

Remarks to the People of Xiahe

June 26, 1998

Nin men hao, Xiahe.

Thank you, Yunlong, for your welcome. I thank all of the students for the greeting and for the wonderful music, and I thank all the rest of you for making all of us in the American delegation feel so welcome here.

My wife and I are delighted to be joined by our daughter, my mother-in-law, and Secretary Albright, Secretary Daley, Ambassador and Mrs. Sasser, and six Members of the United States Congress, Senator Rockefeller, Senator Baucus, Senator Akaka, and Representatives Dingell and Hamilton and Markey, along with a number of people who work with me in the White House. We are all very honored to be here. Thank you.

I understand that soon, like nearly half a million other villages across China, you will be voting to choose your local leaders. I know what it is like to run for office. I have won elections, and I have also lost two. I like winning better than losing, but whenever there is an election and the people decide, everyone wins.

I have come to China to strengthen the ties between our two nations. Over the past 25 years, your country has launched a remarkable period of change, and today, most Chinese, including the members of this village, enjoy a higher standard of living than at any time in China's history.

Here, by using better farming techniques, you have freed up time and money for other projects, like your brick factory, your construction crews, your handicrafts. Your village has sponsored language classes in English and Japanese to help you in dealing with foreign tourists. Today, your village committee owns a dozen businesses, with 300 hard-working people now able to provide for their families. Many of you have opened your own businesses, and in only 15 years, average income here has grown 17 times. I congratulate you.

I also appreciate the fact that you have invested money back into your community in better schools, in better roads, in installing cable television to bring the world into your homes. Your achievements are a window for all the world to see what local democracy has brought to China and what a brighter future you are building for the children here with us today.

We Americans respect your devotion to family, to education, to work, your respect for the land and for your heritage. And we hope you will reap the fruits of your labor for many years to come.

Thank you again for making us all feel so welcome here in Xiahe. Thank you. Xie xie.