



PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON: MEETING AMERICA'S CHALLENGES IN AN AGE OF POSSIBILITY

May 1996

"Now it is time for us to look also to the challenges of today and tomorrow, beyond the burdens of yesterday. The challenges are significant. But America was built on challenges, not promises....I am confident: When Americans work together in their homes, their schools, their churches, their synagogues, their civic groups, their workplace, they can meet any challenge."

— President Clinton, State of the Union Address
January 23, 1996

First Challenge: To Cherish Our Children and Strengthen America's Families

Cherishing Our Children

- Announced a breakthrough agreement with the media and entertainment industry to develop a **television ratings system** to enable parents to protect their children from violence and adult content.
- Gave parents greater control over what their children watch on television by requiring the installation of anti-violence screening chips ("**V-chips**") in all new televisions.
- Proposed targeted measures to cut off **children's access to tobacco products** and to ban **advertising directed at children**.
- Established a Childhood Immunization Initiative to ensure **vaccinations and healthy futures for all children**. The President's initiative contributed to the immunization of 75% of two-year-old children in 1995, an historic high.

Strengthening Our Families

- Enabled **workers to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave** to care for a family member without fear of losing their jobs. (Family and Medical Leave Act)
- Provided **tax relief for 15 million working families** by increasing the Earned Income Tax Credit to allow more families to qualify for tax rebates.
- Helped families move from **welfare to work** by authorizing 37 states to bypass existing welfare rules and set time limits on benefits, require recipients to work or stay in school, provide child care and give employers incentives to hire welfare recipients. These waivers are making work and responsibility a way of life for 75% of all welfare recipients

Ensuring Responsibility

- Collected a **record \$11 billion in child support** in 1995 through tougher enforcement, almost a 40% increase over 1992.
- Issued an Executive Order to help track down **federal workers who fail to pay child support**.
- Worked with community, business and religious leaders to form a **national campaign to reduce teen pregnancy**.

Second Challenge: To Provide Educational Opportunities for the New Century

Making the Necessary Investments in Education

- Increased **Head Start funding by almost \$800 million** to provide early education to tens of thousands of additional children in need.
- Supported the development of the **nation's first system of voluntary standards of excellence** for students while encouraging grassroots reforms to improve our schools. (Goals 2000: Educate America Act)
- Encouraged schools, colleges and employers to join in creating **school-to-work opportunities**, providing students with work-based learning and giving them new pathways from high school to good jobs and post-secondary education. (School-to-Work Opportunities Act)
- Gave schools **greater flexibility to use federal aid** and develop **effective teaching innovations** to help economically disadvantaged students achieve their full potential. (Improving America's Schools Act)

Preparing Our Schools for the 21st Century

- Proposed a **\$2 billion Technology Literacy Challenge Fund** to help communities and the private sector ensure that every student is equipped with the computer literacy skills needed for the 21st century.
- Launched an **Educational Technology Initiative** to connect every classroom to the Information Superhighway and provide all students with access to computers by the dawn of the next century.
- Challenged the technology industry to connect 20% of California's public schools to the **Information Superhighway** by the end of this school year. This challenge became a reality in March during Net Day '96.

Opening the Door to College

- Reformed the **student loan program**, making college more affordable this year for **5.5 million students** and saving taxpayers billions of dollars by cutting red tape and providing loans with flexible repayment options, including pay-as-you-earn plans. (Student Loan Reform Act)
- Enabled **45,000 volunteers to earn money for college** by serving their communities and their country in the **AmeriCorps** program. (National Service Act)
- Challenged Congress to make **\$10,000 of college tuition tax-deductible each year**; expand **work-study** to help 1 million young Americans work their way through college by the year 2000; provide **\$1,000 merit scholarships** for the top 5% percent of graduates in every high school; and increase the number of **Pell Grants** for students who need financial help.

Third Challenge: To Help Every American Achieve Security in the New Economy

Strengthening America's Economy

- Submitted to Congress the **first genuine balanced budget in 17 years** — balancing the budget in seven years based on both Administration and Congressional Budget Office estimates while protecting our fundamental priorities of Medicare, Medicaid, education and the environment.
- Won enactment of the **largest deficit-cutting plan in history** — cutting the deficit in half within four years, after it quadrupled during the previous two Administrations.
- Oversaw the creation of more than **8.5 million new jobs in just over three years** — a faster annual rate of job growth than any Republican Administration since the 1920's.
- **Unemployment rate has fallen to 5.4%** — down from over 7% when President Clinton took office.
- **93% of all new jobs created are in the private sector** — higher than the average percentage during any Administration since the Truman Administration.
- More than **3.5 million new jobs in high-wage industries** have been created since January 1993 — by contrast, 200,000 high-wage industry jobs were lost in the previous four years.
- **One million new manufacturing, automotive and construction jobs** have been added since January 1993.
- Highest annual number of **new business incorporations** since World War II.
- Real median **family income has increased** during the Clinton Administration — after falling 4% during the previous four years.
- The combined unemployment, inflation and mortgage rate is at its **lowest level since 1968**.

Creating Economic Security

- Proposed a **\$2,600 job-training voucher** program to allow unemployed workers the freedom to choose the training programs that are right for them.
- Fought for meaningful **health insurance reform** to allow people to keep coverage when they change jobs and prevent denial of coverage due to pre-existing conditions.
- Challenged Congress to **raise the minimum wage** to provide the opportunity for working Americans to lift themselves and their families out of poverty.
- Protected the pensions of more than 40 million workers and retirees by **reforming the federal pension insurance system** and requiring companies to keep their retirement plans sufficiently funded. (Retirement Protection Act)
- Challenged Congress to enable Americans to **save for their retirements** by increasing pension portability, enhancing pension protection and expanding coverage.

Opening New Markets to Create Jobs for U.S. Workers

- Exports have surged **31% over the last three years** because President Clinton stood up for American workers and opened more markets to U.S. goods and services.
- **More than 1 million new export-related jobs** have been created under the Clinton Administration — jobs supported by exports pay on average 15% more than other jobs.
- America is once again the **world's number one manufacturer of automobiles** — overtaking Japan for the first time since the 1970's.

- American goods exported in sectors covered by Clinton Administration trade agreements with Japan have grown over 85% — **three times faster** than growth in other U.S. goods exported to Japan.
- The United States was named the **most competitive economy in the world** for the second year in a row.

Fourth Challenge: To Take Back Our Streets From Crime, Gangs and Drugs

Won Passage of the Toughest and Smartest Crime Bill Ever

- Puts **100,000 more police officers** on the street — more than 34,000 officers have already been funded.
- Imposed a targeted **“Three-Strikes-and-You’re-Out”** provision to put career violent offenders behind bars for life.
- Expanded the **death penalty** to include drug kingpins, murderers of federal law enforcement officers and nearly 60 additional categories of violent felons.
- Provided funding for **100,000 more prison cells** to help states ensure that violent offenders serve their full sentences.
- The number of **murders fell 8%** in 1995 — one of the largest decreases in more than 30 years. The nation’s largest cities saw their **overall crime fall 6%** during the same period.

Keeping Guns Out of the Hands of Criminals

- Stood up to the gun lobby and won passage of the **Brady Bill** — as a result, more than **60,000 fugitives, felons and other criminals** have already been blocked from buying handguns.
- Banned the manufacture and importation of **19 of the deadliest assault weapons** while specifically protecting more than 650 legitimate sporting weapons. (Assault Weapons Ban)

Combatting Drug Use

- Developed a comprehensive **National Drug Control Strategy** that will reduce illegal drug use through law enforcement, prevention, treatment and interdiction.
- Breaking the cycle of drugs and crime through **universal drug testing** in the criminal justice system and by providing funding for **drug courts**.
- The number of Americans who use cocaine has **declined 30% since 1992**.

Fighting to End Domestic Violence

- Tripled funding for **battered women’s shelters** and provided **\$26 million in state grants** to bolster local law enforcement, prosecution and victims’ services to better address violence against women. (Violence Against Women Act)
- Established nationwide 24-hour **domestic violence hotline** providing immediate crisis intervention, counseling and referrals for those in need.

Making Our Schools Safer

- Keeping dangerous weapons out of our children’s classrooms by enforcing a **“Zero Tolerance” gun policy in schools**.
- Reducing **violence and drug abuse in our schools** by investing in school security, drug prevention programs and counseling. (Safe and Drug-Free Schools Act)
- Encouraged schools to adopt **school uniform policies** to help reduce violence while promoting discipline and respect.

Securing America's Borders

- Stood firm against illegal immigration and deported a record **51,600 illegal and criminal aliens** in 1995 — a 15% increase over 1994.
- Increasing the number of **Border Patrol agents** along the southwestern border by 50% to stem the flow of illegal aliens into the United States.

Fifth Challenge: To Leave Our Environment Safe and Clean for the Next Generation

Ensuring Public Health

- Made the air we breathe cleaner by issuing **new standards to cut toxic pollution** from chemical plants by **90%** and dangerous incinerator emissions by **98%**.
- Fought **attempts in Congress to roll back** the progress made in ensuring safe food and water for our families.
- Issued new policy to **control E. coli bacteria** contamination in meat.
- Expanded the public's **right-to-know** about toxic releases and required polluters to disclose information to the public.
- Ensured compliance with environmental safeguards by **toughening EPA's enforcement programs**.

Protecting Our Natural Resources

- Fought attempts to close **national parks** and lift the ban on offshore oil drilling.
- Committed \$1.5 billion over seven years to help restore the unique **Florida Everglades**.
- Broke through decades of conflict and negotiated a consensus plan to protect and allocate **California Bay-Delta water**.

Common Sense Reforms to Environmental Programs

- Changed EPA rules and procedures to **reduce paperwork requirements** for businesses by 10 million hours.
- Reformed wetlands and endangered species programs to better protect the environment while lessening any adverse impact on homeowners.
- Launched a **Brownfields Initiative** to return land to productive use by providing tax incentives to clean-up old industrial waste sites.

Sixth Challenge: To Maintain America's Leadership in the Fight for Freedom and Peace

Leading the Fight for Peace

- Ended four years of bloodshed and destruction in **Bosnia** by brokering the Dayton peace accords.
- Championed peace efforts in the **Middle East** by negotiating the Israel-Jordan peace treaty and helping Israelis and Palestinians fulfill their historic peace agreement.
- Organized historic March 1996 **Summit of the Peacemakers** in Egypt, gathering 29 world and regional leaders to support the Middle East peace process and counter terrorism.

- Negotiated written ***agreement between Israel and Syria*** to end Hezbollah attacks on Israel and provide restoration of calm and protection of civilians on both sides of the Lebanon-Israel border.
- Restored democracy to ***Haiti***, stopping the flow of refugees to the U.S. and accomplishing the first transfer of power from one democratically-elected president to another in Haitian history.
- Became the first American President to visit ***Northern Ireland*** in the pursuit of a just and lasting peace.

Making a Difference in America and Around the World

- ***Russian nuclear missiles*** are no longer pointed at America's children.
- Poised to reduce ***nuclear stockpiles*** by another 25% by successfully securing bipartisan Senate ratification of the Start II Treaty with Russia.
- Imposed the ***toughest sanctions ever*** on Castro's Cuba following the brutal killing of U.S. nationals over international waters.
- Shaped new American military for post-Cold War challenges to peace, ensuring America remains the ***best-equipped, best-trained and best-prepared fighting force in the world***.
- Intensified the ***fight against terrorism and organized crime*** at home and abroad by enacting anti-terrorism legislation giving law enforcement officials tough new tools to stop terrorists before they strike.

Seventh Challenge: To Reform Our Political System and Make Government Work for People

Reforming Our Political System

- Made voting easier for more than 11 million Americans by creating more accessible ***"motor-voter"*** registration locations. (National Voter Registration Act)
- Enacted the ***first major overhaul of lobbying rules in 50 years*** — now lobbyists must disclose the organizations for which they work. (Lobbying Disclosure Act)
- Fought for passage of ***comprehensive campaign finance reform*** to curb the influence of money in our political system.
- Imposed the strictest Administration ***ethics guidelines*** ever, including a five-year ban on top officials lobbying their former agencies and a lifetime ban against lobbying for foreign governments.
- Ensured that the ***same laws apply to Congress*** as to the rest of America. (Congressional Accountability Act)

Making Government Work Better and Cost Less

- Cut the federal civilian workforce by ***more than 200,000 positions*** — the size of the federal government is now at its ***lowest level in 30 years***.
- Eliminating ***16,000 pages of unnecessary regulations***.
- Saved taxpayers ***\$58 billion*** by cutting wasteful government practices and spending through Reinventing Government efforts. Additional recommendations will save another ***\$116 billion***.
- Prohibited Congress from imposing new requirements on state and local governments without paying for them. (Unfunded Mandates Reform Act)
- Fought for and signed into law ***line-item veto*** legislation to change the way Washington works by ***cutting spending*** on wasteful special-interest projects.