

family is doing well, the family of America does well.

In the State of the Union Address, I will put forth my last but still a new agenda, rooted in responsibility, designed to create a wider, stronger, more inclusive American community and to create new opportunity. Today I want to talk about one important element of the new opportunity agenda.

We know that we are now in a position to do more to create opportunity or, as Senator Lieberman and Al From say, to expand the winner's circle, to include men, women, and children still at the margins of society who are willing to work and ought to be rewarded for it.

The ideas that I will advance in the State of the Union will be built on what we have been talking about since 1992, advancing our understanding of what opportunity means in the information age. For example, once textbooks were central to a child's understanding in education; today, computers are. Once a ninth-grade education was all anyone needed for a job, then a high school education; today, the only people who have good chances of getting jobs which will grow over time in income, over a longer period of time, are those who have at least 2 years of some sort of post-high-school education and training.

One new opportunity agenda tries to take account of these new demands but also the new pressures on working families, including the need for quality, affordable child care and the importance of being able to access health care.

The main idea here is still the old idea of the American dream, that if you work hard and play by the rules, you ought to have a decent life and a chance for your children to have a better one. That's been the basic goal of so much of what we've done, from the earned-income tax credit to the empowerment zone program the Vice President ran, to the micro-credit program the First Lady's done so much to advance, to increasing the minimum wage, to greater access to health care and child care, to the partnerships that we have made with so many American businesses to help people move from welfare to work.

Now, I will have more to say about all these other ideas later. But I just want to talk a little bit today, in closing, about what we should do with the earned-income tax credit, something that you've heard Jessica say has already helped

the Cupp family to raise their children but something that is not as helpful now as it was when they first drew it.

In my State of the Union Address and in my budget for 2001, I will propose a substantial increase in the earned-income tax credit. It's a targeted tax cut for low income working families.

In 1992, as has already been said, one of the first things that I did as President was to ask Congress to dramatically expand the EITC. It had been on the books for some time. It had been broadly supported by Democrats and Republicans. President Reagan had hailed it. Everybody seemed to like it, because basically it involved a tax credit for people who were working and had children—almost all of them have children—and who just didn't have enough to get along on.

It is not just another acronym. The EITC was anonymous, I think, in America until a previous Congress tried to do something to it, and then all of a sudden it became something we all knew about and liked, which was immensely gratifying to me. But the EITC stands for, again I will say, the E is about "earned." It's about working. It's about a fundamental American value. It's about rewarding people who do what they're supposed to do.

I think every one of you, when Jessica was up here talking, describing the conditions of their children's birth, their work histories, how they had worked hard to provide a decent home for their kids, every one of us was sitting here pulling for them. Every one of you identified with their struggle. Every one of you could imagine what it would have been like to be the father in the delivery room and see these kids come out, one, two, three. *[Laughter]* Every one of you. That's what this country is all about, the dignity, the struggles, the triumphs, the joys of daily life that we all share.

And I think our Government has a responsibility, as part of our basic compact with the American people, to make sure that families like the Cupps find that work does pay, to make sure that we reward work and that we enable them to succeed at their even more important job, raising those three little girls. It is still, I will say again, society's most important job. And I suspect that every parent in this room today agrees with me about that.