

Laura J. Gross

29 June 91

Hi Buddy.

We can't have a
branch office that
doesn't have an '88
campaign video!

So, for your
viewing pleasure, we
enclosed a tape of
our fine Senator
from the great state
of Nebraska.

Take care & hello
to Lois!
Laura

Senato
Jefferson-Jac
Omaha, N

I also thought
you might
enjoy this
speech! J.

First of all, to the two first ladies of the state, Diane Nelson, and to Pat Exon, and all the rest of you fine Democrats out there, I would just simply echo and reinforce what Jim Exon has just said. You all have made it possible for us to serve, and we never forget that at our best. Sometimes we forget it at our worst, but on our best we indeed don't forget it.

I also try not to forget that I have been very fortunate in my life to have arrived on the scene at a fortuitous time. I arrived in the Governor's office, when Bill Hoppner was very anxious to get the hell away from Jim Exon. So I persuaded him to be my chief of staff at a time when I knew next-to-nothing about state government, and he knew slightly more. We made a great team. I would like you to give a round of applause to one of my heroes: Bill Hoppner.

I also must say that I arrived on the scene at a fortunate time, that is to say, I arrived eight years prior to the decision of my sister to run for the Nebraska Legislature. I understand that she's over in the Legislature right now doing some kind of mischief, as the Nebraska Unicameral is always one to do. I would like to introduce to you the person who made it possible for me to run both times, and made it possible for her to run once: my partner and friend, Dean Rasmussen.

This will be a little unusual to speak, I normally would simply stand up here and give an ad lib account of what it is that I'm doing, but I was asked to give a keynote, which is unusual, and rather than singing a song or otherwise cluttering your night, I have chosen instead to write down some thoughts and ideas that I feel very personally about, some thoughts about where this country ought to go and our role, not just as Democrats, but as citizens in it.

I want to introduce one last person though before I do, a loyal Republican, who was gracious enough and decent enough and good enough to serve as Nebraska's attorney general for six years. A man who in 1988 may have been the only person with courage enough to stand up a Republican campaign that included a racist use of Willie Horton. A man who, upon leaving the office of attorney general agreed to come to Washington, D.C., at no small cost, again, to himself. He is a great addition to my life; I admire him greatly. I want you Democrats to show Bob Spire what you think of him by giving him a round of applause as well.

I believe it is fair to say that as Americans, and as Democrats, that we are concerned about the future of our country. It is obvious to me that we debate that future and that we have extensive and heated deliberations about what this nation ought to be doing.

At the beginning of what I considered to be essentially a one-sided deliberation here tonight, I would like to remember and call to your attention the advice that was given by Benjamin

Senator Kerrey
Jefferson-Jackson Day Speech
Omaha, NE 6-1-91

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Franklin over 200 years ago to a painfully deadlocked Constitutional Convention. In June of 1787, when the frontier of America was Ohio, when the future of this infant nation was in doubt at home and ridiculed abroad, it was unusual to live beyond 60, let alone the 82 years of age of Franklin.

Earlier in the Constitutional Convention, I find it interesting to note, Ben Franklin tried unsuccessfully to convince the other 54 delegates of the democratic merits of a single legislative body. Now, as the convention deadlocked on an important issue of representation, he recalled the value of prayer during the Revolutionary War, and used the value of prayer during the Revolutionary War to support its use to start each day's debate.

To a very tired and overheated, dejected convention, he said this: "Our prayers, Sirs, were heard and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a super-intending providence in our favor. To that kind providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten that powerful friend? I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth -- that God governs in the affairs of men."

I tell you, my friends of the Democratic Party, that I have lived only a few years longer than half of Franklin's age, but I have seen similarly convincing proofs. The miracle of a friend's arrival just in time to save me, has washed away the stain of those moments when I was either betrayed by others or disappointed by my own weakness. I can point to every day examples of anonymous heroism, where one person demonstrates again their willingness to sacrifice their life and their well-being for another human being. I can describe with reverence how always imperfect and sometimes ordinary humans manage to create, build, and do the impossible.

This is not to say I cannot point with outrage at the capacity of people to destroy their gifts, or the gifts of others. Violence and hatred afflict too many in America today. Greed for power and money are age-old, universal dungeons that continue to enslave those whose desire exceed their eyesight.

This is also not to say I believe we are doing all we can, either as individual Americans or as a Nation. We are still too lazy. We are still too arrogant in accepting congratulations that deserve wider distribution. We are still too easily intimidated by our own individual shyness, preferring at times the wrong moment to sit in silence at the conclusion of the majority.

I merely want to begin this evening by telling you of faith that God does govern in on our affairs. As poorly nourished as my faith is it allows me to feel a sustaining hope, that we will conquer our fear, will feel our future connected to today's struggle and today's act, and will act upon that desire to make that future better. Uncertainty will always surround the possibility of tomorrow's decisions; all we have for sure is what we do today.

It is said of George Washington he "had learned the inmost secret of the brave, who train themselves to contemplate in mind the worst that can happen and in thought resign themselves -- but in action resign themselves never."

I do not believe we can or should be constantly as brave as Washington. Still, I believe we must occasionally, occasionally be brave if we want to experience the joyful feeling of freedom, which only comes when we are no longer afraid of losing everything. The unselfish act is still the most pure and is still the most powerful.

I have been a beneficiary of your unselfishness. You -- through your labor, your money, and your support -- have made it possible for me to win two statewide elections. Like all successful jockeys, I have ridden very good horses.

Tonight I would like to tell you what I see as I stand upon your shoulders, I will tell you about the future of my dreams.

I see the United States of America in a world increasingly dedicated to peace and to freedom. I see human beings rejecting the path of war and tyranny, choosing instead the much more difficult way towards individual liberty, justice, and the rule of law.

We here in the United States have a duty to lead the way. The strength of our military force and America's willingness to put our lives on the line for freedom is a powerful reminder to those whose ambition is tempted to become aggression. While I do not see America in the world as a police force standing alert to the next international 911 call, I have witnessed the good our military has done and see no other nation capable of doing it.

In 1989, in January, when I swore before God and you that I would do my best to uphold the Constitution of the United States of America, I felt much more doubt about our ability to use force to turn or keep this world's dictators from power. My personal experience with the Vietnam War made me deeply skeptical towards those who spoke about America's role defending liberty and freedom. Vietnam was the great betrayal of my life. While some America leaders may have acquired peace along with honor in 1975, my acquisition was of a much lower order.

During the past two years I have witnessed great events which has reduced my skepticism to near zero. In November 1989, I was in Berlin shortly after that great symbol of oppression, the Berlin Wall, was breached. I heard our ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany, a crusty diplomat not given to sentimental expressions, Vernon Walters, how he and East Germans cried together a few weeks earlier when the first break occurred.

Two evenings after that, I was standing in the Square of St. Wenceslas in Prague, Czechoslovakia, along with 250,000 other Czech citizens, who had come to hear Alexander Dubek talk to them about freedom. Their freedom and their goals seemed particularly miraculous, since their earlier fight for freedom had been crushed in 1968 by the tanks of the Soviet Union.

In 1990, perhaps most miraculously of all, I represented you in a joint session of Congress where we heard three remarkable former prisoners come to stand before Americans and simply say thank you, thank you for your resolve and willingness to pay a heavy price. We heard Vaclav Havel, we heard Lech Walesa, we

heard Nelson Mandela, each in their own deeply moving way, acknowledged and express their gratitude for this nation's resistance to tyranny.

We did much more than simply defend our own borders or our own economic interests. We stood for the freedom of others and we stayed the course until freedom had been won. Make no mistake about this accomplishment: We paid dearly for it with lives and treasure. And make no mistake about it: The price was worth it.

In the Persian Gulf War, we did likewise. The economic arguments -- our threatened way of life, cheap oil, jobs -- did not persuade Americans to put in on the line again. No, it was the terror of Saddam Hussein against the people of Kuwait and the people of Iraq which moved us to action. Even those of us who argued a different approach -- who believed then and now that a different strategy and a different objective would have produced a more desirable outcome -- agree on this: The men and women of Operation Desert Storm are real American heroes.

The essence of victory, however, is much more than the extraordinary effectiveness of our military forces. Our victory began when we reversed a 12 year relationship with Iraq's dictator. This relationship, the basis of which was Iraq's oil wealth and our hatred of the Ayatollah Khomeini, is a bitter mirror image to the noble effort in Eastern Europe.

The victory -- which is not yet complete -- had its origin in our resistance to the tyranny of a dictator. When we imposed economic sanctions in August we sacrificed real economic interest -- grain sales, technology sales, and sales of military equipment.

This lesson should guide us to do likewise for the People's Republic of China. The Communist dictatorship in China has increased its abuse of human rights and its sale of weapons of mass destruction since President Bush tried to keep them close after the killings in Tiananmen Square two years ago. If we rationalize our economic cooperation now, we will not make matters better; we will make them worse.

In 1991, the widening of freedom's perimeter seems inexorable and it seems almost effortless, but it never has been, and it is not now. The only way the circle can be expanded is through our vigorous and unselfish efforts.

America simply cannot stop leading. In this regard, I must tell you that the image from Desert Storm which impressed me most was not the homecoming of the emir of Kuwait, it was not even the homecoming of American soldiers. No, for me the most moving moment was the homecoming of the Kurdish people, who had been driven from their homes by Saddam Hussein's army after we had begun our victory celebration. In many ways the decision to deploy American forces to southern Turkey and northern Iraq was more risky and noble than the liberation of Kuwait itself.

America simply cannot stop leading. When the Statue of Liberty was presented to us by the people of France, we could afford to simply open our shores to those tired masses yearning to be free. Now, our obligation is much more difficult, and is much greater. I believe our best course to avoid the blood-shed of war is to clearly and forcefully oppose the world's remaining

despots. Non-violent resistance now -- on behalf of the people of the Soviet Union, on behalf of the people of China, Vietnam, Cuba, North Korea, Iraq, Syria, and regrettably even Kuwait -- will be heard and will embolden those who need, above all else, a friend and ally.

We know from experience of our own struggles the danger of the demagogue who promises easy victory at the front door while delivering a constant supply of slavery from the back. America must speak and act in defense of the universal rights of all Mankind for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

The greatest opportunity that I see right now, and perhaps the one that we stand the greatest chance of missing, is the need for our words and deeds in the Soviet Union. I believe we should move quickly to change the nature of our relationship with this nuclear super-power from one of nuclear confrontation to one of partnership. I believe the purpose of this partnership would be two-fold: one, to assist the Soviet Union to make the transition to liberal democracy and free enterprise and secondly, to reach agreements which would drastically reduce both their and our nuclear arsenal.

The Soviet Union should not, and we cannot afford it, be viewed as just another current issue. Their internal problems will become ours in a hurry: Their nuclear weapons are to Iraq's Scud missiles what Hiroshima was to the Gunfight at OK Corral. Further, the promise offered by an economically vibrant, and imaginative, and politically free Soviet Union must seem more realistic to us today, after the fall of the entire Warsaw Pact in less than 12 months time. We should also know, but we sometimes forget, how the rights of an individual are jeopardized. The trampling moment occurs in the middle of the night, the usurper will almost always hide behind our complacency. It is not our's, we will say, it is not the majorities whose freedom which is being denied, so we remain silent. And then, when the knock is on our door, it is too late to act.

I do not mean to over-dramatize this evening. The simple act of limiting freedom does not always lead us down the slippery slope towards totalitarianism. There are many instances where the restriction of freedom is a legitimate and necessary action by a community which wants to maintain its standard of order. However, I believe, and I believe passionately, that we must be ever vigilant to those times when the size and power of a public or private institution enable it to isolate and deny to a single person a freedom which does not violate the larger order of inalienable rights.

I believe such an instance occurred last week when the U.S. Supreme Court held that the Federal Government could impel a doctor to withhold information about medical procedures that are legal in every state. In this case the legal right happens to be the right of a woman to terminate a pregnancy. And it may be the most difficult moral issue facing Americans today. However, as long as that right is legal -- and within the limits established by the Supreme Court Decision of 1973, I believe that we have a right to defend women whose rights have been taken away. And I believe even if you hold the strongly held belief

that all abortions are wrong, as many do, we must allow outrage to fill our voices when our own government, our own government, takes away the legal rights of, in particular, five million low-income women.

The same is true with the Civil Rights Act of 1991. President Bush has used the power of his elevated voice to convince Americans this bill is a quota bill. Impartial observers note little difference between the Congressional Bill which the President vetoed last year and the one he says he will support.

However, for the past 20 years the economic pie has been shrinking for middle-income Americans. Thus, a label which would not have worked in the early 1970s, when Richard Nixon imposed quotas in Philadelphia, imposed quotas in federal government hiring and contracting. Today, unfortunately, it's a political hit. Today, unfortunately, the President can divide us on an issue of great importance, and can make us believe that it's wrong to protect the rights of an individual.

We, most of us here tonight whose rights are not affected, whose job rejection had rarely caused us to wonder if the reason was the color of our skin, should not sit on the sidelines during this debate. Our voices must be heard in support of laws which enable us to achieve a society where all of us have a crack at succeeding.

I believe we should pay attention to the difficulties, the current difficulties that, in particular, young working people have succeeding in America today. I believe it will not change with a single piece of legislation, it will be much more difficult because in many ways we do not seem to feel the crisis, the changes in the fundamentals of our economy, in particular the fact that we are now indeed a part of the global marketplace where the relationship between skill level and economic status are direct and unforgiving.

We have treated these with political ointments or short term sedatives. It is also fair to say that, unfortunately and most regrettably, some of our remedies have in fact made the patient sicker.

Success, and make no mistake about it, is much more difficult to achieve today. When I graduated from Lincoln Northeast High School in 1961, it was still true in 1971, it was possible -- what 75% of my graduating class did -- to get a job in Lincoln, Nebraska, and to have that job support a family. The income from that job was sufficient to buy a house, you could get a three-year car loan in 1961, you could afford health care in 1961, you could afford to set a little money aside so that your children, if they chose to, could go to college. That no longer is the case in 1991. Today, both mother and father have to work as hard as one did in 1961, and still they do not earn enough to be as far as they were 30 years ago. Success is much more difficult to achieve, and we as Democrats and we as Americans must pay attention to why this is happening. I do believe that we can change things, and I see the way for us to change the directions of the American economy from one of diminishing returns to the labor of the majority, and increasing concern for the loss of income to lower skilled workers in Mexico to take one

recent example. My view is that we should not look to specialized short-term programs that promise much but deliver little, other than slightly higher taxes.

My view is that we should look to new generalized, structural changes which offer individuals the opportunity and the incentive to add value to themselves with personal study, hard work, and savings. My view is that we should appeal to the best in human beings by urging them to respond to that which makes them unique: their own conscience.

There are four areas where Americans should press and press for all their energy for change, where change would benefit all of us.

The first is in health care. You have heard me describe my Health USA proposal before. I will give you the five guiding principles one more time: We must have the means to control cost at the national level, at the business level, and, most importantly of all, at the individual level. Secondly, we establish simply a right to health care to all Americans, not differentiated by income, not differentiated by age, but simply a right to health care for all Americans. Thirdly, we must break the connection between the workplace and the eligibility for health care. Fourth, we must establish simplicity as a value. Fifth, we must provide politicians in particular but patients as well, to prevent sickness, illness, and accidents before they happen.

The second area for me is education. For those of us who care about our children and struggled long and hard for answers. I heard my sister say in the campaign -- I see she has returned after doing the damage unknown to us at the moment over in the Nebraska Unicameral -- I heard her say in her campaign in 1990 something so simple that it escaped me, that in many ways we already know what to do, we're just not doing it. This is particularly true when it comes to taking care of our children at an early age. In education, at least that I hold, is that the true measure of accountability -- which does not reveal itself easily to tests -- is the ability of an individual in the workplace of today and tomorrow. Even if our students' tests move to first in the world in math and science, what good will this do us if they are unable to apply this test taking ability on the job? Any diploma which does not result in an ability to raise a person's standard of living is the educational equivalent of fool's gold.

What would I do? I'll give you five things that I would do. First, I say with all due respect to my friends in the educational community that consider this to be a mistake, I'd get rid of the U.S. Department of Education. Rather than giving education more status, this Federal Bureaucracy had given status to a handful of individuals who have talked about change but have been unwilling to fight for it.

I would create instead an alternative Federal Education Agency with the resources and the power to contract directly with local public-private partnerships, which have a fully accountable plan of action to improve school performance.

Thirdly, I would fully fund WIC, Head Start, and Maternal and Infant Health Care Block Grants. It is clear to me, as my

sister, Senator Rasmussen, said in the campaign, that the problem of preparing American children to enter school isn't that we don't know what to do. The problem is simply that we are not doing what we know in fact works

Fourth, I would encourage with money and regulatory relief local efforts to change curricula to accommodate the needs of students who are certain they will directly go from high school into the workplace.

And last, I would encourage businesses to increase their valuation of learning, both on and off the job. Scholarships for post-high school training should be closely tied to the workplace, and closely tied to the community.

The third thing I believe we can do to set our course in a better direction is to change our Federal tax system from an income based system to one that measures instead consumption, I propose a steeply progressive one. I am after all a Democrat and I believe our tax system should be progressive, and I propose a steeply progressive consumption tax which would create, in essence, an unlimited IRA. A system would place a premium on productive investments, stimulate long term growth, reduce the cost of current capital, and most importantly of all, help Americans re-learn the magic of compounding interest rates.

The fourth thing that I would do would be to present Americans a package of Government infrastructure investments which must demonstrably have a positive impact on our capacity to produce. Top candidates of mine fall into five categories.

The first is transportation -- the senior senator from Nebraska knows that the chairman of the Surface Transportation Committee in the Department of Commerce for our Commerce Committee, we had a good plan, Sam Skinner had a good plan, but before he could present it, it was run through the mill over the Office of Management and Budget, instead of being a plan now that prepares us for the 21st century, it is at best mediocre. We need plan for our transportation that prepares us for the economy in the 21st century and we simply do not have it today.

The second area for me in infrastructure is in communication. I believe our regulation and spending must be directed to a new objective of putting a learning work station in every American home. I say with all due respect from my friends in the broadcast industry, you have done such a tremendous job of applying the most powerful tool of communication and technology that I do not want my 14- and 16-year-old children to watch what it is that you broadcast.

The third thing that I believe we must target as infrastructure is technology. As frightened as many of us are of technology, as concerned as we are about what technology sometimes does to our lives when we misapply it, I believe the emerging technologies of tomorrow upon which tomorrow's jobs depend are much more than simple basic and applied research.

The fourth area of infrastructure for me is housing; still and always the symbol of the American dream.

And the last, and for me as a Nebraska senator, would be most important of infrastructures is American agriculture. Our soil, our water, our farm and ranch families are still the most important and the only source of new wealth in America.

I believe these four changes would drastically increase American productivity and would dramatically improve the future living conditions of America's families. In each case we must set our sights on the future -- on the lives of our children, not just on our lives -- and then sail fearlessly and with great faith towards a new prosperity.

My vision for America also includes two important qualitative, non-economic items. First, I believe we should struggle to value the creative capacity of human beings. When we build or invest, we should try to inspire a response which enables us to see the hand of a divine and guiding spirit. And secondly, we must also fight for truth and justice even when the consequences of our discoveries are unsettling and life changing.

I believe strongly, and I believe unshakably in the capacity of human beings to do much more than merely endure or survive. I believe we have an obligation to organize our government programs and our private efforts so that the dignity of all men and woman is protected and enhanced. We can and must fight to end the hope-ending pall of economic poverty.

However, all of us know that this kind of poverty does not compare with the poverty of the spirit which no amount of material goods can cure. To end spiritual poverty, we must abide by the old lessons of the Golden Rule and the Sermon on the Mount. No Federal, State, or Local government, no public or private institution can help us in that regard.

So to you, my fellow Democrats and friends, I close in the same manner in which I began. To find the courage to make our government better for all of us, to approach the paradise of our dreams, and to make certain we do not lose our way, we must trust and trust deeply that God does govern in the lives of men and women.