

Foreword

I began the last six months of my term optimistic about the future of our country and grateful for the good fortune of this productive and historic time.

Never before had our nation enjoyed so much prosperity and social progress with no deep domestic crisis or overwhelming foreign threat to darken the prospect of progress. A spirit of possibility pervaded the Washington atmosphere and brought significant legislative accomplishments, which was remarkable in an election season.

The Congress passed our Lands Legacy initiative to provide long term funding to purchase precious lands from wilderness areas to urban greenspaces; increased funding for childcare and breast and cervical cancer treatment; doubled support for after-school programs, enough to serve 1.6 million children; enacted the largest increase in Head Start ever and the funds necessary to hire 35,000 new teachers; and passed the New Markets legislation, the last major bill I signed, designed to give Americans the same financial incentives to invest in poor neighborhoods and rural and Native American communities as they have to invest in Africa, Latin America, and Asia.

Congress also passed our plans to increase trade with Africa and our Caribbean neighbors; extended normal trade relations with China, paving the way for its entry into the World Trade Organization; enacted the historic Debt Relief Initiative, to forgive the foreign debts of the world's poorest nations, but only if they invest all the savings in education, health care, and economic development; and provided funding for Plan Colombia, to help Latin America's oldest democracy and her neighbors fight drug trafficking.

The Administration took a number of groundbreaking executive actions, including setting aside over 40 million roadless acres in our national forests, a decision characterized by the Audubon Society as the most important conservation move in forty years; establishing several more national monuments in environmentally sensitive areas; raising the standards for arsenic in water; providing \$300 million to feed 9 million poor children in the poorest nations if they come to school to get the meal; concluding trade agreements with Vietnam and Jordan, with the Jordanian agreement being the first ever to include environmental and labor standards; and laying the foundation for ending North Korea's dangerous missile program.

Of course, there were disappointments. I was unsuccessful in persuading Congress to pass a meaningful Patient's Bill of Rights; prescription drug coverage under the Medicare program for senior citizens; and a Hate Crimes bill, making a federal offense of violent crimes motivated by the victim's gender, disability, or sexual orientation. I am optimistic that all these bills will eventually pass.

My greatest disappointment was our failure to make a comprehensive peace agreement in the Middle East, notwithstanding arduous talks at Camp David and afterward in the region. I believe if a peace agreement is ever reached it will have to include the essential elements in the last American proposal, which brought the parties so close to peace at Taba.

I was honored to be the first President in forty years to visit Okinawa for the G-8 Summit and to make a second trip to Africa, this time to Tanzania, to work with President Mandela on the Burundi Peace Talks, and to Nigeria to support President Obasanjo's effort to reform Africa's largest nation and to intensify the struggle against AIDS.