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NEWS

U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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REMARKS OF SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER BOB
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NATIONAL GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION
TULSA, OKLAHOMA

I know you have already heard from my former colleague, Vice President Gore, and your former colleague, President Clinton. First, I want to join the President in recognizing the tragic loss of your former colleague and my friend George Mickelson. Governor Mickelson was a good man and a distinguished public servant with a bright future, and I know he is missed here as he is in his native South Dakota.

As the Republican Leader of the U.S. Senate, I am always eager to visit with our nation's Governors. You and I share a common concern about the direction of the federal government. That concern is rooted in our mutual interest in seeing the federal government focus on its most fundamental responsibilities -- to insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty, for ourselves and our children and generations yet to come.

Too often, however, the federal government loses its focus, dreaming up new ways to involve Washington -- by federal mandates -- into the daily lives of the states and your citizens. I noticed in a Sunday newspaper that one of you declared "the problem we've got are members of Congress who don't have a clue what's going on in the states and who consistently try to solve their problems by pushing the burdens and the responsibilities back to the states." While I do have a clue, I certainly don't have all the answers.

But one thing I do know is that the federal government must do a better job of fulfilling its fundamental responsibilities. This decade of the 1990's presents us with a unique opportunity to do just that, if we want to secure our claim to what can be called "the American Century."

The American Century

In 1941, just as World War II was about to commence, it was Henry Luce who declared that this was "the American Century." He was right in two ways:

America was a large, powerful force for good and for freedom in the great struggles of our century, and the American way of freedom, democracy, and capitalism has been the model and dream of people everywhere oppressed by tyranny.

But, this destiny has never been inevitable. And, as we stand here today, it is not assured. Our experiment in government, our contributions of science and technology, our pioneering of industry and mass production, do not in themselves guarantee that we will indeed live up to the promise of the American Century.

Our duty now -- those of us entrusted by the citizens with the general welfare of America -- is to secure that place in the history of this century, and to leave our United States prepared for what might become known as "America's Millennium."

Much remains to be done in these seven and a half years. There must be a new commitment to the most basic principles upon which America was founded -- a government secure in its future by providing security for its people. Too many have come to look to government not just to secure the blessings of liberty, but to also hand them out. Yet, it's ironic that the American people have grown more cynical about government as the government has grown larger. As the government promises more and more, the people have come to respect it less and less. So, as the challenges ahead are great, our commitment must be greater.

I'm not here just to review the Congressional agenda, but I do want to touch on several matters that I know are of concern to you.

(MORE)

Health Care

Yesterday, President Clinton discussed one of our greatest challenges -- health care reform.

I agree with the President, reforming our nation's health care system should be a bipartisan effort. And considering that there is so much that we agree upon, I am hopeful it will be. Just about everyone agrees on the primary goals of reform: to reduce health care costs; to ensure that everyone has access to affordable health care; to create a fair insurance system, so people don't have to worry about being rejected when they are sick or when they change jobs; to maintain our current high quality of care, and to improve access to it in rural and inner city areas; to reduce paperwork and administrative costs; and, to fix the medical malpractice laws to get bad lawyers out of the doctors office, and to get bad doctors out of the practice of medicine.

But, while we agree on the goals, we lack a consensus on how to solve our health care challenges. And the outline of the President's plan does raise genuine concerns for health care consumers, providers, taxpayers, businessmen and women, and yes, state governments. Our primary concern centers around the role of the federal government as a regulator, especially the prospect of the government imposing employer mandates. And if federal regulations mean a one-size fits all health care policy, there may be fewer opportunities for states to test approaches of their own. And so often, it is the states that are the major innovators in developing new solutions to old problems.

In the view of Senate Republicans who are working on proposals of our own, employer mandates would damage the economy, and hurt those who need help the most -- new hires, small businesses, and low income workers. That's not to suggest that we don't agree that we need to look at how best to share the responsibility between the public and private sectors on providing access. Like the administration, we also believe we must build on our employer-based private insurance system wherever possible.

Make no mistake, we all still have much to learn on this issue. After all, we have not yet heard from consumers, providers, businesses or Governors at Congressional hearings on this issue. But, considering the many areas of agreement we share, I remain hopeful that we will be able to overcome our differences in approach. However, there are already signs that "bipartisanship" may mean picking off just enough Republican votes to pass a plan, rather than a truly two-party effort. That's not the kind of bipartisanship I, or the American people, have in mind.

Education

To truly claim this as the American Century, we must have an education system second to none. As with health care and so many other paramount issues of this time, the states are lighting the way, and Washington must not derail your efforts. The six education goals you devised -- by working in a non-partisan manner -- set the national agenda for change in education for the rest of this century. They are based on the need for a community by community, school by school effort by parents, teachers, the localities and the states.

But, those goals are jeopardized in my view by a bill making its way through Congress. The House version seeks to reverse local control of our schools and impose what are called "national delivery standards," which would be overseen by a "National Education Standards and Improvement Council." In a nutshell, rather than concerning ourselves with whether our students are actually learning, the federal government could dictate class size, the number of computers per student, possibly even the textbooks to be used. That bill even prohibits any federal money from being used for national testing to determine if these new federal standards were doing any good.

It's a prescription for control and ruination by Washington, and we need bipartisan help in defeating it. While some of you would disagree, I believe the direction of education should be moving just the opposite way, toward initiatives like California's proposition 174, which would provide vouchers to parents so they could decide where to send their children. This competition in the field of education would certainly bring us more results than anything Washington would mandate.

Crime and Immigration

Yet, how can we expect our children to learn when so many of our schools and streets have become battlegrounds. The American Century cannot tolerate a violent crime rate that has increased 500% in the past 30 years. We cannot allow the young, the poor, the elderly, or

any other American to be terrorized by criminal predators. Two weeks ago, Republicans unveiled a major anti-crime initiative, and the President followed up with his own last week. And there's one major difference between the two that should be of interest to Governors of both parties. To keep career criminals off the streets, the Republican plan provides \$3 billion for prison construction, and \$2 billion of that would be used to construct ten regional prisons for both federal and state offenders. Those prisons would be available to states that adopt truth in sentencing laws, mandatory minimum sentences, pretrial detention and victims' rights laws. Furthermore, our bill proposes that \$1 billion would be used for matching grants to states for prison construction and operation.

Now, domestic security must also extend to our borders. America is a generous country, the land of opportunity. But, we are not a land of unlimited resources, and we can't allow our generosity to be compromised by an unchecked influx of illegal immigrants, who swell lines for public assistance and put new burdens on our state and local governments.

Small Business

No nation is secure in its hopes and dreams without economic security. In America, our economic security has always been driven by our private sector employers, led by small business men and women. Of the five million employers in America today, 4.5 million have fewer than 20 employees. Some 70% of all new jobs are created by these small businesses. Regrettably, when the federal government is not over-regulating the products manufactured by Main Street businesses, it is often overtaxing the very success that drives our economy.

You heard yesterday from John Motley of the National Federation of Independent Business, who laid out the real concerns of these Americans, these providers of jobs, have about the increased burdens being placed on them by the federal government -- their unfunded mandates. Adding even more to that burden is the last thing small businessmen and women need. That's one reason why Republicans fought so strongly against the tax bill just enacted. To protect job creation in America, we need to protect small business.

NAFTA

We are on the verge of taking a great stride toward enhancing our nation's economic security. I'm talking about the North American Free Trade Agreement, which I hope Congress will approve this fall. You understand as well as anyone how the American economy and the international economy are linked. You know how important foreign markets are for the products made in your states, for jobs, and for local economies. As a result, I know many of you have led trade and investment missions overseas -- some of you even have offices abroad. I also know NAFTA isn't perfect -- the U.S. didn't get all it wanted, but neither did Canada nor Mexico. However, Canada and Mexico are our first and third largest trading partners and represent growing markets that mean jobs -- jobs here in the United States. I believe a majority of Republicans are ready, ready to move quickly in approving NAFTA, before the 1994 election dashes all hopes of securing its passage. If NAFTA fails, we will have a new political term -- "borderlock" or "tradelock" -- and Korea, Japan and the European Community will be the winners.

Foreign Policy & American Leadership

If there has been one hallmark of the American Century to date, it has been our leadership on the world stage. To the benefit of the people of all of our states, the United States has led in times of war and in times of peace. Whether under Democrat or Republican administrations, since World War II we Americans have sought to bring our power and influence to bear on the side of freedom and democracy. During the Cold War, the United States stood at the helm of the North Atlantic alliance, guiding our allies through difficult decisions, keeping a unified front against the vast military might of the Soviet Union. American leadership and NATO unity paid off -- Eastern Europe was freed of its shackles and the Soviet state crumbled; more than 500 million people are free today largely as a result of unswerving U.S. leadership. These new states are building democracies and market economies with U.S. technical and financial assistance, and of course, inspiration. Many of these countries are already new markets for U.S. products and services. Now that the Cold War is over, there are those who would like to give up America's leadership role around the globe. The term "multilateralism" is no longer used to describe a means of implementing foreign policy, but as an excuse for

abdicating U.S. leadership.

We have already seen the effect of this "new" multilateralism in war-ravaged Bosnia-Herzegovina. While the United States hesitates from afar, the United Nations and the European Community have been engaged in diplomatic hand-wringing as a member state of the United Nations is being gobbled up -- defenseless because of an arms embargo which violates the very principles of the U.N. charter. Resolutions are passed, letters are sent, speeches are made and mediators are sent to Geneva to ratify on paper the aggression on the ground in Bosnia. If Lord Owen and Thorvald Stoltenberg get their way, the Bosnians will surrender 70% of their country while the United Nations bureaucracy and the European Community hail the new peace and pat themselves on the back. Any such settlement, will not only be an invitation to that brutal dictator in Belgrade, Slobodan Milosevic, to tighten his grip on the already suffering Serbian people and begin full-scale ethnic cleansing against Albanians in Kosova, but an invitation to other dictators and would-be aggressors who are lurking in the shadows of the former Soviet Union and elsewhere. How many thugs around the world will R.S.V.P. To that invitation? How many of these thugs have access to nuclear or chemical weapons?

There is no substitute for U.S. leadership and make no mistake about it, there will be a continued need for it. It doesn't mean we must police the world, on the other hand we cannot allow the principles of international law and order to be violated with impunity and watch silently as regional instabilities grow unchecked. Nor can we put false hope and high expectations into flawed institutions, especially the United Nations.

The bloated bureaucracy of the United Nations is incapable of taking swift, efficient and effective action -- even in matters where human lives are not at stake. Furthermore, the United Nations does not stand for the same values and principles the United States stands for. And, U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali is obsessed about being in charge, rather than about getting things done. Most recently, he demanded that the United States wait for his permission before NATO takes any action in Bosnia. Well, the last time I checked, the American people did not elect Boutros-Ghali to run U.S. foreign policy. And while it may be tempting to toss things on Boutros-Ghali's lap in view of the many domestic problems and challenges we face, we need to remember that American strength is derived not only from our economic power and military muscle, but from our leadership abroad. It is this leadership, so skillfully exercised by Republicans and Democrats since the second World War which provides us with leverage in international institutions and negotiations whether on diplomatic issues or trade issues. Moreover, it is American global leadership which has made the world safer and more prosperous -- not just for citizens of other countries, but for our own citizens.

So, as we approach the year 2000, we still have a big job to do to fulfill the promise of "the American Century." And that "we" doesn't just mean those of us in Washington, it means you, your state legislatures, the people of all of our states.

That job won't be easy. With approval ratings for Congress hitting rock bottom, the American people frankly aren't certain we can get the job done. But I'm an optimist. And working together, I am confident we can meet our challenges and make Americans proud, not more cynical about their government.

I speak for all my Senate Republican colleagues when I say that we look forward to working with you in the months and years ahead.

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