

So I feel very good about this team. I thank Debbie DeLee for all of her work and for her leadership. I thank David Wilhelm in his absence.

David and Degee brought young Luke by to see me yesterday. And I sat him on the desk in the Oval Office. And they're already saving up for the Inaugural gown for when Luke's inaugurated in 40 or 50 years. [*Laughter*]

I'd like to say a special word of thanks, too, in honor, in homage—I know there is something on the program about this later, but I'd like to tell you all personally how sad I am about the passing of John White and how much I appreciate him. He was the cochairman of our campaign in 1972 in Texas, and I've known him a very long time. He was a great Democrat, a great leader for our party. And I know all of you join me in wishing his wife, Nellie, well and in thanking him from the bottom of our hearts for being such a loyal and effective leader for our party for so very long.

You know, I was listening to the Vice President talk—I say first I need to thank all three of them who spoke. I thank Tipper Gore for being basically, on many occasions, the continuing spark plug of our team, for fighting for the rights and the interests of people who need better mental health opportunities in this country. I do believe that Al Gore will go down in history as the most effective Vice President in the history of the Republic and the person who has exercised the most responsibility.

And I want to say this to my wife. I never really thought when we started this she would become quite the target she has been. It's funny, when we lived in Arkansas, which is supposed to be more conservative and traditional than the country as a whole, most people thought it was a pretty good thing when the Governor's wife tried to get kids an education or make sure they didn't go to bed sick at night if it could be helped. And I'll tell you something else—[*applause*—I'd like to say something else. When I look at her at night, I think there's a lot worse things that could happen to you in life than to get caught redhanded trying to give health care to 40 million Americans who don't have it.

I come here today in a curious role: as the leader of the party I love but also as the President of a country that includes both Democrats and Republicans, a fair number of people that don't think either party amounts to much and

just kind of go with the flow of election after election.

I do regret, in all candor, that any administration that could have done as much as we have done, and any group of Members of Congress that could have supported that, did not find greater favor in the election of November. And I thought, well, maybe there's a lot of reasons for this. There are, objectively, a lot of reasons. First of all, it takes a while for the laws you pass to be actually felt in the lives of people. And secondly, there are all kinds of reasons today why it's hard to get good news out, and it's almost harder if there's more of it. And thirdly, there are a lot of people in this country today who, in the midst of this great recovery, don't feel more secure. And they really don't. And they're our friends and we are their friends, but they may not have known it in the last election, given what they had to listen to.

But the truth is that a whole bunch of folks in America, even in spite of the fact that we've got over 5½ million new jobs in the last 2 years, are working harder for less money than they had 15 years ago. Their wages have not kept up with inflation. Another 1.1 million Americans lost their health care last year, and they were in working families. They were not people on welfare.

I just signed a bill a few days ago—we celebrated it this week—to try to stabilize the pensions of 40 million Americans who depend upon the Government guarantee system and who were in danger of being let down; 8½ million of them were in trouble in their pensions. People know that.

More and more workers feel like they're just sort of dispensable products that can be thrown away in this new rapidly changing global economy, and they feel great anxiety.

And not all the problems of this country are economic. A lot of people feel insecure on their streets. And they don't like what they see happening to our families and our communities. And they're vulnerable to the siren songs they heard in the last election: Promise them anything; tell them what they want to hear; tell them the Government is their enemy.

But let me tell you something else right on the front end, folks. When people say change is hard and you have to be strong and you have to be willing to take unpopular positions, that isn't just rhetoric, that's true. I used to carry a bunch of—about nine rules of politics