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California Democratic  
Party Convention

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**REMARKS BY FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON AT THE  
CALIFORNIA STATE DEMOCRATIC PARTY CONVENTION  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA**

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you. Thank you very much. That's absolutely right -- four more years is what we're here to support. And I cannot tell you how grateful I am and the president is as well for the extraordinary support and encouragement that you have given to him and to me in these last four years. And I want you to know that we are very grateful for that support. We just love California. And you're going to see a lot of us in the next months because we care deeply for this state, from one end to the other, about all of the people who live here, the extraordinary diversity, the excitement of what is happening here. And we want, as the President has said many, many times, for you to know that we will stand with California as we have now and into the future.

I want to thank everyone who is gathered here: all of your elected officials -- Art Torres, who is doing a terrific job, Bill Press, who is fighting the good fight on behalf of the Democratic Party principles on the airwaves. I want to thank Senator Boxer, with whom I had an extraordinary day yesterday, from San Francisco to San Diego to Los Angeles. I know that Senator Feinstein is here, other members of the Congressional delegation, state elected officials. And I am proud to stand with every single one of them because of what they do every day on behalf of California and America.

This particular time in our country's history, as you know, poses challenges to all of us and really does make it more important than ever that we know where we stand and with whom we stand. And for many of us in this room who are proud to be Democrats, this past week has been an especially hard one, and, really, the last several weeks. Because you lost here in California two great champions, Governor Pat Brown and Jim Wood. And then, our nation lost Ron Brown and the people who went with him on his mission to Bosnia. Many of you knew Ron, you knew Bill Morton, you knew a lot of the young people that were with him on that airplane. And knew, also, some of the business leaders from here in California and across the nation. And I hope that as we mourn their deaths, and as I was privileged to attend the memorial funeral service for one young man yesterday in Santa Cruz, Adam Darling, who had given everything he had, that we will remember why they were there, what they hoped to

accomplish, what they stood for. Because what they were doing was in the best tradition of America.

We didn't need to become involved in Bosnia. There are many in our country who thought the President never should have marshalled the forces of NATO, to create the circumstances for the Dayton peace accords, and then to have led NATO and other allies as we committed our military forces to enforcing that peace. But I was in Bosnia, about a week before Ron's trip, with my daughter. I went to thank our soldiers, to tell them that we appreciated what they were doing so far from home and their own families. I went to meet with Muslims and Serbs and Croats who had survived four years of violence, of ethnic cleansing, of rape, of torture. I talked with doctors who had kept their hospitals going despite being shelled and bombed. I spoke with religious leaders of all the faiths represented about what they had done to try to bring some sense of decency back to a land that was crazed by extremism.

And as I sat and talked with those people, I realized that they were looking to return to ordinary life, the kind of life we all too often take for granted here at home. And when I talked with our soldiers, not only at the main base in Tuzla but out at two outposts, Camp Alicia and Camp Bedrock, I wished every American could have been with me. Because there they were, young Americans -- black, white, from country and city, Christian, Jewish, Muslim -- all of them working together. And as I talked with our soldiers, I heard story after story about what this mission had begun to mean to them. How all of a sudden they could see the fruits of their labor as they separated the combatants, because children were venturing out to play outside again.

I was so moved by what I saw there on the ground because of this country's efforts. And because not only of our military commitments, but the humanitarian and relief efforts and the reconstruction efforts that Ron Brown was championing. I came home, as I often do from traveling on your behalf overseas, more convinced than ever that the United States is in a unique and blessed position in the history of the world right now. That people everywhere are looking to us as they learn about democracy, as they take the steps necessary to create a free market. We have led by example, and now we must appreciate how important it is that we continue here at home to lead by example.

Americans in Bosnia are proving that people of different races, religions, and ethnic backgrounds can bridge divisions and work together. American soldiers and American civilians there are living, breathing examples of democracy at work. What Bosnia and other places that are racked with ancient hatreds and insecurities that lead to violence and bloodshed remind us is that on the eve of the 21st century, no nation can exist in a

vacuum. In a fast-paced, hi-tech global village, we are all dependent and interdependent, whether we like it or not.

So the question, the question for us as Americans is how, at a time of unprecedented global opportunities and uncertainties can we remain the strongest force for peace, democracy, stability, and prosperity in the world? And what can we do as a country to strengthen the foundations of our own democratic society? These are the questions that are at the heart of the next election, and how we answer them will speak volumes about who we are as a people and what we really stand for. What do we believe in, in our hearts, to be an American on the brink of this millennium? How do we determine what kind of America we want to leave for our children and grandchildren?

When my husband ran for president and campaigned throughout California four years ago, he talked about putting people first. And it was not just a catchy slogan. It reflected his profound belief that he had spent a lifetime learning about and living about that if we do not respect each other, if we do not invest in the God-given potential of each other, then we devalue and waste people. And it is not only what we do to them, it what, then, we do to ourselves. Because we undermine our capacity for greatness and unity. Investing in people is really what America has always stood for. It remains the guiding principle of my husband's presidency, his administration, and the Democratic Party.

There is no question that if we do put people's needs first -- not in some idealistic, pie-in-the-sky approach, but with respect and realism -- we can see how that pays off. We have seen, in the last years of this Democratic administration, the lowest combined rate of unemployment and inflation in 27 years. We have seen the creation of more than 7.8 million new jobs, including over a million in basic industries like construction and automobiles -- a dramatic turnaround after decades of loss. We know that finally, even here in California after some rough, rough times, the recovery and economic opportunity are once again bywords when people think about California. But we know we still have challenges to face and a lot of work to do together.

The President, in his State of the Union, outlined those challenges. And they are challenges not just for government, not just for elected officials. They are challenges for business, the media, education, religion, every single family, and every individual in America today. We have to be engaged in a great partnership that makes it possible for each of us to do more together than we could ever accomplish alone.

The first challenge was to cherish our children and strengthen our families. And there is nothing more important than that we do that. Now we all know, we know that raising children is the responsibility of parents, mothers and fathers and families, but we know there is no such thing as any family that can do it all by themselves. And part of what we have to recognize is the relationship we all have with one another and whether we intend to help support families. Indeed, whether we intend to move beyond the rhetoric of family values to actions that put our values where they belong in helping our families.

And, you know, the government can either help or undermine families. We see that every day. And, thanks to people like your members of Congress, your senators, this president, we are beginning to take actions that do help strengthen families, that give them the tools they need to make the decisions that they wish to make on behalf of their children's future. That's what the V-chip was about. We know that if we give hardworking parents, single parents some way to control what comes in their homes through the television set, they will have more authority over what happens to their own children. We know that if we have a government that takes on the tobacco lobby, we have a government who stands with families and parents who are trying to protect their children.

So, when we look at this election year, let's make sure that the people of this country know that it is the Democratic Party that is the true pro-family political party in the United States of America. Let's also make sure that Americans know that when it comes to education, it is this President who is the real "Education President" and this party that believes in education.

The President's second challenge to us as Americans is to renew our schools for a new century and to throw open the doors of college to every single student who is willing to work hard and make the commitment to education. Now, more than ever, education is the key to economic opportunity. It is not just a means of acquiring skills, it is a vehicle for learning how to be a citizen of the world. That's why we have to support, as the President does, lifelong education from preschool programs for very young children like Head Start, to job training that will enable adults to keep their skills and knowledge up-to-date.

And that is why the President believes that if we want to prepare Americans for the next century, we must make sure that no American who is qualified for higher learning is denied that opportunity because of systemic or historic forms of discrimination. And, to those among us who want to divide Americans, I say we are going to stay together, we are going to

learn together, we are going to work together because we all live together in one diverse country. And we should not be making it harder for Americans to get an education, we should, in fact, be making it easier. We should be opening the doors of college and university to Americans.

This is no time to be cutting back on student loans and scholarships. Instead, we ought to follow the President's direction, as he has called for the creation of the largest-ever merit based scholarship program that would reward the top five percent of high school graduates with grants for college. The President has renewed his call for tax deductions of up to \$10,000 for the costs of tuition and training. In just three years, against enormous opposition, the President has created a new student loan program that both makes it easier to borrow and to repay student loans. We are saving taxpayer money because we have cut out the middlemen who used to take their share of that loan program. And, we are cutting the student loan default rate. We also need to increase the number and maximum award of Pell Grants, and the President will stand firm on behalf of national service and AmeriCorps, which really embody our finest ideals as a nation.

And, here in California, the President and the Vice President announced their initiative to hook up every classroom to the Internet so that no child would be technologically illiterate when they need those skills for the future. I hope that this entire education agenda, which you have highlighted here at this convention, will be carried into this election. Because when Americans know that it is this party and this President who stand for education, they know whose side they want to be on.

And when it comes to improving education and renewing schools, we know we don't just have to invest, but we have to raise expectations and standards. And I have personally seen the impact that Goals 2000 has had as parents, teachers, and administrators come together to devise the best strategies for their children to learn. And I hope that the parents, teachers, administrators, and business leaders here in California will be able to benefit from the Goals 2000 funding in the months ahead. Because if we do not know where we are going in American education, how can we expect our children to get to that destination?

I also want to congratulate those in this state who are pioneering charter schools within the public education system. The President and I have visited several of those schools -- I visited the Vaughn Learning Center. And I saw with my own eyes

what is happening in the San Fernando Valley as parents get committed to education and feel that they are welcome in the schools. And teachers are partners with those parents. And the children are attending school at the highest rate ever. They are learning, and there is a sense that this school is a village, a community that cares about all of its members.

So, let's be sure that we champion education and lifelong learning, because for each of us who has a stake in America's future, there is no more important investment. And it also helps us meet the third challenge. We know that many Americans feel economically insecure in today's world. There is a lot of change, and it is difficult to accommodate. But the President has put forward proposals that would help millions and millions of Americans.

Look what he's already done -- increased the earned income tax credit, which lifted millions of American families off the federal tax rolls and out of poverty. He is working to create what he calls a G.I. Bill for America's workers by taking all the unemployment programs and the training programs and putting them into the form of a voucher that every individual who is laid off and downsized and, given the difficult time that the economy provides, will have the tools to be able to obtain a new and better job.

Just the other day, the President announced his plan for retirement security. We must do something to make sure every American has the capacity for a pension that is portable and will be there when he or she needs it. We also have to protect Medicare and Medicaid. Yes, those programs need to be reformed -- after 30 years you'd be surprised if you did not. But there is a difference between reforming to make those programs better and dismantling them. And we have to stand with the President and strongly raise our voices against those who would take away the security we gave to older Americans when we passed Medicare.

And we also have to understand that there are more than 40 million Americans in working families without either public or private health insurance. And there is a bill pending in the United States Congress called the Kassebaum-Kennedy Bill, a bipartisan bill that would make insurance portable and provide affordable insurance for people with preexisting conditions. That bill should be passed now.

And finally, although much of the economic and security cannot be directly addressed by the government, it needs to be addressed by businesses that show more respect and appreciation for workers and understand that when we invest in workers, we

invest in profitability and the kind of economic future that will allow all of us to prosper. But there is one thing governments can do -- in Washington, in Sacramento -- and that is to raise the minimum wage above its 40-year low.

You know, every time in the last 50 years anybody has said, "We need to raise the minimum wage," we all of a sudden have all these Chicken Littles running around about "the sky is falling." We've heard that the sky has been falling in the 1950s and the 1960s and the 1970s and the 1980s. And now here we are in the 1990s, where we have, with respect to purchasing power, the lowest minimum wage we've had in 40 years. Well, the sky has not fallen on the American economy when we raise the minimum wage. But, human dignity and respect for the people who serve us and take care of us and clean up after us and produce products for us has increased, and their capacity to support themselves and their children as well. This is one of the most important things we can do to help working people, and I want to thank all of you in this room who have worked so hard gathering signatures and going door to door to ensure that the livable wage will be on the ballot in California this fall.

And, you know, the fourth challenge we face, as the President has said, is to take our neighborhoods and streets back from crime and gangs and drugs and violence. We know that there is something seriously wrong when a dedicated, caring fifth grade teacher is killed by a stray bullet that comes through the window while he is helping his students in the library. We know that that should not happen in America -- it shouldn't happen anywhere in the world. But certainly not here. And, tough talk on crime has been an easy commodity for a lot of people on the other side. But it was this President and it was the Democratic Congress that actually began to move against crime and the tools of crime. We owe a great debt of gratitude to your Senator Feinstein for her valiant fight against assault weapons.

And, I want to assure you that this president will fight any attempt to repeal the Brady Bill or the assault weapons ban. We have already prevented more than 47,000 felons and people with mental health records from buying guns -- 47,000 people who went to buy guns, but were prevented from doing so because of the Brady Bill. We are making progress with the President's promise to put 100,000 more police into community policing on our nation's streets. And we are launching an assault on drugs at home and abroad that is beginning to make a difference, while we don't forget that we have to address the causes of crime, we have to be there for young kids -- give them something to do, take care of them, provide opportunities for them.

And, you know, that goes hand-in-hand with the fifth challenge we face -- to preserve our environment, our entire environment. And, you know, preserving the environment used to be a bipartisan effort. The Environmental Protection Agency was started by a Republican president. I guess that something was lost in the last decades. As we made progress in cleaning our air and our water and saving our land, there were some among us who wanted to turn the clock back. And in 1995, they got their chance. There were lobbyists for polluters writing loopholes into environmental legislation. Luckily for not just those of us in America today but future generations, we've had members of Congress like the ones you see before you and a president who said, "We will not turn the clock back on environmental protection in this country."

The sixth challenge is to maintain American leadership around the world. And again, there are those voices who seem not to have either studied history or have forgotten it, who think that America can become isolationist, that we can basically turn our backs on the rest of the world. They hold out a road into the future that is paved with illusions that "Somehow we don't have to worry about what happens in other parts of the world. We are immune. Oh yes, we want to have commerce, we want to send our business leaders, we want to send our tourists, but we don't really have a stake in what happens elsewhere." That is a very shortsighted and dangerous point of view.

This President understands that America's future lies down another road -- a road that understands there are many obstacles to peace and stability after the end of the Cold War, who knows that there are many ethnic and religious and racial hatreds that have burst through the surface and will continue to cause terrible harm and undermine the kind of stability America needs. And so long as this president holds the Oval Office, he will stand with those who are willing to take risks for peace from Northern Ireland to Haiti to Bosnia to the Middle East and elsewhere in the world.

But as we spread democracy around the world, we have to make it work better here at home, don't we? We have to continue political reform, and we must have campaign finance reform in America. We must continue the efforts of the President and the Vice President to reinvent government so that people will know that they're getting their money's worth, that it is efficient. And we have to define clearly what government can do and what it cannot do. But as we reform government, we have to ask ourselves "What will we do individually? How will we stand against apathy and cynicism? How will we talk to our friends and our neighbors so that they, too, can feel connected to the political process?"

In this room, we have activists. We have people who understand that in a democracy, the government is us -- there is no separation. We get the government we deserve to have because of our votes and our participation. One hundred and four million people voted in 1992, and about 70 voted in 1994. Fifty-four million women alone who were eligible to vote did not vote. That's more than the entire population of our biggest state, California!

So we have a lot of work ahead of us. We have to persuade people that yes, they do have a stake in politics, it does matter whether you have a president who signs the Family and Medical Leave Act or not. It does matter, and this election, more than most, will determine how people will live in the next century. So do we want a society divided by income, race, or gender? Or do we want one that lives up to our principles -- the principles we espouse, the principles we export around the world, principles of inclusion, compassion, community, pragmatism, problem-solving, working together, building, building a better America for tomorrow?

So as you go out from this convention, I hope you will not just preach to the converted. That's always easier, and you know, there are some days where those are the only folks I want to talk to. But, I know and you know that is not enough. We have a lot of work ahead of us. We have to persuade people that what the President has been doing is working, and he will build on the accomplishments of this first term. We have to tell them that we want to have clean air and clean airwaves, fair wages and fulfilling work, good health and good schools. And we have plans about how we can achieve those goals.

We also want to be sure that women are able to make their own personal health decisions according to their own conscience and medical advice. And I have to say that one of the reasons I love Barbara Boxer, aside from the fact that we both love the same man, nine-month-old Zachary, is because she is fearless in standing up for the rights of women at every single turn. You know, if you're a C-Span junkie like I am, you've probably seen Barbara just striding up to one of these folks on the floor of the Senate and just looking them right in the tie clasp and going after them. But I admire the kind of courage that Dianne and Barbara and other members of this delegation bring to the Congress every day. They're not afraid to stand up and be counted. They're not afraid to say where they believe this country should be heading. And they agree with the President that it is the task of politics in our time to expand opportunity and to make the American Dream be within the reach of anyone willing to work hard and take responsibility.

You know, California, for those of us who did not grow up here and have never lived here, has always seemed like a golden place exemplifying the American Dream and holding out the promise of opportunity to those with ambition and aspiration. It was built by people who came from every part of this continent and every corner of the globe. We always think that when things get started in America, they get jump-started in California. And we know that the kind of America we want is one in which the dreams and hopes of Californians, no matter who their parents are, no matter where they live, no matter their income, their gender, their station in life, that those dreams are possible.

And as we look toward this election year, there will be a lot of negativism, a lot of mean-spiritedness and attacks and counterattacks. And I hope that each of us, in our own way, will stand against that and will say, "You know, America is better than that." We have so much we can do if we are positive together. I have absolutely no doubt, because I have a lot of confidence in Americans, that come November of 1996, Bill Clinton and Al Gore will be re-elected for the second term.

But, I also believe (cheers) . . . let me just add that I also believe that each of us will have to determine not only how committed we are to the election, but how committed we are to the future that election should represent. The President, the Vice President, your senators and representatives cannot do what needs to be done by themselves. Every one of us, as citizens, as workers, as managers, as teachers, as preachers, as everything that we are, we have to recommit ourselves to what we believe in as well.

So, when you go forth from this convention, I hope you are not only fired up about politics and about this election and committed to do all you can to make sure that everyone you know understands what is at stake. But I hope by the way we act, the way we talk, we exemplify what we want America to be -- one community, one nation working together to give every single solitary American the chance to live up to their God-given potential as well. Thank you all very much.

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