

Foreword

This volume contains my speeches, messages, major statements, and press conferences from the first 6 months of 2001. This was a period of significant and shared accomplishment on a range of important issues.

My Administration set out to provide a new tone of civility and cooperation. I worked closely with congressional leaders of both parties to pass needed reforms.

Together, we defined an entirely new role for the Federal Government in American education. In the past, Federal authorities often imposed extensive mandates on States and local schools, without requiring high standards and proven outcomes for children. We reversed this approach—proposing greater local control and authority while expecting measured progress for children, proven by regular testing and revealed to parents. My education plan rested on a simple principle: Every child deserves an equal chance to grow in knowledge and character so that no child will be left behind.

I came to office believing the American people deserved tax relief—and I submitted a plan that offered more than a trillion and a half dollars in tax relief over the next 10 years. This tax relief proposal was combined with a plan to fund national priorities while limiting the growth in Government spending to a reasonable rate. Having inherited an economy that was in recession, it was clear that aggressive action on taxes was needed—and we took that action.

I also came to office believing there is real suffering in the shadow of America's affluence, and that we are called by conscience to respond. Faith-based and community organizations are meeting human needs that no government can hope to address. To assist them in their good works, I created the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives and submitted a plan that would put the Federal Government squarely on the side of America's armies of compassion.

In the first 6 months of my Administration, we made essential progress on other key issues. My trade agenda reflected a commitment to open markets around the world for the benefit of American workers and to provide lower prices and greater choice for American consumers. To improve our environment, we accelerated the cleanup of toxic brownfields, proposed full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and proposed almost five billion dollars over 5 years for the upkeep of our national parks. And to offer our seniors better health care coverage, I proposed doubling funding for Medicare over the next decade and endorsed a framework for its reform. At the core of this reform was a plan to make sure that every senior has access to affordable prescription drugs and that working families could use refundable tax credits to make health insurance more affordable.