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take on the big challenges of the 21st century. In Washington, we need to choose the future over politics as usual.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:57 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to Lew and Edie Wasserman, dinner hosts; Steve Grossman, national chair, and Leonard Barrack, national finance chair, Democratic National Committee; and California Lt. Gov. Gray Davis, Democratic candidate for Governor, and his wife, Sharon.

Remarks to the Presidential Scholars

June 15, 1998

Thank you very much. Welcome to the White House. I want to thank Bruce Reed for his service, and I want to thank him for making a joke about how young he looks and saving me the trouble of doing it. [*Laughter*]

Secretary Shalala, Deputy Secretary of Education Smith, to the Commission on Presidential Scholars and its chair, Stuart Moldaw, to the cosponsors, the corporate sponsors, as well as the families and teachers and friends of the scholars here today, and most of all to you, scholars, welcome to the White House. I hope you have enjoyed the day so far. I want to begin by thanking the United States Marine Band, this year celebrating its 200th anniversary as the President's band, playing for you.

The Presidential Scholars Award dates back to 1964 when President Johnson signed an Executive order, and I quote, ''to recognize the most precious resource of the United States—the brainpower of its young people.'' Today I look out across a group of young people whose brainpower could light up this entire city. Someday, many of you doubtless will light up this entire city. Already you have enriched your communities by your activities in music, art, athletics, and citizen service. I'm especially grateful to those of you who have helped to mentor or tutor children who need your help.

As you look ahead to further academic success, let me say that I very much hope you will continue to pursue other interests as well, including community service. And I hope you will become increasingly involved as citizens in the great issues of today and tomorrow.

We are going through a period of profound change. You are on the edge of a new century and a new millennium. We are very fortunate that this is such a good time for America. And every day I get up and give thanks for the fact that we have the lowest crime rate in 25 years, the lowest unemployment rate in 28 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 29 years. We're about to have the first balanced budget and surplus in 29 years, the lowest inflation in 32 years. We have the smallest Federal Government in 35 years, the highest homeownership in history. Inequality among different classes of working people is going down, and millions of children have been lifted out of poverty in the last 5 years. I am grateful for that.

But in that kind of environment, where the American people feel great confidence and where your future looks so bright, it seems to me that as a people we have two different choices: We can do what people usually do in good times—we can relax and enjoy them; or we can do what we should do—we should recognize that things are changing dramatically in our country and in the world, that we still have enormous challenges facing us in this new century, and we should be bold and look ahead to the future, to your future, to the world your children will live in, and act now, when we have the prosperity, the security, and the confidence to act on the long-term challenges of the country. There are many.

Next year I believe we have to reform Social Security and Medicare so that when we baby boomers retire, we don't bankrupt our children and undermine our children's ability to raise our grandchildren. I believe we have to make our public schools the best in the world, just like our colleges and universities are now. I believe we have to deal with the growing problems of crime and violence among children and families. I think we still have economic challenges in the inner cities and isolated rural areas. I believe we have to prove that we can grow the economy and improve the environment, not continue to destruct it. I believe we have serious challenges, long-term, if we want to be the world's leading force for peace and freedom

in the world, as the recent nuclear tests in India and Pakistan indicate, as the continuing turmoil in Kosovo indicates, as all the ethnic and religious and racial strife in the rest of the world indicates.

So we have these big challenges. And I have been hammering and hammering and hammering these last several months, here with the Congress and out in the country, that we owe you—our generation owes you our best efforts to deal with the long-term challenges of the country in these good times, not simply to relax and enjoy them, because nothing like this lasts forever. It is an opportunity, an opportunity to relax or to move forward. I think we have to more forward.

I'd like to talk to you about one such issue today, because I think it is profoundly important to your future and to children coming along just behind you. And that is our obligation to curtail what has become a deadly epidemic of teenage smoking. In 1964, the very year President Johnson started the Presidential Scholars program—when, coincidentally, I was exactly your age, but unlike Bruce Reed, didn't win one—[*laughter*]—the U.S. Surgeon General presented the landmark report linking smoking and cancer. Today we're on the verge of making dramatic progress in our fight against teen smoking. We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to pass comprehensive, anti-smoking legislation that can save a million Americans from premature, painful, preventable deaths just over the next 5 years.

Senator McCain and others have brought to the floor a principled and bipartisan proposal to protect children from tobacco. It raises the price of cigarettes by $1.10 a pack over the next 5 years, the single most important step we can take to reduce teen smoking. It imposes tough penalties on tobacco companies if youth smoking doesn't decline by two-thirds over the next decade. It gives the Food and Drug Administration full authority over tobacco products. It provides for a nationwide counteradvertising campaign for prevention, for smoking cessation programs, and tough enforcement measures to stop retailers from selling cigarettes to minors, something that is illegal now in all 50 States, even though a huge percentage of people under 18 but over 13 have tried cigarettes. It provides assistance to the tobacco farmers who have done nothing wrong. It funds a major increase in health research at the National Institute of Health and the Centers for Disease Control. And it returns to States funds to reimburse them for the massive amount of money they have already spent in helping to deal with the effects of smoking-related diseases, to be spent on health care and child care.

The McCain bill began as the strongest anti-youth-smoking legislation in history; it has been made stronger still. In the past week it has gained momentum as members of both parties offered amendments to fight teen drug use and to provide for tax relief for low and middle income families. I don't see how any Senator can now stand in the way of a bill that fights drugs, cuts taxes, and protects young people from a habit that kills.

It's been almost exactly a year since the State attorneys general proposal for a settlement brought comprehensive legislation to our Congress, a month since the Senate began to consider the issue. I urge the Senate to act now. Every day the Senate delays plays into the hands of the tobacco industry, which wants desperately to kill this bill and which is spending millions and millions of dollars on an advertising campaign designed to convince the American people this is nothing more than a big government tax increase to create huge big government bureaucracies. It is absolutely false.

I just came back from California and Oregon, and I traveled around a lot in automobiles and had the chance to hear some of the advertising being run by the tobacco companies. And I thought to myself, it's not true, but it sounds good. They basically say, "Forget about the fact that we didn't tell the truth to the American people for years, about our efforts to recruit teenagers to smoke illegally, about our memorandum which called them replacement smokers. Forget about the fact that we covered up for years the fact that we knew that tobacco was addictive. Just channel your well-known hatred of Government and taxes against this bill."

And unfortunately, the cancer society, the heart association, the lung association, the people who stand with us on this legislation,

don't have anything like the money that the tobacco companies have to put on ads that answer that.

Those of us in politics know that unanswered ads can sometimes be fatal. Well, if they're fatal this year, they will be fatal to young children who continue to be seduced and sold illegally cigarettes that will shorten their lives.

Remember that every year smoking-related illnesses cause more deaths than AIDS, alcohol, drugs, car accidents, fires, and murders combined. This is an important thing to do. So I ask you all, remember that 3,000 young children start to smoke every day, illegally; a thousand will have their lives shortened because of it. The delays must come to an end. I ask the American people to make their voices heard. I ask the United States Senate to think about the Presidential Scholars here and all the young people they represent and pass the McCain bill this week. [*Applause*] Thank you.

I know many of the scholars here feel just as strongly as I do. Patrick LaRochelle from Signal Mountain, Tennessee, has been running 4½ minute miles. I never did that. [*Laughter*] He would sooner put on lead shoes than smoke a cigarette. Alex Blane, from Charlotte, North Carolina, has aunts and uncles and friends who have worked on tobacco farms. Yet every single one of them is adamant that smoking should be a habit young people never start.

So I ask all of you whose communities look up to you, help your young friends take a stand against peer pressure, help them take responsibility for their health in every way. At the national level we can and must make it more difficult from cigarette companies to market to teens. But to really cure our country of this significant public health challenge, we need the help of parents and siblings, teachers and coaches, and role models like you. The 21st century will be the time of greatest opportunity in all human history. I want every American young person to be able to enjoy it to the fullest.

Congratulations, and God bless you. Good luck.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:40 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Memorandum on the Report to Congress Regarding Conditions in Burma and U.S. Policy Toward Burma

June 15, 1998

Presidential Determination No. 98–30

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Report to Congress Regarding Conditions in Burma and U.S. Policy Toward Burma

Pursuant to the requirements set forth under the heading ''Policy Toward Burma'' in section 570(d) of the FY 1997 Foreign Operations Appropriations Act, as contained in the Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act (Public Law 104–208), a report is required every 6 months following enactment concerning:

1) progress towards democratization in Burma;
2) progress on improving the quality of life of the Burmese people, including progress on market reforms, living standards, labor standards, use of forced labor in the tourism industry, and environmental quality; and
3) progress made in developing a comprehensive multilateral strategy to bring democracy to and improve human rights practices and the quality of life in Burma, including the development of a dialogue between the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) and democratic opposition groups in Burma.

You are hereby authorized and directed to transmit the attached report fulfilling this requirement to the appropriate committees of the Congress and to arrange for publication of this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

William J. Clinton