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chairman, and David R. Obey, ranking member, House Committee on Appropriations.

The President's Radio Address

January 4, 1997

Good morning, and Happy New Year. I look forward to 1997 with great optimism. As we enter this new year, I'm preparing to enter my second term as your President, committed to continuing our mission of preparing our people for the 21st century, meeting our new challenges, and strengthening our oldest values. We will work to give our people the tools they need to make the most of their own lives, to build strong families and strong communities. And as we work to expand opportunity, we will also seek responsibility from every American.

This approach is working. In just 4 years we have replaced trickle-down economics with invest-and-grow economics, responsibility, and opportunity. We've cut the deficit by 60 percent, increased our trade to record levels. We have over 11 million new jobs.

In just 4 years, working with citizens and communities all over America to solve our social problems, we have replaced political rhetoric with a strategy of giving people the tools to solve their problems and demanding responsibility from all of our citizens. It's working, too. Crime has dropped for the last 4 years as we work to put 100,000 police on our streets and take gangs and guns away from our children. The welfare rolls have dropped by 2.1 million—that's a record reduction—as we work to help people find work but to require them to pursue work and education and to be responsible parents.

But there's still a lot more to do if we're going to make sure the American dream is a reality for all of our citizens in the 21st century. And we still have some pretty big problems in our society. None stands in our way of achieving our goals for America more than the epidemic of teen pregnancy. Today I want to talk to you about the progress we've made in preventing it and to tell you about the new steps we're taking to see to it that our progress carries into the new year and beyond.

We know many of our social problems have their roots in the breakdown of our families. We know children who are born to teen parents are more likely to drop out of school, get involved in crime and drugs, and end up in poverty; more likely to suffer ill health, even to die as infants. And teen parents often find their own lives are changed forever. Too many don't finish school, not ever, and therefore they never learn the skills they need to succeed as workers and parents in our new economy.

That's why our administration has worked so hard to reduce teen pregnancies, to increase responsibility among teen parents, and to prepare young people to be good parents at the right time. Last year I took executive action to require young mothers to stay in school or lose their welfare payments. We challenged members of the private sector to take action, and they did, with a national campaign to prevent teen pregnancy and community initiatives all over our Nation.

We're mounting an unprecedented crackdown on child support enforcement. Now child support collections are up over 50 percent compared to 4 years ago. And we've worked with community-based groups in the character education movement in our schools to help parents teach young people right from wrong.

Today we have new evidence that this approach is starting to work. Last year we learned that the teen birth rate has dropped for the 4th year in a row and that out-of-wedlock birth rates dropped for the first time in 19 years. According to a new report by the Department of Health and Human Services, the teen birth rates dropped more than 10 percent over 3 years in Wisconsin, Washington, and 8 other States. And altogether, from 1991 to 1995, the teen birth rate in America has dropped by 8 percent.

The progress we're making on teen pregnancy shows that we can overcome even our most