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Long Island - Technology

Keeping Long Island on the Forefront of
Technology

Long Island Association

Woodbury, New York

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Thank you very much, Matt. Matt has advised me to not go through any more acknowledgements than that or I would probably end up acknowledging half the audience. So I will take his wise counsel and just tell you how pleased I am to be here this morning to have this opportunity to talk about our hopes and aspirations for Long Island and for New York and the kinds of policies that I would look forward to working with all of you to try to implement to be a good partner in these efforts.

Every time I come to visit anywhere on Long Island, whether it's talking to the students at C.W. Post, or visiting with shopkeepers in Jones Beach, or even sitting around a dining room table, which is the first time I ever met Matt and some of you here, in Great Neck last summer, talking about the issues that are important to the Long Island Association, but also to people in general. I am struck by the vibrant spirit of civic pride and civic engagement that seems to permeate this island.

And it certainly is the spirit embodied in this Association. For 75 years, you have brought all Long Islanders together - business owners and labor leaders alike, teachers and neighborhood activists -- to work toward a better, stronger, and healthier community. You've recognized that progress can only be made when people are willing to roll up their sleeves and get to work with each other. From the Long Island Aquarium to the Millennium Technology Research Center, we are seeing the results of that commitment and vision. And I hope in the future to work with you on these projects - and many other projects.

This is a great time for Long Island, for New York and for America. We are living in the midst of the longest peacetime economic expansion in history. And over the past seven

years, our nation has moved from record deficits to record budget surpluses. America now has 21 million new jobs and the lowest unemployment rate in a generation. Welfare rolls have been cut in half, poverty has fallen to a 20 year-low and crime across the country is the lowest in 25 years.

Now did not get here by making easy - or painless -- choices. We are here because seven years ago, Americans made some tough decisions to put our fiscal house in order - to balance the federal budget, to cut the deficit, and to reign-in spending.

And we're here because the American people went to work. You don't have to look very far beyond right here in Long Island to see evidence about how hard work can transform opportunities for countless New Yorkers and Americans. You can look at the history here on Long Island and recognize that when we luckily ended the Cold War and jobs began leaving the defense industry here, Long Island hardly gave up. But instead found ways to make sure that Long Islanders were not left behind in the New Economy. Since 1992, some 96,000 new jobs have come to this area. And companies in all sectors of the economy are expanding.

So we are thriving - fully recovered from the recession of the early '90s. And I believe that Long Island is now poised to become a hub-a technological hub--for the converging high-tech industries of the 21st Century - software, life sciences, and electronics.

Now, our challenge is how to make the most of this prosperity, to move Long Island to the forefront, not just of the New York economy, but of the American and global economy as well. And at the same time to do it in ways that make our communities even better places to live, work, do business, and especially, raise families.

This year, America has a projected budget surplus of \$167 billion dollars - and it's our fourth budget surplus in a row and the largest ever on record. We have reached a national consensus, I would argue, to set aside the bulk of the surplus to save and modernize Social Security for the 21st Century - and thereby keep safe with our commitment to honor the work and the sacrifice of those who have come before. But the portion of that surplus that has not been claimed for Social Security remains substantial - some \$750 billion projected

over the next ten years.

This represents a tremendous and unprecedented opportunity. The decision on how we spend this non-Social Security surplus will be the most important decision facing the next Congress. So let me tell you what I support and what I oppose. Because every time someone asks me what I would work on first and foremost in the Senate, my answer is economy because it still is the economy-everything else we want to do for healthcare and research, for education, for public schools and higher education, for the environment-everything else we want to do depends upon our making the right decision about where we go with the economy.

I was recently at an event with Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers who those of you may recall that Lawrence was in the government and a professor of economics at Harvard and has been a major player in the economic team the President has put together. And he said something that stuck in my mind. He said, you know, when you study business cycles, they appear to go up and down, and you think it's inevitable. But, he said, if you look more closely, below the surface, you'll find that both the ups and the downs are related to and usually caused by decisions in the public and private sectors. So what we do now will have a very big impact on how well we do in the future.

First and foremost, I believe we cannot afford to veer off the course of fiscal discipline we began in 1993. It is the only way we can keep our economy strong - and make progress on some of our greatest long-term challenges.

I believe we can continue our prosperity by making the right choices today. That means eliminating the debt -- strengthening Social Security and Medicare -- investing in education and the environment -- and providing targeted tax cuts to middle class Americans. And it also means rejecting any risky tax plan that would bust a hole in that budget and put our prosperity at risk.

If I am elected to the Senate I will fight to ensure that at least 40 percent of the non-Social Security surplus - some \$350 billion over the next decade -- is used to pay off the national debt. That way, we can eliminate the entire debt by the year 2013, something that would have been totally [inaudible] to

the utmost degree even to speak about fifteen years ago. If we do this then many of you in this room understand, that means lower interest rates, lower real interest rates, and more capital for investment.

Because of the deficit cutting measures that were taken 1993, interest rates have already fallen two percent. Not only new jobs, but whole new companies have been created because of these lower interest rates. And millions of Americans have learned over the years that lower interest rates are the best tax cuts anybody could have. A typical American family is already saving \$2,000 a year in mortgage payments. Students are saving hundreds of dollars a year on school loans. Imagine the possibilities for the future if we wiped out that debt entirely. It's not only an economic issue with me; it is an issue with values. I do not believe we should be passing on this debt to our children and our grandchildren. And I've become fond of saying that I like to paraphrase President Franklin Roosevelt, who said that his generation had a rendezvous with destiny. And I believe ours has a rendezvous with responsibility. And that begins by being responsible stewards of our tax dollars and budget.

Even as I would fight to balance the budget and pay down the debt, I would also fight to cut taxes in ways that honor our families and reflect our deepest values. I would fight to pass tax cuts that are targeted to the people who need them most --- from middle class families who need help sending their children to college, to parents struggling to pay for child care, to families caring for their aging parents. And I also support tax cuts for new home buyers - so that more young families can afford to move into and renew the communities here on Long Island.

But I will not support any tax cut that would force us to abandon the course of fiscal discipline and spend the surplus before we have paid down the debt. We all know that some of the noisiest voices in our country today are those who say we should spend the surplus on a large, untargeted, across-the-board, tax cut. The road to risky tax cuts may appear to be easy, and it certainly has short-term political gains attached to it, but it will inevitably and ultimately lead to exploding deficits and the return of those higher interest rates. Our nation went down that road once before, and I do not believe we can afford ever to go back. Our current prosperity, based as it is on tough choices and fiscal responsibility, is

the time for us to take stock of where we are and make some additional hard decisions.

You know, I recognize that it is a tempting - and much easier - position for anyone running for office to promise the kind of tax cuts that sound so good and look so tempting. But at every level of government - national, state, county, and local - the first responsibility any of us have is good economic stewardship. And supporting these tax cuts would be simply irresponsible - and demonstrate poor leadership.

The tax cut proposals making their way through Congress today are so large and costly, they would drain resources from many important New York initiatives such as smaller class size in our schools, funding for Amtrak, clean-up efforts in the Long Island Sound. Not only that, they would put us back on that path that will lead to even further cuts and further disinvestments in the priorities we should be rallying around in order to get our House fully in order for this new century. If I were in the Senate today and when I'm in the Senate next year, unless we have a change of heart in the Republican leadership, I would vote against these tax proposals.

Because I want to be and I will be a steady and strong voice for fiscal discipline and a balanced budget in the United States. I grew up with a father who didn't believe in credit cards, who paid cash for our house. And I have a hard time breaking those habits and will put them to work in the Senate. But I'm also just as committed to balancing the budget between New York and Washington. When I first announced my listening tour at Senator Moynihan's farm back in July, I said that one of my priorities would be to pick up his crusade on behalf of creating a fairer allocation of resources for New York. New York currently sends 15 billion more dollars to Washington than we get back. That imbalance makes it very difficult for us to do the things we should be doing at the state or local level.

Every year that this happens we get further behind. I believe there is an opportunity now because of Senator Moynihan's leadership over all these years, this issue is finally achieving the kind of attention it deserves. And I would look forward to working with Senator Schumer, with our Congressional delegation such as Gary and Carol and others, as well as Senators from other states that are similarly disadvantaged, in order to begin to reverse some of these patterns that date

all the way to the Depression. It made a lot of sense to have a lot of transfer of funding to places that were so far behind economically. You know, New York in many ways can take credit for playing a major role in electrifying the country and providing all kinds of opportunities. But now it is time to right that balance.

I would fight also for fiscally-responsible investments important to all New Yorkers - from health research into the environmental causes of breast cancer, something I have worked on for eight years, to better roads and transportation networks. And most of all, we have to ensure that all New Yorkers - from our young people to our workers and all of our businesses -- have access to the tools needed to prosper in our new economy.

We know that a seismic shift has taken place in our economy. In little over a generation, we've moved from the Industrial Age to an Information One. It is a new economy that is not just hype or that's highlighted in business magazines. It is an economy powered that is powered by technology, nurtured by the human mind, enlarged by global trade. And it is increasing productivity at a faster rate than anyone could have predicted. It is changing literally the way we all live and shop, work, and relate to each other. And it makes business more productive, whether it's auto assembly lines or the corner dry cleaner. It is creating millions of high-skilled, high-wage jobs.

But it is also, as we all know, rendering other jobs obsolete and placing greater demands on people to be equipped to do these jobs in the new economy. It is clear that workers who succeed in the new economy must have higher levels of education and training; businesses must be more innovative, creative and flexible; community leaders must bring all sectors - government, academia, and business -- together to make sure that no one is left behind in the high tech economy.

You know, Matt mentioned that I served on the board of Wal-Mart for a number of years. And one of the things that is overlooked about Wal-Mart throughout its astonishing success, both domestically and globally, is that Wal-Mart invested in high technology before most people even knew what it was. You know, back in the late eighties we were making decisions about increasing inventory control and

moving distribution networks, putting in satellite communication, that most businesses had not yet seen the potential for. Well now we all know how important those investments are and how critical it is to have a skilled work force that is able to take advantage of the technology.

For Long Island and New York to thrive in this new economy, we must work together to strengthen our public schools and universities. I support new and crucial investments in our public schools - to attract some of our best and brightest to the ranks of our teachers, to reduce class size and modernize our school buildings, make sure they are fully equipped with the information technology that is needed, and ensure that our children meet the highest academic standards. This is something that I've worked on for more than 17 years, and there is still no more important public effort than to do what is required to improve our public schools.

We also, though, have to improve the skills of our workers. Too many businesses in the new economy right here on Long Island and throughout the state cannot find the skilled workers they need to fill those high-wage, high-tech jobs. That's why I support new investments to bring local industries and educational institutions together in Regional Skills Alliances to train workers for these high tech jobs. Too many small technology firms simply do not have the resources to train workers themselves. These alliances will enable, for example, the Long Island Association, to provide that kind of cooperation among the institutions here that would better equip all workers to meet the skills and demands that are currently going unmatched.

We also have to make sure that all businesses can benefit from the technological advances. You know, it's clear that computers and other information systems can help businesses maximize profits and productivity. But I go in and out of small businesses and talk to business owners all the time here, in New York, and there are so many that don't know how to bring about those technical changes. They don't have the expertise to create their own webpage. We need to provide more support, technical assistance to these firms. Because they can't possibly be as productive as we need for what we do. And therefore in the Senate, I would propose and fight to create a new Technology Extension Program that would help small business owners make the most of our new technology because we are still creating most businesses in

small to medium sized units.

For Long Island and New York to thrive, we also have to keep this region at the forefront of new technology development and production. I know that the Long Island Association is a driving force in this effort and is working to expand the research capabilities of local institutions and to strengthen the partnerships between academia and the business community.

And I think there is more that we could do. That is why if I am elected to the Senate, I will propose increasing the number of small business incubators in America by one third. Because small business incubators like the Long Island High Technology Incubator in Stony Brook can help new businesses navigate the legal mazes and file for the patents, or even provide the office space they need to get started. Here, in an area that is blessed with research institutions such as SUNY -Stony Brook, small businesses incubators can cut the time it takes for new technologies to move from the lab to the factory floor.

One of the most frustrating discoveries I have found in the last month as I have talked to so many people in the high-tech communities around the state and talked with businesses is how difficult it has been to take the ideas that are creating in New York in our universities, in our research labs, and turn them into commercial applications right here in the state. We lose so many of our engineers, we lose so many of our ideas. And it's time that we created the environment in which that kind of intellectual capital can not only be captured and promoted here but the commercial applications could be produced and manufacture here as well.

Long Island has always been a place for the American Dream to flourish and thrive. If we look back at the post-World War II generation half a century ago, this is the place that epitomized the return of our veterans who were looking for a chance to make up that time, to raise their families, and to carve out a piece of that Dream for themselves - a home of their own, a yard for the kids to play in, a strong public school system that could prepare their children for even greater opportunities than the ones that they had had. And for so many countless New Yorkers and Americans, the American Dream really did come true on Long Island.

Now, as we are in the midst of such incredible change at the beginning of a new century, we have to work together again to make sure that that dream flourishes for generations of Long Islanders and New Yorkers to come.

We have a lot of work to do. We have a lot of opportunity. But we also have challenges that we cannot duck or deny. I believe that, together, we can indeed build a Long Island where every citizen has the education and the skills to earn a good paycheck. Where hard working young families can afford to buy a new home and start building a future for their own children. A Long Island that is a hub of high technology research, development and manufacturing. These are the possibilities that I see. I think it's time to make them real, and I would look forward to working with you to do just that. Thank you very much.