

that promotes work. And we can do it in a way that builds people up, not tears them down. We can do it in a way that unites this country, not divides it. And the Democrats ought to take it as their solemn mission to make sure that that is exactly the kind of welfare reform we have in this country when I sign a bill on it.

Finally, let me make this point. Both parties and all candidates bear some responsibility for the fact that our public life has deteriorated in recent years, by treating the voters as if they were purely consumers in two senses: first, consumers in the sense that all they care about is economics. That's not true. There are other ways of defining our common security. And second and most importantly, perhaps, for us as a party, that we would treat them as consumers of politics, not participants in it. Who's got the best 30-second ad? Who rushes most quickly to define his or her opponent as a bad person? Who answers the ad best? And the American people become political couch potatoes, very often no more involved in politics than they are in the Super Bowl.

We've got an excuse, I do, for being a couch potato at the Super Bowl: I'm not good enough to play or young enough or strong enough. But we're all good enough to play in citizenship. And one of the reasons that we were successful in 1992 is that we got rid of a bunch of that. We did all those town meetings; we got on those buses and rode across the country; we stopped in little crossroads where nobody had ever been before. And we treated people like they had good sense and could be involved in a dialog about our country's future.

We must not draw the wrong lesson from the recent election. We must not think that the only answer is for us to have better negative ads than they do. Because we have obligations to the people of this country as well as to the party we love. And I am telling you—Andy Jackson, one of the founders of our party, said that the answer to every problem of democracy is more democracy. So we have to do a better job of reconnecting our citizens to our enterprise. The people cannot respond to us just because we pass a lot of bills in Congress. They have to be a part of that. Their lives have to change.

You know some of the happiest people I've seen in America since I've had the honor of being your President? People who are fighting disasters. I remember when that 500-year flood

hit the Middle West, I met a little girl named Brianne Schwantes, who had brittle-bone disease, down in Iowa—lived in Wisconsin, came down to Iowa—the child had all kind of broken bones—fighting the flood, knowing that she could break a lot of her bones again, because it was a great enterprise and it made her feel that she could give something. And all the other people were just the same.

When I was in California last week, we were celebrating the one-year anniversary of the earthquake. They had 5,600 damaged school buildings a year ago; all but 40 are open today. And they are brimming with pride about what they did.

They're dealing with the floods. I flew to northern California; I went to a little unincorporated town in Congressman Fazio's district, Rio Linda, where Rush Limbaugh had his first radio program. And I was in this little Methodist church with all the volunteers in this flood. And this lady comes up to me—we were all standing around in a circle, and we were going to say a prayer—and she puts her arm around me, and she said, "Well, I'm a Republican, Mr. President, but I think I'll stand here with you anyway." Why? Because she was an American first. She was proud of what she was doing. She was helping people in trouble. And she felt more like a person who mattered.

And whether it's right or wrong, whenever our party, that has labored so long and so hard to lift up ordinary people and give them a chance to live out their dreams, suffers a reversal, it's because a lot of them don't think we think they matter. And what we have got to do, in addition to all these things we're doing here in Washington, is to change the way we are conducting politics, to make citizenship matter again, to let people become actors, not couch potatoes, in the great drama that is unfolding.

I am telling you, the next century will be the most exciting time this country ever had. Our best days are still ahead of us. We will have opportunities for people to move from total deprived circumstances into real success because of the technological changes that are occurring if we have the courage to make the right decisions and if we do it together so that people feel they matter. This party would not be here after 200 years unless at every critical juncture in our history, we had been able to do that.

So I tell you, when I say our job is to create opportunity but to provide responsibility and an