

of college, for graduate schools, for adults that have to go back to school. We've got an education IRA now that allows people to save for their kids' education and then withdraw from it tax free. We have dramatically expanded Pell grants. We have dramatically expanded work-study positions.

I love talking about all that. But when the Congressman was talking about the two people that I met in the handicapped section of the rally, it reminded me of something I've been thinking a lot about lately as I try to ponder how I should spend every remaining day in this term. I must say, when I saw that crowd out there today, Congressman, I thought it was a good thing we had the 22d amendment, which limited my ability to run again, because I'd do it again after today if I could. *[Laughter]*

Here's what I want to tell you. He saw a great crowd, and he remembered the stories. In Washington we tend to talk of statistics. Today it came out that in December our economy created another 370,000 jobs, now 14.3 million jobs in the first 5 years of our administration—14.3 million. Well, that's a statistic. But behind that statistic there are over 14 million stories. There are people who have the dignity of work, who can support their children, who can create a different future because of that statistic.

The statistics say there are about 14 million people—maybe more now—who have taken advantage of the family and medical leave law so they could get a little time off from work when there's a sick family member or a new baby born. That's the statistic. The story is it strengthens family life. One of the great challenges in this country is, how do people balance the demands of being parents and the demands of work? There is no more important job for Americans than taking care of their kids and raising them well. So how are we going to balance that? Those are stories; they're not statistics.

I saw the other day something over a quarter of a million—I can't remember—but something over a quarter million people who had criminal or mental health histories were not able to buy handguns because of the Brady law. How many people didn't get killed, didn't get wounded, didn't get injured because of that? We don't know, but every one of them has got a different story because of that.

How many million people will now go on to college or stay in longer because we have opened the doors of college to everyone? That's the biggest, that list I just mentioned to you, the biggest increase in aid to college education since the GI bill was passed when our soldiers came home 50 years ago from World War II. That will create millions of different stories.

The reason I undertook this race initiative this year, to try to get people together across all the racial and ethnic and religious lines that divide America, is because I know that when we can celebrate our differences and then say what binds us together as Americans is even more important, then there is no stopping the United States in the 21st century.

But you can't take that for granted. Look at the problems we see in the world, from the tribal wars in Africa to the ethnic fight in Bosnia, from the longstanding religious conflict in Ireland to the religious and ethnic conflict that endures in the Middle East. You look all over the world, people have a hard time getting along with those that either look different or believe differently than they do about the nature of God and humanity's relationship to God. It's fascinating.

But we in America have always said if you believe in freedom, if you believe in the rule of law, if you believe in our Constitution, and if you show up for work every day—or you show up for school if you're a kid—that's all you've got to do. You can be part of our America if you respect other people and their right to live, just as they respect you and your right to live. That is the fundamental lesson that if we can embody, we will continue to grow and prosper in the 21st century, and we will be able to lead the world toward greater peace and freedom.

Finally, I want to say a special, personal word of thanks to Ruben for taking all the heat to stick with me on the fast-track issue and trying to continue to expand America's outreach to the rest of the world.

I can tell you that I do not believe that there is a majority in the House, just like there is clearly not one—we had almost 70 percent of the Senate with us last year—there is not a majority of Members of the House of Representatives who don't want to continue to expand trade. What they reflect is the ambivalence, the fears people have about the