



Oliver D. Pangborn

01/15/2001 05:15:12 PM



Record Type: Record

To:

cc:

Subject: President William J. Clinton's Message to Congress: The Unfinished Work of Building One America

**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON'S MESSAGE TO CONGRESS:
THE UNFINISHED WORK OF BUILDING ONE AMERICA**
January 15, 2001

I hereby submit this message to the 107th Congress of the United States on the State of Race Relations in America. In it, I present my personal assessment of the current national mood concerning race relations and issue a set of concrete challenges that form what I call the unfinished business of building One America. This report is an outgrowth of my Administration's consistent emphasis on racial reconciliation, most clearly embodied in my Initiative on Race and our White House Office on One America. But it also stems from my own personal commitment to racial harmony that has its roots in the lessons and experiences of my childhood in the racially segregated south. I dedicate this report to countless civil rights champions of all colors who have struggled since the time of Frederick Douglas for an America free from the bondage of racial injustice.

Introduction

After eight years of service as President of the United States, I will relinquish that title on January 20, 2001, when George W. Bush takes the oath of office. But as a citizen, I will always try to serve my country and to advance the ideals that propelled me into public service more than two decades ago, none more important than racial reconciliation. It began for me with the crisis at Little Rock in 1957. I was only 11 years old at the time. Like most southerners then, I never attended school with a person of another race until I went to college. Though discrimination had always gnawed at me, it was the courage and sacrifice of those nine black children who endured constant attacks, both physical and emotional, to integrate Little Rock's Central High School, that made racial equality a driving commitment in my life. I came of age at the height of the civil rights struggles of the sixties: the 1963 March on Washington, the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. I vividly remember the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy. Like any American who grew up in that era, my life was shaped by those triumphs and tragedies. And ever since, I have been inspired to join with others to carry on the fight for racial justice, including justice for all Americans without regard to gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, or religion. Progress on this road is essential to our march toward the "more perfect union" of our founders' dreams.

For eight years, my Administration has worked to build social and economic bridges strong enough for all of us to walk across; to give all responsible citizens equal opportunity to cross those bridges; and to celebrate our great diversity while uniting around our common humanity, values, and concerns. In a nation where soon the only majority will be “American,” I believe we need to talk about race in a new way – not just in terms of black and white, but of the essential worth and dignity of all people. Of course, racial tensions still exist in America. But, if we are ever going to overcome them, we must begin to focus more on the things that unite us than on those that divide us.

Let’s start with the remarkable fact that we are recognized around the globe as the most successful multi-racial democracy in history, a model of peaceful co-existence in a world torn by ethnic, racial and religious conflict. With the current explosion of diversity in America, that image of ourselves is being tested as never before.

America is undergoing one of the greatest demographic transformations in history. We are a changing people. Just fifty years ago, whites made up 90 percent of our population and the Census Bureau used only three major categories to describe us: white, Negro, and “other.” Those distinctions were often reduced to just white and non-white. Since then, there has been a rapid growth in our Hispanic, Asian American, and American Indian populations. According to the latest statistics from the Census Bureau, African Americans, with a population of 35 million, still constitute the largest racial or ethnic group in America. But the gap is narrowing. During the past decade, the Asian Pacific American population has emerged as the fastest growing racial or ethnic group in America. Their numbers have skyrocketed-- from 0.7% of the total U.S. population in 1970 to 4.0% in 1999 – more than 11 million strong. And with a population that has grown from just 7 million in 1960 to more than 31 million today, Hispanics are the second fastest growing racial or ethnic group in the country.

Today, almost ten percent of the people in the United States were born in another country and one in five schoolchildren are from immigrant families. There is no majority race in Hawaii or Houston or New York City. In nine of our ten largest public school systems, over 75 percent of the students are minorities. In a little more than 50 years there will be no majority race in America.

This unprecedented infusion of diversity brings with it a complex and sometimes controversial set of issues. Who, for example, decides who is white and who is a person of color? What will the terms “majority” and “minority” mean when there is no majority race in America? And perhaps, most important, will the black-white schism that has so defined racial struggle in America morph into new minority versus minority divisions or can we build new coalitions for social change and equal opportunity across all racial lines?

As our nation grows more diverse and the world grows more interdependent, our diversity will either be the great problem or the great promise of the 21st century. Will we be two societies, “separate and unequal,” as the Kerner Commission concluded 33 years ago? We have made progress that can be measured both in numbers and in the hearts and minds of

Americans. We have the lowest minority unemployment rate ever recorded, record numbers of minority owned businesses, and minority educational progress among all racial and ethnic groups. Perhaps even more important, most of our children believe that racial harmony and respect for diversity is the only way for all us to live and prosper. We have not yet reached the dream of One America, but I believe in this century, we can and we will. But it will take honest discussion about where we are and where we want to go and vigorous, relevant efforts to deal with our remaining challenges.

This report is not intended to grapple with all aspects of the racial divide in America, but to point to a number of concrete steps we can take to equalize opportunity, maximize the great potential of our growing diversity, and accelerate our journey to building the One America of our dreams. I will offer recommendations in seven broad areas of unfinished business: **Economic and Social Progress, Education, Civil Rights Enforcement, Criminal Justice Reform, Eliminating Health Disparities, Election Reform, and Civic Responsibility.** I offer these recommendations in the hope that they will be helpful, not only to the 107th Congress and the new administration, but to all of us as we continue the work of healing the racial wounds of the past and pointing the way to a more just future of greater opportunity for all Americans.

We must keep working to connect the threads of our coat of many colors into the fabric of One America.

I. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROGRESS

New Markets – Ensuring that the Benefits of Our Strong Economy Reach All

By any measure, America has prospered, both economically and socially over the last eight years. We are now experiencing the longest economic expansion in history. We have a balanced budget. We have turned decades of deficits into the biggest back-to-back surpluses in history. And we have achieved what many people once thought impossible – we are paying down our national debt. In fact, we are well on our way to making America debt-free by the year 2010 – the first time this has happened since Andrew Jackson was President in 1835.

The rising tide of our strong economy is lifting all boats. Between 1980 and 1992 the bottom 60 percent of Americans saw little, if any, increase in income. Unemployment for African Americans and Hispanics reached record highs and the poverty rate for African Americans remained at or above 30 percent.

Today, for the first time in decades, wages are rising at all income levels. Not only did every major income group see double-digit income growth, but the lowest 20 percent saw the largest income growth since 1993. The unemployment rate for African Americans fell from 14.2 percent in 1992 to 7.6 percent today. The drop in unemployment among Hispanics has been just as dramatic – from 11.6 percent in 1992 to 5.7 percent today. We have the lowest child poverty rate in 20 years, the lowest poverty rate for single mothers ever recorded. The highest homeownership on record. Record numbers of Americans have left welfare for

work, and those still on welfare are five times more likely to be working than eight years ago. And the number of families who own stock has grown by 40 percent.

But America is not just better off, we are also more hopeful, more secure, more free, and more united than ever before. We have worked to increase opportunity with commitments to improve funding and higher standards in Head Start and in secondary education; to open the doors of college and job training to all; to provide tax relief to lower-income working families; to increase loans to minority small businesses; and to launch efforts to close the digital divide and open new markets to communities that are not yet part of our prosperity. We governed with a belief and commitment that we could turn around our fiscal situation and still find resources to empower the hardest-pressed families while creating new opportunities. That is why, even in our 1993 deficit reduction bill, we found the resources to make an historic expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit while creating a new Federal Empowerment Zone initiative – effectively led by Vice President Gore.

While maintaining fiscal discipline, we have worked to increase opportunity by more than doubling funding for Head Start, increasing efforts to close the digital divide by 300 percent, increasing Pell Grants by more than 60 percent for millions, starting new initiatives to provide mentoring and job opportunities for economically disadvantaged and minority youth, reforming and strengthening the Community Reinvestment Act, and initiating the Community Development Financial initiative, expanding loans to minority small businesses.

There is also a rising tide of shared responsibility across the land. Crime is at a 25-year low. Teen pregnancy is down. Our environment is cleaner and more secure. Citizens are reclaiming control of their families and neighborhoods and we are seeing the re-emergence of our oldest and most basic values – opportunity for all, responsibility from all, in a community of all Americans.

But despite all this progress, there remain pockets of poverty in America where the light of our glowing prosperity still does not shine. In December of 1997, I paid a visit to an area of the South Bronx that had once been close to the economic equivalent of an impoverished developing country. Too many of the people living there were under-employed and under-housed and the financial community had traditionally under-invested in them. When President Reagan visited the area in the 1980s, he compared it to London in the Blitz. For many it seemed like a community beyond hope or repair.

The transformation I saw three years later was remarkable. That South Bronx neighborhood had gone from decay and chaos to development and pride; from a fragmented collection of individuals struggling to survive to a cohesive community of citizens, working to build a better life for everyone. What I saw made me proud to be an American.

How did it happen? The people of the South Bronx simply refused to accept the conventional wisdom about the poor, and they worked hard to create economic opportunity, fueled by partnerships between the public and private sectors. They began by asking the right questions: “Why shouldn’t I be able to work in my hometown, or have a transportation system

that will get me to good jobs? Why shouldn't people here be able to get decent housing? Why shouldn't our children be able to walk the streets here? Why shouldn't we have decent schools here, and grocery stores and banks?" Over time, they found and created the right answers. Their story demonstrates something I have always believed: most Americans – rich, poor or middle class – welcome the opportunity to work hard and make the most of their lives.

That determined spirit is exactly what I saw when I traveled across America to shine a spotlight on places still untouched by our nation's growing prosperity. And I am pleased that I was joined by Speaker Hastert and a bipartisan group of political and business leaders who share my view that every community should have the chance to share in the prosperity all of us have worked so hard to build.

We began our New Markets tour in July of 1999, during four days of one of the hottest summers on record. I went to places that have been too long forgotten and too long left behind: Hazard, Kentucky, in the heart of Appalachia; Clarksdale, in the Mississippi Delta; East St. Louis, where poverty is three times the national average; South Dakota's Pine Ridge Reservation, where unemployment is nearly 75 percent; the neighborhood of South Phoenix, Arizona where unemployment is more than twice the national average; and the Watts section of Los Angeles, an area that for decades has been a symbol of urban neglect and isolation in a nation of plenty.

Yes, we did see poverty, but we also saw an awful lot of promise too. I went to these places to promote our New Markets Initiative – a strategy that builds on our successful Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Communities agenda, which Vice President Gore has led so ably. Our New Markets Initiative gives businesses the same incentives to invest in our hardest-pressed communities here at home that it gives them to invest in developing nations around the world. It is designed to create the conditions for economic success in distressed communities by leveraging \$15 billion in new investment in urban and rural areas. It was important that business leaders joined us at every stop so that they could see for themselves what they had been missing. I wanted them to see the enormous opportunities in America's new markets. As Robert Kennedy said in 1967, "We must turn the power and resources of our private enterprise system to the underdeveloped nations within our midst." We need to unleash the power of mainstream financial markets linked to effective community-based partners so that people in distressed communities can have access to what I call the tools of opportunity—these include access to credit, capital and jobs.

Hard-pressed communities cannot be expected to lift themselves up on their own. In addition to their own sweat equity, they need and deserve help. That is why we have worked so hard to put in place an empowerment agenda from a number of sources, including local and federal programs, financial institutions, and technical assistance providers. Without a critical level of credit and financing, however, all their efforts will be in vain.

I am pleased that the Congress put partisanship aside to pass our New Markets Initiative last month. But that is only one part of our empowerment agenda. We should also raise the minimum wage, provide more child care assistance, and health care coverage to the

working poor by covering those whose children are already covered under the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). We should also expand the Family and Medical Leave Act, so more parents can succeed at home and at work. We should make sure women receive equal pay for equal work and expand the American Private Investment Companies Act (APIC), which would help raise equity capital for major investment and job opportunities in our own country, just as we encourage overseas investment through the Overseas Private Investment Corporation.

Recommendation: Vigorously implement the New Markets legislation and pass more of the Empowerment Agenda; a substantial increase in the minimum wage; more child care; health care for working parents, starting with the parents of children already covered under CHIP; more education, training and mentoring for minority youths; legislation to ensure that women get equal pay for equal work; and expansion of the Family and Medical Leave Act; and passage of APIC.

Responsible Fatherhood

Economic empowerment alone is not enough to build strong communities. The most basic building block of strong communities is strong families. Every child deserves the love and support of both parents. Still, nearly one in three American children grows up without a father. These children are five times more likely to live in poverty than children with both parents at home. Clearly, demanding and supporting responsible fatherhood is critical to lifting all children out of poverty and is an important component of welfare reform.

Throughout our Administration, Vice President Gore and I have encouraged fathers to take an active and responsible role in their children's lives. We worked hard to ensure that absent parents provide both financial and emotional support for their children. Tough new child support measures promoted by our Administration contributed to doubling child support collections since 1992, while the number of fathers taking responsibility for their children by establishing paternity tripled. Many fathers want to do right by their children, but need help to do it. The Welfare-to-Work program that we fought for in 1997 provided a major new funding source to help low-income noncustodial parents (mainly fathers) work and support their children, and the FY 2001 budget will give state, local, tribal, and community- and faith-based grantees an additional two years to spend existing funds. We provided communities and families with new tools to increase fathers' involvement in their children's learning. And, teen pregnancy and birth rates have declined to the lowest levels on record.

My FY 2001 budget proposed several new initiatives to ensure that noncustodial parents who can afford to pay child support do, to ensure that more of the child support paid goes directly to families, and to help more "deadbroke" fathers go to work. My Administration worked closely with Congress to seek enactment of the Child Support Distribution Act of 2000, which included many elements of our proposals for child support reforms and responsible fatherhood initiatives. Unfortunately, the 106th Congress failed to pass this legislation, despite strong bi-partisan support. I urge the new Congress to pass a

bipartisan fatherhood bill to help more fathers live up to their responsibilities and to strengthen families and communities.

Recommendation: Pass a bipartisan fatherhood bill that provides grants to help low-income and non-custodial parents -- mainly fathers -- work, pay child support and reconnect with their children.

Native Americans

One year ago, I emphasized in my State of the Union address that we should "begin this new century by honoring our historic responsibility to empower the first Americans." While we are living in a time of great prosperity and progress, for many Native Americans, the picture is quite different. Even though economic conditions in Indian country have improved in recent years, the social, economic and educational status of American Indian and Alaska Native communities continue to lag behind the rest of the United States.

That is why I made improving conditions in Indian Country a high priority during my Administration. We worked with tribes on a government-to-government basis to bring about positive change. Most recently, I signed a new executive order that requires consultation with Indian tribal governments in the development of Federal policies that have tribal implications. I believe that honoring our trust responsibilities and fostering government-to-government interaction is essential to improving relationships with tribes.

In order to lift up Native American communities, we must focus on three areas: economic development, health care, and education. A New Markets approach holds much promise for many Native American communities. I saw this first hand when I visited the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota and the Navajo Nation in Shiprock, New Mexico to highlight the needs of our Nation's first peoples and to encourage private investments in these areas. The final FY2001 budget agreement contains my historic new bipartisan New Markets and Community Renewal Initiative which contains tax credits and assistance for small businesses for underserved communities across the Nation – including Indian Country. I also fought for legislation – also included in the 2001 budget agreement – that will treat tribes similarly to state and local governments under the Federal Unemployment Tax Act. Last year, I proposed a historic budget with the largest increase ever for key new and existing programs for Native American communities. We won much of our request with the final budget, including an increase of \$1.1 billion for Native Americans. The centerpieces of the final budget represent the priorities for Indian Country. We have won historic new increases for Bureau of Indian Affairs school construction and repair which will provide an important down payment on reducing the backlog of repairs and renovations needed. We also secured \$75 million for renovations for public schools with high concentrations of Native American students. I am proud that we are continuing our 1000 new Native American teacher initiative, and we were able to create a new Native American Education Foundation to encourage private gifts to further educational opportunities for American Indian children.

The Vice President and I also championed and won the largest increase for the Indian

Health Service – an increase of 10 percent over FY2000 – to provide additional primary care services, more drug and alcohol prevention and treatment services, and a \$240 million increase for a special diabetes program for Native Americans.

My sincere hope is that these budget victories will provide a baseline for the next Administration to continue to work with tribes and lift up the lives of this Nation's first Americans.

Recommendation: Make up for lost time by continuing to pass bipartisan increases in our nation's investment in turning around Native American schools, reducing the enormous disparity in Native American health, and attracting new business to Indian Country.

II. EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE FOR ALL CHILDREN

When Vice President Gore and I came into office in 1993, we pledged to the American people that we would strengthen education at every level and challenge the status quo by investing more in and demanding more from our nation's schools. Because every child can learn and every child deserves the opportunity to realize his or her dreams, the promise of a world-class education must be available to all Americans regardless of their income, where they live, or the color of their skin. As we enter the 21st century, nothing could be more important than investing in the public schools that will prepare our children to be successful in an increasingly global economy. Too often in the past we accepted low expectations for some children, using labels and categories to excuse our failure to educate them.

During the last eight years we have clearly made progress in improving our schools and helping more children succeed. For example, African American high school graduation rates are virtually equal to those of whites for the first time. Test scores for African Americans students are up in virtually all categories, and between 1992 and 1999, math scores for Hispanic students increased at the 4th, 8th, and 12th grade levels. In addition, more minority students are being challenged by rigorous coursework, which is an important precursor to post-secondary education. Three times as many African American students took Advanced Placement (AP) exams in 1999 as took the tests in 1988; and nearly 70,000 Hispanic students took AP exams in 1999 – the most ever.

Access to post-secondary opportunities also continues to increase for minority students: the percentage of African American high school graduates who go on to college has increased from 50 percent in 1992 to 58.5 percent in 1997, and the percentage of Hispanic high school graduates going directly to college increased from 55 percent in 1992 to 66 percent in 1997. Also, the percentage of Hispanic high school graduates age 25-29 who have a college degree is the highest ever.

These improvements show that our commitment to education over the past eight years is helping more of America's students succeed, but they also highlight the fact that much work remains to be done. For example, achievement gaps between Hispanic and white students

persist at all grade levels and across most academic subjects; and more than 80 percent of Hispanics are not introduced to college “gateway” classes such as algebra and geometry by the eighth grade. These gaps likely contribute to the unacceptably low high school completion rate for Latinos, which has not changed substantially in the past several years.

Eight years ago, the debate on education was usually divided into partisan camps arguing over false choices. On one side were those who believed that money could solve all the problems in our schools, and who feared that setting high standards and holding schools and teachers and students accountable to them would only hold back poor children, especially poor minority children. On the other side, there were those who felt education was a state responsibility, and did not need a comprehensive national response – or the leadership of a federal Department of Education. They were willing to give up on our public schools and many of the children in them because they did not believe that we could ensure a world-class education for all students, and therefore, were unwilling to spend money trying. We believed both of those positions were wrong because every child can learn. There was plenty of evidence, even then, that high levels of learning were possible in even the most difficult social and economic circumstances. The challenge was to make the school transformation going on in some schools available and real in all schools. We sought to do this by both investing more in our schools and demanding more from them, with a simple proven strategy: higher standards, greater accountability, more investment, equal opportunity.

This strategy should continue to guide our efforts to improve education. Last year, for the first time, Congress failed to fulfill its obligation to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. In May of 1999 I sent Congress a proposal that would fundamentally change the way the federal government invests in our schools -- to support more of what we know works, and to stop supporting what we know does not work. It would help put quality teachers in all classrooms; send report cards to all parents on the performance of each school; end social promotion, but offer help for students rather than blaming them when the system fails them; and require a plan to identify failing schools and improve them, or shut them down. I have also favored voluntary national tests in fourth grade reading and eighth grade math -- developed in a nonpartisan and professional manner -- as a way to measure student progress within and across state borders as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAPE) tests do today. Congress and the new Administration must act on this legislation, and I hope they will do it in a way that makes progress on accountability, while increasing key investments in what works.

The fundamental lesson of the last seven years, it seems to me, is that an education investment without accountability can be a real waste of money. But accountability without investment can be a real waste of effort. All schools need adequate resources to provide all of our children with a world-class education and yet too often, many schools in poor communities cannot meet this goal because they simply don't have the resources. Long-standing gaps in access to educational resources exist, including disparities based on race and ethnicity. That's why I am appointing a Presidential Commission on resource equity charged with gathering data on this problem and reporting to the President, Congress, and the nation on the best strategies to close this equity gap.

I've also asked Congress to make a range of other investments to make accountability work. These include reduced class sizes, hiring additional, well-qualified teachers, and expanding after-school and summer school programs to help children succeed.

Congress has responded with bipartisan support for many elements of this plan, including the largest education budget in history this year, which as permitted us to more than double federal support for local schools over the last eight years.

We know that children learn better in smaller classes. This year, we won \$1.6 billion to hire 37,000 new, qualified teachers to lower class size to eighteen in the first three grades, keeping us on track toward our goal of hiring 100,000 new teachers.

We also know that children cannot not be expected to lift themselves up in schools that are literally falling down. The average school building in the United States is 42 years old, while in many cities the average is 65 years old. There are schools in New York City, for example, that are still being heated by coal-fired furnaces, schools in states all over America too poorly wired to connect to the Internet, and schools so overcrowded the playgrounds are filled with trailer classrooms. For four years I have tried to get the Congress to approve my \$25 billion tax credit to help to build or modernize 5,000 schools. America's school children are still waiting for this help. This year, we did win \$1.2 billion in spending for urgent school repairs. This is a start, but far short of making the kind of investment needed to provide our children with the schools they deserve.

Since 1997, we've made progress in expanding after-school programs that offer additional learning opportunities for students and prevent juvenile crime. This year we nearly doubled funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers to \$846 million, serving 1.3 million students nationwide. I call on Congress to support these proven programs until we can provide these opportunities for all the estimated 4 million latch-key children in our country.

With the largest expansion of college aid since the GI Bill, we are opening the doors of college to all, so that more of our young people can not only walk through them, but walk out with a degree four years later. The percentage of young people going to college is up 10 percent since 1990, because the rewards of college are greater than ever, and because of investments like our GEAR UP mentoring program which, with this year's increases, will now help 2.1 million low-income middle school students finish school and prepare for college. Our HOPE Scholarship and Lifetime Learning Tax Credits are also helping 13 million Americans pay for college. Thanks to more affordable student loans, students have saved \$9 billion since 1994, about \$1,300 on each \$10,000 loan. We have increased Pell Grants to a maximum of \$3,750 this year; and created 300,000 more work study slots.

We cannot close disparities in race if we do not close the remaining disparities in education. It is just that simple. This means expanding efforts to tie investment to accountability, so that every child, regardless of race, class, ethnicity, income or background, can get a first-class public school education. This is a founding principle of our country and it remains today perhaps the most important tool we have to give all our citizens the chance to

make the most of their own lives.

Recommendation: Reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act so that federal education funds promote higher standards and accountability for results, put qualified teachers in all classrooms, and turn around all failing schools. Finish the job of hiring 100,000 teachers to reduce class size. Expand afterschool and summer school help to make sure all students reach high standards. Mentor disadvantaged youth to increase the chance they go to college. Provide tax credits to help build or modernize 5,000 schools. Act on the findings of the newly appointed Presidential Commission on Resource Equity, that is charged with finding ways to close the resource equity gap between schools in poor communities and those in more affluent ones.

III. CIVIL RIGHTS ENFORCEMENT

Despite all the progress we have made in tearing down walls of segregation and barriers of opportunity, an old enemy lurks in the shadows. It continues to poison our perceptions, undermine our progress and threaten our future. Racial equality has been our nation's constant struggle, predating the nation's founding by a century and a half. And race has been our constant struggle.

We were born with a Declaration of Independence which asserted that we are all created equal and a Constitution that enshrined slavery. We fought a bloody civil war to abolish slavery and preserve the union, but we remained a house divided and unequal by law for another century. We advanced across the continent in the name of freedom, yet in doing so we pushed Native Americans off their land, often crushing their culture, their livelihood and their lives. We eagerly recruited laborers from Asia to help build our fledgling economy but in a time of war, forcibly removed more than 100,000 Japanese Americans from their homes and into internment camps. Our Statue of Liberty welcomes poor, tired, huddled masses of immigrants to our shores, but each new wave has felt the sting of discrimination, and for many that discrimination has burdened their native-born children and grandchildren. We must face these harsh contradictions squarely as a critical first step to healing the wounds of our past and unleashing the power and promise of our future.

After I launched the national initiative on race in San Diego in 1997, people asked me why, in the absence of a great national crisis like Little Rock or the Rodney King riots, should the American people focus anew on the challenge of racial reconciliation. My answer is two-fold. First and foremost, our work is not yet done. And our present progress and confidence give us the best chance to finish it. We have moved out of the epicenter of racism that rocked our nation from the time of the conquest, slavery and Japanese internment until the great breakthroughs of the civil rights era, but we are still experiencing the aftershocks. Though people of color have more opportunities than ever today, we still see evidence of unequal treatment in the litany of disparities in jobs and wealth, in education and health, and in criminal justice, that so often still break down along the color line.

Second, building One America is not just a fancy slogan. It is a rallying cry in defense

of our future. As we have seen so often in other parts of the world, ancient ethnic divisions in the age of the new global economy can rip nations apart. That has not, and will not, happen here in America. The main reason is our fundamental faith in freedom and equality, embodied in the words, if not always the actions, of our founders.

I believe it is also tied to our belief in a spiritual law common to every major world religion. We hear its echo in our call for One America. It is the law of oneness. *E pluribus unum*: Out of many, one. In Christianity it is expressed as loving thy neighbor as thyself. In Islam we are instructed to “Do unto all men as you wish to have done to you and reject for others what you would reject for yourself. The Talmud teaches us, “Should anyone turn aside the right of the stranger, it is as though he were to turn aside the right of the most high God.” As a nation that takes pride in both the depth and diversity of religious expression, we must embrace racial reconciliation as a way to honor our highest spiritual values.

In 1998, my Advisory Board on race made this prescient observation: “[N]ow, more than ever, racial discrimination is not only about skin color and other physical characteristics associated with race; it is also about other aspects of our identity, such as ethnicity, national origin, language, accent, religion, and cultural customs.” While overt racial prejudice has diminished, the discrimination of today is often more camouflaged. In a sense, this makes it more dangerous: if you are denied a job, apartment, or prompt service in a store on the basis of bigotry that is never expressed, and even cloaked in politeness, then you have no signal telling you to object, to fight. In order to build One America, to finish the work that we have started, it is vitally important that all Americans understand that discrimination — intentional or not, obvious or camouflaged — still exists and that each of us has the opportunity and responsibility to help eradicate it. This is about more than enforcing laws. It is about living up to our values and keeping our promises.

With our unprecedented strength, it is all the more intolerable that there are still doors to opportunity that are padlocked by prejudice. That is why I have proposed substantial new investments to strengthen civil rights enforcement at the federal, state, and local levels. Although money by itself will not achieve our civil rights goals, a strong enforcement agenda depends on a sufficient level of resources. But we must act strategically to put the federal investments where they can be the most effective. That is why, for eight years, I have fought so hard for additional investments in civil rights enforcement. These funds are critical to helping the Justice Department expand investigations and prosecutions of criminal civil rights cases. HUD needs adequate resources to reduce housing discrimination and the Departments of Education, Agriculture and Labor will be able to improve and expand civil rights compliance and enforcement programs.

And as our comprehensive review of federal affirmative action programs revealed, affirmative action is still an effective and important tool for expanding educational and economic opportunity to all Americans.

The fact is, important gaps in civil rights law and their enforcement remain. We need to ensure equal opportunity for all Americans, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender,

disability or sexual orientation. To that end, I challenge the new Congress and Administration to pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA). I believe that the simple business of enforcing anti-discrimination laws should be a bipartisan commitment. We should be able to agree on at least this much – enforce the law and promote voluntary compliance with it.

Recommendation: Redouble our efforts to end all forms of discrimination against any group of Americans by expanding investments in civil rights enforcement and passing the Employment Non-Discrimination Act.

Eliminate Hate Crimes

There is nothing more important to the future of this country than our standing together against intolerance, prejudice, and violent bigotry. No American should be subjected to violence on account of his or her race, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender or disability. Americans of conscience were horrified by the vicious murder of James Byrd, Jr. in Jasper, Texas and the cowardly torture-murder of Matthew Shepard in Wyoming. But we must do more than shake our heads in shame—we must back up our outrage with tough sanctions against those who perpetuate these crimes. Hate crimes are criminal acts driven by bias against another person's race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or ethnicity. In 1999, the FBI reported 7,876 incidents of such crimes. Of these, more than 60% were based on the victim's race or ethnicity. It is suspected that many more go unreported. I am proud that my Administration has stood strong against hate crimes through vigorous prosecution under the civil rights statutes, but there is much more to do.

Under Attorney General Janet Reno's leadership, the Department of Justice has been deeply committed to prosecuting and preventing hate crimes. At the first White House Conference on Hate Crimes in 1997, I announced the centerpiece of the Attorney General's Hate Crime Initiative – the formation of local working groups in each federal judicial district to improve the prosecution and prevention of hate crimes. The Justice Department has also developed three law enforcement training curricula on hate crimes – for patrol officers, investigators, and a mixed audience. Since December 1998, more than 500 law enforcement officers have been trained with this curricula.

We must also ensure that when hate crimes do occur, we have the law enforcement tools necessary to identify the perpetrators swiftly and bring them to justice. In this regard, we must pass the revised Hate Crimes Prevention Act, now called Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act. Currently, the law requires we prove that the defendant committed an offense not only because of the victim's race, color, religion, or national origin, but also because of the victim's participation in one of six “federally protected activities.”

The federally protected activity requirement has impeded our efforts to prosecute hate crimes. For example, the federal government can prosecute a violent, racially-motivated hate crime that occurs in a public school's parking lot, but we may lack jurisdiction if the crime occurs in a private yard across the street from the school. To point out another outrageous limitation, the federal government's ability to respond to a racially motivated attack that occurs

in front of a convenience store may depend on whether or not the store has a video game inside.

Although the vast majority of prosecutions would continue to be brought at the state and local level, the federal statute needs to be fixed so that there are more tools to prosecute these heinous criminal acts. Our federal officers must have the authority to work in concert with state and local law enforcement agencies to end hate crimes.

In addition to removing jurisdictional barriers, the revised Hate Crimes Prevention Act will strengthen current law by giving Federal prosecutors the power to prosecute hate crimes committed because of the victim's sexual orientation, gender, or disability. The federal government did not have the legal jurisdiction to prosecute Matthew Shepard's murderers under current law. Because of the lack of jurisdiction, federal law enforcement was not able to provide significant resources to help local law enforcement in that case. The local sheriff's office had to furlough law enforcement officers because of the costs of the investigation and subsequent prosecution. With this new legislation, this would never have happened. Matthew, a 21-year old college freshman, was beaten in the dead of night, tied to a fence, and left to die alone. At Matthew's funeral, his cousin predicted that "Matt will have made a difference in the lives of thousands." I want to make sure he does. Congress and the next Administration should enact a law that provides justice for all Americans.

Let me emphasize that with the enactment of the Hate Crimes Prevention Act, state and local law enforcement agencies will continue to take the lead in investigating and prosecuting all types of hate crimes. For instance, the Justice Department will continue to defer prosecution in the first instance to state and local law enforcement officials. The revised Hate Crimes Prevention Act will, however, strengthen our ability to work effectively as partners with state and local law enforcement, and to serve an important backstop function with regard to a wider range of hate-motivated violence than federal law currently permits. Many people say we don't need this legislation because hate crimes are covered by other state laws. But, as state prosecutors have pointed out repeatedly, a case can often be better made by federal authorities, and even more often, federal support for state agencies with limited resources is critical.

Opponents of the civil rights legislation in the 1960s often said, "You can't legislate morality." It is true that a statute cannot exorcise hate—that is a personal demon that calls for a moral cleansing. But law does have a function in proclaiming our values and differentiating right from wrong. In that sense, over time, law can squeeze hate out of our public lives and eventually out of all but the most diseased hearts. The starting point is to make violent acts of hate against our neighbors a federal crime. And we should do it.

Recommendation: Recognize that hate crimes do damage not only to the victims, but to the moral fiber of our nation. They are different from other crimes and they deserve to be treated as such. The new Congress and Administration should pass the revised Hate Crimes Prevention Act without further delay.

Immigration

America has a rich and lengthy history of immigrants who have contributed to every facet of our society. Often in our history, however, immigrants have been scapegoats for problems plaguing America, including crime, low wages, and rising unemployment. We must not fall into the trap of blaming immigrants for all social problems, as some tried to do over the last few years. It is also imperative that while we enforce our immigration laws, we also recognize that every decision we make and every law we pass affects thousands and thousands of individuals, most of whom are working hard for modest wages, and their families who are all too often separated, with all the pain and damage that result.

For example, in 1996, Congress passed legislation to reduce the presence of criminal aliens and ensure that those who should be deported were deported promptly and efficiently. Yet, because this legislation was retroactive, it wreaked havoc on many families – resulting in the deportation of individuals for relatively minor crimes, sometimes years after they had been punished by the criminal justice system and without due process. Editorial pages are replete with example after example—a 19-year-old boy, adopted at birth from Brazil, deported for marijuana possession to a country where he knows no one nor even speaks the language; a married woman with three children who emigrated from Italy when she was young girl, deported for fraud charges resulting from bounced checks. It is time to restore due process and judicial discretion to ensure that unnecessary family tragedies do not continue.

Similarly, in 1996, Congress passed and I signed landmark welfare reform legislation. We needed to change our system of welfare but we did not need to take punitive actions against legal immigrants that had nothing to do with moving people from welfare to work. Over the last four years we have made steady progress to restore benefits to these legal immigrants. For some legal immigrants in the country before enactment of welfare reform, we restored health care and SSI benefits and food stamps. Congress must take the next step and restore these benefits to other needy legal immigrants.

Our immigration system should be based on the principle that all immigrants from all countries should be treated equally under our laws. When Congress enacts legislation to help one group over another similarly situated group, this creates inequities that must be redressed. Since 1997, my Administration has proposed legislation to eliminate disparate treatment under our immigration laws for Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Hondurans, Haitians and Liberians who have fled civil unrest and human rights abuses and are currently living in the United States, working, paying taxes and raising families. I strongly urge the new Congress to pass the bipartisan proposal that will provide these individuals with equal opportunity to regularize their immigration status.

Furthermore, we must balance America's need for foreign workers with protecting American workers. For example, last year Congress passed legislation permitting more visas

for highly skilled foreign temporary workers to meet the needs of the growing high-tech industry. While we support efforts to address these needs, we cannot allow a temporary high-tech worker program to divert us from the more basic obligation to provide training and education for American workers. Similarly, Congress considered legislation to simplify the process for admitting additional temporary farm workers into the country to address the needs of the agricultural industry. Again, while we should make sure that American industry is able to have the workers that it needs, we must not do so at the expense of undermining workplace protections or depressing wages for those in the toughest jobs.

Over the last eight years, working with Congress, we have dedicated over \$4 billion to enhance the ability of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to control illegal immigration and improve its efficiency. But it is clear that this agency needs a major management reorganization. The new Congress and Administration should make this a priority. First, the immigration enforcement and immigration services functions must have separate and clear lines of authority but both must be managed by a single senior executive. That is the only way to balance the competing and complex needs of enforcement and immigration services.

We must also continue to balance enforcement with the need for family unification. At our insistence, Congress reinstated 245(i) for four months allowing families to remain together while the paperwork is processed by the agency. I urge the new Congress to permanently reinstate this provision to support families.

Finally, immigrants, who come here, in search of a better life, can not only realize the limitless possibility and promise of America, but also enrich the rest of us with their unique gifts. I believe we must do more to help these new Americans become successful, responsible participants in American life. To this end, Vice President Gore and I proposed the English language/Civics Initiative. This is an innovative program to help states and communities provide people who possess only limited English proficiency expanded access to high-quality English-language instruction linked to civics and life skills instruction. This is designed to help them better understand and navigate the U.S. government system, the public education system, the workplace, and other key institutions of American life. The 107th Congress should expand this initiative to help more immigrants become full, productive participants in American life.

We must also do more to ensure that students with limited English skills get the extra help they need in order to speak English comfortably and confidently, and that they meet the same high standards expected for all students. Congress must continue to provide the necessary funding and resources to school districts for teaching English. This commitment must extend to making sure teachers have the training they need to teach LEP students. Expansion of the Immigrant Education program would help more than a thousand school districts provide supplemental instructional services to recent immigrant students.

Congress should also seize the opportunity to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, to ensure that all schools and districts are held accountable for

helping LEP students master their academic subjects and learn English. Finally, programs designed to help migrant families face the particularly difficult obstacles to gaining the education and training that will help them improve their standard of living must be expanded.

Over time, America has raised itself up by absorbing those who have come to our shores. There are today perhaps more people here whose parents were not born here than at any point in our history. And today's immigrants are of so many different races, ethnicities and from so many parts of the world that they create a unique set of challenges and opportunities. The time is now, with our great prosperity, to offer the right kind of opportunity to our newest citizens and welcome them into the family that is America.

Recommendation: Restore vital benefits to legal immigrants and do not target legal immigrants unfairly; re-institute fairness and due process in our immigration system; restructure the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS); continue to help immigrants learn English and the duties of citizenship and invest in education and training.

IV. CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

There is perhaps no area today in which perceptions of fairness differ so greatly based on race than in the administration of criminal justice. If you are white, you most likely believe the system is on your side; if you are a minority, you most likely feel the opposite. This is true at all levels of justice – from what happens on the beat to what happens when the sentencing gavel is pounded.

The statistics are cause for concern: For example, in a recent survey, more than 7 out of 10 blacks said they believe that blacks are treated more harshly by the criminal justice system than whites, and more than 4 out of 10 whites agree. Furthermore, of those crime victims who do not report the incident to police, approximately twice as many blacks than whites say they don't report a crime because the police would not care or would be inefficient, ineffective, or biased. No system that is perceived as unfair can have the full trust of all our citizens, even if it is fair. This lack of trust becomes a cycle, separating the community even farther from the police. We cannot turn a blind eye to this breach of trust and confidence at all levels of the system. We must keep working until every citizen believes that justice is truly blind.

In the three decades before the start of the Clinton-Gore Administration, the violent crime rate had skyrocketed by 400 percent. Many thought that rising crime would never reverse. The soaring crime rate took a particularly devastating toll in communities of color. The year I took office, homicide victimization for young black men ages 18-24 years old was at its highest level on record and was over ten times higher than the rate for white men of the same age.

Our Administration took a new approach to fighting crime with innovative policies to help communities reduce crime and restore public safety – by funding 100,000 more

community police for our streets; supporting community policing strategies so police could work closely with residents to develop solutions to local crime problems; imposing tough, targeted penalties for the most violent offenders; pushing common sense measures to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and children; and providing more after school programs to keep youth supervised and out of trouble.

As a result of these and other efforts, the incidence of crime has dropped to new lows. The homicide rate is at its lowest level in 33 years, gun crime has declined by 40 percent, and the overall crime rate has dropped for over 8 straight years – the longest continuous decline on record. Moreover, people of color have in many cases experienced the sharpest decreases in crime victimization. For instance, since 1993, the murder rate for African Americans has dropped 40 percent, compared to 28 percent for whites, and property crime victimization decreased 45 percent for Hispanic households as compared to 37 percent for non-Hispanics. These are remarkable achievements.

Despite recent and substantial decreases in crime across racial lines, persons of color remain significantly more likely than whites to be victims of crime, especially violent crime. Persons of color are also much more likely to live in fear of crime. No American should have to live that way. We must remember that in the poorest, highest crime neighborhoods in this country, the vast majority of people get up every day, go to work, obey the law, pay their taxes, and do the best to raise their kids. More than anywhere else, these communities – which are often communities of color -- want, need, and deserve strong law enforcement to restore order, reduce crime, and help build stronger communities.

However, these same communities often have less trust in law enforcement – limiting its effectiveness where it is most needed. So, while we have attained historic reductions in crime, we must build on our successful strategy and develop additional ways to make every community even safer. And in doing so, we must strengthen trust and confidence law enforcement in the criminal justice system overall.

Community Policing and “Hot Spots”

First and foremost, we must reduce crime and restore order in communities of color where crime and fear of crime are greatest. Every American has the right to live in a safe community, and we should not be able to identify high-crime neighborhoods based on the race of the residents who live there. Community policing should serve as the cornerstone for our efforts. We must continue to add another 50,000 more community police to our nation’s streets and spread the philosophy of community policing which brings local police and residents together in developing ways to best solve and prevent local crime problems and disorder. We should further expand this successful model to other areas of the criminal justice system including prosecution, with new community prosecutors working side-by-side with community police to address quality of life issues and help prevent crime before it starts.

I challenge the Congress and the next Administration to create a crime “hot spots” initiative – to target more resources to communities and neighborhoods that continue to have

high crime rates or emerging crime problems. In crime “hot spots,” federal, state and local law enforcement would work together to identify high-crime locations through technology such as computer mapping. There would also be an increase in policing of high-crime areas, especially during the hours when crime is most likely to occur.

Recommendation: Build on the success of community policing by creating partnerships with local prosecutors. Increase community policing in the disadvantaged areas that need them most, with more resources, including 1,000 community prosecutors and completion of our 50,000 Community Policing Initiative, and police officers targeted to crime “hot spots.”

Gun Safety Legislation

We must also address the problem of guns in the wrong hands – a pervasive problem in many of our high-crime communities. Gun violence has taken a high toll on minority youth; for example, of the ten children killed each day by gun violence nearly 4 are black youth. We know that sensible and strong gun laws can make a difference in saving lives. The Brady Law alone has stopped over 611,000 felons, fugitives, and domestic abusers from buying guns through background checks since I signed it into law in 1993. The next Administration and Congress should take the next step to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and children by passing common sense gun legislation that closes the gun show loophole and requires safety locks for handguns to help prevent child access to guns, and stops the importation of large capacity ammunition clips, which can be used to evade our assault weapons ban. I also call on more gun manufacturers to join us in the fight to protect our children and keep guns out of the wrong hands.

Recommendation: Pass common-sense gun safety legislation to close the gun show loophole, require safety locks to prevent child access to guns, and ban the importation of large capacity ammunition clips.

Ex-Offenders

Another public safety area that must be addressed is the estimated 600,000 ex-offenders who are released from prison and reenter communities each year. Many of these ex-offenders will return to communities of color. We need to maximize opportunities to help keep released offenders on the right track and out of trouble, able to meet their family obligations, and equipped to lead productive lives. We should foster the creation of reentry courts, similar to drug courts, and reentry partnerships, to provide more community and judicial supervision, more probation and parole oversight, drug treatment, job training, and links to community groups such as faith-based and fatherhood organizations. Our Administration secured \$95 million in the most recent budget to get this initiative started. I challenge the Congress and the next Administration to continue this important effort and work with state and local governments to meet this growing public safety challenge.

Recommendation: Expand drug testing and treatment to make sure that ex-offenders

leave the criminal justice system drug-free. Expand community supervision and job training so they can become productive citizens who never return to a life of crime or prison.

Crime Prevention

And finally, we must prevent young people from becoming involved in crime and the criminal justice system in the first place. That means giving our youth alternatives to the streets, where they are often most at-risk for being involved in, or falling prey to gangs, drugs and crime. We must continue to increase the number of after school programs that help to provide adult supervision and activities for young people during the afternoon and early evening hours when juvenile crime peaks. And we must make sure that they have strong adult supervision, as well as role models and mentors.

As we work to further reduce crime across America, we also must strive to ensure fairness in the criminal justice system so that it has the complete confidence of all of our nation's citizens. To do this, we must address important issues underlying the present racial gap in trust and confidence in our criminal justice system, including racial profiling, sentencing policy, and the death penalty.

Recommendation: Help young people avoid crime by giving them something to say yes to, by dramatically expanding after-school programs and increasing support for mentoring, afterschool programs, adult supervision, and role models.

Racial Profiling

We know that in order for police to be truly effective in their work, they must have the trust and cooperation of the residents in their community. Yet, in many communities, especially minority communities, there remains a disturbing lack of trust in law enforcement among residents. Among the reasons for this distrust are reports of police misconduct such as racial profiling. The vast majority of law enforcement officers in this nation are dedicated public servants of great courage and high moral character who deserve the respect of citizens of all races. However, we cannot tolerate officers who mistreat law-abiding individuals and who bring their own racial bias to the job. Racial profiling is the opposite of good police work where actions are based on hard facts, not stereotypes. Simply stated, no person should be targeted by law enforcement because of the color of his or her skin. We must stop the morally indefensible and deeply corrosive practice of racial profiling. While some remedies are already available, we know we must do more. We know it is wrong. And it should be illegal, everywhere.

Recent polls show that while many individuals believe that law enforcement engages in racial profiling, there is very little data on traffic stops to determine where and when it is occurring. That is why I ordered federal law enforcement agencies to begin to collect data on the race, ethnicity and gender of individuals subject to certain stops and searches. Federal law enforcement should make such data collection permanent and expand it to include more sites

so we can identify problem areas and take concrete steps to eliminate racial profiling anywhere it exists. In addition, I challenge state and local law enforcement to take similar action to collect data. The federal government can help by providing funding and technical assistance to help them in their efforts. We should also provide for more police integrity training and resources to promote local dialogue to strengthen trust between police and the residents they serve.

But I believe we should go a step further. Even with many of these remedies already in place, we know that racial profiling continues to occur. We must find a way to construct and pass a national law banning racial profiling so that every citizen is assured that no police department and no community will tolerate this terrible practice.

Recommendation: End the intolerable practice of racial profiling by continuing efforts to document extent of problem and passing a national law banning the practice of racial profiling.

Mandatory Minimum Sentencing

We must re-examine our national sentencing policies, focusing particularly on mandatory minimum sentences for non-violent offenders. With the prison and jail population at roughly two million, it is time to take a hard look at who we are sending to prison – and whether our sentencing policies make sense given current circumstances. Over the long term, we should not be satisfied when so many Americans, especially so many people of color, are behind bars for so long for nonviolent crimes, with so little hope of putting their lives back together when they get out. We must demand a system that actually works to reduce criminality and recidivism.

One way to do this is to use the power of the criminal justice system to help offenders to kick their drug habits. As we have seen, addiction plays a key role as to why many people end up in prison to begin with: more than two-thirds of all state prisoners report past drug use, nearly one in five committed their crime to get money to buy drugs, and one-third were under the influence of drugs at the time of their offense. In order to help break this cycle of drugs and crime, we should implement a rigorous course of drug testing and treatment for federal and state prisoners, probationers and parolees. Offenders should be required to be drug-free when they leave prison and stay free of drugs in order keep their freedom. In addition, we should further spread alternatives to incarceration for nonviolent drug offenders, such as drug courts. Drug courts, which employ judicial supervision, escalating sanctions, and frequent drug testing and treatment in lieu of incarceration have been shown to significantly reduce recidivism and future drug use. There were about a dozen drug courts in operation eight years ago; today there are more than 400.

Sentences must be firm, but they must also be fair and fit the crime. In the 1980's, mandatory minimum sentences were adopted to attack the horrible problem of crack cocaine and other drugs that were ravaging our cities. While mandatory minimums have been effective in removing hardened criminals from the streets, they have also swept in many lower

level offenders, for whom better alternatives may exist, as discussed above.

One penalty I believe should be changed immediately is the 1986 federal law that creates a 100-to-1 ratio between crack and powder cocaine sentencing policies. This substantial disparity has led to a perception of racial injustice and inconsistency in the federal criminal justice system. Republican and Democratic Members of Congress alike have called for a repeal of this inequitable policy. Congress should revise the law to shrink the disparity to 10-to-1; specifically, the amount of powder cocaine required to trigger a five-year mandatory sentence should be reduced from 500 to 250 grams, while the amount of crack cocaine required for the same sentence should increase from 5 grams to 25 grams. This difference would continue to reflect the greater addictive power of crack cocaine, the greater violence associated with crack cocaine trafficking, and the importance of targeting mid- and higher level traffickers instead of low level drug offenders.

At the same time, I encourage states with mandatory minimum drug sentences to adopt a “safety valve” similar to the provision I signed into law in the 1994 Crime Act. The federal “safety valve” allows non-violent drug offenders with no more than a minor criminal record to be exempt from the federal mandatory minimum sentences.

Recommendation: Re-examine federal sentencing guidelines, particularly mandatory minimums for non-violent offenders. Pass legislation to shrink the disparity between crack and powder cocaine sentencing from the current 100-to-1 to 10-to-1.

The Death Penalty

Finally, I believe we bear a special obligation to do everything we can to ensure that the death penalty is administered fairly. Justice Department studies have found that minorities are over-represented as both victims and defendants in both the federal and state death penalty systems. While this does not necessarily show that these systems are fundamentally broken or that they discriminate, this information raises profoundly disturbing questions. Congress can take an important step forward by passing legislation like that introduced by Senator Leahy, which provides greater access to post-conviction DNA testing as well as increased access to competent counsel for defendants in capital cases. These are important steps toward guaranteeing a system that is fair and just in its results and in its process – so we are absolutely sure the system does not punish the innocent and that the innocent are not convicted in the first place.

Recommendation: Pass and sign legislation to provide greater access to post-conviction DNA testing and increased access to competent counsel for defendants in capital cases.

V. ELIMINATING RACIAL AND ETHNIC HEALTH DISPARITIES

Nowhere are the divisions of race and ethnicity more sharply drawn than in the health of our people. Despite notable progress in the overall health of the nation, there are continuing disparities in the burden of illness and death experienced by African Americans,

Hispanics, American Indians and Alaska Natives, and Pacific Islanders, compared to the U.S. population as a whole. African Americans are 40 percent more likely to die from heart disease than whites. Hispanic Americans have two to three times the rate of stomach cancer. Native Americans have the highest risk for diabetes of any population in the country -- three times the rate of whites. Asian Americans are as much as five times more likely to die from liver cancer associated with hepatitis. We do not know all the reasons for these disturbing gaps. But we do know that overall these groups are less likely to be immunized against disease, less likely to be routinely tested for cancer, and less likely to get regular checkups. No matter what the reason, racial and ethnic disparities in health are unacceptable in a country that values equality and equal opportunity for all. Access to the best health care America has to offer is a new civil right for the 21st century.

That is why we have set a national goal to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities in six key areas by the year 2010: infant mortality; diabetes; cancer; heart disease; HIV/AIDS; and immunizations. To reach this goal, my Administration launched a major preventive health outreach campaign focusing on diseases disproportionately affecting racial and ethnic minorities. We also initiated a public-private collaboration to address racial and ethnic health disparities; and secured approximately \$40 million in 2000 and 2001 for programs to research the causes and devise solutions for these disparities.

In 1999, the Administration launched a new initiative to address HIV/AIDS in minority communities, which received \$167 million in funds this year. Finally, in 2001, NIH will establish the Center for Research on Minority Health and Health Disparities, which will coordinate the over \$1 billion NIH invests annually in minority health and health disparities research.

America has the best health care system in the world. But we can't take full pride in it until every American has an equal chance to benefit from its ever-expanding potential. That is why achieving our goal of eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in health by the year 2010 must be a priority of the new Congress and new Administration.

Recommendation: Eliminate key racial and ethnic disparities in health by 2010, by expanding investment in research into such disparities, in HIV/AIDS prevention, and in the treatment of diseases that disproportionately harm people of color.

VI. VOTING REFORM

If ever there was a doubt about the importance of exercising the most fundamental right of citizenship, it was clearly answered by the first presidential election of the 21st century. No American will ever again be able to seriously say, "My vote doesn't count." That election also revealed serious flaws in the mechanics of voting, and brought up disturbing allegations of voter intimidation that we thought were relics of the past. Too many people felt that the votes they cast were not counted and some felt that there were organized efforts to keep them from the polls. Both of these allegations must be fully investigated. But, whatever the outcome, we can and must take aggressive steps to improve voter turnout, and modernize and

restore confidence in our voting system.

While voting is the sacred right and responsibility of every American, it carries even greater weight for those who have fought so long and hard for civil rights and equal justice in America. In many ways the struggle for civil rights and racial progress in America is analogous to the struggle for voting rights. And this struggle, too, has not been all black and white.

The Fifteenth Amendment declared “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.” But new barriers, like poll taxes and literacy tests, were erected to prevent blacks and poor whites from casting their ballots. It was not until that historic confrontation on Selma’s Edmund Pettus Bridge and the monumental Selma to Montgomery March that the Voting Rights Act of 1965, outlawing these racist impediments, was passed. Full voting rights for women were not secured until the passage of the 19th amendment in 1919. It wasn’t until 1924, with the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act, that Native Americans won the right to vote. It took until 1952 for the Walter-McCarran Act to extend full citizenship and voting rights to Asian immigrants. And only after the elimination of English-only elections through the passage of the Voting Rights Act Amendments of 1975, did the final barriers to Hispanic voting rights fall.

Consider the fact that while our Declaration of Independence and Constitution proclaimed liberty and justice for all, originally this only applied to property-owning white males. Barbara Jordan once put it in stark terms, when she said of the Preamble to the Constitution, “We the People. It is a very eloquent beginning. But when the document was completed on the 17th of September in 1787, I was not included in that *We the People.*” America’s on-going efforts to right those wrongs is marked by the blood, sweat and tears of scores of voting rights warriors — from Frederick Douglas, Sojourner Truth and Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Martin Luther King, Willie Velasquez and Viola Liuzzo. Ms. Liuzzo was one of a number of white freedom riders who lost their lives at the hands of bigots while working with blacks in the south for equal voting rights in the 1960s.

The right to vote is not only a sacred testament to the struggles of the past. It is an indispensable weapon in our current arsenal of efforts to empower those who have traditionally been left out, particularly people of color. So much progress—from the passage of civil rights laws to the increase in the numbers of minorities holding elected office—is the direct result of citizens exercising their right to vote. And so many of the needed changes in public policy, including those I have outlined in this Message to Congress, require active support by voters. Otherwise little will change. But, today, too many of us take our right to vote for granted. In recent presidential elections in France, for example, nearly 85 percent of the eligible voters went to the polls on election day. In America, there aren’t more than two states that ever have an 80 percent turnout, even during a presidential election when interest runs very high.

So, we must do more to ensure that more people vote and that every vote is counted. In an effort to restore confidence in our democracy, I recommend that the next President

appoint a nonpartisan Presidential Commission on Electoral Reform. The Commission should be headed by distinguished citizens who can put country ahead of party, such as former Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter. The Commission should gather the facts and determine the causes of voting disparities in every state, including disparities of race, class, ethnicity, and geography. The Commission should make recommendations to Congress about how to achieve a fair, inclusive, and uniform system of voting in national elections -- including how to modernize voting technologies, establish uniform voting standards, prevent voter suppression and intimidation, and increase voter participation.

I believe such a Commission should also examine two other issues that haven't received as much attention, but could go a long way toward ensuring every American citizen the right to vote and the chance to exercise that right. First, we should declare election day a national holiday so that no one has to choose between their responsibilities at work and their responsibilities as a citizen. In other countries that do this, voter participation dwarfs ours, and the most fundamental act of democracy gets the attention it deserves. Second, we should give back the right to vote to those who have repaid their debt to society. Over the next decade, millions of Americans in the criminal justice system will serve out their sentences and re-enter society. These Americans are disproportionately poor and minority. We should be doing everything we can to make sure that they re-enter society as responsible citizens. That means making sure that those who leave the criminal justice system leave it drug-free, and get the training they need to hold down a job and do right by their communities and their families. But if we want them to live right and do right, we should give them the chance to earn back their rights -- above all, the right to vote.

Recommendation: Appoint a non-partisan Presidential Commission on election reform to ensure a fair, inclusive and uniform system of voting standards, prevent voter suppression and intimidation and increase voter participation. Declare election day a national holiday. Give ex-offenders who have repaid their debt to society the chance to earn back the right to vote.

VII. CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY: BUILDING ONE AMERICA IS THE WORK OF EVERY AMERICAN

When violence and strife exploded in Los Angeles following the Rodney King verdict, countless residents and community leaders responded with inspiring efforts to build bridges that would not only heal wounds but create opportunity. When more than 190 black churches, white churches, synagogues, and mosques were burned or desecrated during 1995-1996, we witnessed an awe-inspiring outpouring of concern and assistance across all lines of race and faith and party. When Jasper, Texas, was shaken to its core by a hideous hate crime, residents and leaders worked tirelessly to hold together, and in doing so, taught us all that some evils can be conquered with understanding. What all these examples prove is that when communities are faced with a crisis, our better angels soar to the challenge. In those moments, America ceases to be a nation of people divided into categories of color. America at its best is people of all colors united for the common good.

As in so many other areas, racial reconciliation and building opportunity simply won't happen unless there is committed engagement by people in communities and institutions throughout the nation. But in the absence of a crisis, we may be tempted to leave this work to national leaders, such as politicians, clergy, business executives or the heads of nonprofit organizations. Such leaders can perhaps help set a tone, point out examples, offer support, and provide critical seed resources. But it takes all of us working together to prevent the kind of devastating crisis that pulls us together only after much pain and suffering. At the end of the day, we will make the most fundamental kind of progress when we work with our neighbors for change.

To help spur this work, I hope that in the coming years leaders of goodwill in individual communities will rededicate themselves to working together across racial and ethnic lines in community partnerships designed to help us build a more perfect union. In many areas, there may already be a vesting place, such as an active ecumenical council of faith leaders, or a human rights commission with broad-based public legitimacy. In other places, convening a group of leaders might require a special initiative by a mayor, a tribal leader, a newspaper publisher, an archbishop, a leading employer or the board of a civic organization.

Much of that work is already underway across America. And I am proud that my White House Office on One America is doing its part. In February, 1999, I launched the first-ever White House office specifically charged with keeping the nation focused on closing opportunity gaps and fostering racial reconciliation. Since its inception, the office has been instrumental in several efforts including the formation of "Lawyers for One America" – a group of attorneys who have committed to change the racial justice landscape through greater diversity within the legal profession and increased pro bono service.

The One America Office also convened corporate leaders at the White House, who

pledged a renewed commitment to diversity in their workplaces and stronger efforts to close opportunity gaps. And the One America Office brought a broad cross-section of religious leaders to the White House to pledge that the faith community would focus more of its efforts on expanding diversity, ending racism and promoting racial reconciliation.

The White House Office on One America has helped focus and coordinate efforts throughout my Administration to build One America. It is my sincere hope that the next Administration will maintain this office and its noble purpose.

Our national service program, Americorps, has also played an important role, bringing together young people of all races and walks of life to work in all kinds of communities with all kinds of people. Since 1994, 150,000 young people have served as Americorps volunteers, meeting community challenges and moving us closer to One America. Last year, 49 of the nation's 50 governors – including President-elect Bush – urged Congress to reauthorize the National and Community Service and Trust Act. I hope Congress will answer their call, and keep Americorps members on the job.

Building One America requires a new kind of leadership. Instead of looking outward for signs of hope, we must first look in the mirror and know that change is our responsibility. Rooted in the heart, that wisdom has the power to connect us in ways that nourish our dreams for a future that is better than our past. Whether you are able to give guidance to a single child or lead a national movement for justice, it all begins with a personal commitment to racial reconciliation. As Dr. King once said, “No social movement rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.”

Recommendation: Maintain the White House Office on One America, and reauthorize the National and Community Service Trust Act. Every American should become engaged in the work of expanding opportunity for all and building One America.

Questions and Answers January 12, 2001

Mandatory Minimum Sentences

Q: The President has signed into law many new mandatory minimum sentences, including for drug offenses. Isn't it hypocritical for him to say that they should be re-examined now that he's leaving?

A: Not at all. Over the last eight years, we have made tremendous progress in reducing violent crime and drug crime in America. Crime rates are the lowest they have been in a generation. Tough sentences for the most violent offenders have played a part in helping to reduce crime, along with more police for our streets, and smarter crime prevention. Having said that, the President believes that with about two million Americans in jail or in prison, we should take a hard look at who we are sending to prison and whether our sentencing policies make sense under the current circumstances. In particular, we should re-examine federal sentencing guidelines for non-violent offenders. The President believes that Americans should not be satisfied with a system that incarcerates so many of its people – and we should demand that our system actually works to reduce criminality and recidivism. That is why, consistent with his record for years, he also supports system-wide drug testing and treatment for offenders as well as alternatives to incarceration for non-violent offenders like drug courts. He also repeats his call for legislation to shrink the sentencing disparity for crack and powder cocaine trafficking-- perhaps the most egregious of all the mandatory minimum sentences on the books.

Racial Profiling

Q: If the President supports the idea of legislation to ban racial profiling, then why didn't he ban it for federal law enforcement through an Executive Order?

A: The President has spoken out repeatedly and forcefully against racial profiling and he has recognized that in this highly charged issue, it is crucial to get the hard facts. That is why he signed a Presidential directive in June 1999 to federal law enforcement to gather data on the race, ethnicity and gender of individuals subject to certain stops and searches by law enforcement – to help us determine where and when racial profiling occurs. This data is currently being collected and evaluated by the federal agencies. Once it is fully analyzed, this data will arm us with the facts we need to end this illegitimate practice in the most thorough and effective manner possible.

Q: What is the status of your data collection effort? Why don't you have any data yet to release?

*The Dept of Justice,
Treasury &
Interior*

A: Pursuant to the President's directive, submitted their data collection plans and began collecting the data at the end of 1999 and the start of 2000. The data is currently being collected and is under evaluation by the agencies. We expect to receive interim reports shortly from the agencies on their efforts. While we expect that the reports will provide information on how the agencies have refined or expanded their data collection, we do not expect them to provide information on all the data they have collected since the agencies are still working to complete their analyses.

[NB: We expect to receive the interim reports by the middle of next week from DOJ and Treasury. While the reports will have info on the overall number of stops and searches they collected data on, they will not have any hard data on race/ethnicity. The agencies assert that they need more resources to determine the baselines necessary to provide any meaningful analysis of the data.]

Voting Rights for Ex-Offenders

Q: Why does the President want to restore voting rights for ex-offenders?

A: The President thinks that those who have paid their debt to society should have a chance to earn back the right to vote, and we call on the Commission to make recommendations on a fair way for all states to do that.

Crime "Hot Spots" Initiative

Q: The President's crime "hot spots" proposal sounds like it could just be a lot more police arresting and harassing residents. Isn't that the type of thing that many minority communities complain about?

A: The President strongly believes that all Americans deserve to live in safe communities. And while we have made great strides in reducing crime in ~~reducing crime~~ across the board, the President believes that we must continue to work to reduce crime and restore order in communities of color where crime and fear of crime are greatest. The "hot spots" initiative would help to put more resources in the disadvantaged communities where they are most needed. The President also recognizes that increased law enforcement efforts must be done in the right way, and that communities must be engaged in the development and implementation of any new public safety effort. That is why the "hot spots" idea should be built upon the principles of community policing and should engage community residents in helping to identify and shut down local crime "hot spots."

collected and is under evaluation by the agencies. We expect to receive interim reports shortly from the agencies on their efforts. While we expect that the reports will provide information on how the agencies have refined or expanded their data collection, we do not expect them to provide information on all the data they have collected since the agencies are still working to complete their analyses.

[NB: We expect to receive the interim reports by the middle of next week from DOJ and Treasury. While the reports will have info on the overall number of stops and searches they collected data on, they will not have any hard data on race/ethnicity. The agencies assert that they need more resources to determine the baselines necessary to provide any meaningful analysis of the data.]

Voting Rights for Ex-Offenders

Q: Why does the President want to restore voting rights for ex-offenders?

A: The President thinks that those who have paid their debt to society should have a chance to earn back the right to vote, and we call on the Commission to make recommendations on a fair way for all states to do that.

Crime “Hot Spots” Initiative

Q: The President’s crime “hot spots” proposal sounds like it could just be a lot more police arresting and harassing residents. Isn’t that the type of thing that many minority communities complain about?

A: The President strongly believes that all Americans deserve to live in safe communities. And while we have made great strides in reducing crime in reducing crime across the board, the President believes that we must continue to work to reduce crime and restore order in communities of color where crime and fear of crime are greatest. The “hot spots” initiative would help to put more resources in the disadvantaged communities where they are most needed. The President also recognizes that increased law enforcement efforts must be done in the right way, and that communities must be engaged in the development and implementation of any new public safety effort. That is why the “hot spots” idea should be built upon the principles of community policing and should engage community residents in helping to identify and shut down local crime “hot spots.”



Anna Richter


01/12/2001 06:21:19 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Karin Kullman/OPD/EOP@EOP

cc:

bcc:

Subject: Re: 

Q: Why is the President sending this message and not producing the Race Book?

A: As the President has said before, he will have much more to say over the course of his post-presidency work on the subject of race. Because he has been working around-the-clock to get as much done for the American people as he can, he was not able to write an entire book on the matter. However, he did want to leave Congress and the next Administration something that would be of use to the country.

Q: One of the recommendations in the President's message is that the next President should appoint a non-partisan Presidential Commission on Electoral Reform. What is this idea behind this commission and why is the President calling for it 5 days before the next President is inaugurated?

A: If ever there was a doubt about the importance of exercising the most fundamental right of citizenship, it was answered in the last Presidential election. We can and must take aggressive efforts to modernize and restore confidence in the voting system and improve voter turnout. This is an issue that is important without regard to party, and one of important consequence for building One America.

The recommendation proposes that the Commission should be headed by former Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter, and should gather the facts and determine the causes of voting disparities in every state, including disparities in race, class, ethnicity and geography. The Commission should also take such information and make recommendations to the Congress as to how to achieve a fair, inclusive, and uniform system in national elections.

In order to help improve voter turnout, the President recommends that the Commission also declare election day an national holiday so American citizens do not have to choose between their duties ~~at~~ at work and as a citizen. He also suggests returning the right to vote to citizens who have repaid their debt and are re-entering society from the criminal justice system.

Q: Have you asked Presidents Ford and Carter to head the Commission?

A: We believe that Presidents Ford and Carter are distinguished Americans who will be able to put country before party, but it is up to the next President and Administration to choose the members of the Commission.

Q: Why make Election Day a holiday?

A: This practice is done in other countries, and they have much higher voter participation. We leave all questions regarding the nature of the holiday to the Commission.

Q: What about the idea of restoring voting rights of ex-offenders?

A: The President thinks that those who have paid their debt to society should have a chance to earn back the right to vote, and we call on the Commission to make recommendations on a fair way for all states to do that.

Karin Kullman



Karin Kullman

01/12/2001 05:04:17 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Anna Richter/OPD/EOP@EOP

cc:

Subject:

Q: Why is the President sending this message, and producing the Race Book?

A: As the President has said before, he will have much more to say over the course of his post-presidency life on the subject of race. Because he has been working round-the-clock to get as much done for the American people as he can, he was not able to write an entire book on the matter. However, he did want to leave Congress and the next Administration something that would be of use to the country.

Q: Why is the President calling for a bipartisan commission 5 days before the next President is inaugurated?

A: Restoring confidence in the voting system is an important issue without regard to party, and one of important consequence for building One America.

Q: Have you asked Presidents Ford and Carter to head the Commission?

A: We believe that Presidents Ford and Carter are distinguished Americans who will be able to put country before party, but it is up to the next President and Administration to choose the members of the Commission.

Q: Why make Election Day a holiday?

A: This practice is done in other countries, and they have much higher voter participation. We leave all questions regarding the nature of the holiday to the Commission.

Q: What about the idea of restoring voting rights of ex-offenders?

A: The President thinks that those who have paid their debt to society should have a chance to earn back the right to vote, and we call on the Commission to make recommendations on a fair way for all states to do that.

January 8, 2001

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: TERRY EDMONDS

THROUGH: JOHN PODESTA

SUBJECT: DRAFT OF PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE TO CONGRESS ON RACE

Attached is a first draft of your Message to Congress on Race. It reflects the discussion you had with me, John and Bruce last week. As we discussed, the issues covered are: New Markets, fatherhood, Native Americans, education, civil rights enforcement, hate crimes, immigration, criminal justice reform (ex-offenders, mandatory minimums, racial profiling, death penalty), eliminating health disparities, voting reform and civic responsibility in the work of building One America.

With Bruce's indispensable help, and further consultation with John and Mark Penn we have prepared this draft for your review in hopes that we can produce and release a final document within the next few days.

Much of this document is based on the work that Chris Edley and I did last year, but it includes new issues and recommendations in areas that are of particular interest to you.

Upon your review and input, we will finalize this message and commence its rollout to coincide with Martin Luther King's birthday.

Thank you.

Draft 1/8/01 11:00 pm
Terry Edmonds

**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
MESSAGE TO CONGRESS
THE UNFINISHED WORK OF BUILDING ONE AMERICA
January 15, 2001**

I hereby submit this message to the 107th Congress of the United States on the State of Race Relations in America. In it, I present my personal assessment of the current national mood concerning race relations and issue a set of concrete challenges that form what I call the unfinished business of building One America. This report is an outgrowth of my Administration's consistent emphasis on racial reconciliation, most clearly embodied in my Initiative on Race and our White House Office on One America. But it also stems from my own personal commitment to racial harmony that has its roots in the lessons and experiences of my childhood in the racially segregated south. I dedicate this report to countless civil rights champions of all colors who have struggled since the time of Frederick Douglas for an America free from the bondage of racial injustice.

Introduction

After eight years of service as President of the United States, I will relinquish that title on January 20, 2001, when George W. Bush takes the oath of office. But as a citizen, I will never abandon my commitment to my country or the ideals that propelled me into public service more than two decades ago. Foremost among those ideals is my commitment to racial reconciliation. It began for me with the crisis at Little Rock in 1957. I was only 11 years old at the time. Like most southerners then, I never attended school with a person of another race until I went to college. Though discrimination had always gnawed at me, it was the courage and sacrifice of those nine black children who endured constant attacks, both physical and emotional, to integrate Little Rock's Central High School, that made racial equality a driving commitment in my life. I came of age at the height of the civil rights struggles of the sixties: the 1962 March on Washington, the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. I vividly remember the assassinations of Martin Luther King, John F. Kennedy and Bobby Kennedy. Like any American who grew up in that era, my life was shaped by those triumphs and tragedies. And ever since that time, I have been inspired to join with others to carry on the fight for racial and ethnic justice.

As President that has meant building social and economic bridges strong enough for all of us to walk across. The overriding goal of my life in public service and as President is to ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to make the most of their God-given potential. That means equal opportunity for all. And it means finding ways to celebrate our great diversity while uniting around our common needs, concerns and values. In a nation where soon the only majority will be "American," I believe we need to talk about race in a new way – not just in terms of black and white. But in terms that recognize the essential worth and dignity of every human being regardless of color, accent or ethnicity. That is not to ignore the fact that racial

tensions still exist in America. But, if we are ever going to overcome them, we must begin to focus more on the things that unite us than on those that divide us. Let's start with the remarkable fact that we are recognized around the globe as the most successful multi racial democracy in history, a model of peaceful co-existence in a world rent by ethnic, racial and religious conflict. With the current explosion of diversity in America, that image of ourselves is being tested as never before.

Fifty years ago, whites made up 90 percent of our population and the Census Bureau used only three major categories to describe us: white, Negro, and "other." Those distinctions were often reduced to just white and non-white. Since then, there has been a rapid growth in our Asian American, Hispanic, and American Indian populations. Hispanics, for example have grown from a population of just 7 million in 1960 to more than 25 million today. The Asian Pacific American population has skyrocketed as well – from 0.7% of the total U.S. population in 1970 to 2.9% in 1990.

The fact is, America is demographically undergoing one of the great transformations in our history. We are a changing people. Today, nearly one in ten people in the United States were born in another country and one in five schoolchildren are from immigrant families. Today, there is no majority race in Hawaii or Houston or New York City. In nine of our ten largest public school systems, over 75 percent of the students are minorities. In a little more than 50 years there will be no majority race in America.

Indeed, this unprecedented infusion of diversity brings with it a complex and sometimes controversial set of issues. Who, for example, decides who is white and who is a person of color? What will the terms "majority" and "minority" mean when there is no majority race in America? And perhaps, most importantly, will the black-white schism that has so defined racial struggle in America morph into new minority versus minority divisions or can we build new coalitions for social change and equal opportunity across all racial lines?

As our nation grows more diverse and the world grows more interdependent, our diversity will either be the great problem or the great promise of the 21st century. That is why an honest discussion and an even more earnest effort at racial reconciliation is so important now.

While this report is not intended to grapple with the full panoply of psychological, institutional and historical underpinnings of the racial divide in America, there are a number of concrete steps we can take to equalize opportunity, maximize the great potential of our growing diversity, and accelerate our journey to building the One America of our dreams. I will offer recommendations in seven broad areas of unfinished business: **Economic and Social Progress, Education, Civil Rights Enforcement, Criminal Justice Reform, Eliminating Health Disparities, Election Reform and Civic Responsibility.** I offer these recommendations in the hope that they will be helpful, not only to the new administration, but to all of us as we continue the work of healing the racial wounds of the past and pointing the way to a future of greater opportunity for all.

Since our founding, we have made much progress in weaving together the disparate strands of our diversity into a coat of many colors. We are a more prosperous, more secure and

more united nation. But our work is not yet done. We must keep working to connect the threads and perfect the fabric of One America.

I. **ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROGRESS**

New Markets – Ensuring that the Benefits of Our Strong Economy Reach All

By any measure, America has prospered, both economically and socially over the last eight years. We are now experiencing the longest economic expansion in history. We have a balanced budget. We have turned decades of deficits into the biggest back-to-back surpluses in history. And we have achieved what many people once thought impossible – we are paying down our national debt. In fact, we are well on our way to making America debt free by the year 2010 – the first time this has happened since Andrew Jackson was President in 1835.

The rising tide of our strong economy is lifting all boats. Between 1980 and 1992 the bottom 60 percent of Americans saw little, if any, increase in income. Unemployment for African Americans and Hispanics reached record highs and the poverty rate for African Americans remained at or above 30 percent.

Today, for the first time in decades, wages are rising at all income levels. The unemployment rate for African Americans fell from 14.2 percent in 1992 to 7.3 percent today. The drop in unemployment among Hispanics has been just as dramatic – from 11.8 percent in 1992 to 5.0 percent today. We have the lowest child poverty in 20 years, the lowest poverty rate for single mothers ever recorded. The highest homeownership on record. Record numbers of Americans have left welfare for work, and those still on welfare are five times more likely to be working than eight years ago. And the number of families who own stock has grown by 40 percent.

But America is not just better off, we are a better people – more hopeful, more secure, more free, and more united than ever before in our history. We have worked to increase opportunity with a greater commitment to Head Start and secondary education, and by expanding access to college and job training, expanding loans to minority small businesses and launching efforts to close the digital divide and open new markets, bringing jobs and businesses to underserved communities.

There is also a rising tide of shared responsibility across the land. Crime is at a 25-year low. Teen pregnancy is down. Our environment is cleaner and more secure. Citizens are reclaiming control of their families and neighborhoods and we are seeing the re-emergence of our oldest and most basic values – opportunity for all, responsibility from all in a community of all Americans.

But despite all this progress, there remain pockets of poverty in America where the light of our glowing prosperity still does not shine. In December of 1997, I paid a visit to an area of the South Bronx that had once been close to the economic equivalent of an impoverished developing country. Too many of the people living there were under-employed and under-housed and the financial community had traditionally under-invested in them. When President

Reagan visited the area in the 1980s, he compared it to London in the Blitz. For many it seemed like a community beyond hope or repair.

The transformation I saw three years later was remarkable. That South Bronx neighborhood had gone from decay and chaos to development and pride; from a fragmented collection of individuals struggling to survive to a cohesive community of citizens, working to build a better life for everyone. It was the kind of meeting that made me proud to be President and even prouder to be an American.

How did it happen? The people of the South Bronx simply refused to accept the conventional wisdom about the poor, and they worked hard to create economic opportunity, fueled by partnerships between the public and private sectors. They began by asking the right questions: “Why shouldn’t I be able to work in my hometown, or have a transportation system that will get me to good jobs? Why shouldn’t people here be able to get decent housing? Why shouldn’t our children be able to walk the streets here? Why shouldn’t we have decent schools here, and grocery stores and banks?” Over time, they got-- and created -- the right answers. Their story demonstrates something I have always believed in my heart. Most Americans—rich, poor or middle class—welcome the opportunity to work hard and make the most of their lives.

That determined spirit is exactly what I saw when I traveled across America to shine a spotlight on places still untouched by our nation’s growing prosperity. And I am pleased to say that I was joined by Speaker Hastert and a bipartisan group of political and business leaders who share my view that every American in every community has a stake in the prosperity all of us have worked so hard to build.

We began our New Markets tour in July of 1999, during four days of one of the hottest summers of the decade. I went to places that have been too long forgotten and too long left behind as our economy surges forward: Hazard, Kentucky, in the heart of Appalachia; the city of Clarksdale, in the Mississippi Delta; the city of East St. Louis, where poverty is three times the national average; South Dakota’s Pine Ridge Reservation, where unemployment is nearly 75 percent; the neighborhood of South Phoenix, Arizona where unemployment is more than twice the national average; and the Watts section of Los Angeles, an area that for decades has been a symbol of urban neglect and isolation in a nation of plenty.

Yes, we did see poverty, but it may surprise you to know that we saw an awful lot of promise too. I went to these places to promote our New Markets Initiative – a strategy that builds on our successful empowerment agenda. It is designed to create the conditions for economic success in distressed communities by leveraging \$15 billion in new investment in urban and rural areas. It was important that business leaders joined us at every stop so that they could see for themselves what they had been missing. I wanted them to see the enormous opportunities in America’s new markets. As Robert Kennedy said in 1967, “We must turn the power and resources of our private enterprise system to the underdeveloped nations within our midst.” We need to unleash the power of mainstream financial markets linked to effective community-based partners so that people in distressed communities can have access to what I call the tools of opportunity—these include access to credit, capital and jobs. This is a vital part of an

empowerment agenda that must also include a raise in the minimum wage, providing child care and health care so that parents can succeed at home and at work. And equal pay for equal work.

Hard-pressed communities cannot be expected to lift themselves up on their own. In addition to their own sweat equity, they need and deserve help. That is why we have worked so hard to put in place an empowerment agenda from a number of sources, including local and federal programs, financial institutions, and technical assistance providers. Without a critical level of credit and financing, however, all their efforts will be in vain.

I am pleased that the Congress put partisanship aside to pass our New Markets initiative last month. But that is only one part of an effective empowerment agenda. We must also raise the minimum wage, provide child care and health care so parents can succeed at home and at work, and make sure women receive equal pay for equal work. If we commit ourselves to that agenda, we can ensure that we leave no one behind as we move into the 21st century.

Recommendation: Continue to build on the success of New Markets and pass an empowerment agenda that includes an increase in the minimum wage, more child care and health care for working parents and equal pay for equal work for women.

Responsible Fatherhood

But economic empowerment alone is not enough to build strong communities. The most basic building block of strong communities is strong families. Every child deserves the love and support of both parents. Still, nearly one in three American children grows up without a father. These children are five times more likely to live in poverty than children with both parents at home. Clearly, demanding and supporting responsible fatherhood is critical to lifting all children out of poverty and is an important component of welfare reform.

Throughout our Administration, Vice President Gore and I have encouraged fathers to take an active and responsible role in their children's lives. We worked hard to ensure that absent parents provide both financial and emotional support for their children. Tough new child support measures promoted by our Administration contributed to doubling child support collections since 1992, while the number of fathers taking responsibility for their children by establishing paternity tripled. Many fathers want to do right by their children, but need help to do it. The Welfare-to-Work program that we fought for in 1997 provided a major new funding source to help low-income noncustodial parents (mainly fathers) work and support their children, and the FY 2001 budget will give state, local, tribal, and community- and faith-based grantees an additional two years to spend existing funds. We provided communities and families with new tools to increase fathers' involvement in their children's learning. And, teen pregnancy and birth rates have declined to the lowest levels on record.

My FY 2001 budget proposed several new initiatives to ensure that noncustodial parents who can afford to pay child support do, to ensure that more of the child support paid goes directly to families, and to help more "deadbroke" fathers go to work. My Administration worked closely with Congress to seek enactment of the Child Support Distribution Act of 2000, which included many elements of our proposals for child support reforms and responsible

fatherhood initiatives; unfortunately, the 106th Congress failed to pass this legislation, despite strong bi-partisan support. I urge the new Congress to pass a bipartisan fatherhood bill to help more fathers live up to their responsibilities and to strengthen families and communities.

A **Recommendation: Pass a bipartisan fatherhood bill.**

Native Americans

One year ago, I emphasized in my State of the Union address that we should "begin this new century by honoring our historic responsibility to empower the first Americans." While we are living in a time of great prosperity and progress, for many Native Americans, the picture is quite different. Even though economic conditions in Indian country have improved in recent years, the social, economic and educational status of American Indian and Alaska Native communities continue to lag behind the rest of the United States.

That is why I made improving conditions in Indian Country a high priority during my Administration. We worked with tribes on a government-to-government basis to bring about positive change. Most recently, I signed a new executive order that requires consultation with Indian tribal governments in the development of Federal policies that have tribal implications. I believe that honoring our trust responsibilities and fostering the government-to-government interactions is essential to improving relationships with tribes.

In order to lift up Native American communities in this century, we must focus on three areas: economic development, health care, and education. To that end, we know that a New Markets approach holds much promise for many Native American communities. I saw this first hand when I visited the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota and the Navajo Nation in Shiprock, New Mexico to highlight the needs of our Nation's first peoples and to encourage private investments in these areas. The final FY2001 budget agreement contains my historic new bipartisan New Markets and Community Renewal Initiative which contains tax credits and assistance for small businesses for underserved communities across the Nation – including Indian Country. I also fought for legislation – also included in the final budget agreement -- that will treat tribes similarly to state and local governments under the Federal Unemployment Tax Act. Last year, I proposed a historic budget with the largest increase ever for key new and existing programs for Native American communities. Today, I am proud to say that we won much of our request with the final budget including an increase of \$1.1 billion for Native Americans. The centerpieces of the final budget represent the priorities for Indian Country. We have won historic new increases for Bureau of Indian Affairs school construction and repair which will provide an important down payment on reducing the backlog of repairs and renovations needed. We also secured \$75 million for renovations for public schools with high concentrations of Native American students. I am also proud to say that we are continuing our 1000 new Native teacher initiative, and we were able to create a new Native American Education Foundation to encourage private gifts to further educational opportunities for American Indian children.

Health

The Vice President and I also championed and won the largest increase for the Indian Health Service – an increase of 10 percent over FY2000 – to provide additional primary care

services, to increase drug and alcohol prevention and treatment services, and to provide a \$240 million three-funding increase for a special diabetes program for Native Americans.

My sincere hope is that these budget victories will provide a baseline for the next Administration to continue to work with tribes and lift up the lives of this Nation's first Americans.

Recommendation: Continue to work in government-to-government partnership with tribes to improve economic conditions, health care and education in Native American communities.

II. EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE FOR ALL CHILDREN

When Vice President Gore and I came into office in 1993, we pledged to the American people that we would strengthen education at every level and challenge the status quo by investing more in and demanding more from our nation's schools. Because every child can learn and every child deserves the opportunity to realize their dreams, the promise of a world-class education must be available to all Americans regardless of their income, where they live, or the color of their skin. As we enter the 21st century, nothing could be more important than investing in the public schools that will prepare our children to be successful in an increasingly global economy. The progress of our efforts in this regard will be remembered not by how many succeed, but by how many are left behind. Too often in the past we accepted low expectations for some children, using labels and categories to excuse our failure to educate all students.

During the last eight years we have clearly made progress in improving our schools and helping more children succeed. For example, test scores for African American students are up in virtually all categories, and between 1992 and 1999, math scores for Hispanic students increased at the 4th, 8th, and 12th grade levels. In addition, more minority students are being challenged by rigorous coursework, which is an important precursor to post-secondary education. Three times as many African American students took Advanced Placement (AP) exams in 1999 as took the tests in 1988, and nearly 70,000 Hispanic students took AP exams in 1999, the most ever.

Access to post-secondary opportunities also continues to increase for minority students: The percentage of African American high school graduates who go on to college has increased from 50 percent in 1992 to 58.5 percent in 1997, and the percentage of Hispanic high school graduates going directly to college increased from 55 percent in 1992 to 66 percent in 1997. Also, the percentage of Hispanic high school graduates age 25-29 who have a college degree is the highest ever. These improvements show that our commitment to education over the past eight years is helping more of America's students succeed, but they also highlight the fact that much work remains to be done. For example, achievement gaps between Hispanic and white students persist at all grade levels and across most academic subjects, and over 80 percent of Hispanics are not introduced to college "gateway" classes such as algebra and geometry by the eighth grade. These gaps likely contribute to the unacceptably low high school completion rate for Latinos, which has not changed substantially in the past several years.

Eight years ago, the debate on education was usually divided into partisan camps arguing over false choices. On one side were those who believed that money could solve all the problems in our schools, and who feared that setting high standards and holding schools and teachers and students accountable to them would only hold back poor children, especially poor minority children. On the other side, there were those who felt education was a state responsibility, and did not need a comprehensive national response – or the leadership of a federal Department of Education. They were willing to give up on our public schools and many of the children in them because they did not believe that we could ensure a world-class education for all students, and therefore, were unwilling to spend money trying. We believed both of those positions were wrong because every child can learn. There was plenty of evidence, even then, that high levels of learning were possible in even the most difficult social and economic circumstances. The challenge was to make the school transformation going on in some schools available and real in all schools. We sought to do this by both investing more in our schools and demanding more from them.

Accountability The strategy of greater accountability and greater investment should continue to guide our efforts to improve education. Last year, for the first time, Congress failed to fulfill its obligation to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. In May of 1999 I sent Congress a proposal that would fundamentally change the way the federal government invests in our schools -- to support more of what we know works, and to stop supporting what we know does not work. It would help put quality teachers in all classrooms; send report cards to all parents on the performance of each school; end social promotion, but offer help for students rather than blaming them when the system fails them; and require a plan to identify failing schools and improve them, or shut them down. It is past time for Congress to act on this legislation, and I hope they will do it in a way that makes progress on accountability, while increasing key investments in what works.

The fundamental lesson of the last seven years, it seems to me, is that an education investment without accountability can be a real waste of money. But accountability without investment can be a real waste of effort. All schools need adequate resources to provide all of our children with a world-class education and yet too often, many schools in poor communities cannot meet this goal because they simply don't have the resources. Long-standing gaps in access to educational resources exist, including disparities by race and ethnicity. That's why I am appointing a Presidential Commission on resource equity charged with gathering data on this problem and reporting to the President, Congress, and the nation on the best strategies to close this equity gap.

I've also asked Congress to make a range of other investments to make accountability work. These include reduced class sizes, hiring additional, well-qualified teachers, and expanding after-school and summer school programs to help children succeed.

We know that children learn better in smaller classes. This year, we won \$1.6 billion keeping us on track of hiring 100,000 new teachers who are desperately needed to lower class size in the early grades throughout this country.

We also know that children cannot not be expected to lift themselves up in schools that are literally falling down. The average school building in the United States is 42 years old, while in many cities the average is 65 years old. There are schools in New York City, for example, that are still being heated by coal-fired furnaces. For four years I have tried to get the Congress to approve my \$25 billion tax credit to help to build or modernize 5,000 schools. America's school children are still waiting for this help. This year, we did win \$1.2 billion in spending for urgent school repairs. This is a start, but far short of making the kind of investment needed to provide our children with the schools they deserve.

Since 1997, we've made progress in expanding after-school programs that offer additional learning opportunities for students and prevent juvenile crime. This year we nearly doubled funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers to \$846 million, serving 1.3 million students nationwide. I call on Congress to continue its support for these proven programs and further reduce the estimated 4 million latch-key children in our country.

With the largest expansion of college aid since the GI Bill, we are opening the doors of college wider so that more of our young people can not only walk through them, but walk out with a degree four years later. The percentage of young people going to college is up 10 percent since 1990. That is because of investments like our GEAR UP mentoring program which, with increases included in the FY 2001 budget, will now help 2.1 million low income middle school students finish school and prepare for college. It's because of the HOPE Scholarship and lifetime learning tax credits, which are helping 10 million Americans pay for college. And it because we have worked so hard for more affordable student loans, more Pell Grants and more work-study slots

Clearly, there is a new consensus for greater investment and greater accountability in education. It says to every child, regardless of race, ethnicity, income or background -- you can learn. And it says to the American people, education will do more to strengthen both our economy and our national community than a big, across the board tax cut which cannot be justified and which will either throw us back to the bad old days of deficits or require big cuts in domestic programs, including education, or both.

Recommendation: Continue to invest more in and demand more from our public schools. Do not sacrifice the education of our children to a big, across the board tax cut.

III. CIVIL RIGHTS ENFORCEMENT

Despite all the progress we have made in tearing down walls of segregation and barriers of opportunity, an old enemy lurks in the shadows. It continues to poison our perceptions, undermine our progress and threaten our future. Racism has been our nation's constant curse, predating the nation's founding by a century and a half. And race has been our constant struggle. The way out begins with facing and speaking the truth about our past, even when it is somewhat painful.

Consider this: We were born with a Declaration of Independence which asserted that we are all created equal and a Constitution that enshrined slavery. We fought a bloody civil war to abolish slavery and preserve the union, but we remained a house divided and unequal by law for another century. We advanced across the continent in the name of freedom, yet in doing so we pushed Native Americans off their land, often crushing their culture, their livelihood and their lives. We eagerly recruited laborers from Asia to help build our fledgling economy but in a time of war, forcibly removed more than 100,000 Japanese Americans from their homes and into internment camps. Our Statue of Liberty welcomes poor, tired, huddled masses of immigrants to our shores, but each new wave has felt the sting of discrimination, and for many that discrimination has burdened their native-born children and grandchildren. We must face these harsh contradictions squarely as a critical first step to healing the wounds of our past and unleashing the power and promise of our future. We must become One America in the 21st century.

After I launched the national initiative on race in San Diego in 1997, people asked me why, in the absence of a great national crisis like Little Rock or the Rodney King riots, should the American people focus anew on the challenge of racial reconciliation. My answer is two-fold. First and foremost, our work is not yet done. And our present progress and confidence give us the best chance to finish it. We have moved out of the epicenter of racism that rocked our nation from the time of the Indian conquest, slavery and Japanese internment until the great breakthroughs of the civil rights era, but we are still experiencing the aftershocks. Though people of color have more opportunities than ever today, we still see evidence of unequal treatment in the litany of disparities in jobs and wealth, in education, in criminal justice, that so often still break down along the color line.

Secondly, building One America is not just a fancy slogan. It is a rallying cry in defense of our future. As we have seen so often in other parts of the world, ancient ethnic divisions in the age of the new global economy are ripping some nations apart. That has not, and will not happen here in America. The main reason is our fundamental faith in freedom, embodied in the words, if not always the actions, of our founders.

I believe it is also tied to our belief in a spiritual law common to every major world religion. We hear its echo in our call for One America. It is the law of oneness. *E pluribus Unum*: Out of many, one. In Christianity it is expressed as loving thy neighbor as thyself. In Islam we are instructed to “Do unto all men as you wish to have done to you and reject for others what you would reject for yourself. The Talmud teaches us, “Should anyone turn aside the right of the stranger, it is as though he were to turn aside the right of the most high God.” As a nation that takes pride in both the depth and diversity of religious expression, we must embrace racial reconciliation as a way to honor our highest spiritual values.

In 1998, my Advisory Board on race made this prescient observation: “[N]ow, more than ever, racial discrimination is not only about skin color and other physical characteristics associated with race; it is also about other aspects of our identity, such as ethnicity, national origin, language, accent, religion, and cultural customs.”¹ While overt racial prejudice has diminished, the discrimination of today is often more camouflaged. In a sense, this makes it more dangerous: If you are denied a job, apartment, or prompt service in a store on the basis of bigotry

that is never expressed, and even cloaked in politeness, then you have no signal telling you to object, to fight. In order to build One America, to finish the work that we have started, it is vitally important that all Americans understand that discrimination — intentional or not, obvious or camouflaged — still exists and that each of us has the opportunity and responsibility to help eradicate it. This is about more than enforcing laws. It is about living up to our values and keeping our promises.

With our unprecedented strength, it is all the more intolerable that there are still doors to opportunity that are padlocked by prejudice. That is why I have proposed substantial new investments to strengthen civil rights enforcement at the federal, state, and local levels. Although money by itself will not achieve our civil rights goals, a strong enforcement agenda depends on a sufficient level of resources. But we must act strategically to put the federal investments where they can be the most effective. That is why, for eight years, I have fought so hard for additional investments in civil rights enforcement. These funds are critical to helping the Justice Department expand investigations and prosecutions of criminal civil rights cases. HUD needs adequate resources to reduce housing discrimination and the Departments of Education, Agriculture and Labor will be able to improve and expand civil rights compliance and enforcement programs.

And as our comprehensive review of federal affirmative action programs revealed, affirmative action is still an effective and important tool for expanding educational and economic opportunity to all Americans.

The fact is, important gaps in civil rights law and their enforcement remain. I believe that the simple business of enforcing anti-discrimination laws should be a bipartisan commitment. We should be able to agree on at least this much – enforce the law and promote voluntary compliance with it.

Recommendation: Maintain essential investments in civil rights enforcement.

Eliminate Hate Crimes

There is nothing more important to the future of this country than our standing together against intolerance, prejudice, and violent bigotry. No American should be subjected to violence on account of his or her race, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender or disability. Americans of conscience were horrified by the vicious murder of James Byrd, Jr. in Jasper, Texas and the cowardly torture-murder of Matthew Shepard in Wyoming. But we must do more than shake our heads in shame—we must back up our outrage with tough sanctions against those who perpetuate these crimes. Hate crimes are criminal acts driven by bias against another person's race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or ethnicity.ⁱⁱ In 1997, the FBI reported 8,049 incidents of such crimes.ⁱⁱⁱ Of these, 5,546 were based on the victim's race or ethnicity. It is suspected that many more go unreported. My administration has stood strong against hate crimes through vigorous prosecution under the civil rights statutes. Since 1989, over 500 defendants have been convicted on federal criminal civil rights charges for interfering with the federally protected rights of minority victims. I am proud of what we have done to combat hate crimes, but there is much more to do.

①

First, we must continue to enforce our civil rights laws vigorously. Under Attorney General Janet Reno's leadership, the Justice Department has taken aim at hate crimes with more prosecutions and tougher punishments. To increase our effectiveness, we have assigned substantially more FBI agents and prosecutors to work in this area, and the Justice Department has marshaled the support of every United States Attorney to establish or strengthen community enforcement strategies to combat hate crimes. The centerpiece of the Attorney General's Anti-Hate Crime Initiative is the formation of local working groups in each federal judicial district consisting of local community leaders and federal, state, and local law enforcement officials. These working groups are helping to improve coordination, community involvement, training, education, data collection, and as an education tool, the Justice Department is also spearheading the creation of hate crime resource guides for teachers, law enforcement personnel, and state and local prosecutors.

★

②

Second, we must ensure that when hate crimes do occur, we have the law enforcement tools necessary to identify the perpetrators swiftly and bring them to justice. In this regard, we must pass a Hate Crimes Prevention Act because all Americans deserve protection from crimes of hate. Currently, the law requires we prove that the defendant committed an offense not only because of the victim's race, color, religion, or national origin, but also because of the victim's participation in one of six "federally protected activities."

limitations on current law

The federally protected activity requirement has impeded our efforts to prosecute hate crimes. For example, the federal government can prosecute a violent, racially-motivated hate crime that occurs in a public school's parking lot, but we may lack jurisdiction if the crime occurs in a private yard across the street from the school. To point out another outrageous limitation, the federal government's ability to respond to a racially motivated attack that occurs in front of a convenience store may depend on whether or not the store has a video game inside. In fact, under our current law, the federal government does not have the authority to prosecute James Byrd Jr.'s killers. Other than verbally condemning the actions of the perpetrators — at least one of them an avowed racist—who chained Mr. Byrd to a pickup truck in the predawn darkness and dragged him to his death, we would not have been able to use the power of the state to sanction this crime. We must close this gap in the law. The Hate Crimes Prevention Act will expand the Justice Department's ability to prosecute hate crimes by removing needless jurisdictional requirements for existing crimes. Our federal officers must have the authority to work in concert with state and local law enforcement agencies to end hate crimes.

gender -> sexual orientation

In addition to removing jurisdictional barriers, the Hate Crimes Prevention Act will strengthen current law by giving Federal prosecutors the power to prosecute hate crimes committed because of the victim's sexual orientation, gender, or disability. As in the case of James Byrd, Jr., the federal government did not have the legal jurisdiction to prosecute Matthew Shepard's murderers under current law. Matthew, a 21-year old college freshman, was beaten in the dead of night, tied to a fence, and left to die alone. At Matthew's funeral, his cousin predicted that "Matt will have made a difference in the lives of thousands." I want to make sure he does. Congress and the next Administration should enact a bill that sanctions all hate crimes on an equal basis.

Let me emphasize that with the enactment of the Hate Crimes Prevention Act, state and local law enforcement agencies will continue to take the lead in investigating and prosecuting all types of hate crimes. For instance, the Justice Department will continue to defer prosecution in the first instance to state and local law enforcement officials except in highly sensitive cases where the federal interest is significant. The Justice Department will also refrain from following up a state prosecution with a federal prosecution of the same incident unless the state has left a *substantial federal interest* demonstrably unvindicated. The Hate Crimes Prevention Act will, however, strengthen our ability to work effectively as partners with state and local law enforcement, and to serve an important backstop function with regard to a wider range of hate-motivated violence than federal law currently permits.

Opponents of the civil rights legislation in the 1960s often said, "You can't legislate morality." It is true that a statute cannot exorcise hate—that is a personal demon that calls for a moral cleansing. But law does have a function in proclaiming our values and differentiating right from wrong. In that sense, over time, law can squeeze hate out of our public lives and eventually out of all but the most diseased hearts. The starting point is to make violent acts of hate against our neighbors a federal crime. And we should do it.

Recommendation: Pass the hate Crimes Prevention Act. ✱

Immigration

America has a rich and lengthy history of immigrants who have contributed to every facet of our society as they left an indelible mark of progress and positivism. Those who have traveled to our nation in search of a better life share common American values and are driven to realize the possibility and promise that characterizes our nation. I believe that we must help these new Americans become successful, responsible participants in American life and ensure that immigrants and their families are treated fairly under our immigration laws.

Since 1997, my Administration has proposed legislation to eliminate disparate treatment under our immigration laws for Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Hondurans, Haitians, and Liberians who fled civil unrest and human rights abuses, and are currently living in the United States, working, paying taxes, and raising families. I strongly urge this Congress to finally pass the bipartisan proposal that will provide these individuals with equal opportunity to regularize their immigration status. And I implore you to permanently reinstate section 245(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act to allow families to stay together while applications for adjustment of status await approval. Legislation to provide relief for certain individuals tragically separated from their families by changes in the 1996 immigration law must be enacted. Passage of this bipartisan legislation, stalled in the final days of the 106th Congress, is imperative if we are to achieve fairness in our immigration system.

I believe that legal immigrants should have the same economic opportunity, and bear the same responsibility, as other members of society. In the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 and the Agricultural Research Act of 1998, I fought for and succeeded in reversing some of the unfair cuts in benefits to legal immigrants. I have proposed a budget that builds upon the Administration's progress of restoring these important benefits by providing \$2.5 billion over five years to allow

ACOMPS

states to provide health care to legal immigrant children and pregnant women, to restore SSI and Medicaid to certain legal immigrants with disabilities, and to restore Food Stamp eligibility to certain legal immigrants who are elderly, or live in a household with Food Stamp-eligible children. However, despite bipartisan support, the 106th Congress failed to act on these initiatives. I urge this Congress to stand behind families that pay taxes and play by the rules by passing these provisions to restore vital benefits for legal immigrants.

Today's immigrants are driven by a dream – and to achieve that dream, they seek to learn the ways of this land and become full participants in American society. To this end, Vice President Gore and I proposed the English Language/Civics Initiative, an innovative program to help states and communities provide limited English proficient (LEP) individuals with expanded access to high-quality English-language instruction linked to civics and life skills instruction, including understanding and navigating the U.S. government system, the public education system, the workplace, and other key institutions of American life. This important initiative is a powerful tool in building a stronger American community. The 107th Congress should expand this initiative to help more immigrants become full, productive participants in American life.

We must commit ourselves to ensuring that students with limited English skills get the extra help they need in order to speak English comfortably and confidently and meet the same high standards expected for all students. Under the Administration's Hispanic Education Action Plan (HEAP), which has increased overall by \$1.2 billion over the past three years, the federal investment in bilingual education programs has grown from \$198 million in 1998 to \$296 million in 2001. Bilingual education funding helps school districts teach English and provides teachers with the training they need to teach LEP students, while the Immigrant Education program helps more than a thousand school districts provide supplemental instructional services to recent immigrant students. In addition to continuing to expand these vital investments, Congress should seize the opportunity to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and enact the Administration's proposals to offer additional help so that all teachers are well-trained to meet the needs of students with Limited English Proficiency, and make schools and districts more accountable for helping children with Limited English Proficiency master their academic subjects and learn English.

Migrant families face particularly difficult obstacles to gaining the education and training that will help them improve their standard of living. I have worked to improve the Migrant Education Program in the 1994 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Act, and through Hispanic Education Action Plan (HEAP) won \$75 million in increases to the program. As part of HEAP, we have also increased funds for the High School Equivalency Program, the College Assistance Migrant Program, and funding for a Migrant Youth Job Training Demonstration. It is my belief that this Congress should continue to expand the reach of these critical programs.

Recommendation: Restore vital benefits to legal immigrants, continue to help immigrants learn English and the duties of citizenship, and invest in education and training that can help immigrants become productive citizens.

Recommendation: Continue efforts to ensure that ex-offenders re-enter communities as productive citizens who never return to a life of crime or prison.

Crime Prevention

And finally, we must prevent young people of color from becoming involved in crime and the criminal justice system in the first place. The need is clear: for black males born today, the odds of going to prison are greater than going to college. This is unacceptable. That is why we must give our youth alternatives to the streets, where they are often most at-risk for being involved in, or falling prey to gangs, drugs and crime. We must continue to increase the number of after school programs that help to provide adult supervision and activities for young people during the afternoon and early evening hours when juvenile crime peaks. And we must make sure that they have strong adult supervision, as well as role models and mentors.

As we work to further reduce crime across America, we also must strive to ensure fairness in the criminal justice system so that it has the complete confidence of all of our nation's citizens. To do this, we must address important issues underlying the present racial gap in trust and confidence in our criminal justice system, including racial profiling, sentencing policy, and the death penalty.

Recommendation: Help young people avoid crime by giving them something to say yes to: afterschool programs, adult supervision and role models.

Racial Profiling

We know that in order for police to be truly effective in their work, they must have the trust and cooperation of the residents in their community. Yet, in many communities, especially minority communities, there remains a disturbing lack of trust in law enforcement among residents. Among the reasons for this for this distrust are reports of police misconduct such as racial profiling. The vast majority of law enforcement officers in this nation are dedicated public servants of great courage and high moral character who deserve the respect of citizens of all races. However, we cannot tolerate officers who mistreat law-abiding individuals and who bring their own racial bias to the job. Racial profiling is the opposite of good police work where actions are based on hard facts, not stereotypes. Simply stated, no person should be targeted by law enforcement because of the color of his or her skin. We must stop the morally indefensible and deeply corrosive practice of racial profiling. While some remedies are already available, we know this practice is widespread. There ought to be there ought to be a way

Recent polls show that while many individuals believe that law enforcement engage in racial profiling, there is very little data on traffic stops to determine where and when it is occurring. That is why I ordered federal law enforcement agencies to begin to collect data on the race, ethnicity and gender of individuals subject to certain stops and searches. Federal law enforcement should make such data collection permanent and expand it to include more sites so we can identify problem areas and take concrete steps to eliminate racial profiling anywhere it exists. In addition, I challenge state and local law enforcement to take similar action to collect data. The federal government can help by providing funding and technical assistance to help

them in their efforts. We should also provide for more police integrity training and resources to promote local dialogue to strengthen trust between police and the residents they serve.

But I believe we should go a step further. Even with many of these remedies already in place, we know that racial profiling continues to occur. We must find a way to construct and pass a national law banning racial profiling so that every citizen is assured that no police department and no community will tolerate this terrible practice.

Recommendation: Continue efforts to document extent of problem and pass a national law banning the practice of racial profiling.

Mandatory Minimum Sentencing

We must re-examine our national sentencing policies, focusing particularly on mandatory minimum sentences for non-violent offenders. With the prison and jail population at roughly two million, it is time to take a hard look at who we are sending to prison – and whether our sentencing policies make sense given current circumstances. Over the long term, we should not be satisfied when so many Americans, especially so many people of color, are behind bars for so long, with so little hope of putting their lives back together when they get out. We must demand a system that actually works to reduce criminality and recidivism.

One way to do this is to use the power of the criminal justice system to help offenders to kick their drug habits. As we have seen, addiction plays a key role as to why many people end up in prison to begin with: more than two-thirds of all state prisoners report past drug use, nearly one in five committed their crime to get money to buy drugs, and one-third were under the influence of drugs at the time of their offense. In order to help break this cycle of drugs and crime, we should implement a rigorous course of drug testing and treatment for federal and state prisoners, probationers and parolees. Offenders should be required to be drug-free when they leave prison and stay free of drugs in order keep their freedom. In addition, we should further spread alternatives to incarceration for nonviolent drug offenders, such as drug courts. Drug courts, which employ judicial supervision, escalating sanctions, and frequent drug testing and treatment in lieu of incarceration have been shown to significantly reduce recidivism and future drug use.

In general, sentences must be firm, but they must also be fair and fit the crime. In the 1980's, mandatory minimum sentences were adopted to attack the horrible problem of crack cocaine and other drugs that were ravaging our cities. While mandatory minimums have been effective in removing hardened criminals from the streets, they have also swept in many lower level offenders, for whom better alternatives may exist, as discussed above.

However, one penalty I believe can be changed immediately is the 1986 federal law that creates a 100-to-1 ratio between crack and powder cocaine sentencing policies. This substantial disparity has led to a perception of racial injustice and inconsistency in the federal criminal justice system. Republican and Democratic Members of Congress alike have called for a repeal of this inequitable policy. Congress should revise the law to shrink the disparity to 10-to-1; specifically, the amount of powder cocaine required to trigger a five-year mandatory sentence

should be reduced from 500 to 250 grams while the amount of crack cocaine required for the same sentence should increase from 5 grams to 25 grams. This difference would continue to reflect the greater addictive power of crack cocaine, the greater violence associated with crack cocaine trafficking, and the importance of targeting mid- and higher level traffickers instead of low level drug offenders.

At the same time, I encourage states with mandatory minimum drug sentences to adopt a “safety valve” similar to the provision I signed into law in the 1994 Crime Act. The federal “safety valve” allows non-violent drug offenders with no more than a minor criminal record to be exempt from the federal mandatory minimum sentences.

Recommendation: Re-examine federal sentencing guidelines, particularly mandatory minimums for non-violent offenders. And shrink the disparity between crack and powder cocaine sentencing from the current 100-to-1 to 10-to-1.

The Death Penalty

Finally, I believe we bear a special obligation to do everything we can to ensure that the death penalty is administered fairly. Justice Department studies have found that minorities are over-represented as both victims and defendants in both the federal and state death penalty systems. While this does not necessarily show that these systems are fundamentally broken or that they discriminate, they confirm that we must work hard to ensure fairness at every step of this irreversible punishment. Congress can take an important step forward by passing legislation like that introduced by Senator Leahy, which provides greater access to post-conviction DNA testing as well as increased access to competent counsel for defendants in capital cases. These are important steps towards guaranteeing a system that is fair and just in its results and in its process – so we are absolutely sure the system does not punish the innocent and that the innocent are not convicted in the first place.

Recommendation: Pass and sign legislation to provide greater access to post-conviction DNA testing and increased access to competent counsel for defendants in capital cases.

V. ELIMINATING RACIAL AND ETHNIC HEALTH DISPARITIES

Nowhere are the divisions of race and ethnicity more sharply drawn than in the health of our people. Despite notable progress in the overall health of the nation, there are continuing disparities in the burden of illness and death experienced by African Americans, Hispanics, American Indians and Alaska Natives, and Pacific Islanders, compared to the U.S. population as a whole. African Americans are 40 percent more likely to die from heart disease than whites. Hispanic Americans have two to three times the rate of stomach cancer. Native Americans have the highest risk for diabetes of any population in the country -- three times the rate of whites. Asian Americans are as much as five times more likely to die from liver cancer associated with hepatitis. We do not know all the reasons for these disturbing gaps. But we do know that overall these groups are less likely to be immunized against disease, less likely to be routinely tested for cancer, and less likely to get regular checkups. No matter what the reason, racial and ethnic disparities in health are unacceptable in a country that values equality and equal

opportunity for all. Access to the best health care America has to offer is a new civil right for the 21st century.

That is why we have set a national goal to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities in six key areas by the year 2010: infant mortality; diabetes; cancer; heart disease; HIV/AIDS; and immunizations. To reach this goal, my Administration launched a major preventive health outreach campaign focusing on diseases disproportionately affecting racial and ethnic minorities. We also initiated a public-private collaboration to address racial and ethnic health disparities; and secured approximately \$40 million in 2000 and 2001 for programs to research the causes and devise solutions for these disparities.

In 1999, the Administration launched a new initiative to address HIV/AIDS in minority communities, which received \$167 million in funds this year. Finally, in 2001, NIH will establish the Center for Research on Minority Health and Health Disparities, which will coordinate the over \$1 billion NIH invests annually in minority health and health disparities research.

America has the best health care system in the world. But we can't take full pride in it until every American has an equal chance to benefit from its ever-expanding potential. That is why achieving our goal of eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in health by the year 2010 must be a priority of the new Congress and new Administration.

Recommendation: Maintain our commitment to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in health by 2010.

VI. VOTING REFORM

If ever there was a doubt about the importance of exercising the most fundamental right of citizenship, it was clearly answered by the first Presidential election of the 21st century. No American will ever again be able to seriously say, "My vote doesn't count." That election also revealed serious flaws in the mechanics of voting, and brought up disturbing allegations of voter intimidation that we thought were relics of the past. Too many people felt that the votes they cast were not counted and some felt that there were organized efforts to keep them from the polls. Both of these allegations must be fully investigated. But, whatever the outcome, we can and must take aggressive steps to improve voter turnout, and modernize and restore confidence in our voting system.

While voting is the sacred right and responsibility of every American, it carries even greater weight for those who have fought so long and hard for civil rights and equal justice in America. In many ways the struggle for civil rights and racial progress in America is analogous to the struggle for voting rights. And this struggle, too, has not been all black and white.

The 15th amendment declared "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." But new barriers, like poll taxes and literacy tests, were erected to prevent blacks and poor whites from casting their ballots. It was not until that historic

confrontation on Selma's Edmund Pettus Bridge and the monumental Selma to Montgomery march that the Voting Rights Act of 1965, outlawing these racist impediments, was passed. Full voting rights for women were not secured until the passage of the 19th amendment in 1919. It wasn't until 1924, with the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act, that Native Americans won the right to vote. It took until 1952 for the Walter - McCarran Act to extend full citizenship and voting rights to Asian immigrants. And only after the elimination of English-only elections through the passage of the Voting Rights Act Amendments of 1975, did the final barriers to Hispanic voting rights fall.

Consider the fact that while our Declaration of Independence and Constitution proclaimed liberty and justice for all, originally this only applied to property-owning white males. Barbara Jordan once put it in stark terms, when she said of the Preamble to the Constitution, "We the People. It is a very eloquent beginning. But when the document was completed on the 17th of September in 1787, I was not included in that *We the People*." America's on-going efforts to right those wrongs is marked by the blood, sweat and tears of scores of voting rights warriors — from Frederick Douglas, Sojourner Truth and Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Martin Luther King, Willie Velasquez and Viola Liuzzo, who was one of a number of white freedom riders who lost their lives at the hands of bigots while working with blacks in the south for equal voting rights in the 1960s.

The right to vote is not only a sacred testament to the struggles of the past. It is an indispensable weapon in our current arsenal of efforts to empower those who have traditionally been left out, particularly people of color. So much progress—from the passage of civil rights laws to the increase in the numbers of minorities holding elected office—is the direct result of citizens exercising their right to vote. And so many of the needed changes in public policy, including those I have outlined in this Message to Congress, require active support by voters. Otherwise little will change. But, today, too many of us take our right to vote for granted. In recent presidential elections in France, for example, nearly 85 percent of the eligible voters went to the polls on election day. In America, there aren't more than two states that ever have an 80 percent turnout, even during a presidential election when interest runs very high.

So, we must do more to ensure that more people vote and that every vote is counted. In an effort to restore confidence in our democracy, I recommend the next President appoint a nonpartisan Presidential Commission on Electoral Reform. The Commission should be headed by distinguished citizens who can put country ahead of party, such as former Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter. The Commission should gather the facts and determine the causes of voting disparities in every state, including disparities of race, class, ethnicity, and geography. The Commission should make recommendations to Congress about how to achieve a fair, inclusive, and uniform system of voting in national elections -- including how to modernize voting technologies, establish uniform voting standards, prevent voter suppression and intimidation, and increase voter participation.

I believe such a Commission also should examine two other issues that haven't received as much attention, but could go a long way toward ensuring every American citizen the right to vote and the chance to exercise that right. First, declaring election day a national holiday so that no one has to choose between their responsibilities at work and their responsibilities as a citizen.

In other countries that do this, voter participation dwarfs ours, and the most fundamental act of democracy gets the attention it deserves. Second, giving those who have repaid their debt to society the chance to regain their right to be a voting member of that society. Over the next decade, millions of Americans in the criminal justice system will serve out their sentences and re-enter society. These Americans are disproportionately poor and minority. We should be doing everything we can to make sure that they re-enter as responsible citizens. That means making sure that those who leave the criminal justice system leave it drug-free, and get the training they need to hold down a job and do right by their communities and their families. But if we want them to live right and do right, we should give them the chance to earn back their rights -- above all, the right to vote.

Recommendation: Appoint a non-partisan Presidential Commission on election reform to ensure a fair, inclusive and uniform system of voting standards, prevent voter suppression and intimidation and increase voter participation. Declare election day a national holiday. And give ex-offenders who have repaid their debt to society the chance to earn back the right to vote.

VII. CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY: BUILDING ONE AMERICA IS THE WORK OF EVERY AMERICAN

When violence and strife exploded in Los Angeles following the Rodney King verdict, countless residents and community leaders responded with inspiring efforts to build bridges that would not only heal wounds but create opportunity. When more than 190 black churches, white churches, synagogues, and mosques were burned or desecrated during 1995-96, we witnessed an awe-inspiring outpouring of concern and assistance across all lines of race and faith and party. When Jasper, Texas, was shaken to its core by a hideous hate crime, residents and leaders worked tirelessly to hold together, and in doing so, taught us all that some evils can be conquered with understanding. What all these examples prove is that when communities are faced with a crisis, our better angels soar to the challenge. In those moments, America ceases to be a nation of people divided into categories of color. America at its best is people of all colors united for the common good.

As in so many other areas, racial reconciliation and building opportunity simply won't happen unless there is committed engagement by people in communities and institutions throughout the nation. But in the absence of a crisis, we may be tempted to leave this work to so-called national leaders, such as politicians, clergy, business executives or the heads of nonprofit organizations. Such leaders can perhaps help set a tone, point out examples, offer support, and provide critical seed resources. But it takes all of us working together to prevent the kind of devastating crisis that pulls us together only after much pain and suffering. At the end of the day, we will make the most fundamental kind of progress when we work with our neighbors for change.

To help spur this work, I hope that in the coming years leaders of goodwill in individual communities will rededicate themselves to working together across racial and ethnic lines in community partnerships designed to help us build that more perfect union. In many areas, there may already be a vesting place, such as an active ecumenical council of faith leaders, or a human

rights commission with broad-based public legitimacy. In other places, convening a group of leaders might require a special initiative by a mayor, a tribal leader, a newspaper publisher, an archbishop, a leading employer or the board of a civic organization.

Much of that work is already underway across America. And I am proud that my White House Office on One America is doing its part. In February, 1999, I launched the first-ever White House office specifically charged with keeping the nation focused on closing opportunity gaps and fostering racial reconciliation. Since its inception, the office has been instrumental in the formation of “Lawyers for One America,” a group of attorneys who have committed to change the racial justice landscape through greater diversity within the legal profession and increased pro bono service.

The Office also convened corporate leaders at the White House, who also pledged a renewed commitment to diversity in their workplaces and stronger efforts to close opportunity gaps. And the One America Office brought a broad cross-section of religious leaders to the White House to pledge that the faith community would focus more of its efforts on expanding diversity, ending racism and promoting racial reconciliation.

The White House Office on One America has helped focus and coordinate efforts throughout my Administration to build One America. It is my sincere hope that the next Administration will maintain this office and its noble purpose.

Building One America requires a new kind of leadership. Instead of looking outward for signs of hope, we must first look in the mirror and know that change is our responsibility. Rooted in the heart, that wisdom has the power to connect us in ways that nourish our dreams for a future that is better than our past. Whether you are able to give guidance to a single child or lead a national movement for justice, it all begins with a personal commitment to racial reconciliation. As Dr. King once said, “No social movement rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.”

Recommendation: Maintain the White House Office on One America.

IV. CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

In the three decades before the start of the Clinton-Gore Administration, the violent crime rate had skyrocketed by 400 percent. Many thought that rising crime would never reverse. The soaring crime rate took a particularly devastating toll in communities of color. The year I took office, homicide victimization for young black men ages 18-24 years old was at its highest level on record and was over ten times higher than the rate for white men of the same age.

Our Administration took a new approach to fighting crime with innovative policies to help communities reduce crime and restore public safety – by helping communities put 100,000 police on the beat, supporting community policing strategies so police could work closely with residents to develop solutions to local crime problems, imposing tough, targeted penalties for the most violent offenders, and providing more after school programs to keep youth supervised and out of trouble.

As a result of these and other efforts, the incidence of crime has dropped to new lows. The homicide rate is at its lowest level in 33 years, gun crime has declined by 40 percent, and the overall crime rate has dropped for over 8 straight years – the longest continuous decline on record. Moreover, people of color have in many cases experienced the sharpest decreases in crime victimization. For instance, since 1993, the murder rate for African Americans has dropped 40 percent, compared to 28 percent for whites, and property crime victimization decreased 45 percent for Hispanic households as compared to 37 percent for non-Hispanics. These are remarkable achievements.

Despite recent and substantial decreases in crime across racial lines, persons of color remain significantly more likely than whites to be victims of crime, especially violent crime. Persons of color are also much more likely to live in fear of crime. No American should have to live that way. We must remember that in the poorest, highest crime neighborhoods in this country, the vast majority of people get up every day, go to work, obey the law, pay their taxes, and do the best to raise their kids. More than anywhere else, these communities – which are often communities of color -- want, need, and deserve strong law enforcement to restore order, reduce crime, and help build stronger communities.

However, these same communities often have less trust in law enforcement – limiting its effectiveness where it is most needed. So, while we have attained historic reductions in crime, we must build on our successful strategy and develop additional ways to make every community even safer. And in doing so, we must strengthen trust and confidence law enforcement in the criminal justice system overall.

Community Policing and “Hot Spots”

First and foremost, we must reduce crime and restore order in communities of color where crime and fear of crime are greatest. Every American has the right to live in a safe community, and we should not be able to identify high-crime neighborhoods based on the race of the residents who live there. Community policing should serve as the cornerstone for our efforts. We must continue to add another 50,000 more community police to our nation’s streets and

spread the philosophy of community policing which brings local police and residents together in developing ways to best solve and prevent local crime problems and disorder. We should further expand this successful model to other areas of the criminal justice system including prosecution, with new community prosecutors working side-by-side with community police to address quality of life issues and help prevent crime before it starts.

I challenge the Congress and the next Administration to create a crime “hot spots” initiative – to target more resources to communities and neighborhoods that continue to have high crime rates or emerging crime problems. In crime “hot spots,” federal, state and local law enforcement would work together to identify high-crime locations through technology such as computer mapping. There would also be an increase in policing of high-crime areas, especially during the hours when crime is most likely to occur.

Recommendation: Continue to build on effective community policing efforts with new community prosecutors and a new crime “hot spots” initiative.

Gun Safety Legislation

We must also address the problem of guns in the wrong hands – a pervasive problem in many of our high-crime communities. Gun violence has taken a high toll on minority youth; for example, of the ten children killed each day by gun violence nearly 4 are black youth. We know that sensible and strong gun laws can make a difference in saving lives. The Brady Law alone has stopped over 611,000 felons, fugitives, and domestic abusers from buying guns through background checks since I signed it into law in 1993. The next Administration and Congress should take the next step to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and children by passing common sense gun legislation that closes the gun show loophole and requires safety locks for handguns to help prevent child access to guns. I also call on more gun manufacturers to join us in the fight to protect our children and keep guns out of the wrong hands.

Recommendation: Pass common-sense gun safety legislation to close the gun show loophole and require safety locks to prevent child access to guns.

Ex-Offenders

Another public safety area that must be addressed is the more than 600,000 ex-offenders that will be released from prison and reenter communities each year across the country. Many of these ex-offenders will return to communities of color. We need to maximize opportunities to help keep released offenders on the right track and out of trouble, able to meet their family obligations, and equipped to lead productive lives. We should foster the creation of reentry courts, similar to drug courts, and reentry partnerships, to provide more community and judicial supervision, more probation and parole oversight, drug treatment, job training, and links to community groups such as faith-based and fatherhood organizations. Our Administration secured \$115 million in the most recent budget to get this initiative started. I challenge the Congress and the next Administration to continue this important effort and work with state and local governments to meet this growing public safety challenge.