

Mail →
Feb 17-

Presidential Correspondence Office

Past
Present
Future

3 March 1993

"...we are inviting the American public to write us here at the White House with their suggestions."

-- Remarks by the President During Health Care Working Meeting, January 25, 1993.

"...And so tonight I ask you: Watch what we do closely. If you think I'm wrong, call or write and tell me."

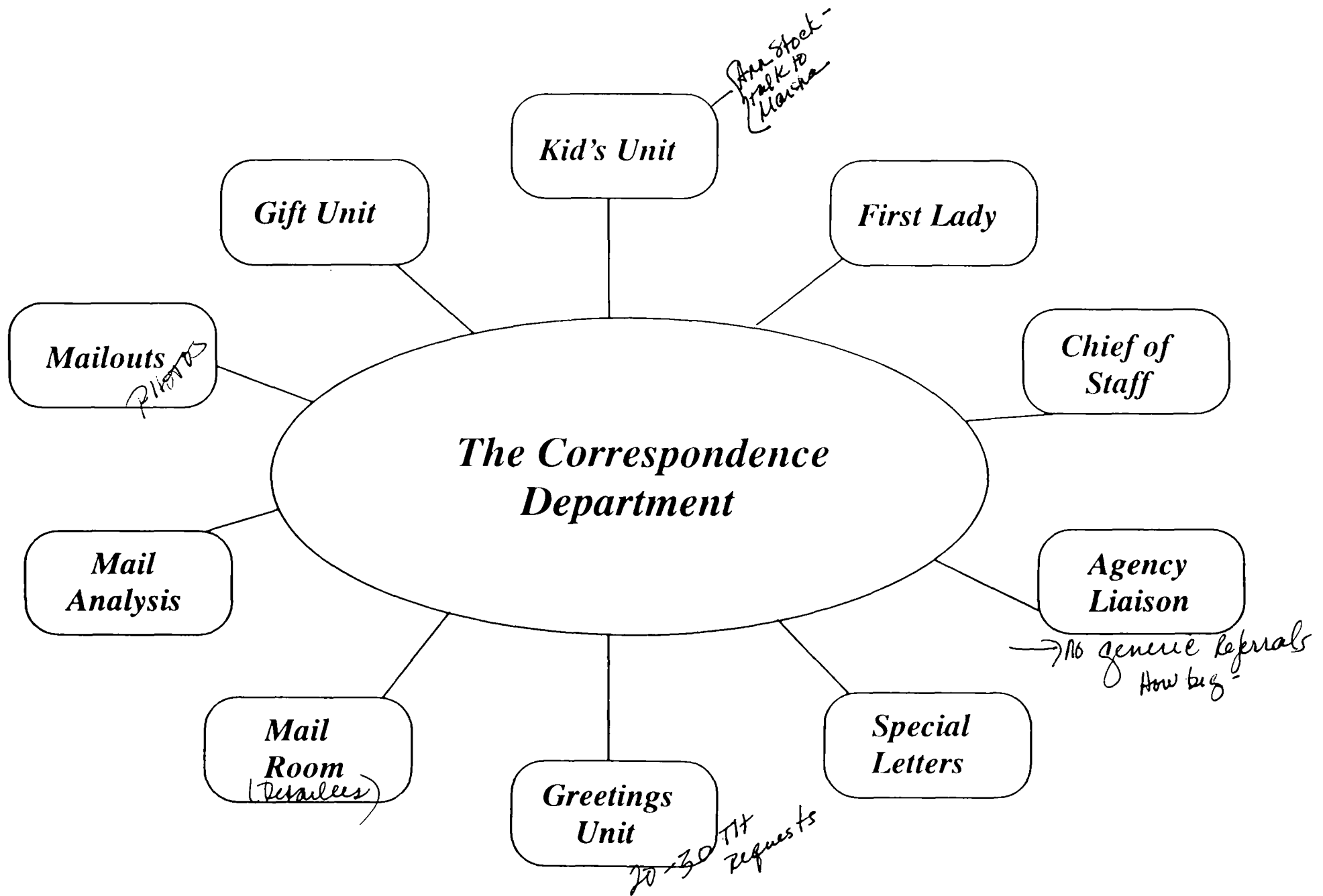
-- Remarks by the President Upon Arrival at Detroit, February 10, 1993.

"...So a lot of you have asked questions you haven't heard us answer today. I would encourage you to write to us. I have reorganized the White House Correspondence Office. ...We're trying to minimize the number of just formal responses we give unless people send us a form letter; that's different. But I mean people that really write us. So I would encourage you to do that."

-- Remarks by the President at the Chillicothe Economic Discussion, February 19, 1993.

"...If you think I'm wrong, write and tell me that."

-- Remarks by the President in ABC Kids town Meeting, February 20, 1993.



Presidential Correspondence
Long Term Goals

Conduct Ongoing Dialogue With American Public

Provide Timely, Personal Response to Mail

Produce Pro-Active, Targeted Mailings

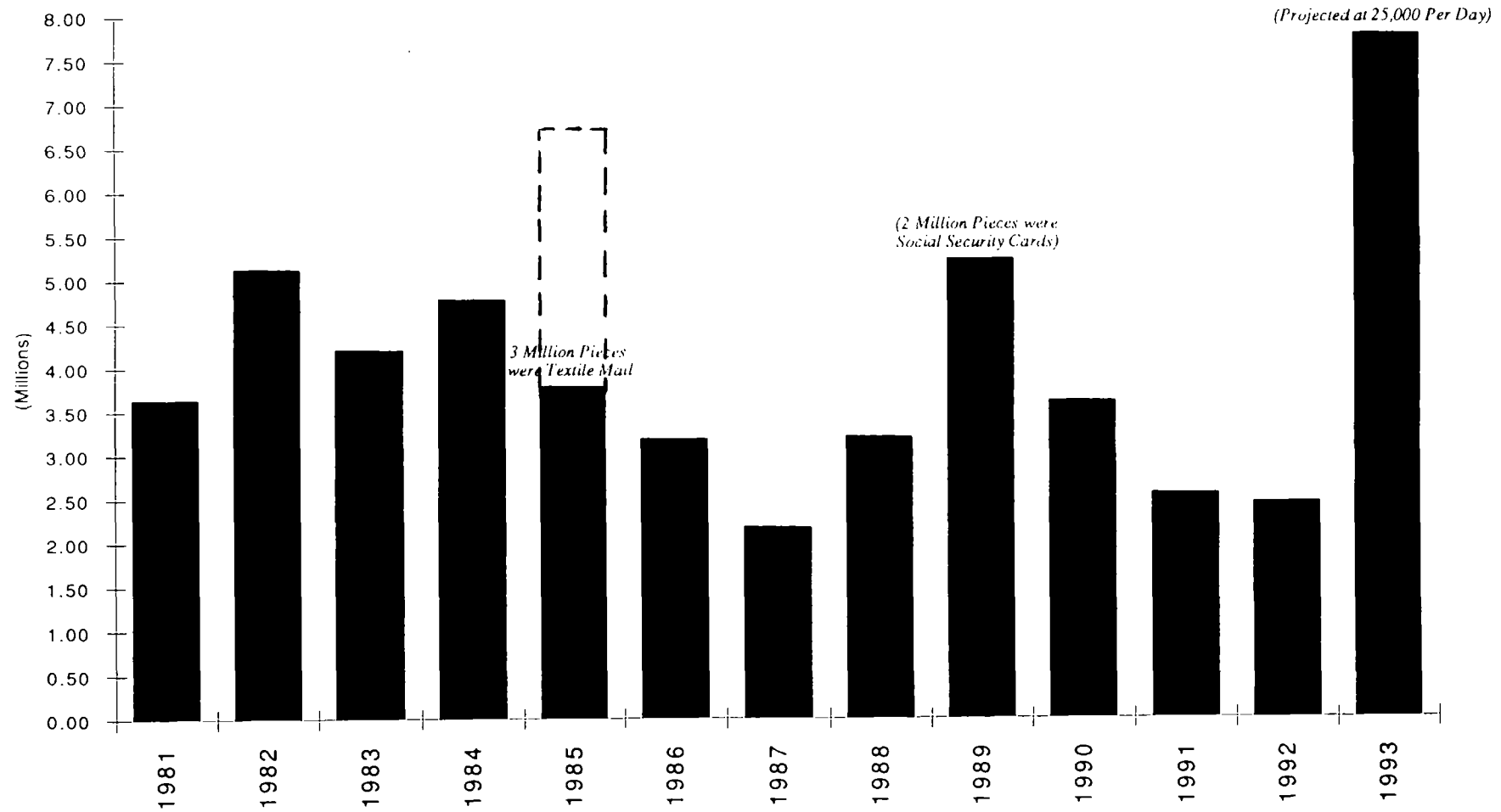
**Compile Constituent Data Base to Serve
President's Policy Goals**

Reflect Leading Edge Communications Technology

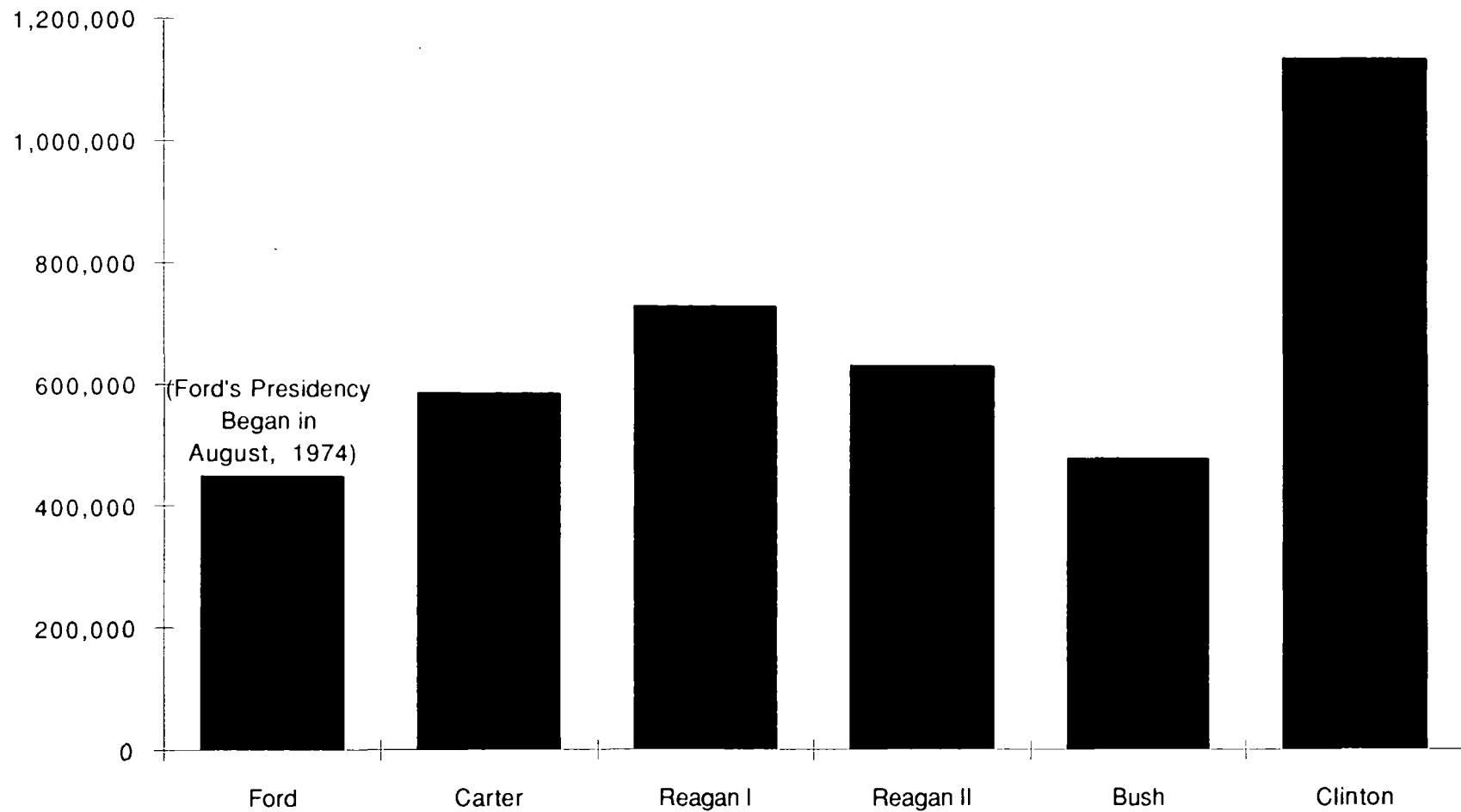
***Key Number Projections
Correspondence Office***

34,000	Total Daily Incoming Correspondence
29,000	Total Incoming Correspondence Minus Staff Mail
21,800	Total Projected Responses Required (Total Minus Staff Minus Propaganda Minus Illegible)

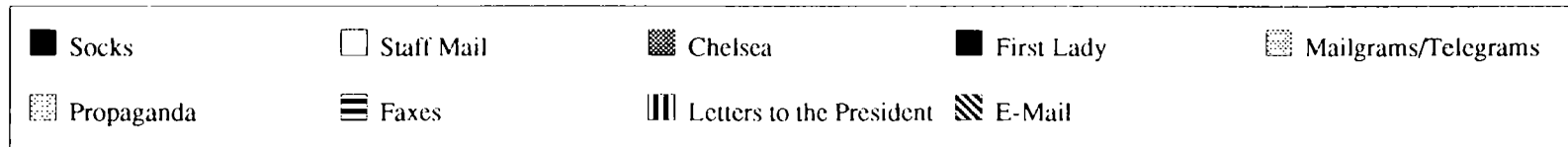
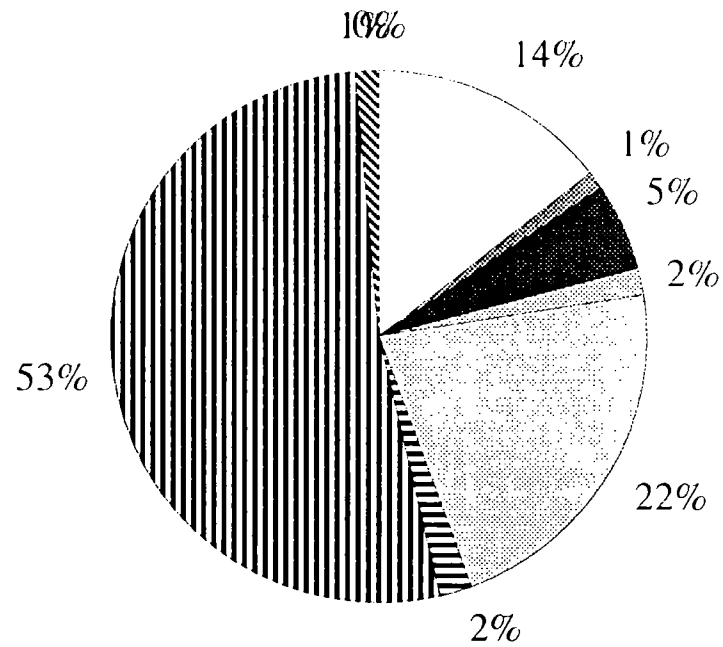
Mail Addressed To The President



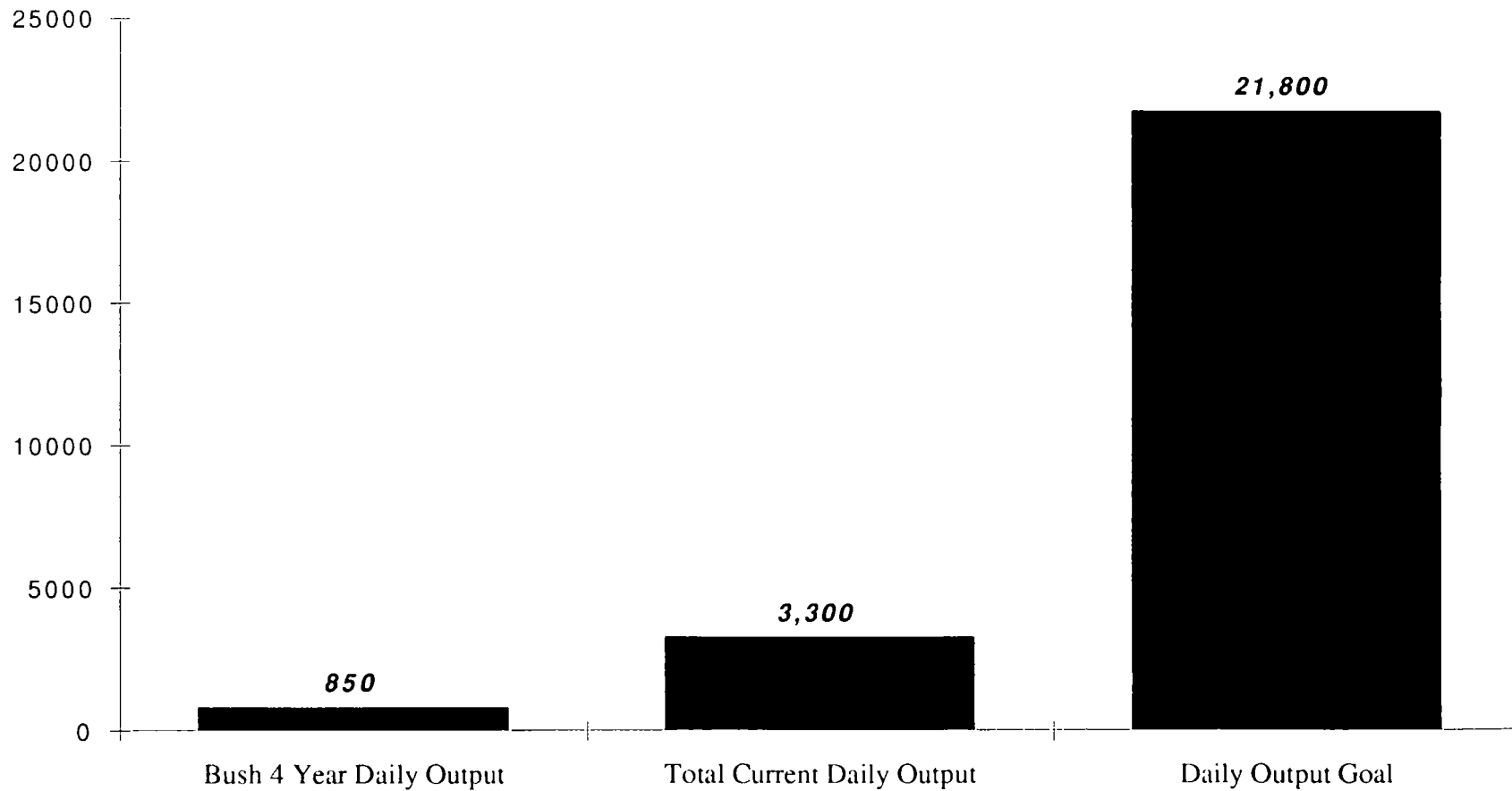
Total Mail Received During First 34 Days



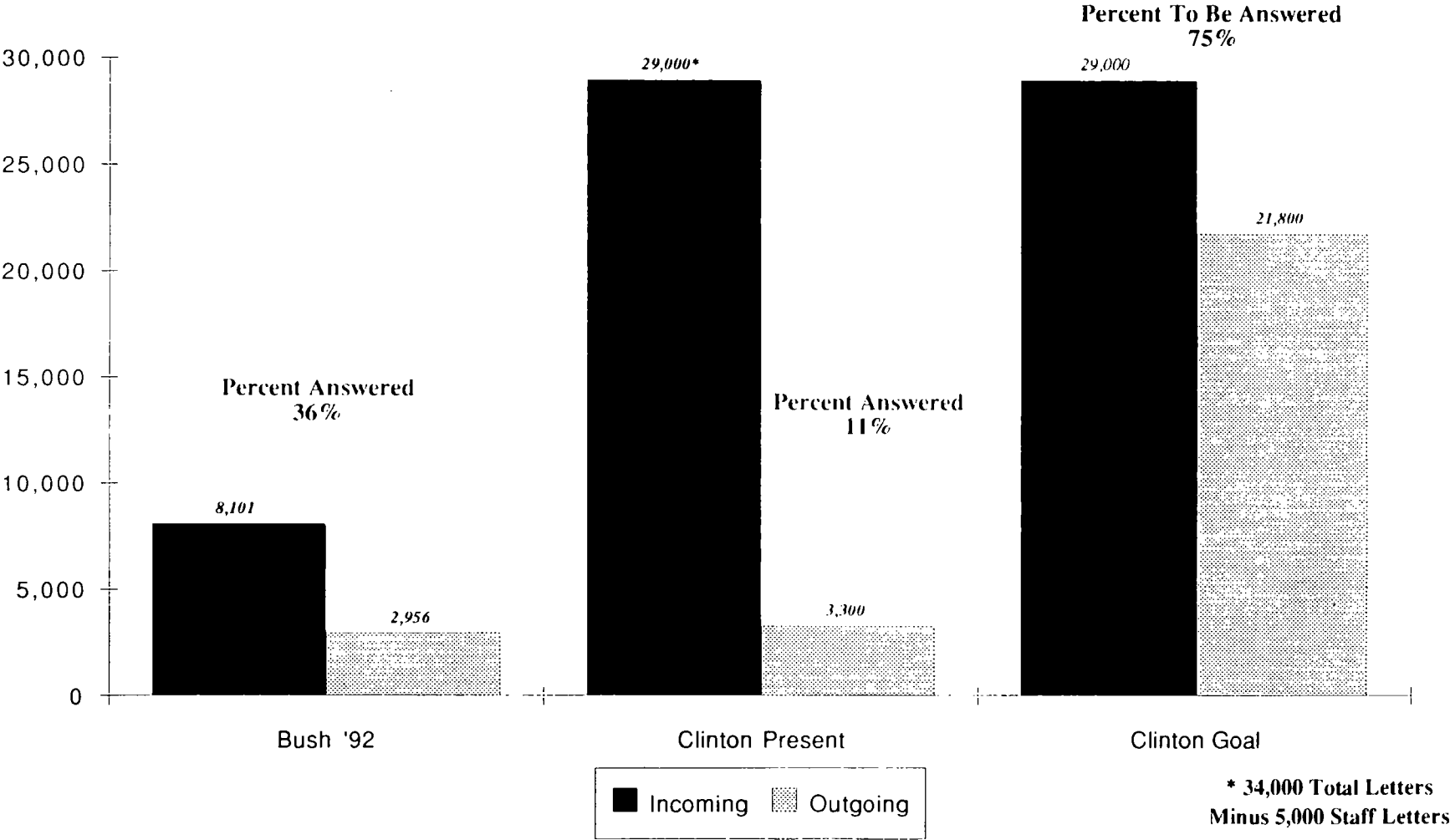
Clinton Administration Breakdown of Total Incoming Mail Total Received as of 2/28: 1,149,769



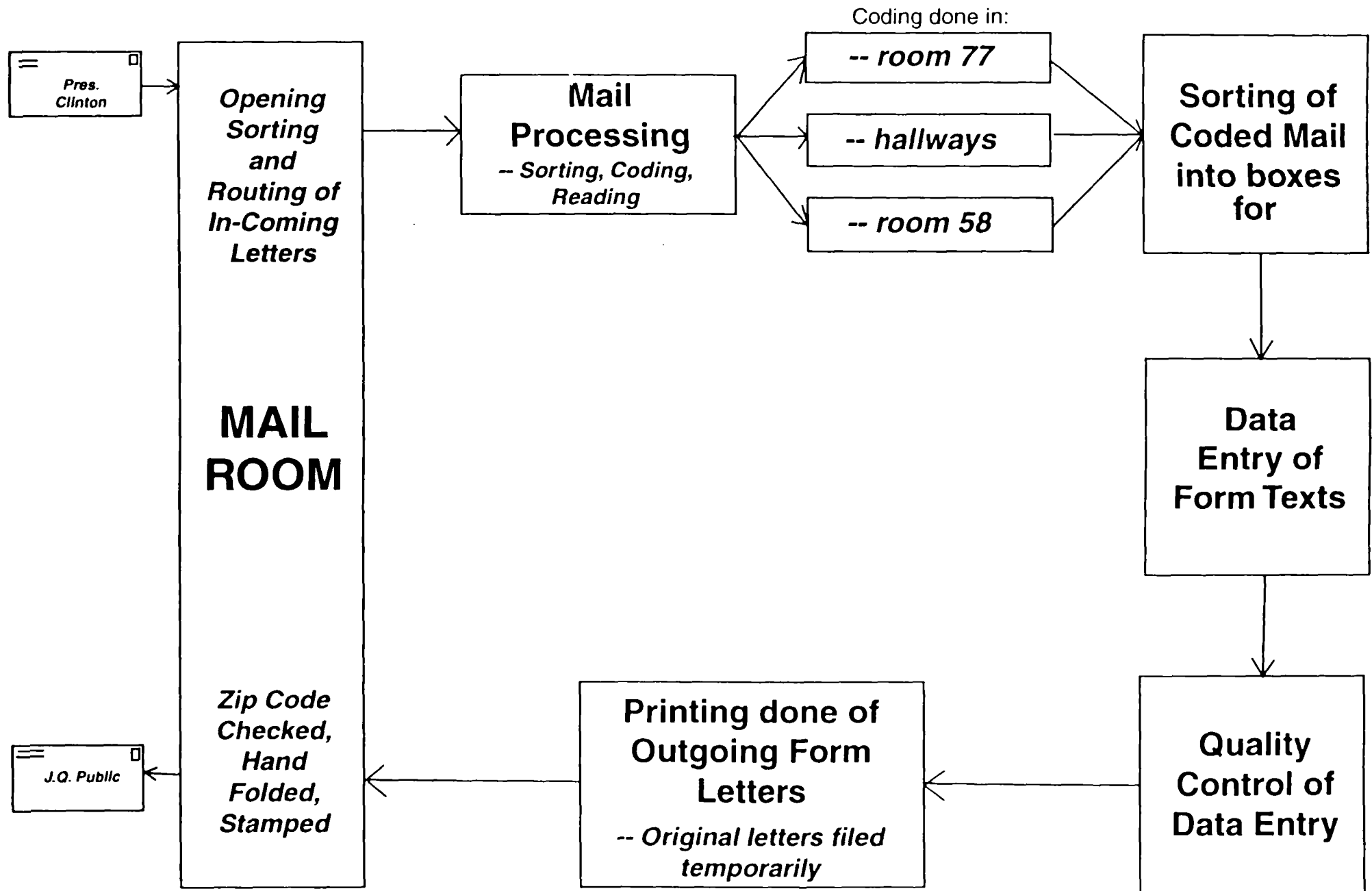
Past, Present and Future Output of Presidential, First Lady, COS, and MS Letters



Ratios of Incoming to Outgoing Mail



Typical flow of Form Letter Through Current System



Current Backlog In Correspondence

18 per day

<i>Status</i>	<i>Number</i>
Letters to Be Opened & Stapled	350,000
Mail To Be Read, Coded, and Entered	170,000
Kids Mail to Be Processed	70,000
Greetings	45,000
First Lady's Mail	37,000
E-Mail	13,600
Agency Liaison	6,400
Gifts	2,000
Special Letter Response	1,000
<i>Totals</i>	<i>687,800</i>

Current Obstacles

Computer

- **Barely Adequate Number of Workstations**
- **Insufficient Quorum Capacity**
- **Not User Friendly for Volunteer Training**
- **Not Configured for Emerging Technology**

Space

- **Spread Out in OEOP, East and West Wing**
- **No Room For Expansion**
- **Inefficient Use of Present Space**

Personnel

- **Volume Increase; Staff Decrease**
- **Over 200 Staff/Volunteers Needed for Daily Mail Functions**
- **Training Volunteers: Time & Labor Intensive**

Process

- **Excessive Handling of Mail**
- **Too Labor Intensive/ Under Automated**

Staffing Needs

<i>Office</i>	<i>Avg. Daily Incoming</i>	<i>Current</i>	<i>Needed</i>
Mail Room	29,000	22*	15
Special Letters	200	13	5
Agency Liaison	500	7	16
Children's	2,500	3	19
First Lady	1,800	5**	16
Greetings	1,300	3	22
Gifts	100	7	4
Chief of Staff	100	2	2
Mail Analysis	15,300	38	94
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>21,800***</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>193</i>

* Postal Service detailees

** Two on First Lady's personal staff

*** Excluding Mail Room Total

Policy Drives Process
Senior Staff Decisions

Do We Answer All Mail?

If Not All Mail, Where Do We Cut?

What Proactive Mailings Are Desired?

What Constituent Data Is Required/Useful?

What Response Time Is Expected?

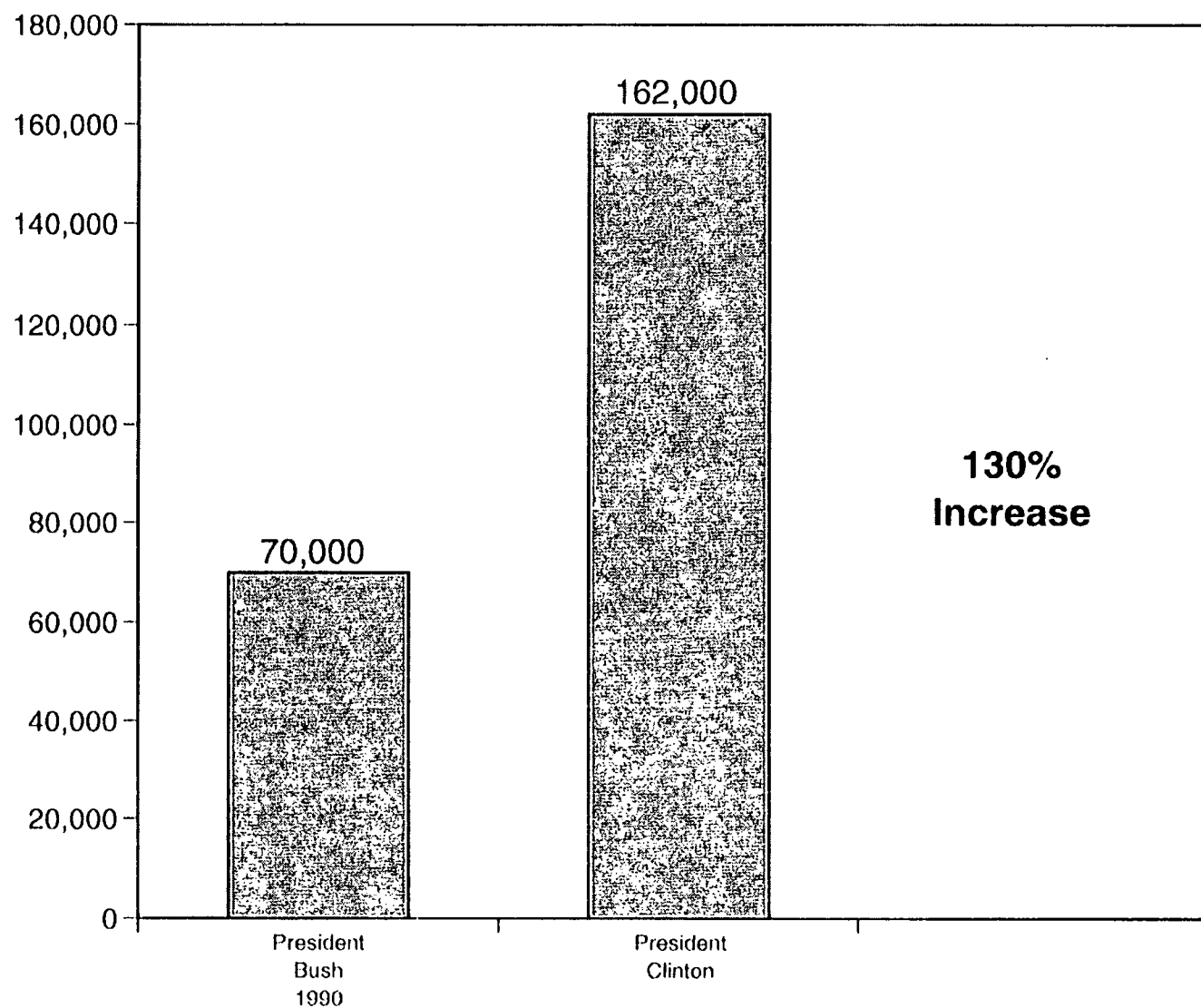
IDENTIFIED SOLUTIONS

- **Immediate Actions**
 - **Reconfigure workspace**
 - **Develop volunteer base**
 - **Develop volunteer training programs**
 - **Upgrade existing computer systems**
 - **Short-term efficiencies**
 - **electric staplers**
 - **windowed, pre-stamped envelopes**
 - **electric letter folders**
- **Task Force for Long Term Solutions**

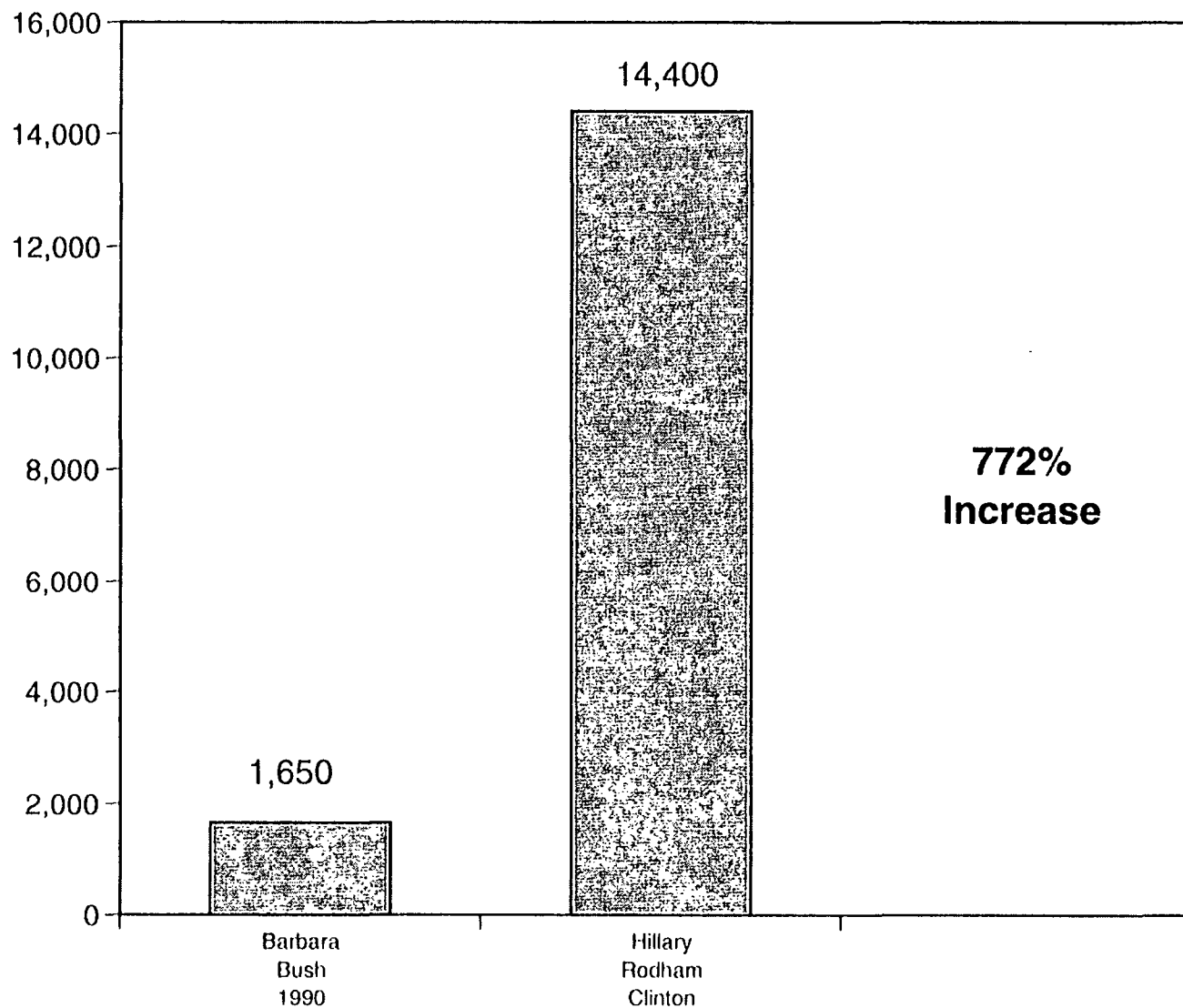
Overview of First Lady's Correspondence

April 29, 1993

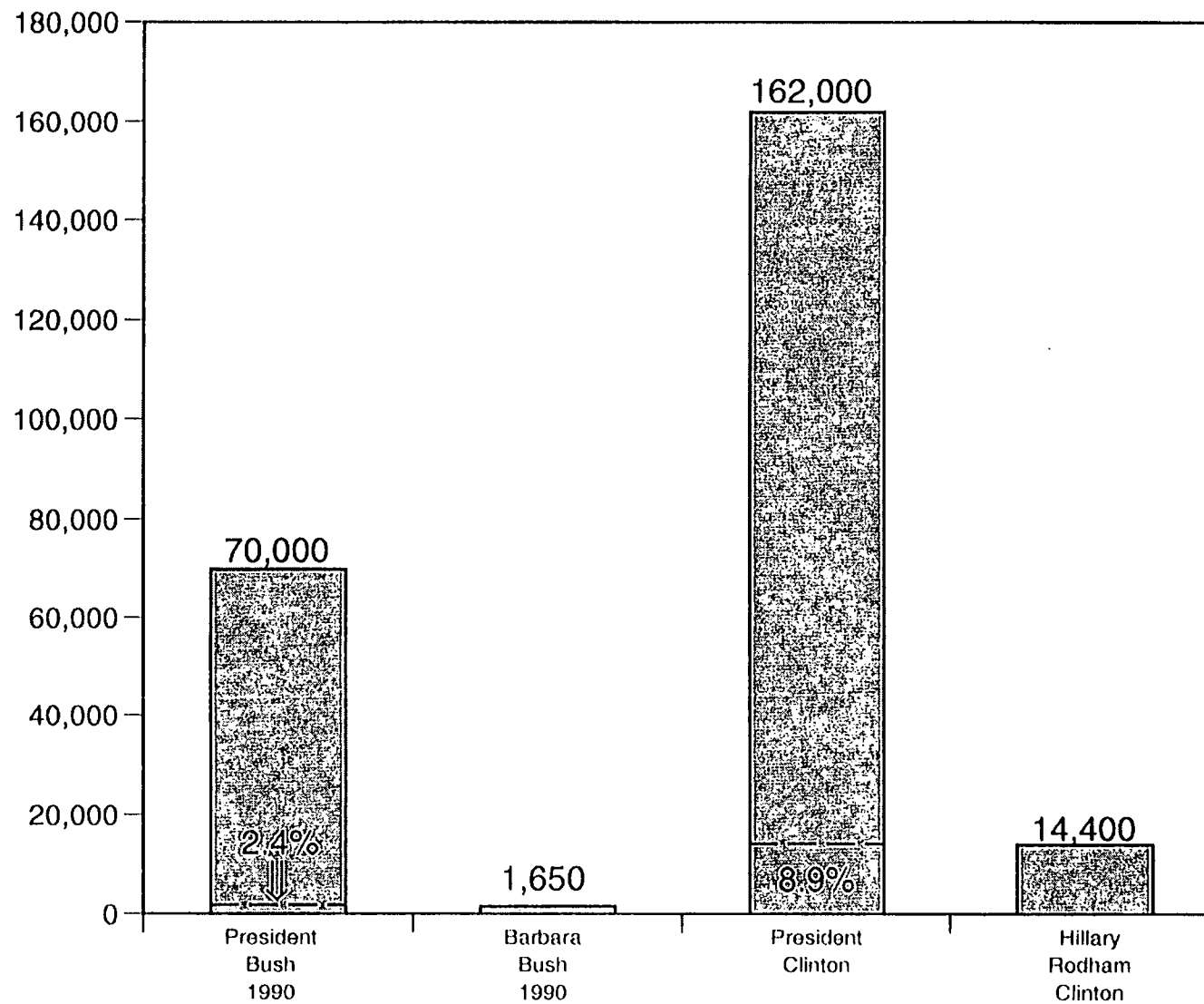
WEEKLY AVERAGE VOLUME OF INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT



WEEKLY AVERAGE VOLUME OF INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESSED TO THE FIRST LADY



RATIO OF THE FIRST LADY'S CORRESPONDENCE TO THE PRESIDENT'S CORRESPONDENCE



BREAKDOWN OF CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESSED TO THE FIRST LADY

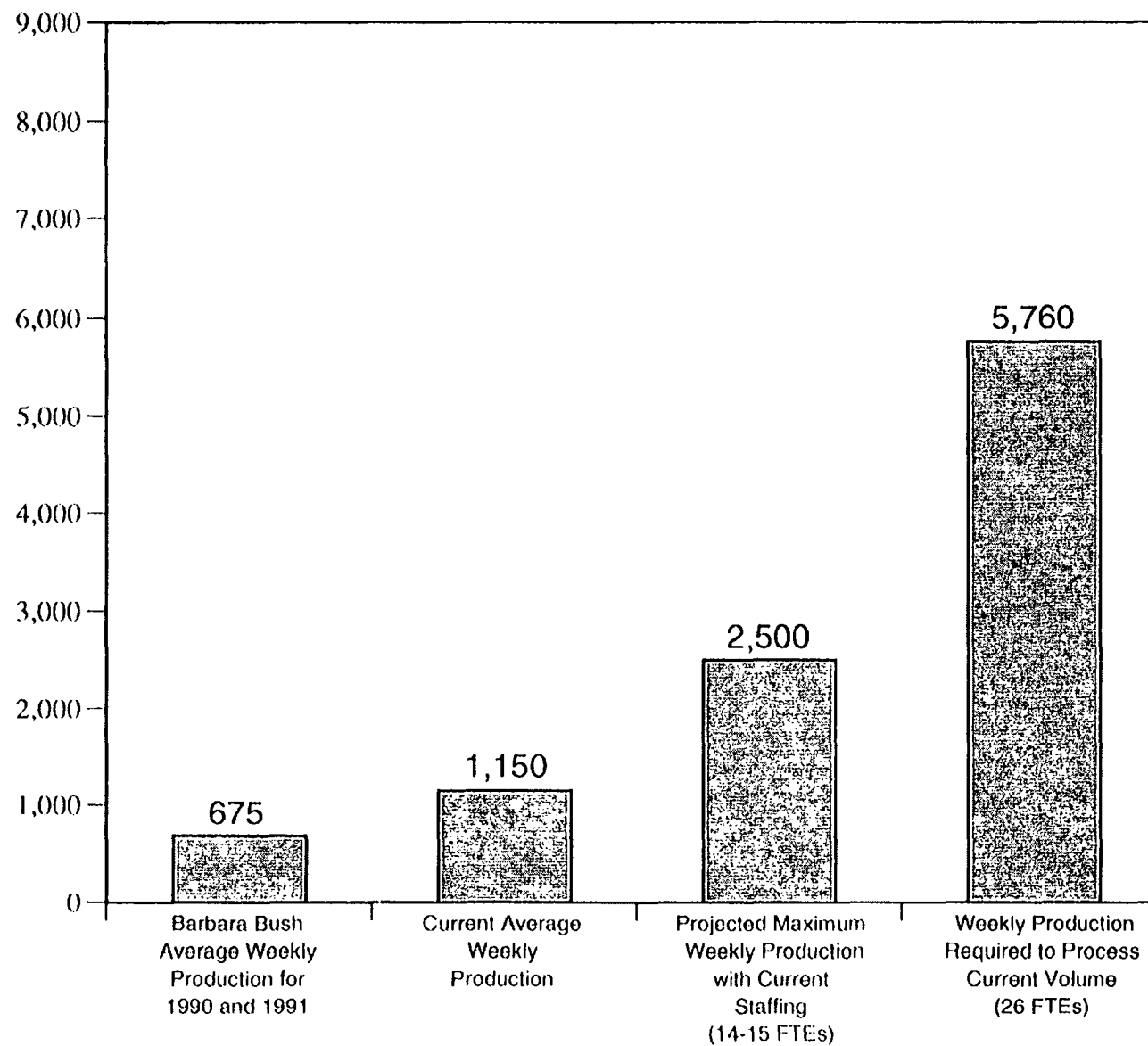
File Correspondence

	Daily	Weekly	Percentage of Total	
Average Volume of Incoming Correspondence	2,400	14,400	—	
Mail Forwarded to Other Offices				
• Health Care Reform Task Force	1,200	7,200	50%	(50%)
• Agency Liaison (Casework)	48	288	2%	(8%)
• Gifts, Personal Mail, Resumes, Greetings, Children's Letters, Mail from Elected Officials or Diplomats	48	288	2%	(2%)
	1,296	7,776	54%	(60%)
No Response Required	144	864	6%	(14%)
• Foreign Mail (other than VIPs and Casework)				
• Propaganda/Mass Mailings				
• Prisoners (other than Casework)				
• Illegible or no address				
Correspondence Answered by the First Lady's Unit	960	5,760	40%	(26%)

BREAKDOWN OF CORRESPONDENCE ANSWERED BY THE FIRST LADY'S UNIT

	Daily	Weekly	Percentage of Total
Total Correspondence Answered	960	5,760	—
Type of Correspondence			
• Scheduling	43	258	4.5%
• Individual Responses and Requests	34	204	3.5% (32)
♦ Special greetings and messages			
♦ Requests for auction items, photos, recipes, etc.			
♦ Interview Requests			
♦ Requests from service providers and performers			
♦ Contributions			
♦ Letters requiring individual attention			
• Letters of Support	220	1,320	23% 57
♦ Notecard response			
• Issues - Related Mail	663	3,978	69%
♦ Brief comments (notecard response)	393	2,358	41%
♦ Substantive (requires letter response)	270	1,620	28%

PRODUCTION CAPACITY OF FIRST LADY'S CORRESPONDENCE UNIT



CORRESPONDENCE BACKLOG

CURRENT:

Estimated Backlog as of April 15, 1993: 105,000
Average Response Time: 6 to 7 months

PROJECTED:

**Estimated Backlog as of September 1, 1993
At Maximum Production Capacity with
Current Staffing: 170,200**

- 5,760 Current Weekly Volume Requiring Response
- 2,500 Weekly Responses Produced at Optimum Performance Level
-
- 3,260 Weekly Response Shortfall for 20 Weeks (April 16 – September 1)

Average Response Time as of September 1, 1993: 9 to 10 months

**Estimated Backlog as of September 1, 1993
With Off-Site Processing of Notecards
Beginning June 1, 1993: 119,800**

- Estimated Backlog as of June 1, 1993: 124,560
- 5,760 Current Weekly Volume Requiring Response
 - 3,600 Notecards Processed Off-Site (General Support Mail and Less Substantive Issues Mail)
 - 2,500 Weekly Responses Produced at Optimum Performance Level
 -
 - + 340 Weekly Reduction in Backlog for 14 Weeks (June 1 – September 1)

Average Response Time as of September 1, 1993: 3 to 4 months

ACTIONS TAKEN TO INCREASE PRODUCTION

- Segregate and Prioritize Letterhead Mail
- Use Notecard Responses as much as Possible
- Hand Address Notecards
- Develop Program to Recruit, Train and Retain 75 to 100 Long Term Volunteers
- Recruit College Students for Internships
- Sponsor Large Group Reading Days

RECOMMENDATIONS

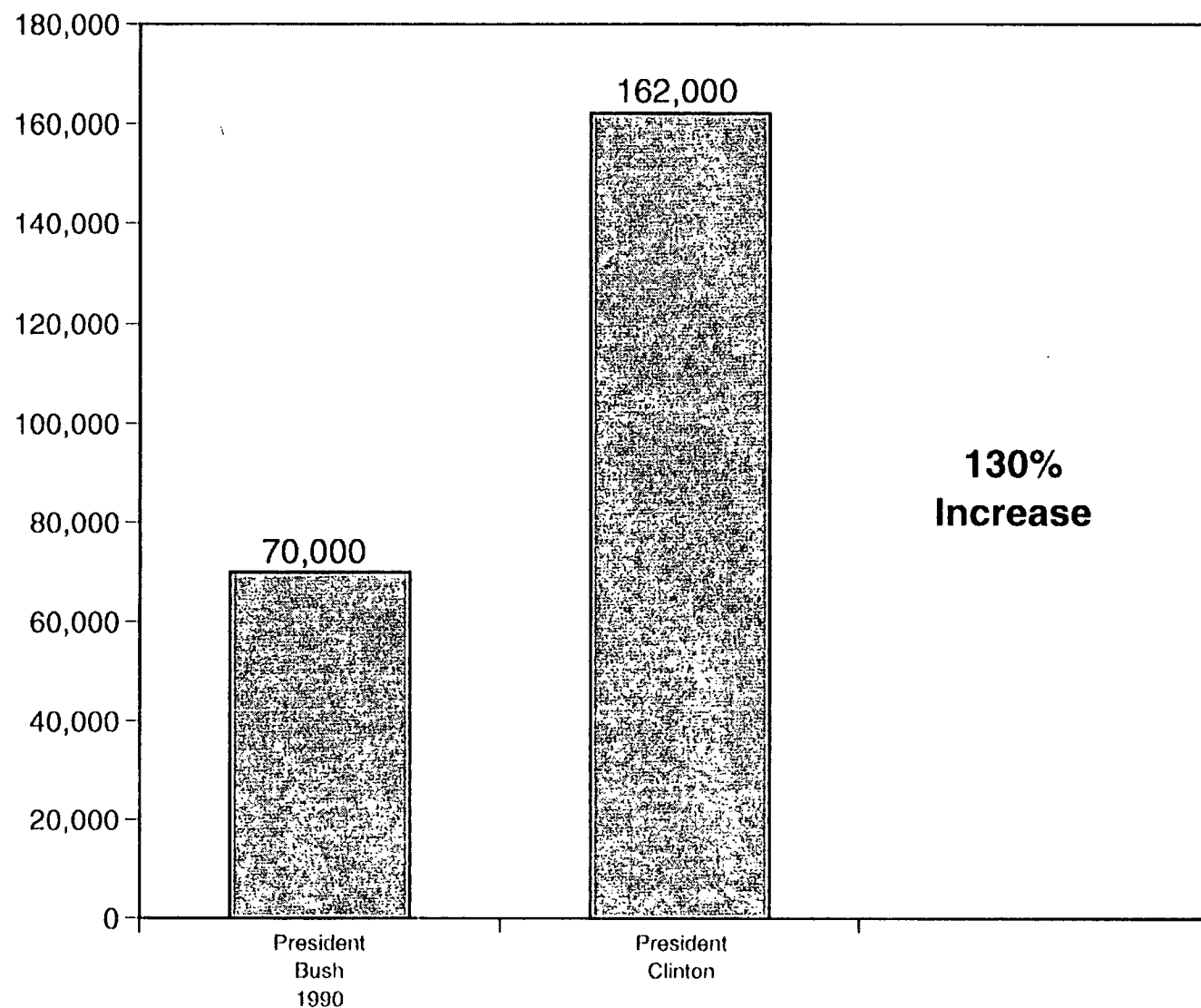
- Develop Communications Plan
- Use Off-Site Processing when Available
- Consider Using a Single Notecard for Backlog
- Add Three Paid Staff Positions

. . File Correspondence

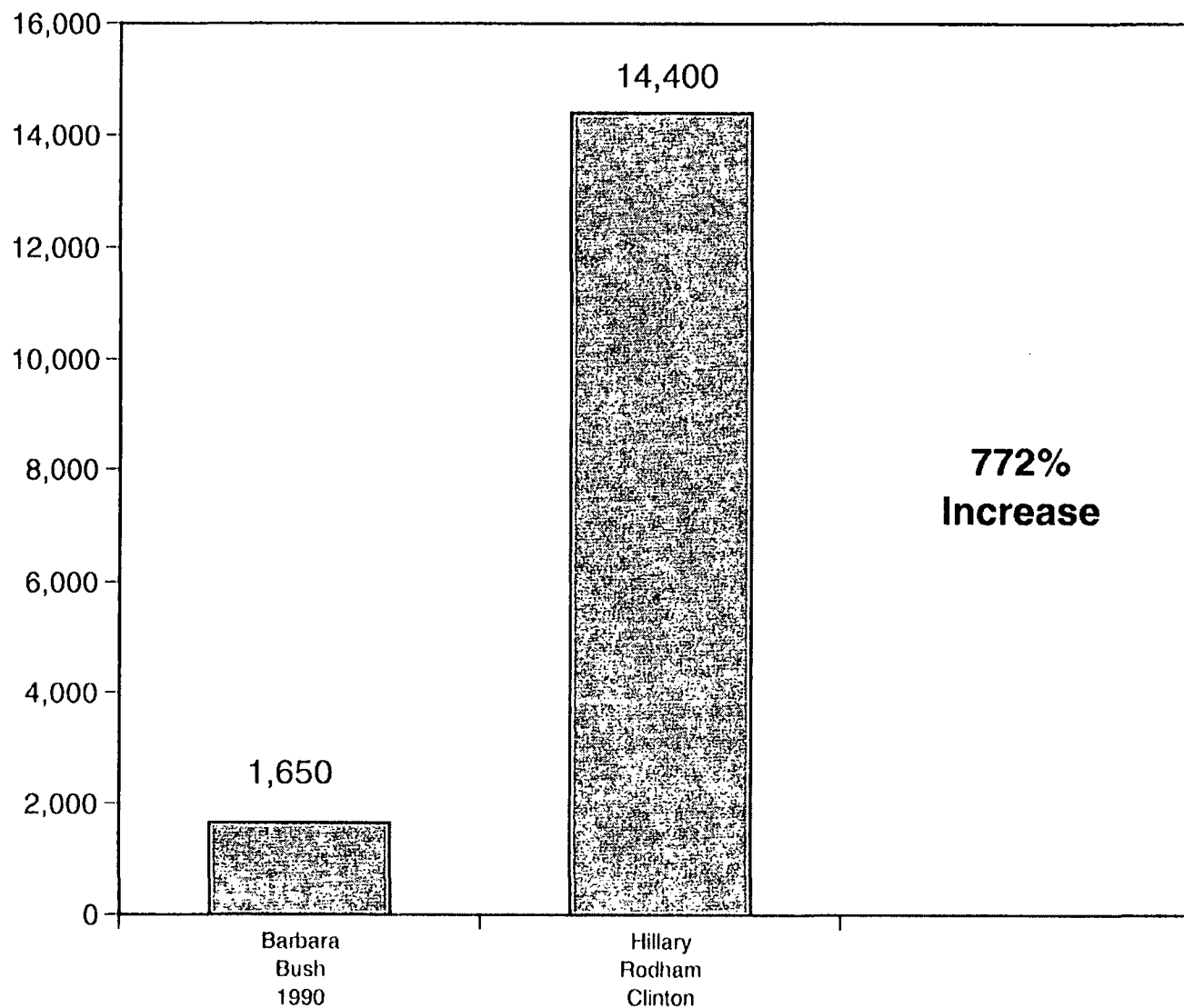
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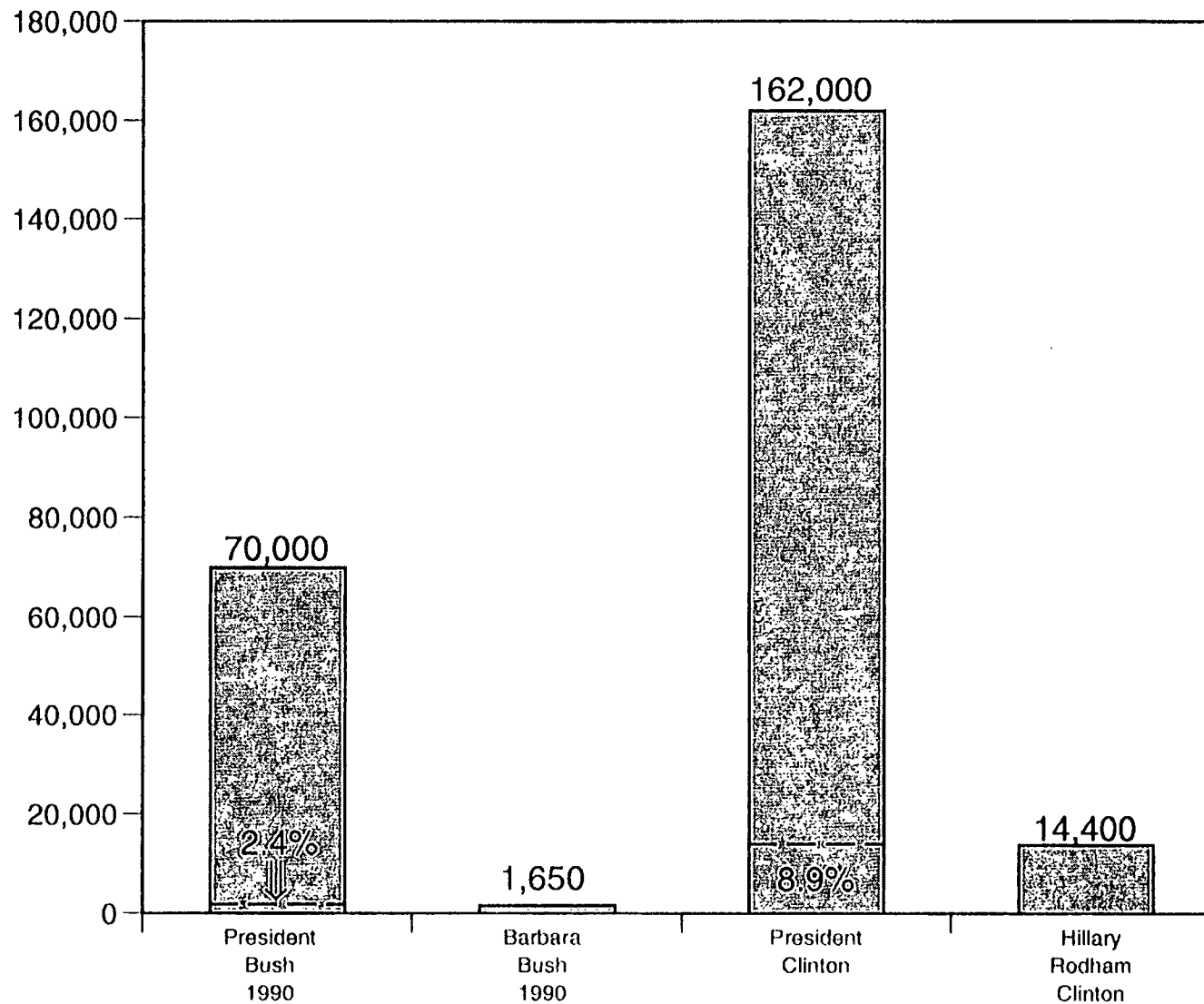
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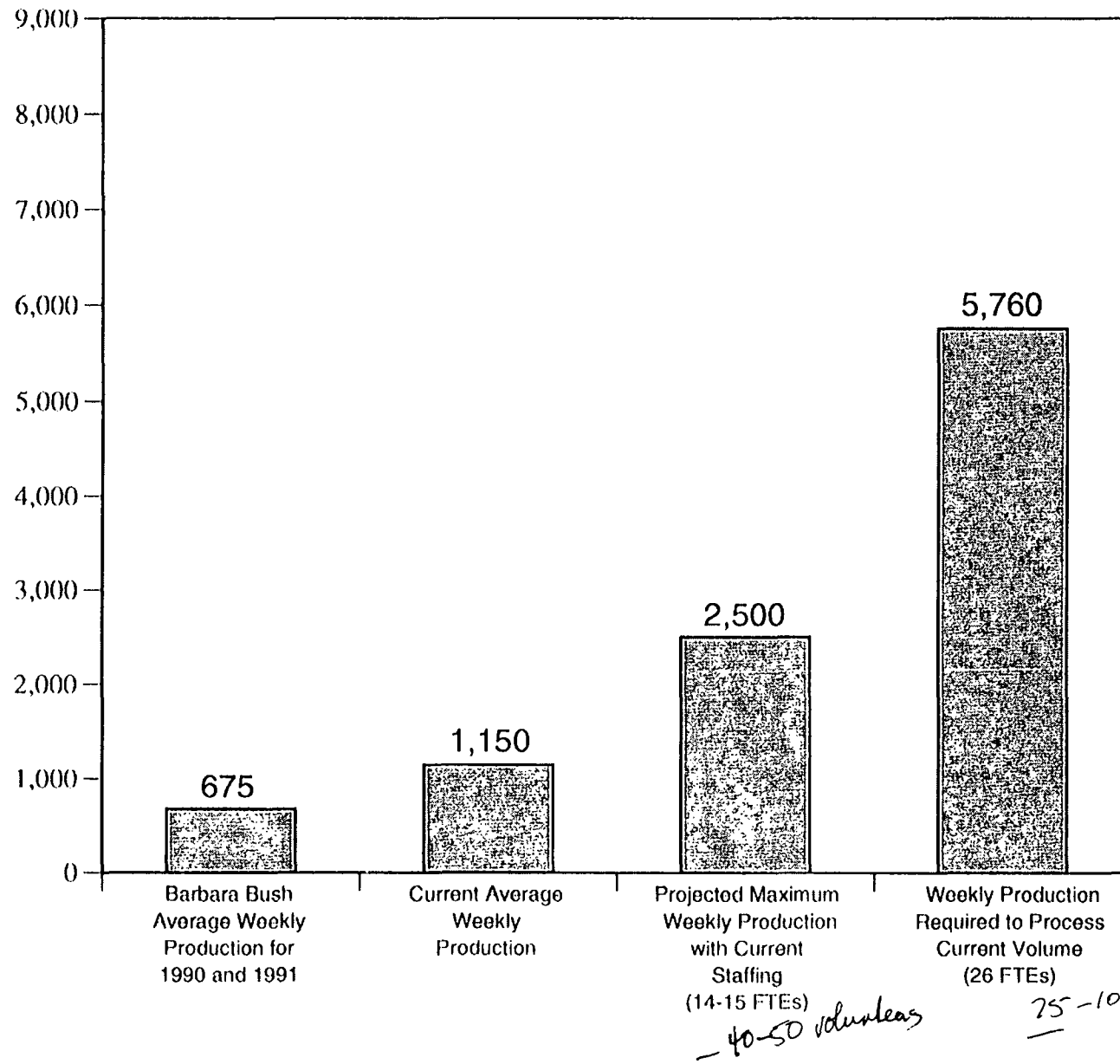
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note card

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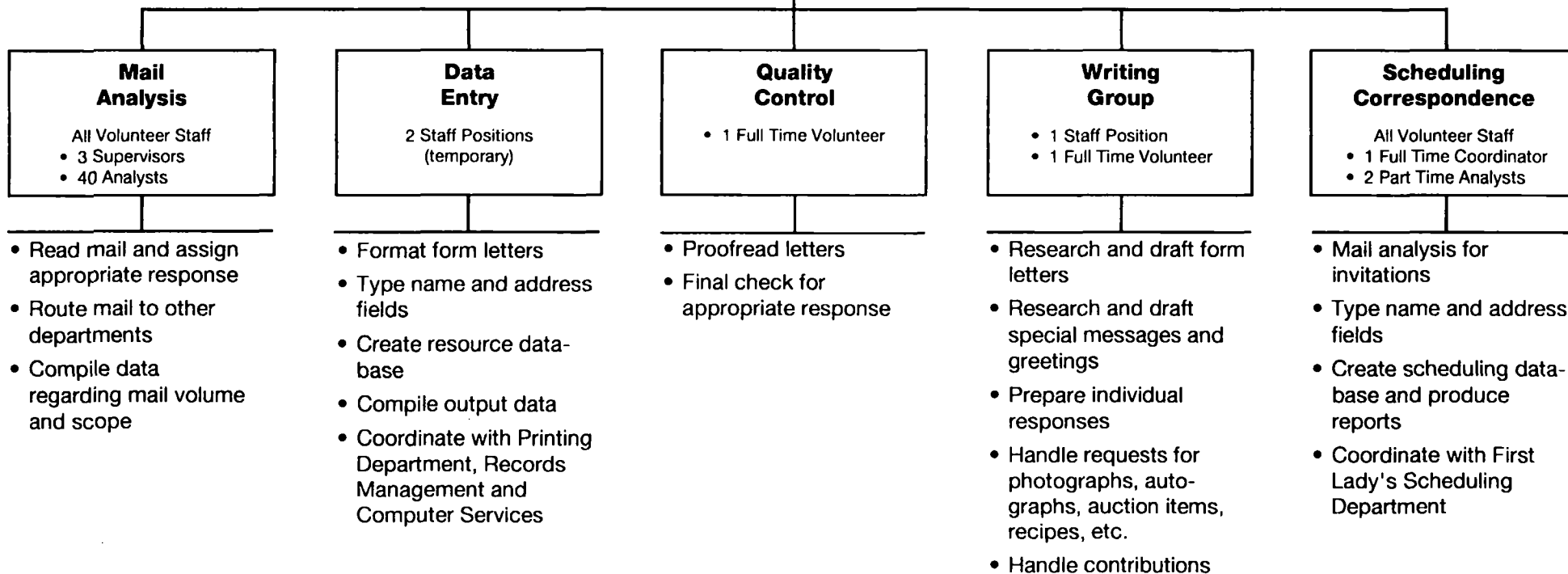
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- Add Three Paid Staff Positions

*without
a second response -*

Director

Deputy Director

- Volunteer recruitment, coordination and training
- Administration
- Preparation of reports and projections



*File
Correspondence*

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON CORRESPONDENCE

**Production Report for
January 25 Through January 30, 1993**

*Maggie -
Transition
Production Report -
F&I -
Kelly*

Date	Issues Cards	Support Cards	Foreign Letters	Transition Letters	Appoint Letters	Gift Letters	DAILY TOTAL
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Jan. 25, 1993	69	23	0	0	0	0	92
Jan. 26, 1993	48	29	0	0	0	0	77
Jan. 27, 1993	88	40	0	0	0	Cam- paign - 13 letters	141
Jan. 28, 1993	85	39	0	0	0	Birthday - 1 letter	125
Jan. 29, 1993	106	163	0	0	0	0	269
Jan. 30, 1993	163	131	0	0	0	Birthday - 1 letter	295

**TOTAL FOR
PERIOD:** 559 425 0 0 0 15 999

File Correspondence

DETERMINED TO BE AN
ADMINISTRATIVE MARKING
INITIALS: By DATE: 11/4/2013
2013-0359-S

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

CORRESPONDENCE BACKLOG: STATUS AND OPTIONS 6/23/93

STATUS:

Backlog Size: Approximately 65,000 as of 6/22/93

Average Response Time: 9-12 weeks for mail received after
6/22/93

Substantially all mail received before 5/1/93 has been processed

OPTIONS:

Three options, relying on a mix of the following elements:

- * Procedures for daily processing
- * Large group reading days (Women's Bar, League of Women Voters, etc.)
- * Special groups (HRC friends, Arkansas Travelers, etc. work intensively for short period)

I. Option One: Become Current by September 1, 1993

Action 1: Simplify Operation-Use Notecard Responses for
Substantially All Correspondence

Weekly Production Capability:	4,250
Weekly Responses Required to Stay Current (at current incoming vol. of 9,600/wk):	<u>3,840</u>

Weekly Backlog Reduction:	410
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Total backlog reduction (7/1-9/1; 10 wks)	4,100
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Action 2: Schedule 6 Large Group Reading Days

Backlog Reduction for 6 days @ 5,500 per day	33,000
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Action 3: Recruit 5 Special Groups for One
Week Each

Backlog Reduction for 5 groups @ 5,500 per group	27,500
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TOTAL BACKLOG REDUCTION FOR OPTION I: 64,600

II. Option Two: Become Current by September 1, 1993

Action One: Handle mail received after 6/1 using complete procedures; simplify procedures for mail received before 6/1 and process older mail using special groups

Weekly Production Capability:	3,000
Weekly Responses Required to Stay Current (at current incoming vol. of 9,600/wk)	<u>3,840</u>
Weekly Backlog Increase:	840
Total Backlog Increase (7/1-9/1; 10 wks)	8,400
Total Backlog:	73,400

Action Two: Schedule 6 Large Group Reading Days

Backlog Reduction for 6 days @ 5,500 each	33,000
--	---------------

Action Three: Recruit 7 Special Groups for
One Week Each

Backlog Reduction for 7 groups @ 5,500 each	38,500
--	---------------

TOTAL BACKLOG REDUCTION FOR OPTION II: 71,500 (2,500 shortfall)

III. Option Three: Become Current by October 1, 1993

Action One: Handle mail received after 6/1 using complete procedures; simplify procedures for older mail so it can be handled by special groups

Weekly Production Capability:	3,000
Weekly Responses Required to Stay Current (at current incoming vol. of 9,600/wk)	<u>3,840</u>
Weekly Backlog Increase:	840
Total Backlog Increase (7/1-10/1; 14 weeks)	11,760
Total Backlog:	76,760

Action Two: Schedule 7 Large Group Reading Days

Backlog Reduction for 7 days @ 5,500 per day	38,500
---	---------------

Action Three: Recruit 7 Special Groups for One Week Each

Backlog Reduction for 7 groups @ 5,500 per group	38,500
---	---------------

TOTAL BACKLOG REDUCTION FOR OPTION III: 77,000

NOTE: ALL NUMBERS ARE ESTIMATES; STRATEGIES ARE ILLUSTRATIONS

File Correspondence

DETERMINED TO BE AN
ADMINISTRATIVE MARKING

INITIALS: Ry DATE: 11/4/2013

2013-0359-S

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Week Each

Backlog Reduction for 5 groups @ 5,500 per group	27,500
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TOTAL BACKLOG REDUCTION FOR OPTION I: 64,600

II. Option Two: Become Current by September 1, 1993

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Weekly Production Capability:	3,000
Weekly Responses Required to Stay Current (at current incoming vol. of 9,600/wk)	<u>3,840</u>
Weekly Backlog Increase:	840
Total Backlog Increase (7/1-9/1; 10 wks)	8,400
Total Backlog:	73,400

Action Two: Schedule 6 Large Group Reading Days

Backlog Reduction for 6 days @ 5,500 each	33,000
--	---------------

Action Three: Recruit 7 Special Groups for
One Week Each

Backlog Reduction for 7 groups @ 5,500 each	38,500
--	---------------

TOTAL BACKLOG REDUCTION FOR OPTION II: 71,500 (2,500 shortfall)

III. Option Three: Become Current by October 1, 1993

Action One: Handle mail received after 6/1 using complete procedures; simplify procedures for older mail so it can be handled by special groups

Weekly Production Capability:	3,000
Weekly Responses Required to Stay Current (at current incoming vol. of 9,600/wk)	<u>3,840</u>
Weekly Backlog Increase:	840
Total Backlog Increase (7/1-10/1; 14 weeks)	11,760
Total Backlog:	76,760

Action Two: Schedule 7 Large Group Reading Days

Backlog Reduction for 7 days @ 5,500 per day	38,500
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Action Three: Recruit 7 Special Groups for One Week Each

Backlog Reduction for 7 groups @ 5,500 per group	38,500
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TOTAL BACKLOG REDUCTION FOR OPTION III: 77,000

NOTE: ALL NUMBERS ARE ESTIMATES; STRATEGIES ARE ILLUSTRATIONS

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

AGENDA FOR FEBRUARY 8, 1993 MEETING

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON CORRESPONDENCE ISSUES

I. PERSONAL MAIL

A. Letters from Personal Friends

1. Friends sending resumes
2. Friends recommending others for appointments
3. Friends writing regarding issues
4. Friends requesting assistance regarding an agency matter
5. Friends requesting assistance regarding an agency matter on another's behalf

B. Letters from Friends who are Foreign Officials, Members of Congress, Governors, Mayors, State or Local Officials or Other VIPs

1. Handled by personal correspondence unit or by appropriate general correspondence unit?
2. If by general correspondence unit, all of this correspondence can be tracked and reported

II. MAIL ADDRESSED TO CHELSEA

A. Friends of Chelsea Carolyn / Milli

Routed to the personal correspondence unit

B. Mail from General Public

1. Should special letters be given to Chelsea?
2. No response should be sent from Chelsea
3. A response should be sent from either the President or the First Lady (or both)
4. Gifts for Chelsea

Corresp
send from payings we got your resume

*just a form
response from
Pres and HRC
"I heard you for
writing to
Chelsea..."*

*for family
gifts*

- a. Use cards for acknowledgement?
- b. Chelsea's signature?

III. GREETINGS

A. Personal Friends

Handled by the personal correspondence unit

B. VIPs

Members of Congress
Governors, Mayors; Other State and Local Officials
Senior Executives of Large Companies
University Presidents
Authors, Performers and Artists

C. General Public

- 1. Answered by cards or letters?
- 2. Greetings sent jointly from the President and First Lady?
 - a. Use cards or letters for acknowledgement?
 - b. Acknowledgements for gifts to the family or gifts to both the President and First Lady

D. Acknowledgements to Service Providers

IV. GIFTS

A. Acknowledgements/Thank-yous

- 1. Gifts from General Public
 - a. Use cards or letters for acknowledgements?
 - b. Acknowledgements for gifts to the family or gifts to both the President and First Lady

2. Gifts from Personal Friends

To be acknowledged by the personal correspondence unit?

B. Reporting

- 1. The gift unit can prepare a weekly log containing a description of each gift received and the name and address of the sender

*for gifts -
some cards
and letters
"grateful that you thought
about ~~the~~ us, but
please send ~~us~~ \$
or gift to your
local charity"*

*do not send forms
back ~~with~~ with
signature of from unknown person*

2. Separate logs can be maintained for each of the President, the First Lady, Chelsea and Socks
3. Personal Gifts (20500-2000 zip code)

a. **Gifts from Family**

Family gifts need not be logged. If Milli and Carolyn provide a list of family members to the gift unit, family gifts will be delivered unopened to the personal correspondence unit

b. **Other Personal Gifts**

Other gifts marked with the 2000 zip code will need to be logged in by the gift unit. Once the gift unit has completed logging the gifts, the records can be sent to the personal correspondence unit for acknowledgement

C. Procedure for Viewing Gifts

D. Disposition of Gifts

1. Charities

a. Types of gifts which may be donated to charity without prior consultation with the first family

b. Authorized charities

2. Disposition of flower arrangements

3. Disposition of gifts for Chelsea or Socks

*pet shelters
or animal
hospitalities*

V. **SIGNATURE**

A. Letters to be signed personally:

Responses to personal friends
Responses to Heads of State

B. Letters to be signed by autopen:

Responses to Members of Congress
Responses to Governors, Mayors and Other State and Local Officials
Responses to Senior Executives of Large Companies
Responses to University Presidents

C. Letters to receive digitized signature:

Responses to the General Public

VI. STATION^Q~~ARY~~

VII. RELEASE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION REGARDING FIRST FAMILY

— autopen
— HRC redo signature

Greetings unit

Correspondence

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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3. ☒ A response should be sent from either the President or the First Lady (or both)
4. Gifts for Chelsea

- a. Use cards for acknowledgement?
- b. Chelsea's signature?

III. GREETINGS

A. Personal Friends

Handled by the personal correspondence unit

B. VIPs

Members of Congress
Governors, Mayors; Other State and Local Officials
Senior Executives of Large Companies
University Presidents
Authors, Performers and Artists

C. General Public

- 1. Answered by cards or letters?
- 2. Greetings sent jointly from the President and First Lady?
 - a. Use cards or letters for acknowledgement?
 - b. Acknowledgements for gifts to the family or gifts to both the President and First Lady

D. Acknowledgements to Service Providers

IV. GIFTS

A. Acknowledgements/Thank-yous

- 1. Gifts from General Public
 - a. Use cards or letters for acknowledgements?
 - b. Acknowledgements for gifts to the family or gifts to both the President and First Lady
- 2. Gifts from Personal Friends

To be acknowledged by the personal correspondence unit?

B. Reporting

- 1. The gift unit can prepare a weekly log containing a description of each gift received and the name and address of the sender

2. Separate logs can be maintained for each of the President, the First Lady, Chelsea and Socks
3. Personal Gifts (20500-2000 zip code)

a. **Gifts from Family**

Family gifts need not be logged. If Milli and Carolyn provide a list of family members to the gift unit, family gifts will be delivered unopened to the personal correspondence unit

b. **Other Personal Gifts**

Other gifts marked with the 2000 zip code will need to be logged in by the gift unit. Once the gift unit has completed logging the gifts, the records can be sent to the personal correspondence unit for acknowledgement

C. **Procedure for Viewing Gifts**

D. **Disposition of Gifts**

1. **Charities**

a. Types of gifts which may be donated to charity without prior consultation with the first family

b. **Authorized charities**

2. (Disposition of flower arrangements)

3. (Disposition of gifts for Chelsea)

V. **SIGNATURE**

A. **Letters to be signed personally:**

Responses to personal friends
Responses to Heads of State

B. **Letters to be signed by autopen:**

Responses to Members of Congress
Responses to Governors, Mayors and Other State and Local Officials
Responses to Senior Executives of Large Companies
Responses to University Presidents

C. **Letters to receive digitized signature:**

Responses to the General Public

VI. ~~STATIONARY~~

VII. RELEASE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION REGARDING FIRST FAMILY

Don T. Muilenberg, Ph.D., P.C.

Clinical Psychology and Education

August 3, 1993

Mr. John Emerson
The White House
Personnel Department
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear John:

I hope when you receive this letter you are well, doing well (which obviously you are), and possessed of a good memory. I remember our "Hamilton connection," although the "seventies" do seem rather long ago, and trust that you will remember also. Before continuing, let me take the opportunity to congratulate you on your accomplishments. It is not like me to read an alumni magazine so carefully, but this time I'm glad I did. Your success in California, and your now being in Washington, must be most gratifying.

John, I write to ask your assistance. Please understand, however, that I only ask that you be candid with me regarding what may or may not be possible. All this is in regard to the enclosed manuscript. The timing of my learning that you were in Washington, within days of my finishing this writing, is somewhat astonishing, but let me get on with some comments regarding the manuscript itself.

I have read that Mrs. Clinton is interested in creating a "moral agenda" for the nation, and that she has often used the expression "search for meaning" in her presentations. My manuscript, AMERICA: THE POWER AND THE PRESENCE, was written with exactly these concerns in mind, and as you can see, includes the subtitles "The Spiritual Well-Being of a Nation" and "The Meaning of America." My writing addresses several of the President's objectives and sentiments, as stated in his inaugural address, and quotes him generously in a separate introductory page, the text itself, and a forceful and challenging conclusion. I truly believe that AMERICA: THE POWER AND THE PRESENCE could become a literary cornerstone for the moral agenda and effort toward meaning which Mrs. Clinton may be envisioning. It would of course be a great honor for me to have an opportunity to contribute to such an undertaking.

My manuscript is written in a style which would allow it to form the basis for a powerful and inspiring television documentary. It could also be published as a beautifully illustrated

602-483-3377

6623 North Scottsdale Road • Scottsdale, Arizona 85250

Mr. John Emerson

Page 2

commemorative book, and as an informative and inspirational textbook for courses in civics and American history. I would need considerable help in order to make all this happen, of course, but I think the possibilities are tremendously exciting. With the support and involvement of the Clintons, I know the nation would be truly well served. I can especially envision the impact of the television documentary, with the President himself speaking his own words to a large and responsive nationwide audience.

So...the big question. Do you think you could help me with this by somehow getting the manuscript brought to the attention of the President and Mrs. Clinton? Perhaps if they could just see the introductory material and the conclusion, their interest might be captured. So many have waited so long for the style and substance the Clintons have brought to the White House. I would be so very pleased to be able to contribute to what they hope to do for this nation.

Thanks, John. I look forward to hearing from you, and of course wish you continued success.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'DM', written over the closing 'yours'.

Don T. Muilenberg, Ph.D.

DM/ae
Enclosure

America: The Power and the Presence

The Spiritual Well-Being of a Nation The Meaning of America

Written with the hope that should we the people of these United States of America choose to take to our hearts the message, the challenge, and the tasks presented in this essay, God may truly, indeed God shall surely bless America. . .today, tomorrow, and in future ages to come.

Don T. Muilenberg, Ph.D.

*Copyright
(Revised 1993)*

There is a sacred *covenant*, an historic bond, which unites the United States of America and a higher power, Providence. . .the God of the Judaic-Christian tradition. As one step on the path toward restoring the integrity of these United States, it is my intention in the essay which follows to make this abundantly clear.

Don T. Muilenberg, Ph.D.

Dedication

It is the high privilege and sacred duty of those now living to educate their successors and fit them, by intelligence and virtue, for the inheritance which awaits them.

In this beneficent work sections and races should be forgotten and partisanship should be unknown. Let our people find a new meaning in the divine oracle which declares that "a little child shall lead them," for our own little children will soon control the destinies of the Republic.

James A. Garfield
20th President of
The United States of America

In the interest of contributing to an education which shall indeed "fit" our "successors. . .by intelligence and virtue, for the inheritance which awaits them," this essay is dedicated to my son, Todd, my daughter, Ann, and to all the "children" of our great nation who in fact shall someday "control the destinies of the Republic." I shall be pleased if in the writing which follows they, and other readers as well, acquire a greater understanding of the values, attitudes, and practices which lead to *the spiritual well-being of a nation*, and gain a more thorough knowledge and deeper appreciation of the historic and essential *meaning of America*.

In memory of my mother and father.

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Note

In the following essay, the reader will find that the presidents of our nation are quoted at length. These quotations, unless otherwise specified, are from their respective inaugural addresses. They are presented at such length to inform, instruct and inspire, and thus help to preserve the history and very meaning of the nation about which they were spoken. They deserve to be read as written, as spoken, and not to be diminished by paraphrase. Other material is quoted at length as well, especially that which has to do with some of the basic historical documents which define the structure and function of this nation. This has been done to allow and encourage the reader to become directly informed regarding the information contained in these most important writings.

Every president of this nation could have been cited, for each, of course, addressed and contributed to the nation's spiritual well-being and to the meaning of America. Those presidents who are quoted are represented herein because of the singular nature of their words or because of the manner in which their messages contribute to the overall purpose of this essay. I wish to make clear, however, that those who are not cited are nevertheless a part of the spirit of the essay and are not necessarily to be thought of as having provided fewer words of value to our nation or less direction regarding its destiny.

I wish also to take this opportunity to express my appreciation and indebtedness to Viktor Frankl, M.D., Ph.D., internationally known psychiatrist and author, whose

writings and good counsel have had a profound influence on my life, both personally and professionally, and therefore on the work which follows.

All presidents' inaugural address quotations are from Davis Newton Lott, The Presidents Speak the Inaugural Addresses of the American Presidents from Washington to Nixon. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969). Presidents Carter, Reagan, and Bush are quoted from texts in The New York Times.

The bold-face type in the quotations has been added by the author for purposes of emphasis and continuity of thought.

The President Speaks

I believe we will find our new direction in the basic old values that brought us here over the last two centuries: a commitment to opportunity, to individual responsibility, to community, to work, to family, and to faith.

...

Our democracy must be not only the envy of the world, but the engine of our own renewal. There is nothing wrong with America that cannot be cured by what is right with America.

...

And so, my fellow Americans, at the edge of the 21st century, let us begin with energy and hope, with faith and discipline, and let us work until our work is done. The scripture says, "And let us not weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

William Jefferson Clinton
January 20, 1993

And Other Presidents Before Him:

No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand which conducts the affairs of men more than those of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency. . .

George Washington
1st President of
The United States of America

God who gave us life gave us liberty.

Thomas Jefferson
3rd President of
The United States of America

Events have brought our American democracy to new influences and new responsibilities. They will test our courage, our devotion to duty, and our concept of liberty.

Harry S. Truman
33rd President of
The United States of America

This nation cannot afford to be materially rich and spiritually poor.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy
35th President of
The United States of America

Ours was the first society openly to define itself in terms of both spirituality and of human liberty. It is that unique self-definition which has given us an exceptional appeal, but it also imposes on us a special obligation to take on those moral duties which, when assumed, seem invariably to be our own best interests.

Jimmy Carter
39th President of
The United States of America

America is never wholly herself unless she is engaged in high moral principles. We as a people have such a purpose today. It is to make kinder the face of the nation and gentler the face of the world.

George Bush
41st President of
The United States of America

Preface

America: A Power, A Presence, and A Call to Duty

Washington, D.C., the nation's capital:

Standing here, one faces a magnificent vista, opening up on this city's special beauty and history.

At the end of this open mall are those shrines to the giants on whose shoulders we stand.

Directly in front of me, the monument to a monumental man. George Washington, father of our country. A man of humility who came to greatness reluctantly. He led America out of revolutionary victory into infant nationhood.

Off to one side, the stately memorial to Thomas Jefferson. The Declaration of Independence flames with his eloquence.

And then beyond the Reflecting Pool, the dignified columns of the Lincoln Memorial. Whoever would understand in his heart the meaning of America will find it in the life of Abraham Lincoln.

Beyond those monuments to heroism is the Potomac River, and on the far shore the sloping hills of Arlington National Cemetery with its row upon row of simple white markers bearing crosses or Stars of David. They add up to only a tiny fraction of the price that has been paid for our freedom.

Ronald Reagan
40th President of
The United States of America

The first time I visited Washington, D.C., my eyes were literally washed in tears, tears of wondrousness and reverence, as I viewed the gleaming monuments and memorials, those hallowed, "alabaster" expressions, both simple and grand, of this nation's greatness. My very heart, soul, and mind were at that time, and forever, changed. And I recalled then, as though it were only yesterday, seeing tears in the eyes of my parents and neighbors, when I was just a little boy, and they learned of the death of President Roosevelt in Warm Springs, Georgia.

A similar time of tears was to occur for me many years later, when the church and tower bells of my graduate university community tolled the tragic death of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Then the Reverend Martin Luther King. Then Senator Robert Kennedy. Later there were tears in my eyes as I watched the memorial service and interment at Arlington National Cemetery of the Unknown Soldier of the Vietnam conflict. And yet later, the dedication of the monument to that same effort, the belated salute to the fallen heroes of that terrible, terrible struggle. But I am ahead of my story.

On another visit to the nation's capitol, my family at my side, I listened one warm summer evening, and watched, as the royal blue and regal red clad men of the United States Marine Band performed, indeed *made glorious*, our National Anthem, for the multitude there gathered on the sloping banks of the Potomac, across and down from the Lincoln Memorial. It was a spirited, patriotic, truly *brilliant heralding* of this nation's dignity, strength, and determination to succeed.

Distant and curiously silent at first, but then abruptly, *thunderously*, a sun-silvered jet roared its approach to Washington National Airport. My eyes looked up, and beyond, across the historic river, over the gold-graced bridge and on to Arlington National Cemetery, where among others of our nation's heroes lay John Kennedy and his brother Robert. Again there were tears, for only hours before had I seen and felt the *burn* of the eternal flame for one and sensed the *sorrow* of the simple, white wooden cross for the other. I knew then, as my eyes saw, my heart lamented, and my entire being breathed the breath of what was and of what might have been, that there is in this

land a mighty and most awesome power, and a glorious and most magnificent presence. . .a *power* and a *presence*. . .a compelling, enduring, *endearing* sense of *strength*, and *goodness*, and *well-being*. Of *truth* and of *beauty*. I knew then, as I know now, that ours is a history, an *inheritance*, of which to be proud. A future by which we are to be challenged. A grand and noble *destiny* to which we are *called*. And the command, and outstretched hand of *Providence*, by which we are to be led.

The writing of this essay, **America: The Power and the Presence**, is the result of the experiences which I have just recalled. For I knew that summer, that sun-warmed, soul-simmering day in our nation's capitol, that in whatever I had the good fortune to do, I would endeavor to educate and to urge others be always mindful of, to cherish, to support, and to commit themselves to, the ever-present challenges and ever-unfolding opportunities provided by this great nation. I would urge them to wish and to want and to *work*, in every conceivable way, to preserve, honor, and strengthen these United States.

We the people of this noble Republic, each of us, *all* of us, must become evermore aware of the several *responsibilities*, *obligations*, and *duties* which are ours to fulfill. We are clearly heirs to a sacred trust. But heirs as well to a never-ending *call for action* and for change. We have embarked, America, on a yet to be completed mission. And we must recognize, therefore, that the future success of this grand, God-driven entity, the United States of America, and thus the very destiny of our great nation, lies most especially in the hands, resides in the hearts, and must proceed from the minds and the muscles of the spirited young men and women who today are the hope of America

tomorrow. Therefore, this essay has been written in particular to further their understanding, and to increase as well the knowledge of *every* generation of Americans to come regarding our most solemn and historic charge, and our most meaningful and magnanimous mission. It is my hope in so doing to help ensure the unfolding and further flowering of this vast Republic we love.

May these words then, and the visions they create, *inform, inspire, and instruct* you, until that time when your own vision of the monuments and memorials of our great and glorious past, and your courageous participation in the vision and in the labor of an even greater and more glorious future, allow your spirits to soar. . .bravely, boldly, broad-winged, and strong. . .to the proud, patriotic, heaven-high heights of eagles. The *spiritual well-being of a nation and the meaning of America* rest on your so doing.

Prologue

A "New Nation": A "New Meaning"

New York Harbor. . .

The Statue of Liberty. . .

The inscription:

GIVE ME YOUR TIRED, YOUR POOR,
YOUR HUDDLED MASSES YEARNING TO BREATHE FREE,
THE WRETCHED REFUSE OF YOUR TEEMING SHORE,
SEND THESE, THE HOMELESS, TEMPEST-TOSSED TO ME:
I LIFT MY LAMP BESIDE THE GOLDEN DOOR.

"The New Colossus"
Emma Lazarus

Ours, America, is a troubled world. A troubled world and a rapidly changing one. And ours is a troubled nation as well. A troubled and a changing one. And yet our great statue in New York harbor remains a colossal symbol of liberty. . . of refuge and of hope, and of our dreams of what can be. . .indeed a *powerful presence* in our harbor and in the world today.

Therefore, ours also is a challenging, destiny-fulfilling opportunity, both "through" and "within," on *both sides* of that "golden door," to demonstrate our courage and our determination to stand tall and accept the tremendous burden of responsibility necessary to help create a far, far better, more compassionate, and more just social order, an opportunity to hear and respond to the cries for help, and thus, nobly and bravely, accept the challenges of a world and a nation literally, *painfully* filled with the suffering

that results from a multitude of unmet human needs. And ours is the opportunity as well to experience the absolute joy of success, to know and to *feel* the heart pounding, soul-sustaining sense of personal and *national* well-being which is inherent in the triumph over such suffering, despair, and injustice.

Therefore, as we reflect on the 100 and more years of the presence of our Statue of Liberty, and on the more than 200 years of the *power* and the *presence* of this great nation for which she so majestically stands, let us ask that she speak now, not only for those in need from other shores, but for our own "tired" and "poor," our own "homeless" and "tempest-tossed" as well. On January 20, 1989, George Herbert Bush, forty-first president of the United States said:

My friends, we have work to do. There are the homeless, lost and roaming. There are the children who have nothing—no love and no normalcy. There are those who cannot free themselves from enslavement to whatever addiction—drugs, welfare, the demoralization that ruins the slums. There is crime to be conquered, the rough crime of the street. There are young women to be helped who are about to become mothers of children they cannot care for and might not love.

How very true, America, and how terribly tragic. There is, indeed, much work to be done. And we, citizens all of these United States, are the ones who must do it.

Let then the "New Colossus," our Lady of Liberty, speak now to and for a "New Order," a new way for a new and changing *world*, and a new and changing *nation*. And let us then, you, and me, dedicate *today* our very selves and our every effort, encouraged and led on by her light, and inspired and empowered by her might, that we may provide for all people, and for all ages to come, the resources, the strength, and the *will* of a nation renewed, revitalized and ready to serve. A spiritual, *spirited*, "New Nation,"

well prepared for a new ordering of the world. An America of "New Meaning," determined now more than ever before to stand and to strive for all that is right, for all that is true, beautiful, and good. . .in the hearts and in the history of humankind, and in the mind and the manner of God.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy, our thirty-fifth president, proclaimed not long ago that "the torch," the flame of American freedom, the fire of America's determination to lead all people out of darkness, had been "passed to a new generation of Americans." More recently our new president, William Jefferson Clinton stated: "To renew America, we must meet challenges abroad as well as at home." The President continued with the following quotation: "The scripture says, 'And let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season, we shall reap, if we faint not.'" And then he said, solemnly and with great determination: "We have heard the trumpets. . .we must answer the call."

Let it be so today. And as we, each one of us, respond both to trumpet and torch, as we hear the call and carry forth the light, let us be guided by the following sacred and time-honored words, words so much a part of our legacy as a nation whose very founding was, and whose principle values are so thoroughly and notably steeped in the Judaic-Christian tradition:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

I Corinthians 12:4-8

Thus, with the trumpet sound filling our hearts, let each torch draw the fire and the spirit from the one torch of the New Colossus, the "New Liberty." A Lady of Liberty

for a new age, a new world, and a *New America*. And let those torches burn brightly, both as symbols and as *tools* for the common good. Hold them high, arms outstretched and proud, Americans all, a torch in your hand and a torch in mine. Burning with your talent and burning with mine. Knowing that our lights of *the* light attest more truly and more surely than ever before that we the people of these United States of America shall be forever the hope of freedom-loving people of all lands. That we shall seek to *do* all that is in our power to provide for all humankind, for ourselves and for others, a *life* of honor and purpose, a *liberty* of truth and substance, and the *pursuit of happiness* marked by real meaning and genuine worth. With our efforts, and with God's help, all this is possible.

It has been written:

*For everything there is a season, and a
time for every matter under heaven:
a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
a time to rend, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.*

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

There is a time as well, America, to prepare for what lies ahead, to define and affirm the nation's commitments. Yours, and mine, and ours. The *commitments* and the

actions which will allow us to carry out our destiny and to carry on, bravely, courageously, and without pause, the work of this great nation. That time, America, is now. Let us therefore trumpet our determination once more, heralding the advent of a new era of hard *work* and well-earned pride, as the words and the ways and the *accomplishments* of our *bold* and *mighty* mission roll with the sound of summer thunder across this land and around the world. And let us by so doing make clear to all **the Power and the Presence** which is *America*, and make known as well *the spiritual well-being of a nation* and *the meaning of America*.

America in the World Today

As we seek then to better understand the *power* and the *presence* which is America, and to learn more about the nation's spiritual well-being and its meaning, let us first examine our current state of affairs.

Where we stand:

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, the twilight of the 20th century, the dawning of the 21st, a great and mighty nation. . .

We mark our existence in the second decade of the third century of this nation's independence. . .

We have celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of the Statue of Liberty, the centennial of our symbol of freedom, a Light to light the world. . .

We have seen the two hundredth anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution of these United States. . .

We have heard in recent times encouraging and challenging words from two recent presidents. . .

We've lighted the world with our inventions, gone to the aid of mankind wherever in the world there was a cry for help, journeyed to the moon and safely returned. . .In this blessed land, there is always a better tomorrow. . .

My fellow citizens, our nation is poised for greatness. We must do what we know is right and do it with all our might. Let history say of us, these were golden years—when the American Revolution was reborn, when freedom gained new life and America reached for her best.

Ronald Reagan—January 20, 1985

and:

. . .a new breeze is blowing, and a world refreshed by freedom seems reborn...a new breeze is blowing, and a nation refreshed by freedom stands ready to push on. . .the old ideas are new again because they are not old, they are timeless—duty, sacrifice, commitment, and patriotism. . .

And so, there is much to do, and tomorrow the work begins.

George Herbert Bush—January 20, 1989

More recently, we have witnessed the inauguration of America's forty-second president. From that inaugural address:

My fellow citizens, today we celebrate the mystery of American renewal.

This ceremony is held in the depth of winter. But, by the words we speak and the faces we show the world, we force the spring. A spring reborn in the world's oldest democracy, that brings forth the vision and courage to reinvent America.

. . .

Though our challenges are fearsome, so are our strengths. And Americans have ever been a restless, questing, hopeful people. We must bring to our task today the vision and will of those who came before us.

. . .

I challenge a new generation of young Americans to a season of service—to act on your idealism by helping troubled children, keeping company with those in need, reconnecting our torn communities. There is much to be done, enough for millions of others who are young in spirit to give of themselves in service, too.

. . .

And so, my fellow Americans, at the edge of the 21st century, let us begin with energy and hope, with faith and discipline, and let us work until our work is done. The scripture says, "And let us not weary in well-doing, for in due season, we shall reap, if we faint not."

From this joyful mountaintop of celebration, we hear a call to service in the valley. We have heard the trumpets. We have changed the guard. And now, each in our way, and with God's help, we must answer the call.

William Jefferson Clinton—January 20, 1993

Yes, America, "we must answer the call." And we must recognize as well that the "better tomorrow" and the "reaching" and the "season of service" have only just begun. That the real renewal of America must be carried on by us, *today*.

Clearly, America, there is work to be done. Hard work, work that will be long in being accomplished. It is time, therefore, that we begin.

The Nation Sings

As our "work" begins then, let us be refreshed and inspired, as we hear the nation singing two of our grand, historic anthems. Their words are powerful and profound. So hear them! And ponder them in your hearts. They are *real*. And *we* must make them so! They will *work*. But *we* must *do* them! They are our *inheritance*, our *history*, our *strength*, our *sense of being*. Therefore let us live them! They are the very soul of America in song:

*God of our fathers, whose almighty hand
Leads forth in beauty all the starry band
Of shining worlds in splendor through the skies,
Our grateful songs before Thy throne arise.*

*Thy love divine hath led us in the past;
In this free land by Thee our lot is cast;
Be thou our Ruler, Guardian, Guide, and Stay,
Thy word our law, Thy paths our chosen way.*

*From war's alarms, from deadly pestilence,
Be Thy strong arm our ever sure defense;
Thy true religion in our hearts increase,
Thy bounteous goodness nourish us in peace.*

*Refresh Thy people on their toilsome way.
Lead us from night to never-ending day;
Fill all our lives with love and grace divine,
And glory, laud, and praise be ever Thine.*

National Hymn, Reverend Daniel C. Roberts, 1876
George William Warren, 1892

And then . .

*O beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties above the fruited plain;
America! America! God shed his grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea!*

*O beautiful for pilgrim feet, whose stern, impassioned stress
A thoroughfare for freedom beat across the wilderness!
America! America! God mend thine every flaw,
Confirm thy soul in self-control, Thy liberty in law!*

*O beautiful for glorious tale of liberating strife,
When valiantly for man's avail men lavished precious life!
America! America! May God thy gold refine,
Till all success be nobleness and every gain divine!*

*O beautiful for patriot dream that sees, beyond the years,
Thine alabaster cities gleam, undimmed by human tears!
America! America! God shed His grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea!*

America the Beautiful, Katharine Lee Bates, 1904
Samuel A. Ward, 1882

Of Destiny, Spirit, and Grace

Destiny

The power and the presence of America is firmly rooted in its heritage and mission, in its *calling*, its sense of *destiny*. Let us continue then by reflecting on the basic meaning of the word destiny itself, and on the manner in which our presidents have spoken about the destiny of these United States, for such knowledge is absolutely essential to an understanding of the nation's spiritual well-being, at the very heart of our appreciation of the meaning of America, and an indispensable part of our recognizing the true significance of the work which lies before us.

"Destiny" is defined as ". . . something to which a person or thing is destined," and further, as "a predetermined course of events often held to be a resistless power or agency" (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary).

The following are some of the words our presidents therefore chose, as they spoke so eloquently and insightfully regarding their understanding of the *nation's* destiny:

. . . there is no truth more thoroughly established than that there exists in the economy and course of nature an indissoluble union between virtue and happiness; between duty and advantage; between the genuine maxims of an honest and magnanimous policy and the solid rewards of public prosperity and felicity; since we ought to be no less persuaded that the propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained; and since the preservation of the sacred fire of liberty and the destiny of the republican model of government are justly considered, perhaps, as deeply, as finally, staked on the experiment entrusted to the hands of the American people.

George Washington
1st President of
The United States of America

... Nowhere else in the world have noble men and women exhibited in more striking forms the beauty and the energy of sympathy and helpfulness and counsel in their efforts to rectify wrong, alleviate suffering, and set the weak in the way of strength and hope.

Woodrow Wilson, 28th President
of the United States

... The encouraging feature of our country is not that it has reached its destination, but that it has overwhelmingly expressed its determination to proceed in the right direction. . . We believe that we can best serve our own country and most successfully discharge our obligations to humanity by continuing to be openly and candidly, intensely and scrupulously, American. If we have any heritage, it has been that. If we have any destiny, we have found it in that direction.

Calvin Coolidge, 30th President
of the United States

Events have brought our American democracy to new influence and new responsibilities. They will test our courage, our devotion to duty, and our concept of liberty.

But I say to all men, what we have achieved in liberty, we will surpass in greater liberty.

Steadfast in our faith in the Almighty, we will advance toward a world where man's freedom is secure.

To that end we will devote our strength, our resources, and our firmness of resolve. With God's help, the future of mankind will be assured in a world of justice, harmony, and peace.

Harry S. Truman, 33rd President
of the United States

... Our destiny in the midst of change will rest on the unchanged character of our people and on their faith.

Lyndon Baines Johnson, 36th President
of the United States

Spirit

Having considered the preeding sentiments regarding our destiny, let us now turn to another word which we need to understand more thoroughly as well. The word is "spirit," and an authoritative and authentic definition of spirit, along with a genuine sense of its significance and place in the history and moral fiber of this nation, is central to an adequate understanding and appreciation of the power and the presence which is America. Let us be sure then to know well the meaning of "things spiritual," and therefore to know even better what is meant by "spiritual well-being."

First, from the writing of a truly distinguished nineteenth century American scholar and author:

In our definitions, we grope after the spiritual by describing it as invisible. The true meaning of spiritual is real; that law which executes itself, which works without means, and which cannot be conceived as nonexistent.

Ralph Waldo Emerson
Essays and English Traits, "Worship"

"Spirit" is more precisely defined as ". . .an animating or vital principle held to give life to physical organisms," as "a supernatural being or essence. . .Holy Spirit. . .Soul," and further as "the immaterial intelligent or sentient part of a person. . .the activating or essential principle influencing a person" (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary).

"*Spiritual well-being*" then, as these definitions imply, may be considered to be a condition of both *being* well and *becoming* well, a state which incorporates both that which is given (the "essential") and that which evolves, or is cultivated (the "existential").

Furthermore, and again based on the preceding definition, "spiritual well-being" would connote as well a state of being intelligent, sentient, and sacred, "Holy," and of the "Soul."

With these definitions to guide us, we may now consider the idea, and rightly so, that individuals, by their very nature, are endowed with spirituality and are capable, through clear thinking and right action, of developing further their condition of spiritual well-being. *So also is a nation, by virtue of its defining nature, endowed with spirituality and capable, through thoughtful deliberation and effective action, of furthering its state of well-being.* The nation, like the individual, is "intelligent," "sentient," and possessed of "Soul." It is in fact the way of nations, as well as of individuals, so to achieve their sense of identity, meaning, and purpose.

"*Spirit*" then is what a nation, this nation, the United States of America, *is*. And ours is the "spirit" of liberty and of justice, of duty and obligation, and of concern and compassion for all peoples. It is the nation's *awareness* of its *spirituality* that energizes and empowers it. And it is the *spiritual well-being* of a nation that sustains it and allows it to thrive. "America! America!" we sing, "God mend thine every flaw. Confirm thy *soul* with self-control, Thy liberty in law!"

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, thirty-second president of the United States, described with remarkable clarity and spoke at considerable length about the spirit of this nation and the spiritual basis of its well-being. Listen to what he said:

A nation, like a person, has a body—a body that must be fed and clothed and housed, invigorated and rested, in a manner that measures up to the objectives of our time.

A nation, like a person, has a mind—a mind that must be kept informed and alert, that must know itself, that understands the hopes and the needs of its neighbors—all the other nations that live within the narrowing circle of the world.

A nation, like a person, has something deeper, something more permanent, something larger than the sum of all its parts. It is that something which matters most to its future—which called forth the most sacred guarding of its present.

It is a thing for which we find it difficult—even impossible—to hit upon a single, simple word.

And yet we all understand what it is—the spirit—the faith of America. It is the product of centuries. It was born in the multitudes of those who came from many lands—some of high degree, but mostly plain people, who sought here, early and late, to find freedom more freely.

...

Its vitality was written into our own Mayflower Compact, into the Declaration of Independence, into the Constitution of the United States, into the Gettysburg Address.

...

It is not enough to clothe and feed the body of this nation, and instruct and inform its mind. For there is also the spirit. And of the three, the greater is the spirit.

...

That spirit—that faith—speaks to us in our daily lives in ways often unnoticed, because they seem so obvious. It speaks to us here in the Capitol of the nation. It speaks to us through the process of governing in the sovereignties of forty-eight states. It speaks to us in our countries, in our cities, in our towns, and in our villages. It speaks to us from the other nations of the hemisphere, and from those across the seas—the enslaved, as well as the free. Sometimes we fail to hear or heed these voices of freedom because to us the privilege of our freedom is such an old, old story.

The preservation of the spirit and faith of the nation does, and will, furnish the highest justification for every sacrifice that we may make in the cause of national defense.

In the face of great perils never before encountered, our strong purpose is to protect and to perpetuate the integrity of democracy.

For this we muster the spirit of America, and the faith of America.

We do not retreat. We are not content to stand still. As Americans, we go forward, in the service of our country, by the will of God.

The words of several other presidents speak directly to these issues of spirituality also. The following are representative. First, from former President Carter at his inaugural in 1977:

This inauguration ceremony marks a new beginning, a new dedication within our government and a new spirit among us all. A president may sense and proclaim that new spirit, but only a people can provide it.

And from President Clinton's first address to Congress, we find these statements regarding our nation and its character and spirit, statements strikingly similar to those of President Roosevelt:

Like individuals, nations must ultimately decide how they wish to conduct themselves—how they wish to be thought of by those with whom they live and, later, how they wish to be judged by history. Like every individual man and woman, nations must decide whether they are prepared to rise to the occasions history presents them. . . I believe we will find our new direction in the basic old values that brought us here over the last two centuries: a commitment to opportunity, to individual responsibility, to community, to work, to family and to faith.

We, Americans all, *every one of us*, should find a place for these words in our hearts, our souls, and our minds, making them wholly and forever a part of our very selves. They speak to us clearly, beautifully, and with the utmost integrity, regarding the spiritual basis of this nation we love. And we should hope as well that these same words, and others yet to be spoken, will become a part of the lives of every generation of Americans to come. The spiritual well-being of a nation and the meaning of America require no less.

Grace

There is yet one more word to be considered before we continue. The word is "grace," and its place and meaning in the life of this nation should also be well understood, for grace is very much a part of all things spiritual, and is a concept which is absolutely essential to an understanding of the Judaic-Christian tradition within which these United States were founded. Let us consider it carefully:

For it is for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving to the glory of God.

II Corinthians 4:15

Grace has been defined as "unmerited divine assistance given man for his regeneration and sanctification," and further as "a virtue coming from God" (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary). Thus, grace is to be understood as a God-given gift, a *spiritual resource* provided by God to assist individuals in renewing and making more sacred their lives. It is a manifestation of *spiritual energy* to be used for a renaissance of the soul, carrying with it, as the definition implies, an awareness of that which is morally right and ethically correct.

Grace is usually experienced by, *felt* by individuals through their participation in highly meaningful and morally responsible activities, through experiences which generate deep personal feelings of strength, goodness, and well-being. Grace is that *feeling of blessedness* that often comes from having accomplished, or actively participated in, that which is inherently just and right. One should always be reminded of course that grace, by its very definition, is indeed God's *gift*, unearned and "unmerited." And therefore, at times, it is simply experienced seemingly for no apparent reason.

Nevertheless, one should also be aware that grace is more often experienced in the context of responsible, morally admirable conduct.

Grace, as a part of spiritual well-being, can be found and is experienced in the life of a nation, as well as in the lives of individuals. It is found, and abundantly so, in the life of this nation, the United States of America. And when the gift of grace is in fact present in the nation, when "unmerited divine assistance" is indeed regenerating and sanctifying its spirit, it is known and *felt* by the people, just as it is known and felt by an individual, in a most profound and moving manner. It is known in and through awe-inspiring and at times overwhelming feelings of *national* strength, goodness, and well-being. It is, for the majority of the caring and responsible people of the nation, a "corporate" awareness of and feeling about having "done things well," and thus about God's presence being *in*, and God's blessing being *on*, our nation. Grace then is also a reminder of our *destiny*, of the dignity of, and the direction to be taken by, the nation. It is God's voice speaking to our heart as a people and sounding in our soul as a nation. And it is as well reminiscent of God's call to this nation and its people to *duty* and to *action*.

The idea and experience of grace has been beautifully and simply expressed in a century-old American folk hymn. It is the words of the last two stanzas which speak so comfortingly and convincingly of the presence of grace in the affairs of our nation, as well as in the lives of individuals. From the hymn entitled "Amazing Grace":

*Through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come;
'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me
home.*

*When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun,
we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we'd first begun.*

Providing a further dimension to our understanding of the experience of grace, it was once written, again by America's great 19th century scholar:

There is a principle which is the basis of things, which all speech aims to say, and all action to evolve, a simple, quiet, undescribed, undescribable presence, dwelling very peacefully in us, our rightful lord; we are not to do, but to let do; not to work, but to be worked upon; and to this homage there is a consent of all thoughtful and just men in all ages and conditions.

Ralph Waldo Emerson
Essays and English Traits, "Self-Reliance"

In this passage, although addressing the "undescribed, undescribable presence" dwelling within an individual, the author with like insight may have been speaking about a similar presence, "our rightful lord," dwelling in the life of the nation. For the nation also is blessed with an "undescribable presence," and it too is "to let do," and to "be worked upon." For in so doing it recognizes the same "principle" which is the "basis of all things." And it recognizes, and knows, and *feels* God's grace as well.

Finally, it is well to be reminded once more that although grace, by definition, is an "unmerited" gift both human reason and the human heart should persuade us that God's grace is more likely to fall into the *soul* of an individual of good and noble intentions, and onto the *soil* of a nation whose people are truly rich in *well-meaning* and accomplished in *well-doing*. Let us then, as individuals and as a nation, be always mindful of this. We have a "part to play" and obligations to fulfill.

The history of this nation, the United States of America, indicates, and clearly, that we are indeed a nation of grace. "America! America!" we sing, "God shed his *grace* on thee. And crown thy good with Brotherhood, from sea to shining sea." Thus it is in our

own best interest and for the future good of all peoples, our own and those of other nations, that we keep alive in our hearts our awareness of the presence of grace, God's grace, in the life of *this great nation*. In the past, in the present, and in the future. *The spiritual well-being of a nation and the meaning of America* require that we do so.

Of Presidents, Providence, and America

And now, before going on to a discussion of our present obligations, and of what we can do to further pursue and ensure the well-being of these United States, let us pause to read and reflect on the words of our presidents regarding the one issue which they considered to be, literally above all others, central to our spiritual well-being, our experience of grace, our understanding of the meaning of America, and our ability to truly appreciate and appropriately fulfill our destiny. That one issue was, and is, their absolute and steadfast belief in the presence and the place of *Providence* in the establishment and carrying forth of the American dream. This above all they believed. Always, *always* the presidents invoked the blessing of *God* on the vision and proceedings of the nation. Always they reminded us, citizens all of these United States, of our *covenant* with God, and of our *calling* from above to protect and provide for the freedom, dignity, and well-being of all people. Hear what they have said.

April 30, 1789, New York City. Having outlined the circumstances leading him to assume the duties of "the supreme office," George Washington, first president of the United States spoke these words:

Such being the impressions under which I have, in obedience to the public summons, repaired to the present station, it would be peculiarly improper to omit in this first official act my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe, who presides in the councils of nations, and whose providential benediction may consecrate to the liberties and happiness of the people of the United States a government instituted by themselves for these essential purposes, and may enable every instrument employed in its administration to execute with success the functions allotted to his charge. In

tendering this homage to the Great Author of every public and private good, I assure myself that it expresses your sentiment not less than my own, nor those of my fellow-citizens at large less than either. No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the Invisible Hand which conducts the affairs of men more than those of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency. . .

And thus with Washington's words of reverence as their guide, succeeding presidents have established an unbroken tradition of expressing their own awareness of Providential influence, and we are thereby entrusted with a veritable litany of their belief in and reliance on God and God's grace for the continuance of the spiritual well-being of this nation, the fulfillment of its destiny, and the enhancement of its very meaning as well. Let us hear them.

John Adams, second president of the United States:

And may that Being who is supreme over all, the Patron of Order, the Fountain of Justice, and the Protector in all ages of the world of virtuous liberty, continue His blessing upon this nation and its Government and give it all possible success and duration consistent with the ends of His Providence.

Andrew Jackson, seventh president of the United States:

. . . a firm reliance on the goodness of that Power whose providence mercifully protected our national infancy, and has since upheld our liberties in various vicissitudes, encourages me to offer up my ardent supplications that He will continue to make our beloved country the object of His divine care and gracious benediction.

Grover Cleveland, twenty-second president of the United States:

Above all, I know there is a Supreme Being who rules the affairs of men and whose goodness and mercy have always followed the American people, and I know He will not turn from us now if we humbly and reverently seek His powerful aid.

William McKinley, twenty-fifth president of the United States:

Our faith teaches that there is no safer reliance than upon that God of our fathers, who has so singularly favored the American people in every national trial, and who will not forsake us so long as we obey His commandments and walk humbly in His footsteps.

Theodore Roosevelt, twenty-sixth president of the United States:

My fellow-citizens, no people on earth have more cause to be thankful than ours, and this is said reverently, in no spirit of boastfulness in our own strength, but with gratitude to the Giver of Good who has blessed us with the conditions which have enabled us to achieve so large a measure of well-being and happiness.

Harry Truman, thirty-third president of the United States:

Steadfast in our faith in the Almighty, we will advance toward a world where man's freedom is secure.

To that end we will devote our strength, our resources, and our firmness of resolve. With God's help, the future of mankind will be assured in a world of justice, harmony, and peace.

Dwight David Eisenhower, thirty-fourth president of the United States:

Almighty God, as we stand here at this moment my future associates in the executive branch of government join me in beseeching that Thou will make full and complete our dedication to the service of the people in this throng, and their fellow citizens everywhere.

John Kennedy, thirty-fifth president of the United States:

... With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God's work must truly be our own.

Richard Nixon, thirty-seventh president of the United States:

Our destiny offers not the cup of despair, but the chalice of opportunity. So let us seize it not in fear, but in gladness—and,

'riders on the Earth together,' let us go forward, firm in our faith, steadfast in our purpose, cautious of the dangers; but sustained by our confidence in the will of God and the promise of man.

Jimmy Carter, thirty-ninth president of the United States:

Here before me is the Bible used in the inauguration of our first president, in 1789, and I have just taken the oath of office on the Bible my mother gave me just a few years ago, opened to a timeless admonition from the ancient prophet Micah: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."

William Jefferson Clinton, forty-second president of the United States:

From this joyful mountaintop of celebration, we hear a call to service in the valley. We have heard the trumpets. And now, each in our way, and with God's help, we must observe the call. Thank you and God bless you all.

Thus have our presidents spoken. And thus may we proceed, and do so with the "faith of our fathers" to sustain and direct us.

Toward Spiritual Well-being

There are three prerequisites for the spiritual well-being of the nation: (1) the nation shall *know* itself; (2) the nation shall *love* itself; and (3) the nation shall *lose* itself.

In order that we may more fully comprehend, and thus successfully fulfill these prerequisites, however, it is well that we first direct our attention to the following statements regarding *basic characteristics* and *qualities* which underlie the nature and behavior of *both* nations and individuals. For if a nation, *our nation*, is to truly *know*, and *love*, and *lose* itself, it is necessary that it be aware and ever mindful of these common fundamental aspects of existence. This, as you may recall, was a comparison President Roosevelt found useful as well. There are seven of these characteristics to be considered.

The Seven Characteristics of Nationhood

One: A nation, like an individual, is to a considerable extent, and in a profoundly significant manner, characterized by *uniqueness*. The United States of America, by virtue of the very circumstances of its founding, its basic beliefs, principles, and practices, and by reason of its present internal state of affairs and position in the world today, is *unique* among all the nations of the world. In all its deliberations, therefore, in all that it proposes to do and in all that it indeed chooses to carry out and accomplish, the nation should be acutely aware and always mindful of this fact. *The United States of America is unique in all the world.* And thus, so also is its *mission*.

Two: A nation, like an individual, is marked by both *perfection* and *imperfection*. This nation, *our* nation, has had and shall continue to have both strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures. It is subject to excellence of thought and action, and to errors of both thought and action. Therefore, if we as a nation are to be a healthy and vital people, if we are to enjoy a lasting state of real and reasonable happiness and peace, we, like the individual, must rejoice in what is good and rectify and redress what is not. We must acknowledge our wrongs, just as we would celebrate that which is right. And we must at all times recognize the *realities* and the *truths*, both within and around us, and then *act*, honestly, creatively, courageously, and in a just, spirited, and yet prudent manner.

Three: A nation, like an individual, if it is to be both self-respecting and respected by others as well, must be willing, indeed is *required* to assume a tremendous burden of *responsibility*, both for its own well-being and for the well-being of others. Furthermore, it must determine to fulfill the many *obligations* inherent in the exercise of such responsibility, regardless of the burdens they impose. The character and conscience of a nation so noble allow no less. We as a nation can look at our past, examine the present and project the future. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us, the people of these United States, and true to the very nature of our nation itself, to do all that we do with the greatest possible sense of *duty* and public concern. This shall require at times that certain constituencies of the nation be willing to "give-in" or "give-up" lesser and more private causes for greater, more truly common, and thus more meaningful ends. A responsible nation can do no less.

Four: A nation, like an individual, must continually strive to develop, maintain, and draw its strength from a genuine sense of *meaning* and *purpose*, *dignity* and *direction*. The achievement of spiritual well-being and the preservation of the very soul of the nation depend on its so doing. We must clearly understand what is *truly* and *ultimately American*, all that is of real importance to us, both as individuals and as a nation. And then we must *do* what we believe. We must formulate policy and carry out programs which *do in fact*, as evidenced by both commitment and accomplishments, provide us the sense of meaning and purpose, dignity and direction, which shall ensure the viability of our own spirit. This sense of meaning and *mission* essential to an ethically responsible and *morally secure* America can be achieved through our knowledge of and commitment to the three remaining characteristics of nationhood.

Five: A nation, like an individual, can acquire much of the sense of meaning and purpose essential to its well-being by *creatively achieving*, or working toward, well-defined, highly valued *goals*. Therefore, we the people of this nation must think both carefully and critically about precisely what achievements are to be most valued, and then we must *do* whatever is required of us in order to see these goals, and the values inherent in them, accomplished. Our dreams realized. Our tasks fulfilled. In pursuing these goals and values, there can be no flagging of our determination. No loss of courage. And no compromising of our commitments.

Six: A nation, like an individual, can also acquire and enhance its sense of meaning and purpose by encouraging and providing for the *active participation* of its citizens in all those *experiences* which allow for and encourage a greater knowledge and

appreciation of *truth, beauty, and goodness*. Of music and the arts, of physical exercise and athletics, of the great philosophies, literature, and religions, of the world, of the very environment itself, the natural world on which we live, and finally of the absolute joy and satisfaction to be known in loving and respectful relationships with others. Thus, we the people of this nation must truly consider which of the myriad activities available to us will contribute to a greater awareness, understanding, and appreciation of life itself. We must strive to *hear* and to *see* and to *feel* all that will truly nourish, inspire, and sustain us. In heart, soul, and mind.

Seven: Finally, a nation, like an individual, can acquire and further complete its sense of meaning and purpose through cultivating a necessary and appropriate attitude toward suffering and sacrifice. Through not only focusing its attention on understanding, nurturing, and further developing its most cherished beliefs, but by considering as well the price it is willing to pay to maintain, support, and protect them. Therefore, we the people of this nation, the United States of America, must not only be mindful of just what our beliefs are, but be aware as well of our obligation to sacrifice and endure hardship in order to preserve them. What *are* the truths which we indeed hold to be "self-evident?" What *are* this nation's greatest dreams? What *are* our very highest ideals? Our most cherished, indeed most *sacred* principles? What, we must ask, we must *know*, comprises the very heart and soul, the very *essence* of this nation? And what will we do, *what price will we pay*, to secure it? We must know, and then we must educate others so that they may know as well.

The Three Prerequisites

With these seven characteristics of nationhood before us, with the sense of destiny, spirit, and grace as our guide, and mindful as well of the presence and place of Providence in the life of this nation, the following questions may now be addressed:

(1) How, historically, has the United States of America achieved and preserved its state of spiritual well-being and its sense of meaning? And of even greater importance, (2) What must we as citizens of the United States *do*, today and tomorrow, to continue to protect, maintain, and enhance even further the nation's well-being and meaning?

The answer to these two questions is both straight forward and demanding: it is that such conditions of well-being and meaning have been and shall continue to be ours by our striving *diligently, devotedly, and dutifully*, to fulfill three historic, clearly defined imperatives, three "commands" which may be considered to be the absolute prerequisites of such spiritual well-being and meaning. These are imperatives, both philosophical and behavioral, which encourage us, indeed *require* us, to both *think* and *act* in a manner which inevitably leads to a condition of internal strength, goodness, and well-being. They may be viewed as the "rules of conduct" which underlie and nurture a nation's understanding of and affection for its basic principles, powers, and purposes, "guidelines" which invariably lead to the thoughts, actions, and accomplishments which have hallowed the halls and sanctified the monuments and memorials of this great nation. These three imperatives which we must fulfill, the prerequisites of spiritual well-being and meaning, are: (1) the nation shall *know* itself; (2) the nation shall *love* itself; and (3) the nation shall *lose* itself.

One: The nation shall *know* itself. We are to know, and know well, the basic documents on which these United States were founded, and we are to be familiar with the several and fundamental principles, policies and practices by which the affairs of our government are carried out. We are to know the *history* of the nation, its successes and its failures. We are to know the *purpose* of the nation, its dreams, ideals, and objectives. And we are to know our *mission*, the *destiny* to which we are called, and to which we must answer.

Two: The nation shall *love* itself. We are to truly love both what we *are* and what we *do*. What the nation *is*. We are to love our knowledge of what we stand for, of what we know to be *right*, and of all for which we bear responsibility. We are to love, honor, and respect our good intentions. And we are to love, take pride in, and celebrate our accomplishments. Our patriotism should require no apology. Finally, we are to love even more our *commitment* and *determination* to further these efforts. Our *duties*. Our *responsibilities*. Our *obligations*. And we are to love and to cherish the very freedom which allows all this.

Three: The nation shall *lose* itself. We are to put aside selfish interests, every thought and all activities which would limit our vision, lessen our capability, and thus diminish our mission. We are to lose ourselves, both in *thought* and in *action*, to *greater* and more *noble causes*, in response to and in support of the requirements for the safety, health, and well-being of our own citizens, and to the extent that it is possible, the citizens of other nations as well. We are to lose ourselves through our determination to see that the many blessings which have been bestowed upon us are, in the better world

we would help create, shared by all peoples. In doing so, we shall truly "do justly," and "love mercy," and "walk humbly" with God. We shall see thereby that our commitment to freedom and to fairness, to caring and to sharing, to giving and to forgiving, is an all-encompassing one. A commitment first to the citizens of this nation, and then to the peoples of the world. A commitment, a firm commitment, to *know* God's will, and to *do* God's work.

These then are the prerequisites for the spiritual well-being of these United States: (1) *the nation shall know itself*; (2) *the nation shall love itself*; and (3) *the nation shall lose itself*. And these the underlying characteristics and principles to guide our thinking about them: (1) the nation is *unique*; (2) the nation is marked by *perfection* and *imperfection*; (3) the nation bears a tremendous burden of *responsibility*; (4) the nation must forever strive to attain a genuine sense of *meaning* and *purpose*, to achieve greater dignity and direction for all its peoples; (5) the nation can acquire such meaning through *achieving objective, well-defined and highly valued goals*; (6) the nation can acquire such meaning through urging its citizens to participate in varieties of *experiences* containing *truth, beauty, and goodness*; (7) the nation can acquire such meaning through the development of a soul-sustaining attitude toward sacrifice, and through demonstrating its willingness and determination to protect its values and principles, regardless of the hardship or suffering thus imposed on its people.

Prerequisite One

The Nation Shall Know Itself

Let us look now at each of the prerequisites and at the manner in which the life of the nation and the words of our presidents relate to and support them. Throughout history these three prerequisites have provided for and protected the well-being of individuals. They are the prerequisites for the spiritual well-being of a *nation* as well.

The first prerequisite for the spiritual well-being of these United States is that *the nation shall know itself*. Throughout history, humankind has been instructed to know and that which is of its very nature, that which is essential, singular, and real. And nations have been similarly instructed. Throughout our own history, we have been urged by concerned educators and patriots to know the structure and various functions of the nation, the driving forces acting on our lives, and the responsibilities and obligations which we are expected to assume and fulfill. What *is* America? Who *are* we? We have been asked also to know the values we would articulate, the principles we would uphold, the causes we would defend, the persons to whom we would pledge our support, and the God whom we would recognize and worship. All this we have been asked and encouraged to know. And more. For along with the knowledge of all that is good *for* us, and *in* us, and of all that should issue *from* us, we as individuals and as a nation are enjoined to know as well, and to defend ourselves against, the evil and destructive forces in both self and society which would divert us from our rightful way, and thus threaten or destroy the meaningful life we would uphold and preserve.

From the very beginning of this nation's history, our presidents have recognized and honored this prerequisite of self-knowledge. And they have spoken of it in a manner which both informs and inspires. They knew that "we the people" must not only know *ourselves* but must know well the *nation itself*. Hear how some of them have spoken.

Thomas Jefferson, third president of the United States, himself a man of profound insight and knowledge:

About to enter, fellow-citizens, on the exercise of duties which comprehend everything dear and valuable to you. . . it is proper you should understand what I deem the essential principles of our Government. . . Equal and exact justice to all men, . . . peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations . . . support of the State governments in all their rights. . . the preservation of the General Government in its whole constitutional vigor. . . a jealous care of the right of election by the people. . . absolute acquiescence in the decisions of the majority. . . a well-disciplined militia. . . the supremacy of the civil order over the military authority; economy in the public expense. . . the honest payment of our debts. . . sacred preservation of the public faith; encouragement of agriculture, and of commerce as its handmaid; the diffusion of information and arraignment of all abuses at the bar of the public reason; freedom of religion; freedom of the press, and freedom of person under the protection of the habeas corpus, and trial by juries impartially selected. These principles form the bright constellation which has gone before us and guided our steps through an age of revolution and reformation. The wisdom of our sages and blood of our heroes have been devoted to their attainment. They should be the creed of our political faith, the text of civic instruction, the touchstone by which to try the services of those we trust; and should we wander from them in moments of error or of alarm, let us hasten to retrace our steps and to regain the road which alone leads to peace, liberty, and safety.

Several decades later, Calvin Coolidge, thirtieth president of the United States:

If we wish to erect new structures, we must have a definite knowledge of the old foundations. . . Throughout all these

experiences we have enlarged our freedom, we have strengthened our independence. We have been, and propose to be, more and more American. We believe that we can best serve our own country and most successfully discharge our obligations to humanity by continuing to be openly and candidly, intensely and scrupulously, American. If we have any heritage, it has been that. If we have any destiny, we have found it in that direction.

And then more recently, Lyndon Baines Johnson, thirty-sixth president of the United States:

Our destiny in the midst of change will rest on the unchanged character of our people and on their faith.

They came here—the exile and the stranger, brave but frightened—to find a place where a man could be his own man. They made a covenant with this land. Conceived in Justice, written in Liberty, bound in union, it was meant one day to inspire the hopes of all mankind, and it binds us still. If we keep its terms we shall flourish.

First, justice was the promise that all who made the journey would share in the fruits of the land.

...

Liberty was the second article of our covenant. It was self-government, it was our Bill of Rights. But it was more. America would be a place where each man could be proud to be himself; stretching his talents, rejoicing in his work, important in the life of his neighbors and his nation.

The third article is union. To those who were small and few against the wilderness, the success of liberty demanded the strength of the union. Two centuries of change have made this true again.

To extend further our understanding and appreciation of the prerequisite of self-knowledge for the nation, let us also recall and reflect on three of the founding documents of these United States. They are truly what we are, or are intended to be, and we should know them, and then of course, make them our own reality today. They

are the very "self" of the nation. The heart, the soul, and the mind of a great people and a great Republic, the United States of America.

First, from *The Declaration of Independence*, July 4, 1776:

—We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. —That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, —That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed.

...
...for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.

Second, from the *Articles of Confederation*, July 9, 1778:

Whereas the Delegates of the United States of America in Congress assembled did on the fifteenth day of November in the Year of Our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and Seventy-five, and in the second Year of the Independence of America agree to certain articles of Confederation and perpetual Union between the States.

Among these articles are the following:

Article I. The Stile of this confederacy shall be "The United States of America."

Article II. Each state retains its sovereignty, freedom and independence, and every Power, Jurisdiction and right, which is not by this confederation expressly delegated to the United States, in Congress assembled.

Article III. The said states hereby severally enter into a firm league of friendship with each other. . .

Article IV. The better to secure and perpetuate mutual friendship and intercourse among the people of the different states in this union, the free inhabitants of each of these states, paupers, vagabonds and fugitives from Justice excepted, shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of free citizens in the several states. . . .

Article IX. The united states in congress assembled, shall have the sole and exclusive right and power of determining on peace and war. . .

Article XIII. Every state shall abide by the determinations of the united states in congress assembled, on all questions which by this confederation are submitted to them. . .

And Whereas it hath pleased the Great Governor of the World to incline the hearts of the legislatures we respectively represent in congress, to approve of, and to authorize us to ratify the said articles of confederation and perpetual union.

And third, from *The Constitution of the United States of America*, adopted September 17, 1787, and made effective March 4, 1789: The Preamble. . .

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

And then follow the seven original Articles, and all those in addition, defining and giving form to the very structure of government which was thus to be ours. From the original Articles:

Article I. Section 1. All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives. Section 2. The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several States, and the Electors in each State shall have the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature. . . Section 3. The Senate of the United States shall be

composed of two Senators from each State. . .and each Senator shall have one Vote.

...

Article II. Section 1. The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America. . . Section 2. The President shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, and of the Militia of the several States. . . Section 3. He shall from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union. . .

Article III. Section 1. The judicial Power of the United States, shall be vested in one supreme Court, and in such inferior Courts as the Congress may from time to time ordain and establish. . .

...

Article IV. Section 1. Full Faith and Credit shall be given in each State to the public Acts, Records, and judicial Proceedings of every other State. . .

Amendments to the Constitution followed, the first ten of course being known as the *Bill of Rights*. Among those amendments are the following Articles:

Article I. Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or of the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

...

Article IV. The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

...

Article X. The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.

...

Article XIV. All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside.

...

Article XV. Section 1. The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

...

Article XIX. The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

Such are several of the fundamental articles of government of the United States of America.

This then, that *the Nation shall know itself*, is the first of the three prerequisites for the attainment of spiritual well-being. To this philosophy and form of government, and to these principles and practices, do proud and loyal citizens of these United States of America stand and pledge their support. In unison, their hands placed on their hearts, they declare:

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands. One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Prerequisite Two

The Nation Shall Love Itself

The second prerequisite for spiritual well-being is that *the nation shall love itself*. This nation, rooted from its inception in the wisdom of the Judaic-Christian tradition, its spiritual life now enhanced even further by other religious traditions, knows well the nature and the place of love in the lives of individuals and in the affairs of nations. In the very consciences of so many of our people are inscribed these two commandments:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. . .and. . . You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Matthew 22:36-40

Spoken to and for individuals, these words are of like value and validity for nations. Therefore it is incumbent upon this nation, the United States of America, so steeped in religious tradition, so well guided, strengthened and sustained by such thinking throughout its history, to abide by these words. For both individual and nation, these "commandments" have the power to inform, inspire, humble, and sustain us.

So also do the following words, the *teachings about love* which are contained in the Judaic-Christian literature, inform, inspire, humble, and sustain us.

If I speak in the tongues of man and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

And so also is the nation "nothing" without such love. And likewise the nation, without such love shall "gain" nothing. The teaching continues:

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, endures all things.

And the nation, in its understanding of its rightful love of self, is to be similarly "patient and kind," and neither "jealous or boastful. . .arrogant or rude," both in its internal affairs and in its world-wide activities as well. So also does the nation not "insist on its own way." It is not to be "irritable or resentful," and neither should it "rejoice at wrong." Indeed, it "rejoices in the right." And so also this nation, reverently and courageously, in pursuit of all that is true and beautiful and good, "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." Truly, these words were spoken for the well-being of the nation, *our* nation, just as they were spoken for the betterment of the individual.

The teaching concludes:

Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

I Corinthians 13:1-13

Let then the nation be so reminded. Knowledge does most surely "pass away." It is indeed "imperfect," as is "prophecy." And the nation indeed is no longer a "child,"

but is a mature and continually developing *presence*, and a responsible, an immensely responsible, *power*, as well. Not yet understanding fully, but called upon nevertheless to continue its course and to reach for its goals. And in so doing, called upon to preserve the "faith," to "hope" for an even more fulfilling future, and above all, to "love." This nation, in so doing, shall not, cannot, fail. *Let then the nation love itself.* This is the second prerequisite for spiritual well-being.

Again, the words of our presidents are here to instruct and inspire us. For not only did our presidents understand the nation's need to *know* itself, they understood also its need to *love* itself, to love what it is, and to love what it *does*.

John Adams, second president of the United States:

The existence of such a government as ours for any length of time is a full proof of a general dissemination of knowledge and virtue throughout the whole body of the people. And what object or consideration more pleasing than this can be presented to the human mind. If national pride is ever justifiable or excusable, it is when it springs, not from power or riches, grandeur or glory, but from conviction of national innocence, information, and benevolence.

Thomas Jefferson, third president of the United States:

A rising nation, spread over a wide and fruitful land, traversing all the seas with the right productions of their industry, engaged in commerce with nations who feel power and forget right, advancing rapidly to destinies beyond the reach of mortal eye—when I contemplate these transcendent objects, and see the honor, the happiness, and the hopes of this beloved country committed to the issue and the auspices of this day, I shrink from the contemplation, and humble myself before the magnitude of the undertaking.

James Monroe, fifth president of the United States:

Penetrating internally to the Great Lakes and beyond the sources of the great rivers which communicate through our whole interior, no country was ever happier with respect to its domain. Blessed, too, with a fertile soil, our produce has always been very abundant, leaving, even in years the least favorable, a surplus for the wants of our fellow-men in other countries. Such is our peculiar felicity that there is not a part of our Union that is not particularly interested in preserving it.

James Garfield, twentieth president of the United States:

We can not overestimate the fervent love of liberty, the intelligent courage, and the sum of common sense with which our fathers made the great experiment of self-government.

And then, reflecting on the new nation now having past its first century, William McKinley, twenty-fifth president of the United States said:

These years of glorious history have exalted mankind and advanced the cause of freedom throughout the world, and immeasurably strengthened the precious free institutions which we enjoy. The people love and will sustain these institutions. The great essential to our happiness and prosperity is that we adhere to the principles upon which the government was established and insist upon their faithful observances. Equality of rights must prevail, and our laws be always and everywhere respected and obeyed.

And several years later, Herbert Hoover, thirty-first president of the United States spoke these words:

Ours is a land rich in resources; stimulating in its glorious beauty; filled with millions of happy homes; blessed with comfort and opportunity. In no nation are the institutions of progress more advanced. In no nation are the fruits of accomplishment more secure. In no nation is the government more worthy of respect. No country is more loved by its people. I have an abiding faith in their capacity, integrity and high purpose. I have no tears for the future of our country, It is bright with hope.

This then, *that the nation shall love itself*, is the second prerequisite for our attaining spiritual well-being. To a nation not only known to itself, but loved by itself, do our people dedicate their lives. As our presidents have said, such dedication is to a nation of which "*no country was ever happier* with respect to its domain," and a land in which "*no nation...has ever been blessed* with so rich and noble an inheritance." A nation which "cannot overestimate the fervent *love* of liberty, and intelligent courage, and the sum of common sense." A nation of "glorious beauty," with a government "worthy of *respect*." Indeed, the United States of America, aware of its many, many blessings should truly *love itself*. Who we are, what we are, and all that we have sought to accomplish allow us, and indeed should encourage us, to do so.

Prerequisite Three

The Nation Shall Lose Itself

The third prerequisite for spiritual well-being is that *the nation shall lose itself*. As has been seen to be true regarding self-knowledge and self-love, humankind has also been instructed, indeed admonished, concerning the virtue of and necessity for the *loss* of self. Throughout history and across continents, the teachings are many. The idea is most familiar to the majority of Americans as it is expressed within the Judaic-Christian tradition in the following words: "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake, will find it" (Matthew 10:13). Or, similarly stated: "Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it" (Luke 17:33).

Again, these words, although spoken to or written for individuals, are of similar importance to the well-being of nations. A nation determined to discover itself, both its meaning and purpose, to "find" itself regarding its place in history and its position and role in an ever-changing world, is indeed called upon at various times to "lose" itself. To do so, however, is not to be diminished, or to be made less whole, or to become less well-defined. In fact to "lose" one's self in an informed and enlightened manner, whether person or nation, is to become *more*. It is to become greater, stronger, wiser. It is not to abandon what is good, neither is it to abolish that which has been justly and duly established. Rather, for a nation, as for an individual, it is to put aside an identity made less well, defined perhaps during a difficult time, or fashioned perhaps less carefully, less knowingly, by a people yet unschooled or in some ways inexperienced. It is to abandon that which serves us poorly in order to allow the emergence and growth

of that which can serve us better. It is to encourage the appearance of a "new" nation. A nation of *greater maturity, of greater knowledge, of greater purpose* and consequently of *infinitely greater meaning*. It is to have learned, to have become more wise. It is to stand taller among all nations, and to create anew a nation of which to be even more proud. A nation for which greater praises are to be sung. Such a nation, be assured, shall know spiritual well-being. And the grace of God as well. Such a nation, America, is ours.

Several of our presidents recognized the issue of the nation's need to "lose" itself, and they spoke knowingly about the ensuing increase in strength, character, and stature which such an exercise and expansion of the nation's sense of destiny and duty could provide.

Franklin Pierce, fourteenth president of the United States, expressed his understanding in these words:

The great objects of our pursuit as a people are best to be attained by peace, and are entirely consistent with the tranquility and interests of the rest of mankind. . .the vast interests of commerce are common to all mankind, and the advantages of trade and international intercourse must always present a noble field for the moral influence of a great people. . . .The rights which belong to us as a nation are not alone to be regarded, but those which pertain to every citizen in his individual capacity, at home and abroad, must be sacredly maintained.

Warren Harding, twenty-ninth President had this to say:

The unselfishness of these United States is a thing proven; our devotion to peace for ourselves and for the world is well established; our concern for preserving authority has had its impassioned and heroic expression.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, thirty-second president of the United States:

Old truths have been relearned; untruths have been unlearned. We have always known that heedless self-interest was bad morals; we know now that it is bad economics. Out of the collapse of a prosperity whose builders boasted their practicality has come the conviction that in the long run economic morality pays. We are beginning to wipe out the line that divides the practical from the ideal; and in so doing we are fashioning an instrument of unimagined power for the establishment of a morally better world.

And Dwight David Eisenhower, thirty-fourth president of the United States, talked to the American people at considerable length about the "national conscience" and about his concerns regarding America's obligation to lose itself in service to others. From his address to the nation:

Great as are the preoccupations absorbing us at home, concerned as we are with matters that deeply affect our livelihood today and our vision of the future, each of these domestic problems is dwarfed by, and often even created by, this question that involves all humankind.

...

At such a time in history, we who are free must proclaim anew our faith.

This faith is the abiding creed of our fathers. It is our faith in the deathless dignity of man, governed by eternal, moral and natural laws.

This faith defines our full view of life. It establishes, beyond debate, those gifts of the Creator that are man's inalienable rights, and that make all men equal in His sight.

In the light of this equality, we know that the virtues most cherished by free people—love of truth, pride of work, devotion to country—all are treasures equally precious in the lives of the most humble and of the most exalted. The men who mine coal and fire furnaces and balance ledgers and turn lathes and pick cotton and heal the sick and plant corn—all serve as proudly, and as profitably, for America as the statesmen who draft treaties and the legislators who enact laws.

...

Change expresses a purpose of strengthening our dedication and devotion to the precepts of our founding documents, a

conscious renewal of faith in our country and in the watchfulness of a Divine Providence.

...

This is our home--yet this is not the whole of our world. For our world is where our full destiny lies--with men, of all peoples, and all nations, who are or would be free.

...

For one truth must rule all we think and all we do. No people can live to itself alone.

...

And so the prayer of our people carries far beyond our own frontiers, to the wide world of our duty and our destiny.

And finally, the words of Richard Nixon, our thirty-seventh president:

Until he has been a part of a cause larger than himself, no man is truly whole.

And no nation.

This then is the third prerequisite for the spiritual well-being we seek, and for the grace of God we would enjoy. *The nation shall lose itself.* We shall "lose" ourselves, as so instructed by our presidents, knowing that "the rights which belong to us as a nation are not alone to be regarded." We shall lose ourselves in order that we may be encouraged in our task of "fashioning an instrument of unimagined power for the establishment of a morally better world." And we shall lose ourselves in attesting forthrightly the "one truth," that "no people can live to itself alone." No people, and no nation.

The Nation Acts

The Prerequisites Realized

*... be doers of the word, and not hearers only.
... he who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and
perseveres, being no hearer that forgets but a doer that acts, he
shall be blessed in his doing.*

James 1:22,25

These then are the three prerequisites for the spiritual well-being of the nation: the nation shall *know* itself, the nation shall *love* itself, and the nation shall *lose* itself. The question now before us, therefore, is how are the prerequisites to be adequately recognized and effectively practiced today? What are we, the people of these United States of America, to *do* so that we may indeed continue to know, enjoy, and *make real* these conditions of health and well-being? In what manner, and by what authority, is the nation to continue the tradition and *fulfill* these prerequisites?

The answer is that the prerequisites of spiritual well-being shall be fulfilled through a firm and steadfast commitment on the part of our people to *think* about, to *do*, and then to *contemplate* the outcome of all that we profess to contain the truth, beauty, and goodness on which this nation was founded, by which it thrives, and for which it must forever stand. We must *think*. We must *do*. And we must *contemplate*. Create. Enact. Evaluate. The *truth*, the *beauty*, and the *goodness of America*. Thus shall the nation truly know, love, and lose itself. For in such thinking, doing, and contemplating shall we provide for ourselves, and for all those who follow, a nation strong of soul, a nation aware of and engaged in assuming its responsibilities and fulfilling its obligations, and

a nation thus filled with spiritual well-being. An America alive with meaning and exuberant in purpose. And a nation, an America, a *power* and a *presence* blessed with the grace of God.

"Action," the actual *doing* of an individual's or the nation's beliefs, is of course of utmost importance, and thus should be clearly and forcefully emphasized. For *it is only through action*, through *doing what is believed*, that one actually experiences and feels the validity and truth of the ways one has chosen. *We must do, America. Do what America is.*

Several of our presidents have made strikingly clear the nation's ever-present need to carefully, and caringly, think, *do*, and contemplate our beliefs. They knew, as must we, that it is only in this manner, in diligently and dutifully completing this cycle, that we can hope to fulfill our purpose. They understood that we must first give rise to truly noble ideas, and then commit ourselves wholeheartedly to responsible and courageous *action*. And they knew also, as must we, that the effects, the outcomes of such thoughts and actions are then to be critically contemplated, *evaluated* with concern and compassion, and then, if meeting our standards, be pressed into the very heart and soul of the nation. And they knew as well, and so must we, that the entire process, the thinking, the doing and the contemplating, must be carried out over and over and over again. Let us once more listen to the presidents.

Martin VanBuren, eighth president of the United States stated:

. . . we present an aggregate of human prosperity surely not elsewhere to be found.

How imperious, then, is the obligation imposed upon every citizen, in his own sphere of action, whether limited or

extended, to exert himself in perpetuating a condition of things so singularly happy! All the lessons of history and experience must be lost upon us if we are content to trust alone to the peculiar advantages we happen to possess.

Franklin Pierce, fourteenth president of the United States:

In this our country has, in my judgment, thus far fulfilled its highest duty to suffering humanity. It has spoken and will continue to speak, not only by its words, but by its acts, the language of sympathy, encouragement, and hope to those who earnestly listen to tones which pronounce for the largest rational liberty.

Theodore Roosevelt, twenty-sixth president of the United States:

. . . the success which we have had in the past, the success which we confidently believe the future will bring, should cause in us no feeling of vain-glory, but rather a deep and abiding realization of all which life has offered us; a full acknowledgement of the responsibility which is ours; and a fixed determination to show that under a free government a mighty people can thrive best, alike as regards the things of the body and the things of the soul.

Much has been given us, and much will rightfully be expected from us. We have duties to others and duties to ourselves; and we can shirk neither. . .

. . . though the problems are new, though the tasks set before us differ from the tasks set before our fathers who founded and preserved this Republic, the spirit in which these tasks must be undertaken and these problems faced, if our duty is to be well done, remains essentially unchanged. . . we have faith that we shall not prove false to the memories of the men of the mighty past. They did their work, they left us the splendid heritage we now enjoy. We in our turn have an assured confidence that we shall be able to leave this heritage unwasted and enlarged to our children and our children's children. To do so we must show, not merely in great crises, but in the everyday affairs of life, the qualities of practical intelligence, of courage, of hardihood, and endurance, and above all the power of devotion to a lofty ideal, which made great the men who founded this Republic in the days of Washington, which made great the men who preserved this Republic in the days of Abraham Lincoln.

Woodrow Wilson, twenty-eighth president of the United States:

We know our task to be no mere task of politics but a task which shall search us through and through, whether we be able to understand our time and the need of our people, whether we be indeed their spokesmen and interpreters, whether we have the pure heart to comprehend and the rectified will to choose our high course of action.

This is not a day of triumph; it is a day of dedication. Here muster, not the forces of party, but the forces of humanity. Men's hearts wait upon us; men's lives hang in the balance; men's hopes call upon us to say what we will do. Who shall live up to the great trust? Who dares fail to try? I summon all honest men, all patriotic, all forward-looking men, to my side. God helping me, I will not fail them, if they will but counsel and sustain me!

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, thirty-second president of the United States:

Restoration calls, however, not for changes in ethics alone. This nation asks for action and action now. . . .

We face the arduous days that lie before us in the warm courage of the national unity; with the clear consciousness of seeking old and precious moral values; with the clean satisfaction that comes from the stern performance of duty by old and young alike.

We do not distrust the future of essential democracy. The people of the United States have not failed. In their need they have registered a mandate that they want direct, vigorous action. They have asked for discipline and direction under leadership.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy, thirty-fifth president of the United States:

And so my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you--ask what you can do for your country.

My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you but what together we can do for the freedom of man.

Richard M. Nixon, thirty-seventh president of the United States:

Our greatest need now is to reach beyond government, to enlist the legions of the concerned and the committed.

What has to be done, has to be done by government and people together or it will not be done at all. The lesson of past agony is that without the people we can do nothing; with the people we can do everything.

To match the magnitude of our tasks, we need the energies of our people--enlisted not only in grand enterprises, but more importantly in those small, splendid efforts that make headlines in the neighborhood newspaper instead of the national journal.

With these, we can build a great cathedral of the spirit--each one of us raising it one stone at a time, as he reaches out to his neighbor, helping, caring, doing.

Ronald Reagan, fortieth president of the United States:

. . . I believe we the Americans of today are ready to act worthy of ourselves, ready to do what must be done to insure happiness and liberty for ourselves, our children and our children's children.

And as we renew ourselves here in our own land we will be seen as having greater strength throughout the world. We will again be the exemplar of freedom and a beacon of hope for those who do not now have freedom.

George Herbert Bush, forty-first president of the United States:

. . . a new breeze is blowing, and a world refreshed by freedom seems reborn. A new breeze is blowing, and a nation refreshed by freedom stands ready to push on.

And now the commitment continues, with the words, and under the leadership of William Jefferson Clinton, forty-second president of the United States:

Today, a generation raised in the shadows of the Cold War assumes new responsibilities in a world warmed by the sunshine of freedom. . .

And so, my fellow Americans, at the edge of the 21st century, let us begin with energy and hope, with faith and discipline, and let us work until our work is done. The scripture says, "And let us not weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not."

Thus have our presidents spoken. Let us heed their words. And let us in so doing heed *our call to begin*, and to begin at once, to *think*, to *do*, and to *contemplate* all that will lead us to the better nation and the better world which we, *we*, must create.

Do we, does this nation, value the *friendship, cooperation, and respect* of all nations? What then must we *do*? How is this to be *achieved*? Does this nation truly value the principles which state that all its citizens have a right to live safely and securely in their residences and neighborhoods of choice? And in the world at large? What then must we *do*? How is such security to be *achieved*? Do we value the benefits of more and better education for all people? How then do we best educate? Do we value an environment rich in its health-giving properties and resplendent in its beauty? How then do we provide and protect it? Truly, we the people of these United States must know precisely what we value, and then be prepared and willing to *do* whatever is required of us in order to achieve it.

America, let us "comfort the weak," and "heal the sick." Build and rebuild the homes, high-rises, and industries of our nation. Bring peace where there is strife, in our own nation, and, when feasible, in other nations around the world. Let us work to *make real* the rights, the freedoms, and the well-being of all people. Let us *do*, America, "do unto others," as we would hope, and pray, others might do unto us. Let us *be* American!

Toward a New Beginning

*They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.*

Isaiah 40:31

*In each generation—with toil and tears—we have had to earn
our heritage again.*

*If we fail now, then we will have forgotten in abundance
what we learned in hardship: that democracy rests on faith, that
freedom asks more than it gives, and that the judgment of God is
harshest on those who are most favored.*

Lyndon Baines Johnson
36th President of
The United States of America

Thus are we reminded again, America, that we are a nation "called," truly *called*, to duty, to service, and to greatness. Called to *think* about, called to *do*, and called to *contemplate*. Our values, our conscience, our course, and our command. Called, America, to fulfill our *destiny*.

Let therefore the very best of America, the finest America of our fathers and our mothers, and of theirs, the America of all who came before us, guide and inspire us as we forge a new, greater, more spiritually well and more meaningful America. And as we struggle, as did they, to uphold and carry forth the sacred principles, the priorities which must now be ours, as we march out of their past, through our today and into the tomorrow of our children, let us place before the nation and all the world a new commitment, a new creed of conscience, *A New Pledge for a New America*. A pledge,

an "all-American" pledge, born of what is *right* with America, and of all we intend America to be. A covenant among a people, its government, and its place in the world. And let us do so with the pride and patriotism which such a pledge justly allows.

A New Pledge for a New America

We the people of the United States of America proclaim to all who would hear:

This nation, mindful of its historic, self-determined and publicly proclaimed purposes, mindful as well of its strong religious heritage and of the presence of Providence in all its affairs accomplished with honor, aware of the breadth and intensity of suffering, of the multitude and magnitude of human needs both within and beyond its boundaries, aware as well of its *obligation* and *responsibility* to respond, hereby accepts, renews, and reaffirms its solemn and sacred *call to duty*, its call to carry on with vigor the nation's historic commitment to the emergence of an increasingly enlightened, more just, and more ennobling future for all peoples, its call to *work* faithfully, diligently, and devotedly, toward a time of greater meaning and purpose, dignity and direction for all.

I. This nation, in accepting this call, does so fervently, reverently, and prayerfully, in full recognition of its need in all its deliberations and in all its actions, to "do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly" with, and under, the authority of God.

II. The nation thus aware, and so resolved, shall seek also and at all times, to love and respect its neighbor nations, both near and far, as in fact it loves and respects itself.

III. The nation shall recognize and remember that it is indeed *unique* among all the nations of the world. Therefore, it shall actively study, steadfastly protect, and thus faithfully preserve its history and its mission, and shall do so diligently, prudently, and with an unquestionable and unassailable devotion to its *destiny*, its cause, and its very reason for being.

IV. The nation shall both publicly and privately recognize and rejoice in its accomplishments and successes, *and*, it shall acknowledge, accept, and redress its faults and its failures. In such manner is every effort to be made to protect and preserve at all times the *integrity* and the *credibility* of these United States.

V. The nation shall recognize its burden of responsibility for the well-being of its own people, and, to the extent that it is in the best interest of all parties, shall accept responsibility for the well-being of people of other nations as well. Therefore, it shall respond to its obligations and seek to fulfill its responsibilities with a tremendous, united effort, and a firm, unyielding sense of determination to rightfully and justly accomplish what it believes it is *called* to do.

VI. The nation shall strive at all times to inform and educate its people regarding the affairs of state, both foreign and domestic, so that the people may be aware of, and in a position to give genuine support to, or offer just criticism of, its policies and actions. This shall be done to the furthest extent that legitimate concern for the security and well-being of the nation allows. Furthermore, the nation, in a manner both prudent and appropriate, shall clearly and candidly apprise other nations of its causes and concerns, its objectives and chosen courses of action, and the reasons

underlying them. Again, this shall be carried out to the extent that concern for its own security and well-being may allow. The place of America in the world, the dreams of America at home, and the policies that we intend to pursue, shall be made perfectly clear, and proudly so, to all persons and to all nations who wish to hear and who would truly know and respect the American way.

VII. The nation shall provide reasonable means of support and assistance, and every possible opportunity, to each of its citizens, for their personal and social well-being, success, and betterment. It shall attempt to be similarly concerned, to the extent that it is reasonable, appropriate, and feasible, to the people of other nations as well. The nation shall truly strive to comfort the weak, support the oppressed and give aid to all who for whatever reason falter in their struggle to achieve a sense of dignity, self-worth and well-being. It shall seek, in the tradition of its religious and political heritage, to appreciate the blessedness of, and to demonstrate its concern and compassion for, those who are "poor in spirit," those who "mourn," the "meek," the true "seekers of righteousness," the "merciful," the "pure in heart," the "peacemakers," and all persons who are "persecuted and reviled."

We the American people, with humility and with pride, do solemnly pledge all this. To ourselves. And to others. So help us God.

Godspeed, America!

The thing I shall count upon, the thing without which neither counsel nor action will avail, is the unity of America—an America united in feeling, in purpose and in its vision of duty, of opportunity and of service.

Woodrow Wilson, 28th President of
The United States of America

More than a century ago, a battle won, others lost, the struggle of civil strife still ongoing, a weary but determined president stood overlooking a field of fallen soldiers, each in his way a loyalist and a patriot, and spoke these words:

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of

*freedom--and that government of the people, by the people,
for the people, shall not perish from the earth.*

President Abraham Lincoln
November 19, 1863 at the dedication of the
National Cemetery on the Civil War battle-
field at Gettysburg

One hundred years later, almost to the day, another American, the acclaimed leader of the nation's civil rights movement, also weary, also determined, stood on the steps of the memorial honoring that Civil War President and to the thousands upon thousands of people there assembled spoke these words:

*I have a dream that my four little children will one day live
in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin
but by the content of their character.*

I have a dream today. . .

*I have a dream that one day every valley shall be
exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the
rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will
be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together.*

*This is our hope. This is the faith with which I return to
the South. With this faith we will be of hope. With this faith we
will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope.
With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords
of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this
faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle
together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together,
knowing that we will be free one day.*

*This will be the day when all of God's children will
be able to sing with new meaning "My country 'tis of thee,
sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers
died, land of the pilgrims's pride, from every mountainside,
let freedom ring."*

*And if America is to be a great nation this must
become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops
of New Hampshire! Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains
of New York! Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies
of Pennsylvania!*

Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado!

*Let freedom ring from the curvaceous peaks of California!
But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain
of Georgia!*

*Let freedom ring from every hill and mole hill of
Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.*

*When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every
village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will
be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men
and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will
be able to join hands and sing in the words of that old Negro
spiritual, *Free at last! Free at last! Thank God almighty, we
are free at last!*"*

The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.
August 23, 1963, at the Lincoln Memorial,
Washington, D.C.

A very few years later, a terrible and terrifying few, a president slain, and this great orator of the nation's conscience tragically silenced, another American stood in one of the mighty and majestic cathedrals of this land, and for a nation of bowed heads, for a people weeping once more, ever more weary, yet more determined to go on as well, sang in tribute to his dear friend, our fallen senator:

*Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord,
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored,
He has loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword,
His truth is marching on.*

*Glory, glory, hallelujah,
Glory, glory, hallelujah,
Glory, glory, hallelujah,
His truth is marching on!*

The Battle Hymn of the Republic
Julia Ward Howe

We are being called once more, America, citizens all of this great and mighty nation, each one of us, to be Americans with a *new and greater purpose*. And we shall be

called again, and again, and again. Called, each one of us, to dream. To dream and to *do*. To become involved in, to contribute to, to be truly a part of, the *spiritual well-being of this great and mighty nation*. Called to know and to *live* the real *meaning of America*. And thus to seek the "glory of the coming of the Lord." And then we shall be called to even greater dreams, and to yet more grand and more noble actions. "Glory, glory hallelujah," indeed.

Let us then *do*, today and in our many tomorrows, the very *essence* and real *work* of all the dreams that are America. Let us together gather up and put in place the proposals and the programs and the projects, and then celebrate, truly *celebrate*, as we witness the progress toward our each and every dream. Let us *be a new America*. Let us fashion a *new man* and a *new woman* in America. New in strength. New in meaning. And new in their determination to "do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God." Let us seek the glory of an America of ever-increasing liberty and ever-expanding justice for all. An America of such splendid and noble accomplishments as to surpass all other times in our history. And let us *pledge* to be an America ever-mindful of our *destiny*, our *duties*, our *obligations*, and our *responsibilities*. To ourselves. To the nation. To other nations. And to God.

Three decades ago, the thirty-fifth president of these United States, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, himself a man of dreams, determination, and courage, said to us and to all the world:

We dare not forget today that we are the heirs of that first revolution. Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans—born in this century, tempered by war,

disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage—and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world.

Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty.

This much we pledge—and more.

This thirty-fifth president went on to speak to us of the several tasks and trials which confronted us at that time. And then he said:

All this will not be finished in the first 100 days. Nor will it be finished in the first 1,000, nor in the life of this Administration, nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet. But let us begin.

In your hands, my fellow citizens, more than mine, will rest the final success or failure of our course. Since this country was founded, each generation of Americans has been summoned to give testimony to its national loyalty. The graves of young Americans who answered the call to service surround the globe.

Now the trumpet summons us again—not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need—not as a call to battle, though embattled we are—but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle year in and year out, "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation"—a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself.

And thus, he also said:

With good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God's work must truly be our own."

We are so summoned, America. Let us go forth. And as we do, let us be reminded of, and strengthened by the reality that we are now two decades into the *third* century of our national being. That the fifty-first inauguration of an American president

has occurred. The centennial of our Statue of Liberty has been celebrated, and the bicentennial of the nation's Constitution as well.

Framed by the flag of this nation, bright with its fifty stars, and crowned by the towering and majestic dome of the Capitol rotunda, itself crowned that night by the panoply of God's stars, the people gathered, and the fortieth president of the United States spoke, saying:

This is... the 50th time that we, the people, have celebrated this historic occasion. When the first president, George Washington, placed his hand upon the Bible, he stood less than a single day's journey by horseback from raw, untamed wilderness. There were four million Americans in a Union of 13 states.

Today we are 60 times as many in a Union of 50 states. We've lighted the world with our inventions, gone to the aid of mankind wherever in the world there was a cry for help, journeyed to the moon and safely returned.

So much has changed. And yet we stand together as we did two centuries ago.

When I took this oath four years ago, I did so in a time of economic stress. Choices were raised saying that we had to look to our past for the greatness and glory. But we, the present-day Americans, are not given to looking backward. In this blessed land, there is always a better tomorrow. . .

*...
Let us resolve: There will be no turning back or hesitation on the road to an America rich in dignity and abundant with opportunity for all our citizens.*

Let us resolve that we, the people, will build an American opportunity society in which all of us--white and black, rich and poor, young and old--will go forward together, arm in arm. Again, let us remember that, though our heritage is one of blood lines from every corner of the earth, we are all Americans pledged to carry on this last best hope of man on earth.

America must remain freedom's staunchest friend, for freedom is our best ally, and it is the world's only hope to conquer poverty and preserve peace.

President Ronald Regan

We are the people of these United States today. *The spiritual well-being of a nation and the meaning of America* are now in *our* hands. Ours to hold. Ours to treasure. And of even greater importance, ours to protect, preserve, and then place in the hands of others to come.

America, let us "pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty." Let us join together. Now. Protectors of "the splendid heritage." Welcoming "the work of restoration." Longing to build anew "a cathedral of the spirit." Living on to be the "exemplar of freedom." Let us walk proudly, and march majestically, heralding a new and mightier America. And never forget, America, *let us never forget*, that what we hold, what we treasure, what we must protect and preserve, what we rightfully and must so faithfully extol, is of *God* and for *all people*.

Over twenty-five hundred years ago a prophet spoke the following words to his people. They may well have been spoken to the American people today:

... give heed to the statutes and ordinances which I teach you, and do them; that you may live and go in and take possession of the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, gives you. . . Behold, I have taught you statutes and ordinances, as you should do them in the land which you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them; your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who when they hear all these statutes, will say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people."

Deuteronomy 4:1-9

Thus, to our task. And as we begin, let us hear once more these words of President Clinton. It is he who leads us, he who sounds the call today:

From this joyful mountaintop of celebration, we hear a call to service in the valley. We have heard the trumpets. We have

changed the guard. And now each in our way, and with God's help, we must answer the call.

So gather the people. Raise high the flag. The stars. The stripes. Fill the air with a flourish of trumpets, the thunder of drums. Stand, America! Stand and sing. And then to work. The *destiny* of the United States of America is in our hands and yet to be fulfilled!

The Star Spangled Banner

*O say can you see, by the dawn's early light,
what so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming,
whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the perilous fight,
o'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming?
And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.
O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave
o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?*

*O thus be it ever, when free men shall stand
between their loved homes and the war's desolation!
Blest with victory and peace, may the heaven-rescued land
praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation!
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,
and this be our motto, "In God is our trust."
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave
o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!*

Frances Scott Key

Amen, America!

Amen and Godspeed!

America the Power! America the Presence!

References

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