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PRESERVATION**

DNC Dinner
New York, NY
4/24/00

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

April 24, 2000

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT,
THE VICE PRESIDENT, THE FIRST LADY AND MRS. GORE
AT DNC DINNER

Imperial Ballroom
New York Sheraton Hotel
New York, New York

8:53 P.M. EDT

MRS. GORE: Thank you, all. Hello, everybody. Please be seated. I want to thank you for that very warm welcome, Mayor Rendell, and for your very spirited and dedicated and strong leadership that's so effective for our Party. I know all of us appreciate that, the time and the commitment that you give to us.

And what a great night for the Democratic Party. What a great night. It's fantastic. (Applause.) I am proud to be sharing the stage, too, with one of our Party's greatest Presidents ever and two of its very finest candidates. What a pleasure for me. It's fantastic. (Applause.)

I also see so many friends in the room, and I want to thank each and every one of you for being such very good friends to Al and to me. And I think all of us here recognize that this election is going to be very tough and it's going to be very important in our nation's history. And it's going to determine the kind of nation that we are going to leave to our children and to our grandchildren.

And I know that you would agree with me that it's one of the great reasons why it's important for us to remind our neighbors and friends and other people who are interested that politics is personal, and that it really does matter who we all elect to the State House and to the White House, and it's going to make a very real difference in each of our houses.

And I think that's a message that all of us are very determined to take to other people, and to continue to open the doors in the Democratic Party to all those who share that vision and those values. And we have to remind people that it is the Democratic Party, truly, that is the party of the people, that makes the government work for the people. That's the value, the core value of our party and that's a key distinction, and I know it's one that we're all very proud of.

And now it is my great pleasure to introduce to you a woman who embodies all the very best values in the Democratic Party. We know her as someone who works absolutely tirelessly to open the doors of opportunity to women here in America and, in fact, all around the world. And she knows how to turn her rock-solid values into a commitment that can serve people in their everyday lives. And she knows, as well, how to achieve results.

She is a very dedicated and a very determined leader, and I am proud to welcome her as a close, personal friend and someone who I know that all of you are proud of as our great First Lady and a wonderful candidate for the Senate.

Ladies and gentlemen, my friend, Hillary Rodham Clinton. (Applause.)

MRS. CLINTON: Well, thank you all. And thank you, Tipper. I'm delighted that all four of us -- Tipper and Bill and Al and I -- could be here to be part of this very successful event for the DNC in the Empire State, where we have so many people who have demonstrated their commitment to the Democratic Party, and to its principles. And I'm delighted to be here to thank all of you for your support over the last seven, eight years now, and thank you for your continuing commitment and support.

You know, I know Tipper so well, and am so proud of her, and I can only echo what Ed Rendell said. And that is that she's going to be a superb person in the White House to carry on so many of the important issues that she has championed her entire life. From homelessness -- (applause) -- from her advocacy on behalf of the homeless, the children, to those with mental illness, who deserve to be treated the same as a person with any kind of illness, and she sends a brave and courageous voice for that position. (Applause.)

I want to thank Ed for his leadership of the party. He's done a fabulous job. (Applause.) And he's one of my favorite mayors, and I'm so grateful for the leadership that he has demonstrated in the position that he formerly held.

And I want to thank Tony Bennett for coming and entertaining us as well this evening. (Applause.)

This is a very special night for all of us, because Bill and I have been a little bit nostalgic today. We did the last Easter Egg Roll on the White House Lawn, and that's the eighth and last one for us. And we spent some time sort of thinking about everything that has happened since 1992. And one of the greatest gifts that we've had is the friendship and relationship with Al and Tipper Gore.

And it was a relationship that began when Bill asked Al to join the ticket and the four of us first met together. And I can remember some of those early times when we were getting to know each other, on a bus trip that took us throughout so many of the states that we were campaigning in with such joy and excitement about the future.

And I think all of us made those speeches in 1992, standing on flatbed trucks and in the doorway of a bus or in front of a building somewhere, in a field with a farmer. And we kept

saying -- and Bill and Al said over and over again, we can turn this country around, we can demonstrate what it means to lead again; America can assume its position of prominence in the economy and the political and military leadership of the world, we just have to make some tough choices.

Many of you took that position that Bill and Al embodied, which was really the new Democratic Party, you took it on faith. You knew that we had to make some serious changes. You had seen the deficits building, you had seen how they squeezed out private capital, you saw our social conditions deteriorating. And you said, no, we're going to make a change. And New York was such a great, supportive state for the policies that the Clinton-Gore administration proposed.

Now, we can look back and say that that investment you made in 1992 -- and then you even upped your investment in 1996, because New York gave the greatest margin of victory to the Clinton-Gore ticket. That investment was one of the best investments that New York and New Yorkers and America has ever made. Because we are today -- (applause) -- we are today a stronger and better country than we were in 1992 -- (applause) -- and I know that all of us in this room recognize it would not have been possible without the leadership and the tough decisions that were made from the very top by the President and the Vice President. I'm very proud of the record of this administration; and the results speak for themselves.

And many of you have been not only stalwart supporters, but you've been missionaries, in effect, talking to friends and neighbors and colleagues about what it now means to be a Democrat -- a Democrat who believes in balanced budgets, a Democrat who believes in using the surplus to pay down the national debt, a Democrat who believes in providing the tools that are needed to mayors and governors and others to bring down the crime and welfare rates. A Democrat who understands that we have to remain committed to public education, that we have to continue to work for the day when every child has access to a first-class public education in this state and throughout our country. (Applause.)

You know how important it is that we continue to work toward the day when we do provide quality, affordable health care to every New Yorker and every American. (Applause.) You know what the positive agenda of this Democratic administration has been. You have supported it. You have spoken out for it. You have contributed to the DNC and to the Democratic campaign, so that this message could get out and the work could be done.

Because now we no longer have to ask you to take it on faith. You've seen the evidence, you know what the results of these kinds of policies are, and how critical it is that we elect Democrats -- starting with Al Gore, but going right through the House and the Senate. If we are able to take back the House and the Senate, we can continue the policies that have worked so well for America. (Applause.)

Now, with so many Democratic New Yorkers in the House, I just have to say one special word about how important it is that we elect a Democrat to succeed Daniel Patrick Moynihan in the United States Senate. (Applause.) And just remember these three brief reasons why it's important we do that.

Number one, we do not need any more Republicans in the United States Senate, we have too many as it is. (Applause.) They have stood in the way of the progress that has been made and we have to continue to stand up to them and their agenda, that would be so counterproductive and send us in a u-turn back to the 1980s, with exploding deficits and disinvestment.

Number two, there are very big differences between Republicans and Democrats in this state and elsewhere. If we want to continue the fiscal policies that have worked, we need a Democrat in the Senate. If we want to support public education, we need a Democrat in the Senate. If we want to guarantee a woman's right to choose, we need a Democrat in the Senate. (Applause.)

And you all know that in order to get anything done in the Senate, it takes teamwork. It takes people who are willing to work together to get something accomplished for their state and the people they represent. And if you go to the Senate and you disagree with a fellow senator -- you can ask the Vice President, he was there working so hard and effectively for all those years - - you can't sue or fire your colleague, you have to get along with them and keep working with them to get things done for the people you represent. (Applause.)

So there are many reasons why we should celebrate tonight. But we cannot rest until we make sure that we put Al Gore in the White House, we do everything we can to put Democrats in the majority in the House and in the Senate.

Now, none of this would be possible this evening, we could not have raised the money that's been raised, the report that Ed gave about how well we're doing, if this administration had not kept faith with you, had not demonstrated how worthy your investment in Bill Clinton and Al Gore was.

And none of that would have been possible if we hadn't elected someone to be President who understood where the country needed to go, who had the commitment to making the tough political decisions that would really make it possible for us to be enjoying and celebrating this moment, and I am very proud that this administration has such a record of accomplishment.

And it's my great honor, and personal privilege, to introduce the person who really has made it all possible, the President of the United States, Bill Clinton. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Thank you. (Applause.) Thank you very much. Thank you. (Applause.) Thank you very much. I think she's about to get the hang of it, don't you? (Laughter.) Wow.

The Vice President, Tipper, Hillary, Chairman Rendell, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to begin with a heart full of gratitude by saying some thank you's. I thank Ed Rendell and Joe Andrew and all the people at the Democratic Party for the work they have done. (Applause.)

I thank all of you at these tables who helped to chair this event and did the work so that we could all be here tonight. I want to thank Jon Stewart for making us laugh. (Applause.) I wish he would move to Washington -- if we laughed a little more there, we might get twice as much done. (Laughter.)

I want to thank my dear friend, Tony Bennett, for performing again so beautifully. (Applause.) You know, people always marvel -- Tony's a year or two older than I am, and people always marvel at how great an artist he is. And I was telling people earlier tonight, the thing that is so amazing is that he still has perfect pitch. I lost my perfect pitch 10 years ago. And he has perfect pitch in more ways than one. I'm glad he's here.

I thank the people of New York, the Democratic Party of New York and my special supporters in this room who have been with me and Al and Hillary and Tipper all these years. I want to thank those of you who are helping Hillary in this Senate campaign. I have no doubt of one thing -- that if you elect her, she will be a worthy successor to Robert Kennedy and Pat Moynihan, and will make a terrific difference to the people of this state and this nation. And after I heard her speaking, I have no doubt she's going to win if you stay with her, so I feel good about that. Thank you. (Applause.)

I want to thank Tipper Gore for eight marvelous years. I was looking at her tonight, thinking to myself -- I've watched her raise her children, I've watched her deal with sick members of her family, I've watched her deal with all kinds of pressures and keep laughing. The thing I appreciate most about her is that she believes that people who are fragile and people who are broken -- whether they are homeless or suffering from mental illness -- are part of our common humanity and still have something to live for, still have something to give, and ought to be given a better chance. And our country would be a better place if more people felt the way she did. I hope that more people will. (Applause.)

Let me say also that I am profoundly grateful tonight for the chance you gave me to serve. We were talking around our table tonight about one of the chances that I've had as President is to learn a lot about the presidencies of people you don't know much about. I thought I knew a lot about American history when I became President, but I've spent a lot of time studying. Periods of time when most Americans are not -- that most Americans aren't too conversive with. The presidency of Franklin Pierce or Rutherford Hayes. And I tried to do it so that I could see the whole history of this country in a seamless web.

One of the things that strikes me as strange is that some people who have been in this position -- even people I very much admire -- talk about what a terrible burden it is, and how the White House is the crown jewel of the federal penal system, and how they can't wait to get out of there, and what a terrible pain it is. Frankly, most of those guys didn't have a tougher time than I've had there -- (laughter and applause) -- and I don't know what in the heck they're talking about. (Laughter.)

One of my friends from home called me a couple of years ago when things weren't going so well for me and he said, just remember, Bill, a couple of runs of bad luck and you'd be home

doing \$25 divorces and deeds. Don't feel sorry for yourself; you asked for this job. And that's the way I feel.

Every day has been a joy and an opportunity and still is, and I thank you for it. But I want you to know, sometimes people say, well, what keeps you going. And tonight we were sitting around our table, and I looked at Bob Rosen, and I said, isn't this the place where we had that fundraiser in February of '92, right before the New Hampshire primaries, when I was dropping like a rock in the polls and everybody said I was deader than a doornail? He said yes, this is it.

So I started telling people around the table, I said, you know, I met a guy here that night walking through the kitchen. This is a true story. I said, I met a guy there that night walking through the kitchen. He was working here. And he came up to me and he said, governor, governor, he said, my boy is in school. He's in the 5th grade. He studies this election and he studies the candidates and the issues, and he says I should vote for you. And he said, but I want to ask you a question first: If I do what my boy wants and I vote for you, I want you to help me. He said, you see, I came here as an immigrant, and in my home country I was very poor and here I have more money and a better job. But in my home country, I was free.

He said, here, my boy, he can't go across the street to the park and play unless I go with him because he'll be in danger. He can't walk down the street to school by himself because he could get hurt. So he said, if I do what my boy wants and I vote for you, will you make my boy free?

And as I was telling this story, that man, Dimitri Theopoulos, (phonetic), came up to me and embraced me tonight. He doesn't even work here anymore, but he came here tonight to work this banquet, and I want to thank him. His son is now a student at St. John's University in New York City, and he is doing well. (Applause.)

Now, what's the point of all this? When Al Gore and I came to Washington, it was to help people like Dimitri and his son -- people who serve these banquets, but can't afford the price of the tickets. People who need the minimum wage and access to health care, whose kids ought to be able to go to college and ought to be able to get a good education on the way. People who maybe have been homeless at some point in their lives or stuck on welfare and want jobs. And after seven years and a few months, over 21 million of them have jobs that didn't exist eight years ago. (Applause.)

Over 21 million have taken advantage of family and medical leave. Over 5 million have taken advantage of the HOPE Scholarship to go on to college. There are 500,000 people who couldn't get handguns because of the Brady Bill. (Applause.) And gun crime in this country, down 35 percent since 1993; the homicide rate at a 31-year low; 2 million kids out of poverty; more than 2 million kids with health insurance; students borrowing money through our new loan program, saving \$8 billion, to help them go on and go to college. (Applause.) Real stories of real lives of real people. That's what this is all about.

I never, ever, for all the wonderful joy and love of the presidency and my love of politics -- and Lord knows, I have loved it -- I always thought that it was wrong to seek power without purpose. That in the end, it was a hollow victory to have it and to exercise it to hurt other people with the painful disappointment in life, they never give you what you want. The only thing that really matters is knowing that people who otherwise wouldn't have done as well have a little better chance because of your endeavors.

And what I want you to know tonight, as I bring the Vice President up here, is that we have worked very hard to turn this country around and to get it going in the right direction. But the theme song of this election year ought to be the first song Tony Bennett sang, "The Best Is Yet To Come." Because we are now in a position to take on the big challenges of this country that would have been unthinkable eight years ago. We can get this country out of debt for the first time since 1835, and give a generation of Americans a chance at a strong economy. We can deal with the challenges of the aging of America, the children of America and all the things that - I'll leave it to Al to talk about.

But we've got a chance to do that. But you have to understand that this election is every bit as important, if not more important, than the ones in '92 and '96. I want you to know a couple of things about Al Gore that he wouldn't say, himself. And I'm amazed that so many Americans, even a lot of our supporters, don't know.

First of all, as you might have noticed, we've had to make a few tough decisions over the last eight years. He was at the fore of the process that produced every difficult decision we ever made, every controversial one, every one that could have wrecked both our careers and kept him from being here tonight as the nominee of our party.

He wanted us to take that tough stand against the deficit in 1993 that required him to break the tie in the United States Senate. He wanted us to become the first administration in history to seriously take on in a systematic way the problems of gun violence in this country, and to try to have systematic, sensible measures to protect our children from its dangers.

He wanted to be the first administration in history that took on big tobacco to try to give our children their lives back. He was out there with me on Kosovo, on Bosnia, on Haiti, on all the tough, controversial foreign policy issues, when all the experts in Washington were saying these were little places unworthy of America's great interests, and besides there was lots of downside and no upside, who cares if a lot of innocent people are just dying like flies.

He was there every time, in private, getting no credit, when a difficult decision had to be made. And the presidency is defined, and the country goes forward based on the hard decisions. The easy ones anybody can make.

The second thing I want you to know is that he has had more responsibility than any person who ever held this job. And he has performed in an absolutely stunning manner. And I just want to run through -- yes, you can clap for that. (Applause.)

I want to give you a few examples. He led our effort to give America a genuinely competitive and humane telecommunications policy, which meant -- what did that mean? You look at all the companies in New York state alone that did not even exist in 1996, when we signed the Telecommunications Act. Hundreds of thousands of new jobs. Plus we got the e-rate to guarantee that our schools -- our poorest schools -- and libraries and hospitals would be able to access the Internet.

He led our efforts to hook all of our schools and classrooms up to the Internet. When we started in 1994, under Al's leadership, 3 percent of the classrooms in America were hooked up to the Internet. Today, 65 percent are; 11 percent of the schools. Today, 95 percent of the schools in this country have an Internet connection. (Applause.)

He led our efforts to bring economic opportunity to people and places left behind, in the empowerment zones and the enterprise communities. He led our efforts in the environment, which it seems like our partnership for the next generation of vehicles with Detroit, with the auto makers and the auto companies, the auto workers and the auto companies. Now you'll be able to buy cars -- decent size cars, actually getting 70-80 miles a gallon in the next year or two.

He had a big part of our foreign policy when it came to arms control, or dealing with Russia or South Africa or the Middle East. He led our efforts to reinvent the federal government which meant, as I think all of you, even our adversaries would admit, we have been slightly more active than previous presidents in the last several years, and we did it while shrinking the government to its smallest size in 40 years -- all because of Al Gore's leadership. (Applause.)

But what I want you to know is more important than all that. I had lunch with this guy once a week, before he got something better to do here a few months ago. (Laughter.) From the day I took office until the onset of the presidential campaign. I probably know more about him than anybody but Tipper. I know what he likes and what he can't stand. I know what he loves. I know when he's having a bad day and how he deals with it. And, by the way, he knows the same about me.

And all I can tell you is, I feel absolutely comfortable putting the future of my daughter and the grandchildren I hope she will give us in his hands. (Applause.) He is the most accomplished and effective Vice President in the history of the country. That is not a matter of dispute, that's a statement of fact. He is the most well-qualified candidate we have had in my lifetime. I wish I'd had half his experience coming into office in '93 that he will bring in, in 2001.

But the most important thing of all is, he understands the future and he knows how to take us there. There are big challenges out there. We have not done all this work to turn this country around, to fritter away the chance of a lifetime, to deal with the big issues -- and there are huge differences between our parties and our candidates that will have dramatic, immediate, practical impact on the lives of the American people -- not just those of us who came here tonight, but keep in mind, those of us who served us here tonight.

So for all my gratitude to all of you, for all my gratitude to the American people for the chance to serve in a job I love, the most important thing is always, for our country, what are we going to do today and tomorrow. All I have done for seven years and three months was to try to get the country I love in the position to build the future of our dreams for our children. Now, it's up to you to decide whether we do that.

And believe me, for the rest of the lives of everybody in this audience, I will be very surprised if you ever get a chance to vote for anyone for president again who has done so much, who is such a fine human being and who so clearly understands the future that is unfolding at such a rapid pace. We owe it -- we owe it to ourselves, to the labors of the last eight years and, more importantly, we owe it to our children and the dreams we have for them, to make sure that the next President of the United States is Al Gore. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Thank you. (Applause.)

Well, it's great to be here and I just told the President, I told him, I said, I thought you were a little stingy with those comments. You could have laid it on a little thicker than that and it would have been fine with me. (Laughter.)

Seriously, thank you so much. I believe that's, by far, the most generous introduction I've ever had and I appreciate it very much. And to all of you, we've all thanked you, but I want to tell you how much it means to all of us for you to be here and be so generous in your support of the Democratic Party.

And you have just heard from President Bill Clinton an example of why we're all together and why we're all here. He has demonstrated for eight years now the capacity to bring all of us together in support of a vision of America's future that can make us a better country.

You know the old saying from scripture where there is no vision, then people shall perish. Well, the flip side of that must be, where there is a clear and compelling vision, people shall prosper. And Bill Clinton came to New York in '92 and came to the White House in January of '93 with a vision of how we could bring our country together, and end the economic struggle that had held America back and unleashed instead the great potential that our country has been demonstrating these last seven and a half years.

He had a vision of how we could take a new approach to solving social problems, not with the heavy hand of government regulation as the instrument of first choice, not with the abandonment that the private sector with good wishes and little else, but rather an artful combination of public-private partnership and skillful policies that really hit the bulls-eye of the target -- whether it was welfare reform or expanding health care for children or community policing, or the AmeriCorps program. You know, there are more young people -- and others, but mostly young people -- all across America in the AmeriCorps Program right now than were ever in the Peace Corps at the height of the Peace Corps. And they are so enthusiastic, and so committed to making their communities and their country a better place. That's just one tiny example.

And, of course, the example that's cited most is the fact that the economic performance under President Bill Clinton has been so stunning that we've all run out of adjectives to describe it. "Great" is the least of them. Because we went -- as everybody here knows -- from the biggest deficit to the biggest surpluses; from a triple-dip recession to a tripling of the stock market; from high unemployment and the worst time for those without jobs since the Great Depression to 21 million new jobs, along with low inflation; and officially now, as of two months ago, the longest economic recovery, and the strongest economy in the entire history of the United States of America.

President Bill Clinton has made all of these things possible. His legacy will endure. (Applause.) I want to thank him for the opportunity that I've had to get to know so many of you. And Tipper and I have gotten to know some of you over the years extremely well, and all around this room. We count you as friends, and I'm very, very grateful.

You know, every time we come to New York now, we are thrilled by the prospect of this election to fill Pat Moynihan's seat. And I want to just say a few words here about what Hillary Clinton has done, not only as First Lady, but as many people are finding out as they learn more about her personal story, for the last 30 years in her own right, she has been working to lift up children and families, she's been fighting for improvements in education and in health care.

From her early days, when she was identified by one and all as a student, as one of the brightest and best, and then given challenging assignments early on just out of Yale Law School, to her designation in her own right as one of the 100 top attorneys in the United States of America. And, of course, as First Lady, making us proud all across this country and around the world. And now, as a compelling candidate for the United States Senate, articulating a vision of how New York can be well-served and how our country can be even better.

This is not even close in terms of the merits. And I want all of you to make sure it's not even close in terms of the vote. Let's elect Hillary Clinton as the next Senator from New York. (Applause.)

Tipper and I have counted these two as good friends for eight years now, and I appreciate not only what you said about me, but what you said about Tipper. And it's true that she has demonstrated that compassion and knowledge of the subject that she has taken on, and she has been a great teacher to me. And, incidentally, next month, we will celebrate our 30th wedding anniversary, and we're looking forward to that. (Applause.)

Our son-in-law, Drew Schiff, is here and Karenna's at law school tonight, finishing up -- oh, did she make it? Well, Karenna Gore-Schiff, our daughter. And Karenna and Drew made us grandparents for the first time 10 months ago, and it is great to have a New Yorker as a grandson. (Applause.) And having just come from there earlier, I can tell you that he is the cutest little boy you have ever seen in your life. (Laughter.) He is 10 months old and quite precocious. He is obviously extremely intelligent, very handsome. He has it all. (Laughter.)

Anyway, let me say just a few words about where we go from here. First of all, I do want to say this, that we're here at a fundraiser, and I'm very grateful for all of you being here at this fundraiser. I want to remind you that one of the things I'd like to accomplish if our party is

successful in these elections, is to change the way we go about financing elections. (Applause.) I'd like to see meaningful campaign finance reform -- there's a ground swell of support in the room, I can tell. I believe in public financing. And I have challenged the other party to do away with the 30-second and 60-second ads and, instead, just debate twice a week, every week, on a different issue each time. Do away with the soft money, and endow our democracy. (Applause.)

Now, all the issues have been discussed here tonight, and I'll be very brief. I just want to give you a few more things to think about. The outcome of these elections will determine not only the presidency and the House and the Senate -- and, incidentally, I believe that we are going to win a majority in the House, and we can win control of the Senate also. (Applause.) If you win this race for Hillary, I really think that we have an excellent chance and a lot of momentum to win the Senate.

But in addition to all of that, the Supreme Court is also at stake, and I want you to consider that. (Applause.) There are a lot of cases that are being decided in this term five to four, and four to five, depending on your point of view. And cases involving a woman's right to choose are pending. (Applause.) Cases involving civil rights and affirmative action. Cases involving really the heart of who we are as a people.

And according to our Constitution, the principal connection between your political will and the way our court interprets the Constitution is how you vote for President and how you vote for Senate, because they do the confirming or rejecting. And the next President is probably going to appoint three Justices of the Supreme Court, maybe more. What that means is that the way the Court interprets our founding charter for the next 30 to 40 years will be determined by what happens this November in the election.

So if you believe in a woman's right to choose, if you believe in civil rights, if you want to see further progress in protecting our freedoms and expanding the circle of human dignity, please remember that. This is as important, if not the most important, election we've ever had in this country. (Applause.)

I support a woman's right to choose, and I am unyielding in my support of a woman's right to choose. (Applause.) Hillary Clinton supports a woman's right to choose. (Applause.)

Let me give you something else to think about, that doesn't often come up in the discussion of politics: foreign policy. You know, I've said that if I am entrusted with the presidency, the first document that I will send to the Senate is to resubmit the nuclear comprehensive test ban, with your demand that they ratify it this time. (Applause.)

Now, the leader of the other party, Governor Bush, is opposed to ratifying the test ban treaty. Now, let me just spend a moment on that. President Clinton just came back from a very successful effort to try to defuse the tensions a little bit on the Indian subcontinent. There's no doubt that as this new century begins, one of the most dangerous threats we're going to have to deal with is the threat of weapons of mass destruction around the world and the delivery systems that can threaten us.

Our military experts and leaders have told us we don't need to test nuclear weapons anymore. We've tested them for 50 years, and we don't need to any more. Countries like Iran and Iraq, if they get to that point, will need to. Libya -- you could name off the list -- North Korea -- if we can put in place a worldwide ban supported by the common opinions and wishes of all humankind, that is a strategic asset for us to use in trying to protect our children and grandchildren.

The Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs for the past four administrations, Democratic and Republican, have said, by all means, we need this. Why would the other party vote it down on a party line vote and then Governor Bush, as the leader of the party, say no, opposed to ratifying it?

I believe in a strong national defense. I also believe in strong diplomacy. I believe that we have the wisdom and the national strength to pursue a bright future for our people, not only with weapons, but with our values and with our arguments in favor of the future that we want to create for all of the people in the world. I ask for your support for those values and for that effort. (Applause.)

A couple of days ago, we recognized the 30th anniversary of Earth Day. One of the big issues there that didn't get talked about, the same as these others, is whether or not we are going to move forward in a meaningful way to deal with the most serious global environmental challenge we have -- global warming; and whether in doing so we're going to protect the water that New Yorkers drink and the air that children breathe here and in the rest of the country.

You know that I'm committed to protecting the environment. (Applause.) I hope you know I'm committed to doing it in a way that also grows our economy. We have demonstrated in this administration that we can do both -- the economy and the environment go together.

The other party and its leader have called the treaty that we negotiated at great effort unwise and extreme, and they are opposed to doing anything about it. I think they're wrong about that, as I think they're wrong about most of the big questions that we face, including the economy.

I'm going to be talking tomorrow morning, at the Association For A Better New York, about economic policy. But all of the good things that I described as flowing from the vision of Bill Clinton and the work that we have done in this administration are instantly at risk if the other party is put in charge of economic policy.

We have seen them advocate a \$2-trillion tax scheme that would squander the entire budget deficit and then a trillion dollars besides, as if it doesn't matter. How arrogant to think that we Americans cannot add and subtract. We had the politics of irresponsibility one time before, and our debt was quadrupled and interest rates rose, and the economy went in the tank.

We had the politics of illusion and the pretense that the arithmetic really didn't matter that much. And what we have tried to bring instead is an insistence on a commitment to realism, a solid assumption, hard choices, lay them out there, and make them in the best way you can.

Balance the budget -- not just because that's a slogan, but because we have learned in our country that deficits which used to be thought capable of stimulating economic growth might not do that if it leads the Federal Reserve Board to constrict the money supply and choke off credit.

What we've learned, in other words, is that you have to keep your eye on the ball. The confidence that people have in our economy, the confidence the markets have that we're capable of governing ourselves well, that we're not going to just let everything go into endless red ink, but that we are going to insist on the tough choices. If we continue doing that, then we can keep interest rates low, we can keep investing in the future, we can keep opening up new markets, and we can keep the economy growing strongly. The other side would put all that at risk -- including the investments in our future that are needed.

I've said that, in my opinion, the single most important investment we need to make in our future is to bring revolutionary improvement to our public schools and start treating our teachers like the professionals that they are -- reward them adequately, set higher standards, have accountability, measure performance. (Applause.)

Let me tell you, approximately once a week, I've been having school days. I was talking to Alan and Susan Patrickov (phonetic) in some depth about it earlier, where I go to the home of a public school teacher and spend the night with the family and then the next morning have breakfast with them and go to school at 7:00 a.m., 7:30 a.m.. And I'm there when the children arrive, and I stay there all day. And while I'm there, I meet with the teachers and the principals and the students and the parents and the bus drivers and the janitors and the cafeteria workers and the school safety and security folks, and the school nurse. I'm there when the children leave at the end of the day, once a week.

What I'm learning is, of course, that we have an awful lot of great teachers that work their hearts out, great principals who don't have the resources they need, teachers who regularly agree to work for \$10,000, \$15,000, \$20,000 a year less than they could make in another profession where they could easily find a job. I spent the night with a family in Michigan where the teacher was a 30-year veteran with a master's degree, recognized as one of the very best you can find anywhere. Her 19-year-old son just got a job in Fort Lauderdale, Florida as a web page designer and is making almost twice as much as she makes after 30 years as a teacher.

That's great, but it's for him. But it's not great that we don't recognize the importance of investing in our future in that way. And what would the other side do? They don't really have accountability in their proposal. What they do have is vouchers. Again, an illusion, just like the economic plan. You ask people, what is a voucher? Oh, that pays the tuition for a private school. Wrong. It pays a tiny downpayment toward tuition for a private school. It's a fraud. It doesn't do what it is advertised to do. (Applause.)

And just today, at an earlier group, I was commenting briefly on the news of yet another incident involving young people and guns -- this time at the National Zoo. We don't know all the facts, but we know that two groups of young people got into a fight at the zoo, which turned into a gunfight. And a 12-year-old is gravely injured; two others seriously injured. And it goes on.

What does it say? We've already this year had a six-year-old 1st grader killed by a classmate with a gun. A five-year-old firing a gun at the playground near Seattle. And the other party is hosting a dinner like this one that's co-chaired by the National Rifle Association, and they are opposing meaningful gun control legislation.

The leader of the other party, Governor Bush, just overturned in his state a 125-year-old ban on concealed weapons. And then when the NRA complained, he went back for another bill to make sure that you could take concealed weapons into churches and synagogues. It's a different vision of our future. It's a different way of looking at America. (Applause.)

And finally, why are they opposed to hate crimes legislation? (Applause.) And why are they opposed to affirmative action? (Applause.) Why did Governor Bush find it impossible to reach the moral conclusion that a century and a half after the Civil War, it really is not right for the confederate flag to be flying over government buildings and sending a signal of hate to so many of our citizens? (Applause.)

It's a different vision of our future. And we have to choose. He's for state's rights on the confederate flag, and incidentally, on the minimum wage also. He thinks that states ought to be able to opt out of the minimum wage. What would that do to New York?

So whether it is the Supreme Court and the future of our liberties, or foreign policy and the future security of our nation, or environmental policy and the future of the Earth, itself. Whether it's our ability to equip our children with the skills they need to live fulfilling lives and prosper in the 21st century with education and job training. Whether it's the establishment of safety in our schools and on our sidewalks and in our neighborhoods by dealing with the flood of guns that are in the hands of the wrong people. Whether it's bringing our people together through enforcement of the civil rights law and moral leadership to establish respect and tolerance, tolerance for diversity and respect for difference, and then transcend to embrace what we have in common: the American Spirit. Or whether it's the bread and butter decision of whether we're going to keep our prosperity going or sacrifice it on an ideological altar of supply-side nonsense. Whatever the question, the choice between the two parties is clear.

And in closing, if that were all that mattered -- the issues -- we would win this hands down. Hillary would win the Senate race hands down. n We'd win the House and Senate and the White House hands down -- (applause) -- because the American people agree with us on the issues.

But the final thing I want you to remember is, there's a second factor that determines the outcome of elections. And sometimes it's even more important than whether you agree or disagree on the issues. And you could call it intensity, you could call it commitment, you could call it determination. But whatever you call it, what it comes down to is how strongly you feel that our country has to make the right choice in this election. How deeply do you care about the way we make the policies that will affect all our lives in the future?

The other side may be wrong in our way of thinking on all these issues, but they are passionately committed. Just look at what they're doing with all the money that's flowing into

this state, for example -- from people that don't know either one of the candidates here. Because they are committed to their way of thinking, to that different vision that they have of our future.

Because of your presence here and because of what I've been hearing from you, and what I feel from all of you in this room, I have no doubt that the real answer is that you feel stronger than they do, and because of that we're going to win this election in November, and I thank you for being here and for making that possible. (Applause.)

God bless you and thank you. (Applause.)

END

9:55 P.M. EDT