americans will know that it is the democratic party that is the true pro-family party in our country. Just look at the record, it took this President, a democratic President, to sign into law the Family and Medical Leave Act. Over 800,000 Massachusetts workers are protected by the Family and Medical Leave Act. And a recent bi-partisan congressional study found that it was not a burden on business, but that it gave workers the flexibility to be both good workers

and good parents. The Family and Medical Leave Act is what family values should be about.

It also took this President to try to take action to return authority to parents, so that they could have more say over what happens in their own homes. That's what the idea behind the v-chip is. That we know that things come into our living rooms, across our television sets, that we don't think are good for children. But often parents feel overwhelmed and bewildered about how to take back authority. Well, there are several things that need to be done -- The v-chip, which the President championed will give parents the technical authority to be able to program their T.V. sets.

The voluntary rating system which the industry agreed to in a meeting with the President, will enable you and me to understand how to program that set by making decisions about what we want our children to watch. And right now the Federal Communications Commission is considering a proposal strongly backed by the President, to require networks to offer three hours of quality programming for our children. It is the least that should be done to provide better television in our homes.

We also have a President who has been willing to stand up to the tobacco lobby and say "Quit advertising tobacco products to children."

Now we all know that parents bare the primary responsibility for children but as a mother I know that I do not do it all by myself or with my husband. There are many people out in society who will affect my daughter, whether I like it or not. And to have a President who understands how challenging it is today to raise children gives me a lot of comfort. Because he understands that government should be a partner in trying to make society more family friendly. The other...(Tape breaks off)