

who are here, without which none of this could be done.

I was glad to hear the joke that the representatives from Thailand told yesterday. I have cut a lot of redtape sideways in my life. I was glad to hear you laugh at the Vice President's remark about using plain language in Government regulations. I think that must be a common problem throughout the world. But mostly, I'm glad to see you in such a good frame of mind about this.

You know, one of the problems with having a continuous reinventing Government effort is that it almost never gets any headlines in the newspaper, and most people who cover it think it is about as exciting as watching paint dry. [Laughter] So I think that means that if you're going to do this, you need sort of an extra dose of determination and good humor, because I believe it is truly one of the most important things that those of us in public life today can do.

I've been interested in this for a long time. When I was the Governor of my State, we had what I believe was the first State government-wide ongoing effort in the country. When I became President, I knew we had to change old policies and old ways of doing things. Besides, we were flat broke and running a huge deficit. And even worse, the American people had a very low level of confidence in the Government. I used to say that everyone in America thinks that our Government would foul up a two-car parade. We wanted to change all that. We knew it was important for our economy. We knew it was important for our political success. We knew it was important for the integrity of our democracy.

Fortunately for me, Vice President Gore agreed. And he approached this task as he does everything he really cares about, with an astonishing amount of energy, determination, and intelligence. And I'm sure you have seen, he has absorbed about everything there is to absorb about this subject. And if you hang around long enough, he will give you a chance to know everything he knows about it. [Laughter]

We have a theory about this; most people think it's so boring we have to have a joke every 3 minutes when discussing it. [Laughter] But it is very serious. When the history of our time here is written, the leadership of the Vice President in doing this will be one of the signal

achievements of this administration, and I am very, very grateful to him for a superb job.

We also are heavily into reinventing speeches here; you see I crossed out the first paragraph, and I go from page one to page three. So you'll be out of pain before you know it. [Laughter]

Let me also say to you we have a selfish reason in hosting this conference. We've not tried to reinvent the wheel. We have tried to borrow good ideas wherever we could find them. We very much want to know what is going on in every other country in the world, just as we want to be helpful to every other country in the world if we can.

I'd like to make just one or two points if I might. First is one you know, but I think it bears repeating: This will not work if it is a one-shot effort, if it is something that happens for a month or 6 months or even for a year. In fact, I think you should measure your success in part by whether you have put in a system so integral to the operation of government—a process—and whether you have embedded in the public's mind the importance of this to the extent that all your successors in whatever offices you hold will have to follow suit. That, I think, is the ultimate measure of whether we are successful. Because no matter how long you serve, no matter how hard you work, you will either leave things on the table that are undone, or new opportunities will emerge with the revolutions and technology in human organization that are constantly unfolding.

Our basic theory has been that we ought to have a Government for the information age that is smaller, that lives within its means, but that actually is capable of doing more of what needs to be done. We believe what needs to be done is that we should focus mostly on giving people the tools they need to solve their own problems. We should help people who, through no fault of their own, can't get along through life without help. But most of what we should be doing is creating the conditions and giving people the tools to make their lives as dynamic as the world in which we live.

I also want to emphasize again how important it is to be able to stand up and say that we are giving people good value for their tax investment, because I found that our people tend to judge the reinventing Government sometimes not by what we think they would. It sounds