

As a nation, we have a responsibility to *all* of our children and especially to those in our most vulnerable communities. That is why I have fought for high national standards and national tests to help our children reach their highest potential.

Since I called for national standards, I am proud to say that 15 major city school systems have stepped forward to accept my challenge. But we must not rest until *every* school system in the Nation commits to adopting high standards—and helping their students to meet them.

If we are going to go strong into the 21st century, we must continue to expand opportunity for all of our people, and when it comes to our children's education, that means continuing to expect and demand the very best from our schools, our teachers, and above all, from our students. That is why I have fought for excellence, competition, and accountability in our Nation's public schools, with more parental involvement, greater choice, better teaching, and an end to social promotion. We cannot afford to let our children down when they need us the most.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in New York City January 8, 1998

The President. First of all, let me say to Alan and Susan, it is wonderful to be back here. I remember very well when I was here in 1992. I also remember an event that they were part of in 1992, about 10 days before the New Hampshire primary, when everybody said I was absolutely dead; I had no chance to win; I was dropping like a rock in the polls. And we showed up in New York City for a fundraiser, and there were 700 people in this room for a dead candidate. So I said, "I am not dead yet." [Laughter]

And that night was memorable for two reasons: One was that we had so many people there, thanks to a lot of you in this room, who didn't believe that it was over and who believed in what I was trying to do. The other was that I had a very—what is now a very famous encounter in the kitchen, walking to the speech, with a Greek immigrant waiter who said that his 10-year-old son had asked him to vote for me because of what he'd heard me say, and he would do it if I would be more concerned about his son's safety. He said he lived across the street from a park, but his kid couldn't play in the park without his being there; he lived down the street from a school, but his child couldn't walk to the school. And he said that where he had lived, he was much poorer but he was free.

It was a very compelling portrait of why crime and physical safety is an important public issue.

And he said, "So if I vote for you like my boy wants me to, I want you to make my boy free." And that man and his son became friends of ours, and they've been to lots of things, and they even went to Ohio once to an anticrime event with us.

So a lot has happened because of my friendship with Alan and Susan. If he had said one more time that he wasn't a Democrat—I thought he was protesting too much. [Laughter] I'm a Baptist; I believe in deathbed conversions. It's not too late. [Laughter]

Let me say what I thought would be helpful tonight. I do have to leave fairly soon, but before—because we've all been here and most of you have heard me give a zillion speeches, I'd like to just talk for 2 minutes and then give you time—if you have any questions or anything you want to talk about, I'd like to just hear from you.

Steve has already said what this investment is about. But let me back up a little bit. In 1992, I ran for President because I thought the country was divided and drifting, and I believed we were on the verge not just of a new century and a new millennium but a profoundly different time in human affairs. We now know that this whole process of globalization and the revolution in information in science and technology is dramatically changing the way we live and work and relate to each other and relate