

was too old to cry. And then he said something I have always kept with me. In fact, I've got a copy of the exact quote on the wall in my private office in the White House. He said after Douglas defeated him for the Senate, he was walking home, and it had been raining that day and the path was muddy, and one of his feet slipped and hit his other foot and knocked his footing out from under him. But just before he fell, he righted himself and he smiled, and he said, "This is a slip and not a fall." Well, I think we all ought to try to keep that in our own minds as we deal with life's challenges and adversity.

The Lincoln-Douglas debates, as you just heard for a few moments, were about the course of our country and the proper role of government in a time of great change. In 1858, of course, the issue was slavery. Lincoln believed that it was a national issue. Long before he believed the Government could abolish slavery, he at least believed the Government could stop it from expanding. Douglas believed it was not a national issue, that it should be just up to the States or to the territories; if they wanted to keep slavery, they could vote for it and then come on into the Union.

The Republican Party was born out of a conviction that even though we are a country deeply devoted to limited government, there are some things that the times demand national action on and that at that moment the times demanded, first, national action to stop the spread of slavery and, then, national action to stop slavery.

About a half a century earlier, the Democratic Party was born in the Presidency of Thomas Jefferson, who passionately believed in limited government. I was driving across the beautiful Illinois farmland today, feeling very much at home, thinking about how Jefferson loved being on his farm more than he liked being at the White House and how he wanted to limit government. But when he became President, he knew there were certain things that he had to use the power of the National Government to do because the times demanded it.

He bought the Louisiana Purchase, \$15 million—peanuts, really, to us for all that land. I like it because it included Arkansas. So if he hadn't done it, I could never have been an American, much less President. [Laughter] But at the time it was a stunning, sweeping thing. The price of Louisiana was the entire budget

of the National Government for a year. Can you imagine what you'd think of me if I wanted to spend that much on any piece of real estate? [Laughter] But he did.

Both believed in limited government. Both approved of action by the National Government to meet the demands of the time, to do what the people needed. Our Founders established this great country under a Constitution that limits government. Mostly it limits what government can do to private citizens and gives us a lot of elbow room to think what we please and say what we please and go where we please and worship God as we please. It also limits government in other ways, dividing it at the State and local as well as the national level, the President, the Congress, the courts. But it was set up to allow all of us to pursue life, liberty, and happiness. And it was set up with enough flexibility so that over time we could have the kind of government that we needed as a people, not the kind of people that the Government needs but the kind of government that we need as a people.

Now we're at another great sea-change period of American history. Everyone knows we are moving from an information age—I mean, to an information age from an industrialized age in which all organizations were bigger, more hierarchical, more bureaucratic, to a time which is more flexible, more rapidly changing, more full of opportunity and uncertainty. And so we will have to have some changes in what we expect our Government to do, but we have to be clear about our purpose.

I think our purpose has to be to keep the American dream alive for all the people in this country into the 21st century and to make sure we cross the threshold of the next century still the strongest country in the world, still a force for freedom and peace and democracy at home and around the world.

Every American who works hard and obeys the law should be able to get ahead in this new world. It should not be a province of opportunity for a few. To get that done we face enormous challenges. Most of the people who are at a community college know better than I that for the last 10 or 15 years the majority of our people have worked longer and longer work weeks for the same or lower wages, that in the last year alone over a million Americans in working families lost their health insurance.