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REMARKS

REMARKS BY DEAN AND MAYOR DAVID HOLT ON APRIL 19, 2025

David Holt

On April 19, 2025, Oklahoma City University School of Law hosted the inaugural Clinton-Keating Lecture. In McLaughlin Hall, Dean David Holt moderated a conversation with former United States President Bill Clinton and former Oklahoma Governor Frank Keating. Earlier that day, Dean Holt, in his capacity as Mayor of Oklahoma City, spoke two blocks away from OCU Law at the thirtieth annual remembrance ceremony noting the April 19, 1995, bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. These were Mayor Holt's remarks at the ceremony held at First Church OKC.

I begin by thanking our first responders, our own here in Oklahoma City and those who came to our aid from around the country. And I again express the deepest condolences of the people of Oklahoma City to those who lost a loved one on April 19, 1995.

Matthew 6:34 states, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."¹

"Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow Creeps in this petty pace

1. *Matthew* 6:34 (NIV).

from day to day, To the last syllable of recorded time.”² That was Macbeth.

“[T]omorrow is another day,” said Scarlett O’Hara in the very last line of *Gone with the Wind*.³ Spoiler alert.

“Don’t stop thinking about tomorrow,” sang Fleetwood Mac in a song adopted by a young Arkansas governor as his de facto campaign theme when he ran for President in 1992.⁴

“We will stand with you for as many tomorrows as it takes,” said President Clinton three years later standing in Oklahoma City, four days after 168 of our family, friends, and neighbors were murdered by a fellow American.⁵

We humans talk a lot about tomorrow. Macbeth was weary of tomorrow. The Bible is quite concerned that we worry too much about tomorrow. But I would argue that most of the time, tomorrow represents hope. It did for Scarlett O’Hara and Fleetwood Mac. Tomorrow is a blank canvas. And though no one is promised tomorrow, we each depend on it, and we hold it close, like a lottery ticket. Tomorrow may bring us a better day than today. On some days, it feels like tomorrow almost has to be better than today.

On April 19, 1995, on one level, the people of Oklahoma City certainly had to feel that way. How could tomorrow not be better than today? But on another level, we all knew the sorrows of April nineteenth would still join us tomorrow. Hundreds of families knew there was someone who was going to be just as gone tomorrow as they were today. Only one person has ever come back, and Christians will mark that event—tomorrow.

There have been nearly 11,000 tomorrows since the bomb went off. As a city, those tomorrows have in fact brought all the hope and promise we could have ever imagined. One day of darkness has unquestionably been followed by thirty years of light here in Oklahoma City.

We have invested billions of dollars into our quality of life, often

2. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *MACBETH* act 5, sc. 5, l. 18-20.

3. *GONE WITH THE WIND*, HBO Max, at 3:45:13–3:45:18 (Selznick Int’l Pictures 1939).

4. *Fleetwood Mac*, CLINTON DIGIT. LIBR., <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/exhibits/show/rock/fleetwood> [https://perma.cc/GW7E-AK3F] (last visited Nov. 23, 2025).

5. *Remarks at a Memorial Service for the Bombing Victims in Oklahoma City*, OKLAHOMA, AM. PRESIDENCY PROJECT, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-memorial-service-for-the-bombing-victims-oklahoma-city-oklahoma> [https://perma.cc/G5EW-Y3KU] (last visited Nov. 23, 2025).

fueled by unifying community choices that transcended partisanship or other things that might divide us. We are drawing new residents from around the country; we're now America's twentieth-largest city. Our economy is diversified, our low unemployment rate is on a record streak, and new developments open every month.

We have a global identity that is built on a foundation of success and/or basketball but definitely not a bombing. Tomorrow, we will launch our Thunder into what we hope is a historic NBA playoff run.⁶ And in three years, we will welcome people from around the world as we stage seven events of the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. The day after *the day after* tomorrow, our city will turn 136 years old, and these last thirty years have unquestionably represented our city's golden age. No one who knows and loves Oklahoma City would dispute that statement.

On the other hand, for those who lost so much on April 19, 1995, for those who survived, and for those changed forever, those 11,000 tomorrows have been a mixed bag. Even as tomorrow has brought weddings and births, graduations and success, there has always been an empty chair, or a traumatic memory, or a dark realization of the evil that humans can do. For each of you, I hope this community has done, and will continue to do, all that it can. I think I use an aspirational word like "hope" there because to us, just standing with you can feel a bit inadequate. We want to return your loved one; we want to make your pain go away. But though we can't, I know each of us believes that our role in the *Oklahoma Standard* is to do all we can.⁷

And so, I stand here as your mayor and pledge that no priority in this city will ever stand between us and that commitment to you and your family who lost so much. It was a commitment originally made by President Clinton, but we all co-sign. Tomorrow is often a symbol of hope,

6. On June 22, 2025, the Oklahoma City Thunder won the NBA Championship. Tim Reynolds, *The Thunder are NBA Champions, and They Might be Just Getting Started*, AP NEWS (June 23, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/nba-finals-thunder-champions-8076a3f4d6fec9b0c2bbbd79f17ef38> (on file with the Oklahoma City University Law Review).

7. *What is the Oklahoma Standard?*, OKLA. STANDARD, <https://oklahomastandard.com/about> [<https://perma.cc/7DSZ-HRH4>] (last visited Nov. 23, 2025) ("April 19, 1995[,] altered the face of Oklahoma—and the nation—forever. Despite this unspeakable tragedy, among the most lasting memories are the tenderness of the response. The people of Oklahoma banded together in a community-wide display of spontaneous altruism. . . . That spirit of generosity—of giving until there's no more to give—has been part of the DNA of the state ever since it was founded. Visiting first responders and journalists called it the *Oklahoma Standard*.").

but it can also be a word of commitment, a reflection that a promise will endure into the future. We all recommit, on this thirtieth anniversary, that we will stand with you for as many tomorrows as it takes.

Today, I want to also speak of a related commitment that will outlive all milestones and all of us.

This is my eighth address to this gathering. Over eight addresses, I have spoken in favor of love, empathy, truth, and better conversations. I have asked us to embrace pluralism; to look past things that can be used to divide us, like political opinions or ethnicities or religion; and asked us to instead consider the infinite ways in which we are alike. I have spoken against dehumanization and words of division, and I have asked us to gaze into that tranquil reflecting pool across the street and consider whether the person that you see is living up to the *Oklahoma Standard* in their own words, and social media posts, and actions. I have stated that this obligation starts with us as citizens of Oklahoma City, but that it should apply to everyone in this entire country, especially, and including, elected officials and all those in the public eye.

I have also spoken repeatedly these last eight years about the passage of time. It's on my mind today because today is a milestone in the measurement of time. It is the thirtieth anniversary of the bombing. Because of that milestone, President Clinton is in Oklahoma City this weekend. He met with families and rescue workers last night and visited the Memorial—keeping a commitment, as he has for thirty years. We thank him, on behalf of the people of Oklahoma City, for that commitment. We share a friendship and a bond with President Clinton that transcends politics, and we will never forget that he kept his word. Thank you as well to Governor Keating, Mayor Norick, Kari Watkins, and all the people who have kept this city's commitment to those who needed support these past thirty years.

Thirty years is an inflection point, no doubt. Ten years is the blink of an eye. Twenty years is still less than a generation. But thirty years hits different. Many of us now have to admit that there are more yesterdays for us than there are tomorrows.

Perhaps that reality reminds us that in addition to the obligation we have to the families most directly affected, we also have another related obligation in Oklahoma City, and this obligation is timeless and will outlive us. And that is the obligation to speak and act against the forces that created the environment for this act of evil and, really, for all acts of evil across human history.

Even when the personal remembrances have faded, the people of this city will still have a scar in our downtown—a place where people used to go to work, serving their neighbors. The site of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building is now peaceful and shaded by tall, beautiful trees. But the jagged edges of concrete that surround it remind us that it is a scar—a symbol of what humans can do to each other when they do not love each other; when they do not seek to understand each other; when they fail to acknowledge our shared humanity; when they dehumanize each other; when they entertain conspiracy theories; when they are willing to act outside of peaceful democratic processes, even to commit violence; and when they let extremism rot their brains to the point where even a child is a soldier in their imagined war.

Humans are highly unlikely to ever fully shed our capacity for evil, but evil can be answered and kept at bay. Evil must be answered. And the residents of this city must always be the protectors of a commitment to do so.

Perhaps today, on this thirtieth anniversary, like a relay runner in one of our memorial marathons, we are beginning to pass the baton of that commitment. And that baton of commitment will be kept by PJ Allen, Rebecca and Brandon Denny, Joseph Webb, Nekia McCloud, and Chris Nguyen, the six children who survived the bombing. It will be kept by Clint Seidl, Krista Doll, Dina Abulon, Hilary Johnson, Dionce Thomas, and the 249 children who lost one or both parents that day. Those are the youngest among us who bore direct witness.

But this commitment will also be kept by those who are too young to have borne witness. It will be carried by the thirty-eight members of the Memorial Teen Board. It will be kept by my kids, George and Maggie, who are now almost the age I was when the bombing happened. They host a video about the bombing for middle school kids you can find on YouTube.⁸ It will be kept by your kids and your grandkids. It will be kept by the people who will stand here on the sixtieth anniversary and the ninetieth anniversary, when everyone here will turn towards a wheelchair on stage and ask the last remaining survivor what it was like. Even then, when tens of thousands of tomorrows will have passed, this commitment by the people of Oklahoma City to stand against evil must endure.

I thank each of you and those who will follow us for your commitment,

8. OKLAHOMA CITY NATIONAL MEMORIAL & MUSEUM, *Students Teaching Students the Impact of the Oklahoma City Bombing*, (YouTube, Mar. 29, 2023), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ELzADPU9HU> (on file with the Oklahoma City University Law Review).

for it will require all the tomorrows that lie ahead.

Thank you.