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Foreword to President's Public Papers
1/01/99 – 6/30/99

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As 1999 opened, and we marked the last year of the 20th century, Americans took stock of our blessings. And they were many. We had the longest peacetime expansion in our nation's history, nearly 18 million new jobs, low inflation, peace at home and strength abroad.

We looked ahead to the next century, and sought to meet the challenges it is bringing. We announced grants that will bring 30,000 new teachers into our nation's classrooms, to prepare the leaders of tomorrow. We proposed the Medicare Modernization plan, to secure Medicare for the next two decades and offer our citizens affordable prescription drug coverage. And I asked Congress to commit 60 percent of our budget surplus to Social Security for the next 15 years, to put it on a sound footing for our generation and for those who follow us.

Overseas, America stood firm with those who stand for peace – and against the forces of aggression and hatred. Our NATO Alliance celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, admitting three new members – the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland. With our NATO allies, we defeated ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, and kept the peace in that troubled corner of Europe. Together, we put the integration of the Balkans into Europe high on the international agenda. And our relationship with Russia stood up to challenges as Russia helped make and keep the peace in Kosovo.

The accords reached between Israelis and Palestinians at Wye River Plantations, in Maryland, helped revitalize the Middle East Peace Process. Northern Ireland installed its first institutions of self-government, the result of free and open elections and power-sharing agreements.

We celebrated one of the most important achievements of our century, and looked back on our progress, when we presented Rosa Parks with a Congressional Gold Medal for her courageous leadership in the civil right movement. Looking ahead to the future, I created the White House Office of One America, to promote racial reconciliation in the century ahead.

But we were also faced, again and again, with the tragedies and difficulties of our modern age. As a nation, we struggled to make sense of the senseless shootings at Columbine High School; and we pressed to pass commonsense gun safety legislation to make such tragedies less likely.

In my State of the Union, the last of the 20th century, I reminded Americans that, 100 years from now, Americans will end a 21st century shaped in so many ways by the decisions we make here and now. "Let it be said of us then," I said, "that we were thinking not only of our time; but of their time; that we reached as high as our ideals; that we put aside our divisions and found a new hour of healing and hopefulness; that we joined together to serve the land we love."

Draft 03/27/00 5:00pm
Heather Hurlburt

FOREWORD TO THE PUBLIC PAPERS OF THE PRESIDENT
7/01/99 – 12/31/99

In the second half of 1999, the nation's attention turned to meeting the challenges of a new millennium – and seizing the opportunities presented by our strong and growing economy.

Our economic expansion became the longest in America's peacetime history. The count of new jobs created since 1993 passed the 20 million mark, as unemployment reached its lowest level in 20 years, and unemployment among African-Americans and Hispanics fell to record lows. At the same time, America experienced the fastest and longest growth of real wages in two decades – and inflation fell to its lowest since the 1960s. We achieved our first back-to-back budget surpluses in 42 years.

With support from members of Congress on both sides of the aisle, I launched a New Markets Initiative, to reach those parts of America that economic growth has passed by. We began with the principle that, just as we give companies incentives to invest in developing markets overseas, we should give them incentives to invest in inner cities, poor rural areas, and Native American reservations right here in America. As I traveled from Watts to the Mississippi Delta to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, I met a stream of talented people, eager for opportunity and ready to work. With investment incentives, loan programs, and support for business development, our New Markets Initiative is helping put them to work – and helping keep our economy growing.

Working with Congress, we made a bipartisan commitment to put 100,000 new teachers in our schools and 50,000 more police on our streets. We doubled funds for after-school programs. We provided, for the very first time ever, funds to help school districts turn around failing schools or shut them down. We funded 60,000 housing vouchers to help people move from welfare to work. We passed the Kennedy-Jeffords bill to allow people with disabilities to move into the workplace and keep their government-funded health care.

We also reaffirmed our commitment to global leadership for peace and freedom in the century ahead, by reaching agreement at home to pay our arrears to the United Nations. We reached a ground-breaking agreement that will, if Congress agrees, allow China to enter the World Trade Organization in exchange for China opening its markets to U.S. goods. We helped ensure major progress toward peace in the Middle East, by working with Israel as it negotiated with both Syria and the Palestinians at the same time. We concluded the adapted Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty, which will help ensure military stability and predictability in Europe; and Russia committed to withdraw forces from Georgia and Moldova. We helped conclude a Caspian pipeline agreement that can help assure our energy security and reinforce the

independence of the new nations of Central Asia. In our own hemisphere, we handed the Panama Canal back to the government and people of Panama.

We also gave strong support to the democratic transitions in Nigeria and Indonesia, which allowed the passage of more people to freedom in 1999 than in 1989, the year the Berlin Wall fell. And we led in negotiating a historic debt relief initiative for the poorest countries of the developing world.

But we recommitted ourselves as well to meeting the challenges we face at the dawn of a new millennium, abroad and at home: the need to keep Social Security and Medicare safe and sound for future generations; the need to make sure the trade that keeps us prosperous becomes not just freer, but fairer; the need to bridge the digital divide between those who have and can use a computer, and those who do not or cannot; the need to manage the implications of new technology, new science, new ways of doing business. And perhaps the most important challenge of all: the imperative not to give in to complacency, but to use our prosperity for good – and for a better future.