

proposed creating new College Completion Challenge Grants to encourage students to stay in college.

We have seen dramatic advances in health care over the course of the 20th century, which have led to an increase in life expectancy of almost 30 years. But much remains to be done to ensure that all have and maintain access to quality medical care. That is why my budget expands health care coverage, calls for passing a strong and enforceable Patients' Bill of Rights, strengthens and modernizes Medicare, addresses long-term care, and continues to promote life-saving research.

My budget invests over \$110 billion over 10 years to improve the affordability accessibility, and quality of health insurance. It will provide a new, affordable health insurance option for uninsured parents as well as accelerate enrollment of uninsured children who are eligible for Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program. The initiative will expand health insurance options for Americans facing unique barriers to coverage. For example, it will allow certain people aged 55-65 to buy into Medicare, and it will give tax credits to workers who cannot afford the full costs of COBRA coverage after leaving a job. Finally, my initiative will provide funds to strengthen the public hospitals and clinics that provide health care directly to the uninsured. If enacted, this would be the largest investment in health coverage since Medicare was created in 1965, and one of the most significant steps we can take to help working families.

As our Nation ages and we live longer, we face new challenges in Medicare and long-term care. Despite improvements in Medicare in the past 7 years, the program begins this century with the disadvantages of insufficient funding, inadequate benefits, and outdated payment systems. To strengthen and modernize the program, I have proposed a comprehensive reform plan that would make Medicare more competitive and efficient and invest \$400 billion over the next 10 years in extending solvency through 2025 and adding a long-overdue, voluntary prescription drug benefit.

The aging of America also underscores the need to build systems to provide long-term care. More than 5 million Americans require long-term care because of significant limitations due to illness or disability. About two-thirds of them are older Americans. That is why I have proposed a \$27 billion investment over 10 years in long-term care. Its centerpiece is a \$3,000 tax credit to defray the cost of long-term care. In addition, I propose to expand access to home-based care, to establish new support networks for caregivers, and to promote quality private long-term care insurance by offering it to Federal employees at group rates.

We must continue to make this economic expansion reach out to every

corner of our country, leaving no town, city, or Native American reservation behind. That is why I am asking the Congress to authorize two additional components of our New Markets agenda. The first is the New Markets Venture Capital Firms program, geared toward helping small and first-time businesses. The second is America's Private Investment Companies, modeled on the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, to help larger businesses expand or relocate to distressed inner-city and rural areas. Overall the New Markets initiative could spur \$22 billion of new equity investment in our underserved communities.

I am also proposing a new initiative called First Accounts, to expand access to financial services for low- and moderate-income Americans. We will work with private financial institutions to encourage the creation of low-cost bank accounts for low-income families. We will help bring more automated teller machines to safe places in low-income communities, such as the post office. And we will educate Americans about managing household finances and building assets over time.

To further increase opportunities for working families, I am proposing another expansion of the EITC to provide tax relief for 6.4 million hard-pressed families—with additional benefits for families with three or more children. We have seen the dramatic effects that our 1993 expansion of the EITC had in reducing poverty and encouraging work: 4.3 million people were directly lifted out of poverty by the EITC in 1998 alone. More single mothers are working than ever before, and the child poverty rate is at its lowest since 1980.

Our initiatives to open overseas markets will continue. We have successfully concluded bilateral negotiations on China's accession to the World Trade Organization and now seek congressional action to provide China with permanent normal trade relations. The United States will also work to give the least developed countries greater access to global markets. We will participate in the scheduled multilateral talks to liberalize trade in services and agriculture and will continue to press our trading partners to launch a new round of negotiations within the World Trade Organization.

We have a historic opportunity to answer the challenges ahead: to increase economic opportunity for all American families; to provide quality, affordable child care, health care, and long-term care; and to give our children the best education in the world. Working together, we can meet these great challenges and make this new millennium one of ever-increasing promise, hope, and opportunity for all Americans.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON.

THE WHITE HOUSE, February 10, 2000.

□ 1700

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER
PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HASTINGS of Washington). The Chair will now recognize one minute requests.

TRIBUTE TO SGT. BRUCE A.
PROTHERO, A FALLEN HERO

(Mr. EHRLICH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. EHRLICH. Mr. Speaker, today in Reisterstown, Maryland, hundreds of police officers have gathered to pay tribute to another fallen hero. Earlier this week, Sergeant Bruce A. Prothero, a 13-year veteran of the Baltimore County Police Department, said goodbye to his wife and five young children. He went to work his second job, something many police officers must do to support their families.

Shortly after the jewelry store at which Sergeant Prothero was employed opened for business, armed thugs entered the store. While horrified customers were forced to the floor, the Sergeant was held at gunpoint until the robbery was completed. As the thugs made their escape, Sergeant Prothero was gunned down.

Every day, all across America, police officers lay their lives on the line so that we may enjoy the freedoms so many of us take for granted. They are our moms and dads, our brothers and sisters, our sons and daughters. They are our heroes. Sergeant Bruce A. Prothero was just such a hero. But, more importantly, he was a loving father, a devoted husband, a son, and a brother.

May God grant strength to his family, and eternal peace to another fallen hero. Let these words, now a permanent part of the history of this great Nation, serve as an introduction to those who never knew Sergeant Prothero, and as a reminder to those who will miss him so dearly.

WORKING TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE
NASA'S GOALS

(Mr. WELDON of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, space program supporters often compete among themselves for programs and funding. I want to do my part to bring everyone together to work towards a common goal, and I recently had an opportunity to visit NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston.

My district includes Kennedy Space Center, which is a traditional rival for