

Mayor Gavin Newsom

Transcript of Remarks to the Fresno Jefferson Jackson Dinner

Wednesday, July 29

Thank you! Thank you for that introduction. Thank you for reminding me that my first and most important job was delivering orthotics for a podiatrist in the Bay Area. It may not have been the most glamorous job I've had but it taught me a lot of discipline and good work ethic and taught me what I didn't want to do for a living. And it's probably foremost why I'm here today.

Thank you for the invitation, thank you for following up with me, and thank you for threatening that if I didn't come here Jerry Brown would be speaking tonight.

I'm blessed to be here. I started my day down in the southern part of the state and I'm very pleased to be joined by one of our state senators, the chair of my campaign for governor, senator Alex Padilla, thank you.

We had our twentieth town hall meeting down in the San Bernardino County last night. We've been up and down the state and have been here in Fresno on multiple occasions now, and had one of our first town hall meetings here in Fresno and I had the chance to meet a number of you and I'm very thankful that I've been invited back.

It was interesting, I was listening to Pat and I was reminded of my first introduction to politics up here in Fresno, and it was a rather personal introduction. Your former Mayor, Allen Autry, in 2004 made sure that I got a warm welcome in the form of a protest on the steps of city hall here in Fresno, protesting what we were doing on back then on the steps of city hall in San Francisco. And I bring this up for no other reason than to say that I had a wonderful half hour this morning on his radio show, and I've actually come to admire and respect him even if we don't see eye to eye on issues. I think it's

important to reach out and have this kind of dialogue and I was very appreciative that he afforded that opportunity to me on his show today. Indeed we are in a much better place than we were in 2004. Its interesting, that initial introduction was only followed up by subsequent protests he held against me when I arrived in Fresno, to try to get the California Stem Cell Institute to locate in the northern part of the state and he was none too pleased with that. We didn't have a chance to work through those issues this afternoon, but hopefully next time.

My point in this is that I recognize that we have a very diverse state. And I recognize that in that diversity is our strength. And I couldn't be more proud of that diversity. When I think about what's good and right for the state of California it's the fact that by and large that we not only tolerate diversity, we by and large celebrate that diversity. Think about what's going on all over the world. Nations are literally being torn apart by racial and ethnic controversies that clearly fuel fanaticism and terrorism. Here in California we are one of the most diverse states in one of the most diverse democracies in the world. And we can say that for the most part, people are living together and advancing together and trying to struggle to prosper together across every conceivable difference. And so, in the spirit of those differences, those interesting differences, let us not forget that the framework that defines the best of the Democratic Party, that frames the best of Jefferson, and Jackson and Roosevelt, and Kennedy, is that we're a party that will unite around those differences and focus on the common humanity, the common values that we share together. It's in that spirit that I'm here tonight and it's in that spirit that I've engaged in this odyssey, this race for governor of California. It's also in the spirit of not just being a dreamer, but a doer. The spirit that I think defines the best of a state that has always tried to be on the leading and cutting edge of new ideas; a state of entrepreneurs and innovators. A state that wants to be out front, not only identifying problems but solving problems. Pat referenced some of those problems we've tried to

solve in my capacity and role as mayor of San Francisco. And I believe that you deserve and should demand much from your next governor. It's no longer good enough for politicians to come up and talk about problems and identify them and eloquently explain them away. We need leadership that begins to tackle those problems and solve them and have the courage to go out and again find ways, find solutions, and find opportunities to get things done.

I'm one of those people that got a little frustrated a few years ago at a lot of these Jefferson Jackson dinners. Frustrated with not just some of the speakers but with myself. Because I came up and I started giving speeches like this, "Its time in our great city and state and county, for universal healthcare. " And people would naturally applaud. And they would say yes, it is time for universal healthcare. We would walk out and they would say, "That was a fine speech. Its wonderful that you believe in those principles." Months would go by and years would go by, and I realized that more people were uninsured, more people were frustrated, more and more citizens' heads were shaking, thinking things weren't ever going to change. I remember stuffing envelopes for Michel Dukakis when he ran for president and I remember lamenting at the time that there were just over thirty million Americans without health insurance. How is this possible? In the world's wealthiest democracy, that we would allow tens of millions of our citizens go without health care. I remember a few years later when we hit thirty-five million, then forty million. Even under the Clinton administration it reached just shy of forty-two million, only to go through the Bush years to find those numbers increase year in and year out. We had democratic legislatures in California. We had a Democratic governor in California. The rolls of the uninsured in the state continued to grow. There are more uninsured Americans in California than in any other state in our nation. The estimates are around 6.7 million of the forty seven million without health care in this country are Californians. So all the rhetoric in the world hasn't solved this

problem, all the glorious rhetoric particularly from our Party. Our Party is better than this.

In our city, rather than be part of this problem I was compelled by obligation by my own ethic and sense of responsibility and accountability to begin to address it and do something about it. San Francisco is the only county, not just in the state of California, but the only county in America that has advanced a universal health care plan regardless of preexisting conditions. This can be done in every county in California; this can be done in this state and this country. Ours is a public plane, yes a public option, creating real competition for the insurance companies. Our program provides real choices, five of the biggest hospitals in the state participating in the plan, fourteen private clinics participating in the plan, 13 public clinics participating in the plane. And just this month the largest HMO in America, Kaiser Permanente just partnered with our plan. It is not perfect, and there is a lot of arguing. But what I'm arguing is we can do more, we can do better, than just identifying problems and walking away. That's the leadership we need in this state.

You recognize that we're off course. You recognize that we're moving in the wrong direction. Democrats and Republican are united in these views. You recognize that it's not better to fail more efficiently in California, or even to argue to fail more efficiently. We need to order a magnitude of change. We need real reform, not just with our health care system, but real reforms with our public education system in this state. And Pat brought this up, and I'm following up with that introduction. We did the same thing in our city, with big budgets deficits mind you, and incidentally our health care is delivered without any new big bureaucracy being created, without any general tax increase, and without playing a system where we are forced into the courts and forced at each others throats in terms of fighting against our better interests. We did the same thing on education. We decided the best way to reform public education is to begin at the beginning. You cannot get serious

about the achievement gap, the opportunity gap, gaps that are disproportionate to the African American and the Latino American, unless you get serious about early childhood education. As a city, everyone came together to get across their differences, stepped up and stepped in. So we found resources, we had to make tough choices but we found the resources and we began the process of fully funding universal pre-school. Four years later we finally adopted the framework for every community, and now we have ubiquity and universality in terms of that access. We can do more; we can do better in this state. This is the best plan. You want to reduce truancy? You want to increase the graduation rates? You have to start there, beginning at the beginning, and we have done that. You will recall in your own school the great art programs? Some of you may remember those days. Remember when you had a nurse or doctor in your public school? Depending on your age you may not know those days even existed. I barely remember those days, about the time when they started to cut those programs. Well, again, you know we have a slogan for education, No Child Left Behind, that's left behind billions and billions of dollars. I know you know that these cuts are unacceptable coming from the governor, in terms of those cuts concerning education, but they have been coming for years and years and years. And we know we don't have enough support. Prop 98 isn't enough in terms of funding education. Again you know that, but what are we going to do about it. How are we going to take responsibility? Again, not just identify the problem and explain it away, but to actually begin to solve it. So again, in our city we said enough, we've got to stop this. We believe that dance and music and theater, and visual arts can actually build self-esteem. Give people the confidence and quality of imagination so we can begin to compete again. Let's fund it. So we have fully funded every child, every classroom, K through 12, comprehensive education. It's a question of priority, it's a question of what you value. We had huge budget deficits when we did it but it was a priority, we valued it. We are a lot wealthier state and San Francisco is a wealthy county. Do not allow the cynics to short change the capacity for real change in

the state of California. I remember that Michelangelo said, "The biggest risk isn't that we aim too high and miss, it's that we aim too low and reach it." Think about that. We have lowered the bar in this state. We have eliminated that sense of hopefulness and possibilities that define again the best of the state of California, a state of dreamers and doers, of entrepreneurs and innovators.

Our teachers are not photo ops. I'm getting a little concerned that we talk about valuing our teachers, but they tend to be photo ops for politicians during election season. But what we did is we went to the voters of San Francisco and established a partnership with our public schools called Partnership for Achievement, a memorandum of understanding, a legal framework to build this partnership on preschool and arts and to focus gain on the issue of wellness. And it was with that partnership that gave a renewed sense of possibility. That we went to the voters together, all of us. Labor big and small, people of all political stripes came together, crossed their differences, and we put an initiative on the ballot this time last year year. It passed overwhelmingly. It gave across the board five thousand dollar wage increases. But this was the important idea. It created the framework where our teachers can get two thousand dollar bonuses for teaching math and science, get an additional two thousand dollars for teaching at underperforming schools, and get an additional thousand dollar bonus for getting additional professional development. Take a five thousand dollar base wage increase and double it to ten thousand dollars. In return, because I recognize that we were all in this together, shared responsibility to reform and improve it. This was real reform. And it's the kind of performance in the spirit of partnership, not in the spirit of taking cheap shots at our public employees and saying that it's the teachers unions that aren't taking care of our kids or don't care about reform. That is very dangerous and I'm hearing more and more Democrats attacking our teachers and our teachers union because somehow it's more acceptable. You cannot reform unless you build

trust, and you cannot build trust unless you build partnerships. This is critical for the state.

See you all recognize, you all understand this, that we're not going to compete just with folks in Boston and Nevada, but folks in Bangalore and Beijing, unless we out educate. And we're not going to turn this economy around unless we out educate. And so the old system of K through twelve is as antiquated as our water system is in our state. We have got to change the framework from pre-K to sixteen. To focus on providing real opportunities, real access to community colleges and the California State University system and our UC system. And here's exactly what we do. Again, to say is not to do. I was at a graduation ceremony a few months ago and I had all these little six graders at city hall, it's a pretty amazing thing to get all these little six graders to pay attention, so I think you can appreciate it. These are kids that can't think past recess and they were all standing there because the head the California University system was there, the head of our own San Francisco State, our school board and business leaders and members of the county board of supervisors. These students were all handed a diploma, a certificate guaranteeing them access to the opportunity of a four-year education. Its called San Francisco Promise. Every single one of those kids was guaranteed that placement and guaranteed that financial support to completely reframe their expectations of themselves and reframe the family's expectation of what is possible. I always believe that once a mind is stretched, it can never go back to its original form. And once you change that brain you change the expectations. Once you change the expectations of yourself anything is possible.

Again the bar needs to be raised. We cannot meet those low expectations and call it success. We need to raise that bar, pre-k to sixteen--a new frame, a new narrative, and a new dialogue. That's how we turn this economy around. That's how we bring back the stature of this great state of California.

Again, if it can happen in a small city, it can happen in a larger county. If it can happen in a county, it can happen in the state of California.

But everywhere I go I hear people that say, "Boy, that message of yours Gavin, I wonder how it's going to play in Fresno?" So now, as I bring up the environment its like there are no environmentalists out here in Fresno, Which is rather insulting. It's insulting to the agriculture interest out here too. Its insulting to small farmers, its insulting to every single one of them. And there is that perception out there in some parts of the state, and we've got to change that perception. And this goes again to what I think we need to do with this state. We put together a local global climate action plan to roll back our green house gas emission levels 20% below 1990 levels by 2012. In essence what we did is went twice as far than what the Kyoto Protocol calls for. We just announced in September of last year 2008, third party independent registry, a group called Igly, came back with a report that we've already rolled back our green house gas emissions at least 6% below 1990 levels, we've already achieved that. And here's what I'm here to say, it was easy. It wasn't that complex. Most said that we were going to sacrifice jobs for the environment. Well that didn't take place, that never took shape. It was quite the contrary. We still have one of the lowest unemployment's rates of the big counties in the state of California. It actually grew our economy during those years and continues to. Remarkably as difficult as the contraction is, we are still out performing in relative terms because of our focus on our economy and our jobs and creating real opportunities. It's the most aggressive solar program in the country. We've increased our solar usage by over 450% in just twelve months. You want controversy? Gay marriage was not controversial, it was requiring composting in San Francisco. The reason we did it? Because I want to get our conversion rate to 100% People say, "Well, that's ridiculous." Well I can assure you that in 1996 when we laid out our plans back in my county board of supervisor days, we were at 35% recycling. Today we're at 75% recycling, the highest in the United

States of America. And every one of those recycling jobs is a green job. Every one of those jobs created because of our composting requirements is a green collar job. And were focused on work force training on twinning the issue of race and the environment. And may I indulge in this, this is critical, we need to frame the environmental question in a much deeper and meaningful way and attack the issue of poverty and attack the issue of environmental justice at the same time. Four out of five environmental waste dumps are in primarily minority communities. We have to address this. We've got to create the work force training programs, we've got to create the incentives, we've got to create the opportunities to address the fact that so many people have been locked out of this economy and make sure that they have the opportunity to be locked in to this new green economy.

The framework of this agenda is to address those issues at the same time, the issue of jobs in relation to the issue of poverty and in relation to the issue of race in relation to our environment. The most aggressive green building standards in the country. An aggressive effort to electrify our vehicles, converting all our bio-diesel, picking up fast oils and grease from restaurants, we're doing that, its called the FOG program. My point is that we need to raise the bar in terms of environmental efforts as well. AB 32 is a spectacular framework for environmental stewardship that puts us on the edge of leading. But it needs to be raised. And the next governor will decide the fate of our future of our environmental framework and in return, because California is a leader we must demonstrate that leadership at a much higher level, and will determine the level of environmental stewardship across this nation and the world. We need to recapture that leadership, again not just with a plan, but also in terms of the institution of that plan.

And finally, not to overindulge my welcome and your patience, I think the issue of poverty needs more attention. When we were here for that town hall, unemployment rate then was 36.6 % Its now over 50% There are parts all over this county where unemployment is also reaching 50% this is serious.

And I was talking at the table, again in the proud tradition of the Democratic Party we were talking about the fact that while that's acute, we've had these poverty rates seasonally for how many decades? I gave a speech in San Francisco's southeast sector, Hunter's Point, predominantly African American community; the old shipyards in San Francisco were still there when I first became mayor. And I thought it was a pretty good speech so I was appreciative when I got a standing ovation. I don't actually read speeches because I have that dyslexia that someone was joking about a moment ago. But I read the speech, and I went to the southeast sector in Sunnyvale in some housing projects out there. They gave that standing ovation because I described in detail the conditions, as they exist today. And then I said well I have a confession to make. One of my heroes wrote this speech when he was campaigning for president out here in California and he was actually in the community when he delivered these words 40 years ago—Bobby Kennedy. These words were written 40 years ago, think about that. I describe the conditions, as they exist today, so much so that people wildly and enthusiastically embrace them. So much has changed, and so little has changed at the same time. The issue of concentrated poverty, the issues of pockets of poverty that continue out here in Fresno County and parts of the Central Valley that lead not just, as we were saying Pat, the state, but the nation, that's unacceptable. We're a \$1.7 trillion a year economy in California, more scientists, more researchers, more engineers, more Nobel laureates, 3 of the top 6 universities on the planet, the birthplace of biotech and life science, more medical device companies and IT companies, more venture capital in California than any other nation, and we still maintain this level of unemployment and this level of poverty. I believe very strongly that we can do better; we must do better, in this state. So it may not be vogue, it may not be what the pollsters tell you to focus on and it's certainly not what the focus groups are telling me, but I am going to focus on the issue of poverty, not just in this campaign, but focus on it if I ever have the privilege of being your governor. This issue is critical, it's foundational, and it's what

defines, I think, the best of the values of this Party. We've always been a Party that fought for these principles. We didn't say one thing in private and do another in public, no. Sure it took us some time in some cases. But we've always been a Party that's stood on these principles.

I'll close with one of those principles, because I know it's the elephant in the room. The issue that defined also this introduction, but has defined a lot of focus and attention that I've received, yes not just across this state but all over the country and as I traveled to Europe it was remarked, the remark was you may say, around the world. And that's what we did in 2004 as it relates to the issue of marriage equality, and I want to tell you why I did it. Because the folks standing here, and what this there represents and what the Party represents, is exactly why I did it. You know, in 1967 the year of my birth, blacks could not marry whites in this country in 16 states, Latinos couldn't marry whites. In fact, interracial marriage was banned in 16 states in this country. I'm not talking about 1937, not 1947, not 1957, but 1967. This was the case until a man named Richard Loving fell in love with Mildred Jeter. And for the audacity of doing that, and saying "I do" and marrying Mildred, Richard Loving was sentenced to one year in jail in Virginia. The judge said the following in sentencing Richard Loving to one year in jail. "God, sir. God put different races on different continents for a reason. God never wanted the races to mix." That's what the judge said almost verbatim, I paraphrased only slightly. In sentencing Mr. Loving to prison for saying "I do". In 1967 people argued not just on the basis of faith and religion against interracial marriage, but also on the basis of tradition, that we're redefining marriage as an institution. Familiar words? People said, 'Well, we're a democracy after all, let us decide, let the people decide.' I'll tell you, pause and reflect that if that had been the case in 1967, 70% of Americans opposed interracial marriage in 1967. So much for 'Let the people decide.'

We fought for gender equality, we fought for racial equality, and we stood proudly on those principles. And it came at a price, sure it did, our folks

weren't ready for it. But in our proudest moments that's what our Party's always fought for, that's how we've been defined, in our best moments, that's how we should be defined. I don't believe that separate is equal, I believe in the principles of Brown vs. Board of Education. I believe that it's right to celebrate its 55th anniversary, as we are this year in this country. And I believe that at our best, this Party can always find that courage and distinguish itself by always fighting for the rights of others.

Social justice, environmental justice, economic justice, these are the principles that are the very core, the very foundation of the Democratic Party. I want to bring back that voice to California. I want to once again step it up and to be proud of who we are and what we believe, and to not be discouraged that we have to say one thing in private and say something differently in public, and not to be ashamed to fight for the rights of those that are struggling and need that support.

I don't want to take up anymore of your time except to say I'm really honored, and I mean this sincerely, to be invited up here. I'm going to be in every county in this state, and I'm not just going to come in and come out, I'm here to listen and to learn, I don't have the answers to all the problems out there but I do believe in my core the answers are out there, I know that the answers are out there. I think we have the courage to dramatically change. I don't believe the best days are behind us. They said that in the 1980s when we went through that defense boom and bust, they said that in the 1990s when we went through the IT boom and bust, and they're saying it again as we go through this consumer-fueled spending, housing-fueled, consumer spending boom bust. But I believe the best days are not behind us in California. As long as again we have the courage to embrace our values and embrace that collective wisdom that defines the best of our state. I'm honored to be here, thank you for your leadership, thank you for your time.