

# Remarks at the Annual Convention of Kiwanis International

**July 6, 1987**

It's wonderful to be with the Kiwanis again. Coming here, I was thinking back to the last time I addressed this gathering in person, and that was more than 20 years ago, back in 1964. So, let's promise each other something: that in the future we won't be such strangers. [Applause] A lot has changed in the last two decades. I remember the first time I was introduced to the Kiwanis, I was described as an "actor" and "spokesman for American business." Of course, that's how a lot of people still think of me. [Laughter] But I've never felt far from the Kiwanis. Since that day in 1964, I've watched Kiwanis International grow to include 315,000 members in 71 countries, bringing the Kiwanis ideal of service and charity to over 8,200 communities. Now, that's one kind of inflation I'm all for.

I've watched as your organization led the Nation in the fight against drugs back in 1969 -- even as others talked of tolerance and experimentation -- and you've been a leader in that fight ever since. With your help, America is winning. We're getting the message across that drugs are an evil, pure and simple, and we're convincing our children to say that magic word when it comes to drugs, to just say no. I can't help but insert something here. I don't know whether you know where that phrase came from about "Just say no." Nancy was speaking to some schoolchildren in Oakland, California, and a little girl asked a question about what do you do if someone offers drugs? Nancy said, "Just say no." And today there are over 12,000 Just Say No Clubs in schools across the United States.

But from the innumerable acts of personal caring and charity the Kiwanis perform to the clubs you sponsor in our nation's schools to instill the spirit of voluntarism in our youth, Kiwanis exemplifies the American tradition of neighbor helping neighbor. And then, of course, there are the Kiwanis public service billboards that line highways across the country. If you'll forgive this old actor, I just have to tell you it feels good to once again see my name up in lights. [Laughter]

And by the way, speaking of the spirit of voluntarism and your great generosity reminds me of a story about a friend from my show business days who couldn't have been more the opposite, the famously stingy Jack Benny. Jack was having lunch with another famous entertainer of the time, Edgar Bergen. In those days, Edgar Bergen and his dummy, Charlie McCarthy, were the biggest things on radio. Well, there was a group of show business types there, and after lunch when the check arrived, Benny picked it up, even though by that time his cheapness had become legend. Someone turned to him and said, "Jack, I'm surprised you asked for the check." Benny said, "So was I." [Laughter] "And it's absolutely the last time I'll ever have lunch with a ventriloquist." [Laughter] Well, after telling that, though, I have to make it plain that that was all part of the act. Jack wasn't really that way; indeed, he was the soul of generosity and kindness. The other was just part of the public performance, his act.

The great generosity of the Kiwanis is what's become legend. The services you perform reach beyond the direct beneficiaries to embrace all of America in a community of caring. You represent America's heart -- good, strong, knowing. You give generously, and you give well,

often putting comparable government programs to shame. You know the difference between private charity and public programs, that with personal giving there are two winners: the person who gives as well as the person who receives -- and very often it's the giver who receives the most precious gift. Personal, private charity humanizes society. It makes us more aware of each other, of our hopes and needs, of our sorrows and joys. It makes us all more compassionate. The Kiwanians have demonstrated this compassion and caring over and over again in thousands of communities, and for that reason I'm today proud to announce that you have been selected to receive my Private Sector Initiative Citation award for all that you've done to fight school-age drug abuse. Nancy and I congratulate you all on a job well done.

And because you exemplify what is best about our private life, I want to talk to you today about what we must do to protect that way of life. I want to enlist your support in the campaign I began on July 3d on the steps of the Jefferson Memorial. There I called on America to complete the work of the author of the Declaration of Independence with an Economic Bill of Rights that will restore to Americans the freedoms our Founding Fathers assumed we would always have and protect us and future generations from the encroachments of big government in our lives. Make no mistake, we face a clear and present danger in Congress. The momentum of big government, which we've managed to hold back these last few years, has only been gathering steam, getting ready to burst through all the restraints that we've imposed upon it.

Let me give you just a few examples. First, the so-called budget process -- an article in the Washington Post recently described a part of that process. The article was entitled "A Member's Menu for Airport Pork," and it described how one of the members of the House Public Works and Transportation Committee circulated a "fill in the blanks" form among the members, asking them to sign up for their favorite pork-barrel project. According to the Post, few could resist grabbing -- and I quote -- "a piece of the action."

Piece of the action? That sounds more like a movie review of "The Untouchables." [Laughter] A piece of the action -- like the UDAG program that will spend millions of your tax dollars to build luxury hotels, restaurants, and condominiums; or the so-called demonstration projects in the highway bill that don't demonstrate anything but the ability of some in Congress to bring home the bacon. A piece of the action -- sometimes the waste is absurd, like the 1,000 acres of underwater property the Federal Government is planning on buying. The shameful secret of the farm programs is that one of the biggest recipients of agricultural subsidies in America isn't even an American. He's the Prince of Liechtenstein, and he happens to own a few hundred thousand acres in Texas.

It seems that everybody is getting a piece of the action, and that's why when the House-Senate conference committee agreed on a budget recently it included \$41 billion in increased domestic spending with essential defense programs held captive to a \$64 billion tax hike. It's always the American people who are expected to foot the bill with higher taxes. Now, I promise this: From now till the day I leave office, I won't hesitate for one moment to use my veto power. And if a tax hike makes it to my desk, I'll veto it in less time than it takes Vanna White to turn the letters V-E-T-O. [Laughter]

But what happens in the years ahead? Can we always count on the occupant of the Oval Office to stand fast against this tide? Will the next President hold the line against tax hikes and big spending? And even if he's determined, the fact is, the Presidential veto power has been seriously weakened in the last 15 years. The checks and balances our Founding Fathers designed into our Constitution have been put awry by a Congress unwilling to give up its spendthrift ways.

Later in life, when Jefferson examined our Constitution, he found one glaring omission: a failure to include an article in the Constitution that would prohibit government borrowing, what we've come to call deficit financing. His concern ran deeper than his well-founded fears of profligate government. From history and experience, he knew that it was in the economic realm that the oppression of government was most often keenly felt. He knew that a government with no limit on borrowing was a government with no limit on its power over the individual, that this power to borrow was like a wedge that could be driven between the individual and his God-given rights of freedom and property.

When I signed the tax reform bill, I said that these last decades had seen an expansion and strengthening of our civil liberties, but that our economic rights have been too often neglected, even abused. Well, it's time that abuse stopped. And that's why we're calling for an Economic Bill of Rights that will complement and strengthen Jefferson's political Bill of Rights. So, Congress: Sit up and take notice. The people are entitled to the fruits of their labor and shall not be burdened by excessive taxation. Therefore, more than a mere majority of the Congress will be required to raise taxes under our plan.

Let me just say something here. On one of the talk shows over the weekend, I heard someone complaining that to ask for more than a 50 percent plus one vote to raise taxes was somehow pulled out of the blue and unusual and didn't make sense. Well, it's not that unusual. Why should 50 percent of the Representatives plus one be able to pass something as important as more money out of your pockets, while there were 50 percent less one who didn't want that to happen? And it isn't that unusual. When I was Governor of California, it took two-thirds of the legislature to approve the budget. And in voting bond issues, which is government borrowing, it took 60 percent of the vote, not 50 percent plus one. We're a federation of sovereign States, and sometimes I think the Federal Government should take more of a close look at how well some of the States are doing and improve itself accordingly.

But what we intend is that the future of succeeding generations shall not be mortgaged to the national debt through deficit spending. The Congress shall be required under our plan to balance the budget each and every year. Now, I grant you that can't happen in a single year. To those who say, "Well, why don't you present a budget?" -- no, when for 50 years or more, we have been deficit spending and building that debt. The deficit is to the point that it cannot be undone in 1 year without causing great hardship to a number of people in the country. So, we have to set a pattern, as the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings bill did, of each year reducing that deficit to a designated date, at which point then the budget must, by Constitution, remain balanced.

Special interest legislation shall not be hidden from the people. The President shall have the right to veto individual appropriations. In other words, the President shall have the line-item veto.

Truth in Federal spending -- Congress shall specify how every single new program is to be paid for.

The people are entitled to pursue their own livelihood, free from excessive regulation and tax-subsidized competition. And I will appoint a Presidential commission to spearhead efforts to privatize public-owned enterprises.

The burden of government shall not be hidden from view. The Congress shall require that a financial impact statement accompany each bill, specifying the effect on economic growth, employment, and competition overseas.

Educational development, creativity, and initiative will be fostered by diversity in our educational system.

Welfare programs must not harm the structure of family and community. Through the use of incentives, the Congress will seek to lift the least fortunate to independence and full participation in American life and economy.

Free and fair trade will be encouraged. The Congress shall pass no measure that slows growth, shrinks markets, or destroys jobs by erecting high tariffs or other trade barriers.

And we shall take seriously the 5th and 14th amendment guarantees to "life, liberty, and property." Whenever government expropriates the use or value of private property, whether outright or through government regulations, owners will be justly compensated.

When I spoke before the Kiwanis those 23 years ago, I said we had come to a time for choosing. The choice was between freedom and increasing state control. "It is time," I said, "that we ask ourselves if we still know the freedoms that were intended for us by the Founding Fathers and if we will pass on to these young people the freedoms we knew in our youth, because freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. It has to be fought for and defended by each generation."

This is the recurrent challenge, the one from which we cannot shrink. Today we have the chance to write into the structure of the law guarantees of our so-much-abused economic freedoms, to ensure that this generation and the next will enjoy the fruits of their labor, will continue to live in a land of hope and opportunity where big government no longer blocks the doors to progress. We can proclaim this truth to be self-evident, that the American dream is our sacred birthright, that in this time for choosing, with one voice, we proudly choose freedom.

Thank you all very much. God bless you all.

Note: The President spoke at 11:06 a.m. in Hall A at the Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Vanna White, hostess of the television game show "Wheel of Fortune."