

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

Governor Bill Clinton
Remarks Prepared for Delivery
To The Democratic National Convention
Accepting the Democratic Nomination
for President of the United States
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Tonight I want to talk with you about my hope for the future, my faith in the American people, and my vision of the kind of country we can build, together.

I salute the good men who were my companions on the campaign trail: Tom Harkin, Bob Kerrey, Doug Wilder, Jerry Brown and Paul Tsongas. One sentence in the platform we built says it all: "The most important family policy, urban policy, labor policy, minority policy and foreign policy America can have is an expanding, entrepreneurial economy of high-skill, high-wage jobs."

And so, in the name of all the people who do the work, pay the taxes, raise the kids and play by the rules -- the hard-working Americans who make up our forgotten middle class, I accept your nomination for the Presidency of the United States of America.

I am a product of America's middle class. And when I am your President you will be forgotten no more.

We meet at a special moment in history, you and I. The Cold War is over; Soviet Communism has collapsed; and our values -- freedom, individual rights and free enterprise -- have triumphed. And yet just as we have won the Cold War abroad, we are losing the battles for economic opportunity and social justice here at home. Now that we've changed the world, it's time to change America.

I have news for the forces of greed and the defenders of the status quo: your time has come...and gone. It's time for a change.

Tonight ten million Americans are out of work. Tens of millions more work harder for less pay. The incumbent President says unemployment always goes up a little before we start a recovery. But unemployment only has to go up by one more person before we can start a real recovery -- and Mr. President, you are that man.

This election is about putting power back in your hands and putting government back on your side. It's about putting our people first.

You know, I've shared these thoughts with people all across America. But always someone comes back at me, as a young man did this week at the Henry Street Settlement on the Lower East Side of Manhattan: "That sounds good, Bill. But you're a politician. Why should I trust you?"

Tonight, I want to tell you, as plainly as I can, who I am, what I believe in, and where I want to lead America.

I never met my father.

He was killed in a car wreck on a rainy road three months before I was born, driving home from Chicago to Arkansas to be with my mother.

After that, my mother had to support us. So I lived with my grandparents while she went away to study nursing in Louisiana.

I can still see her through the eyes of a three-year-old: kneeling at the train station in New Orleans, waving goodbye and crying as she put me on the train with my grandmother to go back home. She endured her pain because she knew her sacrifice was the only way she could support me and give me a better life.

My mother taught me. She taught me about family, hard work, and sacrifice. She held steady through tragedy after tragedy. And she held our family, my brother and me, together through tough times. As a child, I watched her go off to work each day at a time when it wasn't very easy to be a working mother.

As an adult, I watched her fight off breast cancer. And again she taught me a lesson in courage. And always, always she taught me to fight.

That's why I'll fight to create high-paying jobs so that parents can raise their children in dignity. That's why I'm so committed to making sure every American gets the health care that saved my mother's life. And that's why I fight to make sure women in this country receive respect and dignity -- whether they work in the home, out of the home, or both. You want to know where I get my fighting spirit? It all started with my mother.

When I think about opportunity for all Americans, I think of my grandfather.

He ran a country store in our little town of Hope. There were no food stamps back then, so when his customers -- whether white or black -- who worked hard and did the best they could came in with no money, he'd give them food anyway. Just made a note of it. So did I. Before I was big enough to see over the counter, I learned from him to look up to people other folks looked down on.

My grandfather had a grade-school education. But in that country store he taught me

more about equality in the eyes of the Lord than all my professors at Georgetown; more about the intrinsic worth of every individual than all the philosophers at Oxford; and he taught me more about the need for equal justice than all the jurists at Yale Law School.

You want to know where I get my commitment to bringing people together without regard to race? It all started with my grandfather.

I learned a lot from another person, too. A person who for more than 20 years has worked hard to help our children. Paying the price of time to make sure our schools don't fail them. Who traveled our state -- without a salary -- for a year. Studying, learning, listening. Going to PTA meetings, school board meetings, town hall meetings. Putting together a package of school reforms recognized around the nation. Doing it all while building her own distinguished legal career and being a devoted and loving mother.

That person is my wife.

Hillary taught me. She taught me that all children can learn, and that every one of us has a duty to help them do it. You want to know why I'm so committed to children and their futures? It all started with my wife.

I'm fed up with politicians in Washington lecturing Americans about "family values." Our families have values. Our government doesn't.

I want an America where "family values" live in our actions, not just in our speeches. An America that includes every family. Every traditional family and every extended family. Every two-income family and every single-parent family, and every foster family.

I do want to say something to those parents who have chosen to abandon their children by neglecting their child support: take responsibility for your children or we will force you to do it. Because governments don't raise children; parents do.

And I want to say something to every child who is trying to grow up without a father or a mother; I know how you feel. You're special, too. You matter. And don't let anyone ever tell you you can't become whatever you want to be. If the politicians who are lecturing you don't want you to be a part of their families, you can be a part of ours.

The thing that makes me angriest about what went wrong these last 12 years is that this government has lost touch with our values, while politicians continue to shout about them.

I was raised to believe that the American Dream was built on rewarding hard work. But the folks in Washington have turned that American ethic on its head. For too long, those who play by the rules and keep the faith have gotten the shaft. And those who cut corners and cut deals have been rewarded. People are working harder than ever, spending

nights and weekends on the job instead of at the Little League or the Scouts or the PTA. But their incomes are still going down, their taxes are going up, and the costs of housing, health care and education are going through the roof. Meanwhile, more and more people are falling into poverty -- even when they're working full time.

People want change, but government is in the way. It has been hijacked by privileged, private interests. It has forgotten who really pays the bills around here -- it's taking more of your money and giving you less in service.

We have got to go beyond the brain-dead politics in Washington, and give our people the kind of government they deserve: a government that works for them.

A President ought to be a powerful force for progress. But right now I know how President Lincoln felt when General McClellan wouldn't attack in the Civil War. He asked him, "If you're not going to use your army, may I borrow it?" George Bush: If you won't use your power to help people, step aside. I will.

Our country is falling behind. The President is caught in the grip of a failed economic theory. We've gone from first to thirteenth in the world in workers' wages. Four years ago, candidate Bush said America is a special place, not just "another pleasant country on the U.N. roll call, somewhere between Albania and Zimbabwe." Now, under President Bush, America has an unpleasant economy stuck somewhere between Germany and Sri Lanka. And for most Americans, life's a lot less kind and a lot less gentle.

We've fallen so far, so fast that the Prime Minister of Japan actually said he felt "sympathy" for America. When I am your President, the rest of the world won't look down on us with pity. They'll look up to us with respect.

What is George Bush doing about America's economic problems?

Well, he promised us fifteen million new jobs by now. And he's over fourteen million jobs short. We can do better.

He has raised taxes on the people who drive pick-ups trucks, and lowered taxes on people who ride in limousines. We can do better.

He promised to balance the budget, but he didn't even try. In fact, the budgets he submitted have nearly doubled the debt. Even worse, he wasted the money and reduced our investments in education and jobs. We can do better.

So if you're sick and tired of a government that doesn't work to create new jobs; if you're sick and tired of a tax system that's stacked against you; if you're sick and tired of exploding debt and reduced investments in our future -- if, like the late civil rights pioneer Fannie Lou Hamer said, you're just plain sick and tired of being sick and tired -- then join

with us, work with us win with us. Together we can make the country we love, the country it was meant to be.

The choice you face is clear.

George Bush talks a good game. But he has no game plan to compete and win in the world economy. I do.

He won't take on the big insurance companies to lower costs and provide health care to all Americans. I will.

He won't streamline the federal government, and change the way it works; cut 100,000 bureaucrats, and put 100,000 more police on your streets. I will.

He never balanced a budget. I have. Eleven times.

He won't break the stranglehold special interests have on our elections and lobbyists have on our government. I will.

He won't give mothers and fathers a chance to take some time off from work when a baby's born or a parent is sick. I will.

He doesn't have a commitment to keep family farms in the family. I do.

He hasn't fought a real war on crime and drugs. I will.

He won't crack down on polluters, clean up the environment and take the lead on creating jobs in environmental technologies. I will.

He doesn't have Al Gore. I do.

And he won't guarantee a woman's right to choose. I will. Hear me now: I am not pro-abortion. I am pro-choice. I believe this difficult and painful decision should be left to the women of America. I do not want to go back to the time when we made criminals out of women and their doctors.

Jobs. Health care. Education. These commitments aren't just promises from my lips. They are the work of my life.

Our priorities must be clear: we will put our people first. But priorities without a clear plan of action are empty words. To turn our rhetoric into reality we have to change the way government does business -- fundamentally. Until we do, we'll still be pouring billions of tax dollars right down the drain.

The Republicans have campaigned against big government for a generation. But they've run big government for a generation, and they haven't changed a thing -- except from bad to worse. They don't want to clean out the bureaucracy; they just want to run against it.

But we Democrats have some changing to do too. It is time for us to realize that there is not a government program for every problem. And if we really want to use government to help people, we've got to make it work.

Because we are making those changes, we are, in the words of Ross Perot, a revitalized Democratic party. I am well-aware that those who rallied to his cause wanted to enlist in an army of patriots for change. We say to them: join us -- together we will revitalize America.

I don't have all the answers. But I do know the old ways won't work. Trickle down economics has failed. And big bureaucracies -- public and private -- have failed.

That is why we need a new approach to government. A government that offers more empowerment and less entitlement; more choices for young people in public schools and more choices for older people in long-term care. A government that is leaner, not meaner; that expands opportunity, not bureaucracy; that understands that jobs must come from growth in a vibrant and vital system of free enterprise. I call it a New Covenant -- a solemn commitment between the people and their government -- based not simply on what each of us can take but on what all of us must give to make America work again.

We offer our people a new choice based on old values. We offer opportunity. And we demand responsibility. The choice we offer is not conservative or liberal; Democratic or Republican. It is different. It is new. And it will work.

It will work because it is based on the vision and the values of the American people. Of all the things George Bush has done that I disagree with, perhaps the thing that bothers me most has been how he derides and degrades the American tradition of seeing -- and seeking -- a better future. He mocks it as "the vision thing." But remember what the Scripture says: "Where there is no vision the people perish."

I hope you don't have to begin tomorrow without a vision. I hope you don't have to raise a child in this world without a vision. I hope you don't have to start a new business or plant a new crop without a vision. For where there is no vision the people perish.

One of the reasons we have so many children in so much trouble in so many cities is because they have seen so little opportunity, so little responsibility, and so little community that they literally cannot imagine the kind of life we are calling them to lead. Where there is no vision, the people perish.

What is the vision of our New Covenant?

An America with millions of new jobs in dozens of new industries moving confidently into the 21st Century. An America that says to entrepreneurs and business people: We will give you more incentives, more opportunity than ever before to develop the skills of your workers and create American jobs and wealth in the new global economy. But you must do your part; you must be responsible. American companies must act like American companies again -- and export products, not jobs. That is what the New Covenant is all about.

An America in which the doors of college are thrown open once again to the sons and daughters of stenographers and steelworkers. We'll say: Everybody can borrow the money to go to college. But you must do your part. You must pay it back -- from your paychecks, or better yet, by going back home and serving your communities. We'll have millions of energetic young men and women, serving their country, policing the streets, teaching the kids, caring for the sick, helping young people stay off drugs and out of gangs, giving us all a sense of new hope and limitless possibilities. That's what the New Covenant is all about.

An America in which health care is a right, not a privilege. In which we tell all our people: Your government will have the courage -- finally -- to take on the health care profiteers and make health care affordable for every family. But you must do your part: Preventive care and prenatal care and child immunization; saving lives and saving money and saving families from heartbreak. That's what the New Covenant is all about.

An America in which middle class families' incomes -- not their taxes -- are going up. And, yes, an America in which the wealthiest -- those making over \$200,000 a year -- are asked to pay their fair share. An America in which the rich are not soaked -- but the middle class is not drowning, either. Responsibility starts at the top; that's what the New Covenant is all about.

An America with the world's strongest defense; ready and willing to use force, when necessary. An America at the front of the new global effort to preserve and protect our natural environment -- and promoting global growth. An America that will never coddle tyrants, from Baghdad to Beijing. An America that champions the cause of freedom and democracy, from Eastern Europe to Southern Africa, and in our own hemisphere in Haiti and Cuba.

The end of the Cold War requires us to reduce our defense spending. And we will plow those savings back into jobs right here at home. The world needs a strong America, and a strong America begins at home. That's what the New Covenant is all about.

An America where we end welfare as we know it. We will say to those on welfare: you have the opportunity through training and education, health care and child care, to liberate yourself. But then you have a responsibility to go to work. Welfare must be a second chance, not a way of life. That's what the New Covenant is all about.

It's time to heal our country.

So we will say to every American: Look beyond the stereotypes that blind us. We need each other. For too long politicians told most of us that what's wrong with America is the rest of us. Them. Them the minorities. Them the liberals. Them, them, them. But there is no them; there's only us. One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty, and justice, for all.

How do I know we can come together to make change happen? Because I have seen it in my own state. In Arkansas we're working together and making progress. There is no Arkansas miracle. But there are a lot of miraculous people. Good people, pulling together. Because of them, our schools are better, our wages are higher, our factories are busier, our water is cleaner, and our budget is balanced. We're moving ahead.

I wish I could say the same thing about America under the incumbent President. He took the richest country in the world and brought it down. We took one of the poorest states in America and lifted it up.

And so I say to those who would criticize Arkansas: come on down. Especially if you're from Washington -- come to Arkansas. You'll see us struggling against some problems we haven't solved yet. But you'll also see a lot of great people doing amazing things. And you might even learn a thing or two.

In the end, the New Covenant simply asks us all to be Americans again. Old-fashioned Americans for a new time. Opportunity. Responsibility. Community. When we pull together, America will pull ahead. Throughout the whole history of this country, we have seen time and again that when we are united, we are unstoppable. We can seize this moment, we can make it exciting and energizing and heroic to be an American again. We can renew our faith in ourselves and each other, and restore our sense of unity and community. Scripture says, our eyes have not yet seen, nor our ears heard nor our minds imagined what we can build.

But I cannot do it alone. No President can. We must do it together. It won't be easy and it won't be quick. We didn't get into this mess overnight, and we won't get out of it overnight. But we can do it. With our commitment and our creativity and our diversity and our strength. I want every person in this hall and every citizen in this land to reach out and join us in a great new adventure to chart a bold new future.

As a teenager I heard John Kennedy's summons to citizenship. And then, as a student at Georgetown, I heard that call clarified by a professor I had named Carroll Quigley, who said America was the greatest country in the history of the world because our people have always believed in two great ideas: first, that tomorrow can be better than today, and second that each of us has a personal, moral responsibility to make it so.

That future entered my life the night our daughter Chelsea was born. As I stood in that delivery room, I was overcome with the thought that God had given me a blessing my own father never knew: the chance to hold my child in my arms.

Somewhere at this very moment, another child is born in America. Let it be our cause to give that child a happy home, a healthy family, a hopeful future. Let it be our cause to see that child reach the fullest of her God-given abilities. Let it be our cause that she grow up strong and secure, braced by her challenges, but never, never struggling alone; with family and friends and a faith that in America, no one is left out; no one is left behind.

Let it be our cause that when she is able, she gives something back to her children, her community, and her country. And let it be our cause to give her a country that's coming together, and moving ahead -- a country of boundless hopes and endless dreams; a country that once again lifts up its people, and inspires the world.

Let that be our cause and our commitment and our New Covenant.

I end tonight where it all began for me: I still believe in a place called Hope.