

June 24 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1999

in the forefront of countries supporting international efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons to additional countries. It is a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and has an agreement with the IAEA for the application of full-scope safeguards to its nuclear program. It also subscribes to the Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG) Guidelines, which set forth standards for the responsible export of nuclear commodities for peaceful use, and to the Zangger (NPT Exporters) Committee Guidelines, which oblige members to require the application of IAEA safeguards on nuclear exports to nonnuclear weapon states. It is a party to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, whereby it has agreed to apply international standards of physical protection to the storage and transport of nuclear material under its jurisdiction or control.

Continued close cooperation with Canada in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, under the long-term extension of the U.S.-Canada Agreement for Cooperation provided for in the proposed Protocol, will serve important U.S. na-

tional security, foreign policy, and commercial interests.

I have considered the views and recommendations of the interested agencies in reviewing the proposed Protocol and have determined that its performance will promote, and will not constitute an unreasonable risk to, the common defense and security. Accordingly, I have approved the Protocol and authorized its execution and urge that the Congress give it favorable consideration.

This transmission shall constitute a submittal for purposes of both sections 123 b. and 123 d. of the Atomic Energy Act. My Administration is prepared to begin immediate consultations with the Senate Foreign Relations and House International Relations Committees as provided in section 123 b. Upon completion of the 30-day continuous session period provided for in section 123 b., the 60-day continuous session period provided for in 123 d. shall commence.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
June 24, 1999.

Remarks to the Presidential Scholars June 25, 1999

Thank you very much. Danielle, you did a fine job. Didn't she do a good job? I thought she was great. Thank you.

I'd also like to thank my good friend Father O'Donovan, for allowing me to come back to my alma mater to make this speech and to be with you; and Bruce Reed, for the superb use he has made of the Presidential scholarship he got. He does a wonderful job in our office. I hope you got the joke he made about how he looks younger than you. We all rag him about how young he looks. Actually, when I was his age, I looked young, too. And then it just overcame me. *[Laughter]*

I want to congratulate the Presidential scholars, the teachers, parents who are here. I am delighted to have this chance to be with you. Because I have been on an extended trip to Europe, I actually want to take a few moments to give a serious talk about where we are in Washington today and where we are in America

and to talk to you a little bit about the whole nature of our public life and politics.

Nearly 8 years ago, as Bruce said, I came to this hall, where I sat many times as a student, to ask America to join me on a journey, to go beyond what were then the competing ideas of the old political establishment in Washington that dominated the entire decade of the 1980's. People, on the one hand, said Government was bad, and we should get it out of everybody's life and leave people alone to fend for themselves, or on the other hand, said Government was good and could solve most of our problems if it were just free to do so.

I asked the American people instead to embrace a new way, something I called a New Covenant between America and its Government, an agreement with the citizens and their Government that we would jointly pursue opportunity for all Americans, responsibility from all Americans, and a community of all Americans.

I believed it would bring America back to prosperity.

Over the years since I became President, I have come back to this hall several times to discuss in more specific terms the progress we have made in building that New Covenant and the opportunities still to be seized, the responsibilities still to be shouldered, the pillars of community still to be built.

Washington is pretty far away from most American's lives most of the time. It is tempting for people in public life here, who are so far away from you, to fall into easy rhetoric in positioning themselves against their opponents. But politics at its best is about values, ideas, and action. When it is that, it becomes public service, and it is a noble endeavor.

Let me give you some examples of the ideas we've had here. When I came here, our administration believed we could balance the budget and increase our investment in education, in technology, in research, in training people for the future. Those ideas, turned into action, have given us 18.6 million new jobs, the lowest unemployment in 30 years, the highest homeownership ever, the longest peacetime expansion in history. And along the way we have virtually opened the doors of college to all Americans with the HOPE scholarship, the other tuition tax credit, improvements in the student loan program, a million work-study positions. We're well on our way to connecting every classroom in the country to the Internet by the year 2000.

We believed that we could reform welfare and make it good for work and for families. That idea, turned into action, has cut the welfare rolls in half, while maintaining health and nutrition benefits for poor children and increasing our investment in child care for lower income workers.

We believed we could make our streets safer by putting more police on the streets and taking guns out of the hands of people who shouldn't have them. Those ideas, put into action, have given us a 25-year low in the crime rate.

We believed we could grow the economy and improve the environment. That idea, put into action, has given us cleaner air, cleaner water, millions of acres of land set aside from the California redwoods to the Florida Everglades. It has allowed us in the field of public health to have safer food and, for the first time in history, 90 percent of our children immunized against serious childhood diseases. And the economy has

gotten better, not worse, as we have taken steps to advance the environment and public health.

We believed that young people in our country, if given the chance, would serve in their communities and that they ought to be given a chance to earn some education credit. That idea, put into practice, produced AmeriCorps, our national service program, which in just 5 years has already had over 100,000 young people working in communities all across America, a milestone it took the Peace Corps 20 years to reach.

And we believed America could be the world's leading force for peace and freedom and prosperity and security. Those ideas, turned into action, have given us over 250 trade agreements, new partnerships for America with Latin America and Africa, new initiatives against terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, progress on peace in Northern Ireland and the Middle East, a stand against ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and now in Kosovo, where with our allies we have said that when innocent civilians are uprooted or slaughtered because of their race or their religion, if we can stop it, we will do so.

We still have a lot of work to finish the job in Kosovo. We still have many challenges abroad, from peace in Northern Ireland and the Middle East, to our continuing efforts to help relieve the debt burdens of poor nations, to our efforts to stabilize the global economy. But I came back to Washington after my trip to Europe with a renewed energy for the domestic agenda. And I'd like to talk to you about it today, about the things we can do here today that will affect your communities today and very much affect your futures tomorrow.

With our present prosperity, we actually have a rare opportunity to meet the remaining large challenges facing our country on the brink of a new century. But to do it, both parties must work together. There will be plenty of time for politics in the year and a half ahead, but this summer must be a season of progress.

Just think how far we've come in the last decade. When I came here to speak in 1991, America was drifting toward a new century without direction. Now, our people, working with common purpose, have brought the Nation back to a position of unprecedented strength, with greater prosperity, greater safety, more social healing, more national leadership for the United States around the world.

Our economy is perhaps the strongest in our history, and something you may know more about than I do, it is increasingly clear that it is being powered in large measure by a once-in-a-lifetime technological revolution. For example, the high-tech sector accounts for only 8 percent of our economy but for fully one-third of the growth we've had over the last 6½ years.

We are now seeing an explosion of technology, and productivity along with it, from the Internet that links offices around the world to computers used to track warehouse inventories. You will have a chance, thanks to technology, to work in jobs that have not been created yet, in industries that have not yet been imagined. But right now we are benefiting immensely for it. Just this morning we learned that in the last quarter, our economy grew at the brisk rate of 4.3 percent, with virtually no inflation. If we can keep that going, that's very good for your future.

I think that those of us who work here now will be judged, however, primarily by whether we choose to seize this opportunity to ensure your future, not just the short term but the long term, or will it be squandered with petty arguments and animosities and special interest politics.

I regret to say that the atmosphere in Washington has become increasingly poisoned by bitter partisanship. I don't understand exactly why, since we keep doing better and better and better in America. It may be that some people believe they have the luxury of engaging in shortsighted partisanship because the country is doing so well. I think that is a bad misreading of reality.

Moreover, it is clear to me that in the last few weeks our Nation has come together in an unprecedented consensus of conscience and common sense on issues like gun violence, where the Congress unfortunately buckled under to special interest pressure. Partisanship has even paralyzed the basic work of writing our spending bills, something we have to do here every year. Let me give you an example.

Not very long ago, I issued an order saying that the United States Government would cut our greenhouse gas emissions coming out of our buildings by 30 percent over the next few years to meet our responsibility to deal with the challenge of global warming. Now, you have to understand, this doesn't cost you anything. This saves you money. We're going to reduce our

energy use so that we reduce our greenhouse gas emissions coming out of our facilities by 30 percent. It's a no-brainer. It's no money, nothing. The only people that lose are the people that won't be pumping electricity to us.

Unbelievably enough, just yesterday a Senate committee voted to largely block my executive action to cut the Government's emissions by 30 percent, an action that would save you \$750 million a year.

Now, I think I can stop that. But it's an example of what happens when adults with responsibility fall into small-time wrangling and even want to stop things that are 100 percent good and not controversial.

I say again, the interesting thing to me is if you look at all the surveys or just go out and talk to people, or if we would sit down and talk, you would see that across party lines, across regional lines, across income lines there is actually quite a remarkable consensus emerging in America on a number of issues—outside Washington. But the American people have to depend on those of us who work in Washington to take the consensus ideas they have embraced and turn those ideas into action.

Remember what I said at the beginning: Politics at its best involves values, ideas, and action, and the balancing of all those things in ways that change lives.

Now, some other people here really believe that because the Presidential election season has already started, the battle for Congress has already started, even though it's a year and however many months away, that the best politics is just to run out the clock and wait until the next election and hope that the country is doing so well and we enjoy the lazy days of summer so much, nobody will notice. I don't agree with that, either.

And I would like to say to you, as young people, there are an awful lot of very good people in public life who don't think that way, who want to get things done. And I hope someday many of you will be among them. But you will find that all of your life one of the greatest struggles you have to embrace is against being small, against being defensive or angry or combative for the sake of it, or thinking about some slight that someone imposed on you yesterday, instead of some good thing you can do today and tomorrow.

And we have to break out of that now. This country has not had an opportunity like this,

with this level of prosperity and this level of progress on social problems, in decades. And there actually is quite a lot we can do.

For example, there are things, believe it or not, that both parties agree on here. We should certainly act on them. [Laughter] And then there are things on which we have honest disagreements. On those, we should seek to find honorable compromise. The American people give us these jobs to get things done. In the weeks and months ahead, I will do all I can, working with Congress, taking executive action, summoning citizens to deal with these challenges. But first let's start with what we agree on. You might be surprised by the list.

To make sure that Americans should never have to choose between going to work and paying their medical bills, we must pass the proposal to let disabled Americans keep their Medicaid health insurance when they take a job. Believe it or not, people who normally who get Medicaid lose their insurance if they take a job. The problem is a lot of disabled people can't get any other insurance. Their bills may be \$40,000, \$50,000 a year. But all of us are better off if those folks can go to work. They are more fulfilled. They are living their lives better. They also become tax-paying citizens. And whatever their medical bills are, they would be paid, regardless, by Medicaid.

So we now have a bill that solves a huge problem. And believe it or not, almost everybody agrees on it, Republicans and Democrats alike. So let's start with that, the easy one and a very good one, that will help untold numbers of Americans and their families. Congress should pass it, and I will sign it.

To honor work and strengthen our families, we should raise the minimum wage. There are still too many people who work 40 hours a week whose children are in poverty. Democrats and many, many Republicans agree that we should do this. So Congress should pass it, and I will sign it.

To renew our elections and stem the rising tide of campaign spending, we must pass strong campaign finance reform. Finally, after years, it appears that a majority of lawmakers in both parties, in both the Senate and House, agree. But the leaders of the Republican majority are blocking the bill. Instead, they ought to let the Congress vote—everybody votes his or her conscience. But if it passes—and I believe it would—I would certainly sign it.

To protect the interest of 160 million Americans who use managed care, we should pass a strong, enforceable, and bipartisan Patients' Bill of Rights. Now, you all probably know what the problems are here: More and more Americans are going into managed care, and managed care has done a lot of good in our country to slow the rise in health care costs. But we should not ask people to sacrifice quality of care.

Our Patients' Bill of Rights would simply say that if you're in an HMO or any other kind of health care plan, you wouldn't lose a right to see your specialist, if you needed. You wouldn't give up the right to go to the nearest emergency room if you were hurt in an accident; believe it or not, some people do in their plan. You couldn't be forced to give up your doctor in the middle of a treatment; for example, if you were 6 months pregnant and your employer changed health care providers, you couldn't be required to change doctors, or if you were in the middle of a chemotherapy treatment and your employer changed health care providers, you wouldn't give it up. And you would have a right to protect yourself to make sure these rights were enforceable.

Now, these problems have been evident now for the last few years. Yesterday we learned that it had gotten so bad, that doctors are so angry that the doctor-patient relationship is being breached by insurance company accountants' meddling, that they're even organizing a union to bargain with the HMO's.

Now, again, I've seen survey after survey after survey. There is no partisan issue here. Republicans and Democrats and independents all get sick. [Laughter] Right? I mean, they do. There's not a partisan issue here. Most doctors are Republicans; most nurses are Democrats. [Laughter] So what? This is not a big deal. This is not a partisan issue anywhere in the whole country but Washington, DC.

Over 200 medical and consumer organizations have endorsed this Patients' Bill of Rights, and one has opposed it, the health insurance companies. Now, if we get a vote on this—because out in America, doctors, nurses, and patients agree, and Democrats and Republicans will agree—it will fly like a hot knife through butter. But again, the leadership of the Congress is trying to find a way to block the bill. It's not right. So I say again, just let everybody vote his or her conscience. And if they send it to me—and they will—I will sign it.

Now, these are measures awaiting action that could be enacted quickly. And if America will send a signal to Congress that they want action, we can pass them.

There are some, however, broader, more fundamental and, frankly, more difficult issues that I hope we can resolve this year. First, I believe, as I said in my State of the Union Address, that we have a duty to you to use the bulk of this surplus over the next 15 years to solve the long-term challenges of Social Security and Medicare and to do it in a way that pays down our national debt.

Now, why? Because that means that future generations will have guaranteed income and health care in their retirement years. And it means as we pay down the debt, we will keep interest rates low, investment high, and guarantee when you get out of college there will be lots of good jobs available because we'll have a stronger and stronger and stronger economy. We can actually get rid of America's debt over the next 18 years if we will do this.

So I hope, even though we have honest, here, honest philosophical differences about what the best way to reform Medicare is, what the best way to reform Social Security is, the point is we ought to be able to proceed in a spirit of honorable compromise because the goals are so important and the stakes are so high and because, frankly, the choices are a lot easier when you have a surplus than when you have a big deficit.

Next week I will propose a detailed plan to strengthen Medicare, to cut its costs, to modernize its operations, to use competition and innovation, to strengthen the core guarantee of quality care for all Americans who are elderly and eligible. I will also, for the first time, propose a way to help senior citizens with their greatest growing need, affordable prescription drugs. It is a huge issue out there for seniors.

Now, finding agreement on Social Security and Medicare will be hard. Finding agreement on tax cuts will be hard, although I hope the Congress will at least adopt targeted tax credits for long-term care and child care that I proposed. But we can do it. Now, regardless, Congress has to pass a budget this year. We must decide on how to use the surplus. So I hope we can work together to make progress on these goals.

Second, we ought to continue to advance our economy by doing more for the education of

our people. As we have balanced the budget and cut the size of the Federal Government—listen to this—we have cut the size of the Federal Government to the same size it was when I was your age. The Federal Government now is the same size it was in 1962. That was a long time ago. [Laughter] Anyway, as we have done that, we have nearly doubled our investment in education and training. Why? Because, as was said in my introduction, the information age will be the education age.

Last year, at my urging, with school populations in our country at record highs, Congress passed a budget that began to hire 100,000 new teachers to reduce class size in the early years. Unbelievably to me, in the budget the majority is now writing, they repeal their pledge to finish the job of hiring those teachers. I just want Congress to keep its word. I think when you tell people something in an election year, you ought to still be for it the next year when there is no election.

I have also sent Congress an ambitious education reform plan because this is a year, as we do every 5 years, we have to reauthorize the general program under which we give money to schools all over America. And I believe we should dramatically change it to hold schools and school districts and States more accountable for results and to give them more funds for after-school, summer school programs and to target and turn around failing schools.

It is controversial. But it is based on what is working in the States that are having success in lifting all their schools in student achievement. Again I say, there may be those who disagree with me philosophically; we ought to have an open debate about this and come to an honorable compromise. We do not have to continue to spend money in the same old way when we know we can spend it more effectively based on what we have seen in our schools.

Third, let me say something that I hope will be important to all of you and has doubtless been experienced by some of you. We've got the strongest economy on record, all right, but there are still too many poor neighborhoods and rural communities where prosperity is something you read about, not experience. And I believe we should be committed to going into this new century leaving no one behind. This is not only a good thing to do ethically; it is also good economics.

I keep thinking every day, now, how can we continue to grow this economy? How can we drive unemployment even lower, create even more jobs, without having inflation? One way is to find new investment in America. So I say to you, we've spent a lot of time seeking new markets abroad, but our most important new markets are right here at home.

Two weeks from now, for 4 days, I will lead an unprecedented trip across America so our country can see the places I'm talking about. I'll go to the hills and hollows of Kentucky, to the Mississippi Delta, to a poor community in the Midwest, to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, to Phoenix, to inner-city Los Angeles. I'll be joined by distinguished corporate leaders and political leaders of both parties. Again, this is something that should not be a political issue at all. We want to shine a spotlight on the pockets of poverty that remain in America and on the potential they have for new investment, new jobs, new hope, new opportunity.

I will ask Congress to do its part by passing my new markets initiative. It provides for tax incentives and loan guarantees for people to invest in these areas, the same kind of incentives we give people today to invest in emerging economies abroad. I think that whatever we encourage people to do abroad, we ought to give the same encouragement to do at home, to give our people those kinds of chances.

Finally, I think we ought to do more to protect our young people from violence, to redeem the awful sacrifice of the children of Littleton, of the other school shootings, of the 13 American children we lose every single day to gun violence.

After Littleton, our whole Nation came together in grief and determination. We know there are many causes of youth violence, and therefore, there must be many solutions. Hillary and I are launching a national campaign against youth violence to bring all kinds of people from all sectors of our communities together. We have done this before, like Mothers and Students Against Drunk Driving dramatically reduced drunk driving in America, just for one example. And we can do that.

Of course, more must be done at home. Young people can have a greater influence on each other. Schools, houses of worship, other places where children gather can do better. The entertainment community must do more to stop

marketing violence to children. I'm proud that theater owners have agreed—[*applause*—I wonder if that's coming more from the adults or the young people. [*Laughter*]

I feel very strongly about this. I'm proud that theater owners agreed that from now on, young people will be carded for R and PG-13 movies. I'm glad, thanks to the Vice President and Mrs. Gore, that next year TV's will have the V-chip in half of all new TV's sold and that Internet and video game companies are helping with ratings and blocking technologies. We have our differences with various sectors of the entertainment community from time to time, but they have actually done quite a lot with the TV rating systems, the video game rating systems, the blocking technologies in the last few years, and they deserve credit for what they have done, as well as urging to do more.

But we have to face the fact that if you have more children spending more time alone—and let me say that one big difference between the time when I was your age, or even Bruce was your age, and today, in America as a whole, the average—average—young person spends 22 hours per week less with his or her parents than 30 years ago. From birth through age 18, that's over 2 years less time that the average young person spends with his or her parents—over 2 years. You don't notice it so much; it's just a few hours a day.

Why is that? More single parents, more working parents, more people living in suburbs spending more time going to and from work. Everybody is busy, busy, busy. And most of you are turning out just fine, and most of your parents are doing the best they can and doing a fine job. But we shouldn't minimize the fact that when this happens, the most vulnerable children among us will be even more vulnerable.

And that is why this whole entertainment culture counts, not because of you but because there are among us always vulnerable people. And there will be more of them, and they will be more vulnerable. And that's why the access to guns matters.

I've heard this—I got a letter the other day from a really nice person that I admire, saying, "Mr. President, we've got all these laws on the books, and if somebody wants a gun they can get it." Now, if you say that, it seems self-evident, since there's way over 220 million guns in the country. It seems self-evident. But let's look at the facts here.

Since we passed the Brady law, over the strenuous objections of the gun lobby, who then said that no criminal ever gets a gun from a gun store—just since we passed the Brady law in 1993, we have put a stop to some 400,000 illegal gun sales, without stopping one legitimate sports man or woman from buying a gun. And you cannot convince any reasonable person in law enforcement that those 400,000 stops didn't have something to do with the fact that we have a 25-year low in the crime rate and an even bigger plummet in many areas of gun-related violent crime.

Now, in the wake of the shootings after Littleton, I asked the Senate to pass a commonsense measure to help prevent youth violence by doing more in this vein to keep guns out the hands of criminals and children. For one thing, we should close the loophole that lets a criminal turned away from a gun dealer go to a gun show or a flea market in a city and buy a gun without a background check. The technology is there now for these background checks to be done without great burden to people who run gun shows and flea markets. But today they can buy a gun there, no questions asked.

Now, the same people who said in 1993 that no criminals buy their guns at gun stores, they buy them other places, say that we should not have background checks at the other places. I think we should. I think we should require that safety locks be sold with every handgun. We should ban the importation of large-capacity ammunition clips. We should say violent juveniles should not own guns when they become adults.

It took a pivotal vote by Vice President Gore to break a tie in the Senate so that the Senate did the right thing in closing the gun show loophole. Unfortunately, as most of you probably know, 2 weeks ago, the Republicans in the House of Representatives, with some Democrats but not many, shot down America's best hope for commonsense gun control—in the face of strong public demand, clear public need, and again I say, out in the country, no partisanship.

The House filled the proposal full of high-caliber loopholes. And now they say they want to watch it die. The majority even pushed measures to weaken current law, for example, letting criminals store their guns at pawnshops, even if the reason they need to store it is because they're taking a sabbatical in prison. [Laughter] They say if they come back to get the gun, there shouldn't be a background check. [Laugh-

ter] We've had a pawnshop background check for a good while now. They want to get rid of that, as if that is somehow terribly burdensome to people.

Well, I think we can do better than that. But I don't know how we can expect you to stand up to youth violence if the Congress won't stand up to the gun lobby. We have got to—[applause].

So again, I say, it's not too late. The House and the Senate will now appoint conferees on this bill, because they have passed two different bills. Those people can put the provisions the Senate passed into the bill, send it to the House and the Senate, pass it, and I'll sign it. It's important that we strengthen, not weaken, our laws that make it easier for criminals to get and keep guns.

Okay, so let's go back and review the bidding here. We have a raft of bipartisan bills: health care for the disabled; the minimum wage; campaign finance reform; the Patients' Bill of Rights. We have big issues on which there are disagreements but where honorable compromise is possible: long-term reform of Social Security and Medicare; paying down the debt. We have a clear case where Republicans and Democrats should join together to mobilize private capital to give new life to our poorest communities; legislation to hire more teachers and to raise educational standards; sensible but vital steps to protect our children from violence.

These are big things. These are things worthy of a great nation and its elected representatives. I will work day and night to achieve this agenda. I hope you will support it, again, without regard to party. And I hope you will believe that good citizenship and public service are worth your time and effort.

Many times when I have come here, and many times around the country, I have referred to a professor I had here, who I talked about in 1991, who taught Western Civilization. He said our civilization was unique in the belief of what he called "future preference," that is, the idea that the future can be better than the past and that every individual has a duty to make it so.

Now, you obviously believe that, or you wouldn't be here. I'm about to give you all your medal, and we're going to take pictures. And it's a whole monument to years and years and years of your effort believing in tomorrow, right? It is. You wouldn't be here if you didn't.

And that belief has had a lot to do with your Nation's success over the last 220-plus years. It has driven my public life. And it was validated again a few days ago by the pain and the hope I saw in the faces of the children of Kosovo.

The more we think about tomorrow, the more energy, determination, and wisdom we have for the challenges of today.

I believe in your future. I believe America's best days lie in the new millennium. I ask Congress to help me make it so.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:58 a.m. in Gaston Hall at Georgetown University. In his remarks, he referred to Presidential scholar Danielle Huff, who introduced the President; and Father Leo J. O'Donovan, president, Georgetown University.

The President's News Conference

June 25, 1999

The President. Earlier today, in a speech at Georgetown University, I discussed the opportunities now before our Nation. Before I take your questions, let me just take a moment to recap what I believe is America's agenda in the coming months.

Our trip to Europe advanced America's ideals and interests. Working with our partners, we won an agreement to ban abusive child labor everywhere in the world, took new steps to strengthen the global economy, agreed to triple the debt relief provided for many of the poorest nations, and to strengthen democracy and reform in Russia.

We also worked to put together, to put in place the building blocks of peace in Kosovo and to put the Balkans on a shared path to a prosperous, united future. I will meet with the region's leaders later this summer to give the process further momentum.

I met with Kosovar refugees in Macedonia who are planning to return home. They thanked America and our Allies for giving them a chance to reclaim their lives on their native lands. I also met with and thanked some of the American air men and women who achieved the success and with some of our and other NATO troops who are going into Kosovo now to make sure we win the peace. They know that they're doing the right thing, and I am very proud of all of them.

While America is enjoying success abroad, it is important that we keep pushing forward on our challenges here at home. This is a time of great hope for our Nation. Just today we

learned that the American economy grew at a 4.3 percent in the first 3 months of this year. America plainly is on the right track.

But we will be judged by what we do with this opportunity, whether we seize it or squander it in petty bickering and partisan animosity. There will be plenty of time for politics in the months to come. This summer should be a season of progress.

We should start by acting quickly on issues where most lawmakers, Democratic and Republican, agree: legislation to let disabled Americans keep their Medicaid health insurance when they go to work; an increase in the minimum wage; campaign finance reform; a strong and enforceable Patients' Bill of Rights.

I was heartened that earlier today the House overwhelmingly passed legislation making sure that foster children are not cast out in the cold when their time in foster care ends. This is a vital issue, one that Hillary has championed for many years. And I am very pleased by the House action.

Then we must turn to broader ways and, in some ways, more difficult challenges facing our Nation. First, we have a duty to maintain the fiscal discipline that has produced our prosperity and use it to strengthen Social Security and Medicare for the 21st century and to pay down our national debt.

On Tuesday I will propose the detailed plan to modernize Medicare, cutting costs, improving service, and helping senior citizens with their greatest growing need, affordable prescription drugs.