

old. And her forehead was real big and bony, and her elbows and knees were prominent, and her knuckles were, because she lived with brittle bone disease and had already had more than a dozen operations in her life, and could have broken all the bones in her body sitting there working with the people stacking sandbags. And she came all the way from Wisconsin to do it, because she wanted to be a good citizen. And she told her parents she couldn't hide in her life; she had to do something; there was a flood, people needed her help, and even though she had bone after bone after bone after bone broken in her body, she showed up like everybody else to be a good a citizen in Iowa when the flood came.

Now, just a few months ago, I had a rally at American University in Washington, DC—the same girl was there, a freshman in college, with all of her roommates—up there, still be a good citizen, showing up. Now, why do I tell you that? And that child made several trips to the National Institutes of Health in the last 6½ years, becoming stronger.

Now, did Tom Harkin have anything to do with the character of this child? No. Did he have anything to do with the heart of the other little girl with AIDS? No. Did he affect the mother with her generosity and her love? No. But did he do things as an elected representative of you that gave those kids a chance to have better lives and make this a better country? You bet he did. You bet he did.

So I tell you, people ask why you came here, why you support Tom Harkin, why you're a member of our party. Tell them you believe that politics and citizenship is about ideas, action, and people. Power and money are incidental—incidental—to the ability to advance ideas, take action based on those ideas, and help people if your actions turn out to be right.

Now, all of you young people, I can tell you, I just celebrated—Sally was talking about her 30th high school reunion—in a couple of weeks I'm going to have my 35th. And I want you to know, by the way, I don't know if I can go to this one because of the efforts we're making in the Balkans, in Kosovo. But if I miss it, it will be the first one I've ever missed. And I want to encour-

age you not to miss yours. Why? Because, I'll tell you something, the older you get and the closer you get to the end of your life's journey, the more you know that when it's all over, what you really care about is who you liked, who was your friend in good times and bad, who you loved, how your children were, how you felt in the Iowa springtime and in the fall and the winter and the summer—all the things that make you alive.

Politics, the purpose of politics, is to allow free people to be more fully alive and to help each other have better lives. That's what we believe. And so I say, let them make fun of us for telling our stories. That is all that matters in the end. There is nothing abstract about America. It's a bunch of people who believe in liberty and who believe in each other and who believe that they make life better for their children. It is the story of people. Even George Washington was a person. So you remember that. You remember that.

I'm going to tell you one thing, and I'll let you go. Last week I went to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation where the Oglala Sioux live. The most famous Oglala Sioux was Crazy Horse, and they're building a great monument to him there, even bigger than Mount Rushmore. But the unemployment there today is 73 percent. Before I went out there, the chief of the Oglala Sioux and a number of others came to see me at the White House, from the high plains, from Montana and the Dakotas. And they had a meeting, and they told me about the problems, the problems in their States on the farm. They told me the problems of the Indians with education and health care and all of that. But we had just come out of this conflict in Kosovo—we weren't actually quite out of it yet. And the chief of the Oglalas stood up in a very dignified manner, and he said, "Mr. President," he said, "we have a proclamation supporting your action in Kosovo against killing people because of their religion and their ethnic background." And he smiled in a very dignified way, and he said, "You see, we know something about ethnic cleansing. But listen," he said, "But this is America." Now listen to this story. He said, "My great-grandfather was massacred

at Wounded Knee.” He said, “I have two uncles, one was on the beach at Normandy; the other was the first Native American fighter pilot in the entire United States military.” He said, “Now their nephew, me, I am in the White House talking to the President. I have one son”—I later met the boy—“I have one son,” he said. “He is more important to me than anything in the world. But I would be honored to have him go and fight for my country against ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. America has come a long way, and we should stop this wherever we can.”

Why do I tell you that? That is a story about liberty and freedom and the absence of oppression passing down through the generations. That is the story of America. It is the unending effort to form a more perfect Union, to widen the circle of opportunity, to deepen the meaning of freedom, to strengthen the bonds of community. That’s what this guy represents to me. That’s what my party represents to me. That’s the promise of the Governor’s administration to me. That is everything that I have tried to do in these 6½ years. And I am telling you, when you walk out of here tonight and somebody asks you why you were here, you ought to be able to tell them that kind of answer. And you keep fighting for it. And if you do, America’s best days will be in the new century.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:53 p.m. at the Val Air Ballroom. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Harkin’s wife, Ruth, former President and Chief Executive Officer, Overseas Private Investment Corporation; Representative Leonard L. Boswell’s wife, Darlene (Dody); Rob Tully, chair, Iowa State Democratic Party; Lt. Gov. Sally Pederson of Iowa and her husband, James A. Autry; Gov. Tom Vilsack of Iowa and his wife, Christie; Laura Poisel and her adoptive daughter, Jimiya, who was born with AIDS; and American University student Brienne Schwantes, who suffers from brittle bone disease. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President’s Radio Address

July 17, 1999

Good morning. I want to talk to you today about a great debate now underway in Washington, the debate over how best to use America’s recordbreaking budget surpluses. That we can even have this debate is remarkable. Just remember, 6½ years ago, when I first became President, we faced budget deficits that were \$290 billion and rising. In the previous 12 years, those deficits had quadrupled the total debt of America.

But beginning in 1993, we put in place a new economic strategy of fiscal discipline, coupled with greater investments in areas like education, training, and technology. That strategy has helped to produce a private sector-led economic expansion of historic proportions. It’s also produced not only a balanced budget but budget surpluses of \$99 billion this year and a projected surplus over the next 10 years of about \$2.9 trillion, including Social Security taxes.

Now, America must decide how best to use the fruits of our hard work. I believe we should stay with the fiscal discipline that got us here and invest the surplus to meet our long-term challenges. That’s why I’ve proposed that we set aside the vast bulk of this surplus to protect and secure Social Security and Medicare and to modernize Medicare by adding a long-overdue prescription drug benefit.

By saving most of the surplus for Medicare and Social Security, we can also pay off all our publicly held debt by the year 2015. That would make America debt-free for the first time since 1835. What would that mean? It would mean lower interest rates, more business investments, more jobs, higher wages, lower car payments, lower house payments, lower credit card payments, lower student loan payments.

Now, my balanced budget would do this, while increasing investments in areas like education, technology, the environment, and defense. It would also offer a quarter of a trillion dollars in targeted tax cuts to help middle income families meet the crucial

needs for child care, for long-term care for aging relatives, for saving for their own retirement, and tax cuts for inducing people to invest in building modern schools or rehabilitating those that exist now, and for investing in the areas of our country which have not yet fully participated in our recovery.

But my plan puts first things first. It says, first strengthen Social Security and Medicare and pay down the debt, take care of the baby boom retirement, take care of our families and our children, take care of the long-term challenges to America. Then, we can allocate the rest of the surplus for other spending priorities like education and for tax cuts.

Unfortunately, the plan the Republican leadership put forward this week does not do that. Their plan would devote virtually all the non-Social Security surplus, nearly \$1 trillion, to a tax cut, while failing to extend the solvency of Social Security and Medicare even by a single day. The plan also doesn't go far enough in paying down the debt, which will mean higher interest rates and a weaker economy down the road. And it would force drastic cuts in areas where we should be investing more.

In education, for instance, I've proposed an education and children's trust fund that will, among other things, guarantee our ability to hire 100,000 new highly trained teachers to lower class size in the early grades. Yet early next week, the House Republicans will offer legislation that would go back on the bipartisan commitment both Republicans and Democrats made just last year to the American people to hire those 100,000 new teachers. We've hired 30,000 now, or we've given the States and school districts the money to do that. We shouldn't go back on a commitment that we made last year; that's the wrong way to go. But that isn't the worst of it.

Republican leaders have estimated their tax plan would cost more than three-quarters of a trillion dollars between now and the year 2010. What they haven't said is what it would cost after 2010 when the baby boomers retire and the need for revenues for Social Security and Medicare will be most acute. Earlier this week, I asked the Treasury Department to analyze the Republican plan's long-term im-

pact. And the answer I've received is quite disturbing.

According to the Treasury Department's preliminary estimate, the costs of the Republican plan will explode between the year 2010 and 2019 from \$1 trillion a decade to an unimaginable \$3 trillion. At the very time the Nation will be confronting the demographic challenge of the baby boom, the Republican plan will blow a \$3 trillion hole in the Federal budget, threatening our ability to secure Social Security and Medicare for the next generation and risking return to the era of deficits with high interest rates and economic stagnation.

Tax cuts that size quite simply are bad economic policy. It's bad not to save Social Security and Medicare; it's bad not to pay the debt off. It is certainly bad to cut education at a time when it's more important to our children's future than ever.

So I say to Congress: Put first things first. Set aside most of the surplus for Social Security and Medicare. Make sure we invest enough in education. Then, together, we can budget for the kind of tax cuts we need and can afford while we pay off the debt and guarantee a strong America in the 21st century.

This is a very good time for our country. We're on the right path; let's stay on it, use our surplus wisely, think about our children's future. Then the 21st century will be America's best days.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 3:30 p.m. on July 16 in Room 136 at Amos Hiatt Middle School in Des Moines, IA, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on July 17. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 16 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Statement on Representative Michael P. Forbes' Decision To Join the Democratic Party

July 17, 1999

Politics at its best is about ideas, ideas that lead to real advances for the American people. That is why I welcome Congressman Michael Forbes' decision to join the Democratic