

into account; after-school programs; 100,000 police; the Brady bill; the family and medical leave law; the assault weapons ban; housing vouchers for people on welfare to move closer to where the jobs are; environmental right-to-know laws; and many, many other ideas, all within this basic framework of opportunity, responsibility, and community, all with a view toward a Government that was less bureaucratic but more active.

Today, we're in a position to make an assessment—very different from 1992. In 1992 Al Gore and I went around the country and made an argument to the American people, and they took a chance on us. And our friends in the Republican Party said, even after I got elected President, that none of it would work. They said our economic plan would explode the deficit and bring on another recession. They said our crime bill, with 100,000 police and the assault weapons ban and the Brady bill, would do nothing to lower the crime rate or the murder rate. And I could go on and on and on, through issue after issue after issue.

Well, back in 1992, it was, after all, just an argument, and the American people took a chance. Now I think we can safely say the argument is over, for one simple reason: It has been put to rest by the record. We have been fortunate enough to implement virtually all the ideas that were advocated in the 1992 campaign and most of those advanced in the '96 campaign. And we now have 7 years of measurable results. Some of them were mentioned by Senator Lieberman, but I think it's worth going over again, to set the stage for the point I want to make, which is the more important one.

We have the fastest economic growth in more than 30 years, the lowest unemployment rate and the smallest welfare rolls in 30 years, over 20 million new jobs, the lowest poverty rate in 20 years, the lowest murder rate in 30 years, the first back-to-back surpluses in our budget in 42 years, the highest homeownership in history. And in just a few weeks, now, we'll have the longest economic expansion in the history of the country, including those when we were fully mobilized for wartime.

In addition to that, there has been a definite improvement in the social complexion of America. We have the lowest child poverty rate in more than 20 years, the lowest female unemployment rate in 40 years, the lowest African-American unemployment and poverty rates ever recorded, the lowest Hispanic unemployment

rate ever, the lowest Hispanic poverty rate in 25 years, the lowest poverty rate among single-parent households in 46 years.

Along the way, we have immunized 90 percent of our children against serious childhood diseases for the first time in the history of America. We have 2 million more kids out of poverty and 2 million more children with health insurance. Twenty million people have taken advantage of the family and medical leave law. Over 450,000 people have been denied the right to buy a handgun because they were felons, fugitives, or stalkers, under the Brady bill. We have cleaner air, cleaner water. We have cleaned up 3 times as many toxic waste dumps as in the previous 12 years.

And yesterday I had the privilege to go to the Grand Canyon to set aside another million acres of land. Now, in the lower 48 States, we have protected more land than any administration in American history, except those of Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt.

Our country has helped to further the cause of peace from Northern Ireland to the Middle East to Bosnia and Kosovo to Haiti; established new partnerships with Latin America, Asia, and Africa for economic cooperation; restrained the nuclear missile programs of North Korea; fought against Iraq's weapons of mass destruction program; worked to reduce the threat of terrorism, chemical and biological weapons; cut thousands of nuclear weapons in the arsenals of Russia and the United States; expanded NATO; increased our debt relief and economic assistance to the poorest countries of the world. We have helped to minimize economic problems in Asia and Mexico and concluded over 270 trade agreements, all with a view toward implementing the basic ideas that were articulated in 1992 and developed in the years before through the Democratic Leadership Council.

Now what does that mean in practical terms to all of you and especially to the young people in this audience? It means for the first time in my lifetime, we begin a new century with greater prosperity, greater social progress, greater national self-confidence, with the absence of an internal crisis or an external threat that could derail our further forward movement. This has never happened in my lifetime.

The first time I came to George Washington University was in September of 1964, to a Judy Collins concert in Lisner Auditorium. [Laughter] I remember it well. Some of you were not alive