

## *Foreword*

On the morning of May 2, 1997, on the banks of the Tidal Basin, I participated in the dedication ceremony for the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, honoring this great leader of the “American Century.” Later that afternoon, in Baltimore, Maryland, I announced an historic agreement to balance the Federal budget. These two events—one, a reflection on our past, the other, a promise for our future—embodied the new American consensus on the role of Government that I have worked hard to forge since my first days as President.

We have quelled the contentious debate between those who view Government as the problem and those who view it as the solution. It is neither—as I stated in my Second Inaugural Address, which I had the great privilege to deliver. The challenges of a new age require not time-worn slogans but action. They require a limited, flexible Government characterized by fiscal discipline, enlightened innovation, and a commitment to creating opportunity for all Americans. The Government’s role—and its responsibility—is to affirm these cherished values in changing times.

Committed to these principles, America entered 1997 peaceful and secure, prosperous and stable, and determined to meet the challenges of the 21st Century. We discarded outdated dogmas and forged new relationships. In our own hemisphere, we celebrated the close friendship between the United States and Mexico, redefining our partnership in the face of new priorities—from combating drugs to preserving the environment. Across the Atlantic, where the barricades of the Cold War once stood, we built new alliances for global security and commerce. We completed new agreements: from the ratification of the landmark Chemical Weapons Convention, to the Founding Act that joins NATO and the Russian Federation in practical cooperation. In Helsinki, President Yeltsin and I agreed to pursue even deeper cuts in our nuclear arsenals. And in Denver, where I hosted the annual summit of the world’s industrialized democracies, we worked to combat new security threats, prepared our countries to succeed in the global economy, and opened a new chapter in the history of Europe.

Here at home, too, we set new and higher goals, refusing to grow complacent in our success. America’s economy was the strongest in a generation. Inflation remained low while employment surged, defying conventional wisdom, and both crime rates and welfare rolls were down dramatically. And to ensure that all Americans will share in the promise of the new century, I launched a national campaign to lift our standards of education. In my State of the Union Address I called not for a Federal mandate, but for a national commitment to tough, smart standards in education basics.

In June, at the University of California at San Diego, I opened a national dialogue on another challenge: race. When we finally lift the burden of race, it will not be because a law made it happen. It will be because the American people confronted and dispelled the myths that divide us. Americans of all backgrounds have responded to this challenge, leaving me more confident than ever that we will not come apart but come together; that we will enter the 21st Century not as separate, distinct groups, but as one America—at once diverse, and as the Founders declared, indivisible.

*William Clinton*