

PO BOX 004
TRENTON, NJ 08625

CONTACT: Jayne O'Connor
Wendi Patella
609-777-2600

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NEWS RELEASE

Governor Whitman Addresses National Press Club, Highlights the Work of Republican Governors

Gov. Whitman today told the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. that the nation's governors spent the past year moving the nation forward while Washington lost itself in the impeachment process.

In a speech titled "Republicans, Democrats, Feminists and Post-Impeachment Politics," the Governor spoke about how those most closely identified with the impeachment process, from the feminist movement to the Capitol Hill crowd, ended up scarred from it.

"While life in Washington came to a standstill, life went on around the country. Businesses created jobs. People left the welfare rolls. Charter schools sprang up. Crime rates continued to plummet," Gov. Whitman said. "That's because innovative governors and legislatures were attending to the people's business."

A text of the Governor's speech is attached.

REMARKS OF GOVERNOR CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN Republicans, Democrats, Feminists and Post-Impeachment Politics NATIONAL PRESS CLUB WASHINGTON, D.C. WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3, 1999

Thank you, Larry (Lipman), for that introduction.

Last November, in the midst of a major scandal in our nation's capitol, the voters of America made a statement.

I'm not talking about the ones who elected more Democrats to the House of Representatives, or who chose Chuck Schumer over Al D'Amato, or who put Gray Davis and Jeb Bush and Jesse Ventura in the Governor's mansion.

I'm talking about the remarkable number of American citizens who stayed home. The folks who contributed to our nation's lowest voter turnout since the middle of World War II.

The citizens of our nation have been turned off by the events of the past 12 months. They feel that Washington is out of touch with them and with what really matters to them.

Will that trend continue next year? Will we set a new mark for voter apathy?

As you think about that, consider the young Americans who will be voting (or perhaps not voting) in their first Presidential election next year.

For the most part, they have no meaningful recollection of the Reagan era. These Americans have only known one Pope and one Germany. They don't remember Tianenman Square or the hostage crisis, they don't know who Johnny Carson is or what UHF means.

This is a new generation with a very different set of experiences. And one of the freshest things on their minds will be the White House scandal and the impeachment process - not exactly the most inspiring introduction to American government and politics.

Today I will argue, however, that while the impeachment process has left scars on virtually everyone in the Washington establishment - from Republicans and Democrats to the media and the feminist movement - Americans young and old can take hope in the example that is being set in state houses across the country.

America is moving into the new millennium with a strong economy, schools showing signs of improvement, crime on the run, and welfare rolls on the decline because of what Governors and legislatures have achieved. And when the people seek out new leadership next year, there is good reason to look to governors to provide it.

First, let me offer a few thoughts on who won and who lost in the White House scandal and the impeachment process.

To be fair, I will begin with my own party. Republicans emerged with a popular image rivaling that of the Kathy Bates character in Stephen King's "Misery" - a perception that we are all mean-spirited, vindictive, and obsessed.

I've gotten a lot of flak for making that kind of observation, but it's true that we are being perceived this way. Americans as a whole are sick of the whole scandal, and they blame Republicans for dragging it on so long.

Consider who lost their jobs because of the scandal. Newt Gingrich. Bob Livingston. Several other members of Congress. All of them Republican. Yes, my party still controls both houses, and that's important, but we were hurt.

Democrats survived, and in some ways flourished. They improved their numbers in the House. Some were even perceived as rising above the scandal. This despite the absurdity of one hour condemning the President's actions on the House floor and the next hour running to the White House lawn to charge that Republicans have been overly partisan.

I share the frustration that Bill Bennett expressed in his article pointing out that while Democrats throughout Congress used words like "indefensible" and "unforgivable" to describe the President's actions, not a single Democratic leader asked him to resign.

The media did not enjoy their greatest day. This was a tough call for journalists because the very story or allegation your judgment tells you to ignore as irrelevant and inappropriate makes its way onto 24-hour news outlets and - whether you like it or not - changes the dynamic of the scandal.

On the other hand, I think the media saturation the story received wore on the public's interest and patience and may have contributed to the country's desire to move on.

In fact, last week, the managing editor of the New York Times explained that his paper was hesitant to cover the Juanita Broaddrick story in part because, as he put it, "we've all got a bit of scandal fatigue."

As I see it, feminists also suffered damage. Those who spoke out forcefully against Clarence Thomas and Bob Packwood were nearly silent on Bill Clinton, even as the President's legal team attacked his female accusers with the worst kind of character assassination. I fear that this silence sends the message that if you do good things for women as a group, it doesn't matter how you treat women as individuals.

You have to be consistent in condemning patterns of behavior that demean women. Feminists have a challenge in regaining a sense of consistency. And it seems feminist leaders are starting to get tough on

the President. But is it a case of "too little, too late"? Clearly, like many of us, feminists are still grappling with how to move on.

Ironically and amazingly, the only two people who "improved" because of the scandal were Bill and Hillary Clinton. She is enjoying more public adulation than ever - and has been virtually crowned the winner of a race she hasn't entered in a state in which she's never lived.

His approval ratings are phenomenal, and they have been throughout the past several months - even while most Americans believe he lied to us and to the grand jury. I don't know what this suggests we teach our kids about personal responsibility, other than that a really good, artfully worded apology can help you avoid suffering the consequences of your actions every time.

The real question we should be asking is whether the American people gained or lost during the past year. The short answer is that, although the Constitution worked, we suffered.

We were misled and embarrassed. Worse, a process created by the President's stonewalling cost us months of important work on issues confronting the country.

But while life in Washington came to a standstill, life went on around the country. Businesses created jobs. People left the welfare rolls. Charter schools sprang up. Crime rates continued to plummet.

That's because innovative governors and legislatures were attending to the people's business.

Governors like Oklahoma's Frank Keating, who became his state's first governor to propose and achieve a cut in the state income tax rate. He also cut the sales tax, estate tax, and unemployment tax as well.

Governors like John Engler in Michigan, where student tests scores are going up after he improved standards and revolutionized the way they fund public schools.

All over the country, governors - the majority of them Republicans - are making a difference.

Tommy Thompson set the standard for welfare reform. His ideas have been copied by other states and by the federal government, and with good reason: Wisconsin's welfare rolls have dropped by 90 percent.

In North Carolina, Jim Hunt created an award-winning program that helps working families provide their kids with preventive health care and affordable, high-quality child care.

In Texas, George W. Bush has helped clear away red tape so that churches, synagogues, and other faith-based groups can address social problems without undue government interference.

My neighbor to the north, George Pataki, signed laws ending parole for violent felons and restoring the death penalty. New York's murder rate has fallen by 45 percent, and violent crime is falling at twice the national rate.

My neighbor to the west, Tom Ridge, worked with Pennsylvania's legislature on a Land Recycling Program that makes redeveloping brownfields a feasible, even attractive, option. In the 16 years leading up to the new program, only 10 sites had been cleaned up statewide; since then, 350 sites have been cleaned up, creating 13,000 jobs in the process.

Of course, we in New Jersey have been doing these kinds of things as well, whether it's our 17 tax cuts or rigorous new academic standards or report cards on each HMO's performance.

And I'm especially proud that the voters approved, by a 2-to-1 majority, my plan to preserve 1 million acres of open space and farmland, the most significant quality of life program our state has ever

undertaken.

We are getting things done because we are listening to the people we serve. We understand that businesses need government that stimulates, not suffocates. We understand that citizens need government that puts law-abiding families first. And, perhaps most important, we know that government doesn't always know best.

Being Governor may be the best job I could ever have. You have the ability to effect change. And you're close enough to the people you serve to see that change make a difference in their lives.

I think of the woman who sought me out and hugged me at a train station, saying that she was a welfare recipient who was now on her way to a job.

I picture the school children I have seen communicating with students across the state or interacting with our Liberty Science Center through technology we helped put in their classroom.

I recall the many parents who told me they were voting for my open space plan to give their grandchildren a chance to enjoy the New Jersey they know and love.

And I will never forget the gentleman who fought our efforts to move people with developmental disabilities from institutions into community settings. After his adult son made the transition to a group home, his opposition became strong support as he saw his son blossom socially and emotionally.

These are the things that matter. The security of walking down a safe street. The opportunities that come when you are able to keep more of what you earn, or can find a better job because you have earned a diploma that means something. The comfort of knowing that the farm in your community will remain open land 50 years from now.

Whether Congressman A ever cheated on his wife does not make a difference to a family struggling to put their kids through college.

Whether Candidate B ever smoked marijuana does not matter to the mid-career worker who doesn't know whether a Social Security check will be there when she retires.

And whether President C feels sufficient remorse about his misdeeds isn't going to make health care more affordable for the working poor.

American citizens want leadership on the issues that matter. They want results. They want government once again to be truly "for the people."

My advice to a nation hungry for leaders: look to the states.

I'm proud of what governors across the United States are accomplishing for the families we serve. I'm confident that as the scandal recedes into the background of American political life, people will see that our nation still has plenty of outstanding leaders who not only care about their real-life concerns but are making an impact.

Who knows? Maybe some of those stay-home voters of 1998 will make the difference in the elections of 2000.

Thank you.