

and agriculture can now be downloaded by a growing number of villages with Internet hook-ups. And Indian-Americans can now get on-line with people across the world who speak Telugu or Gujarati or Bengali.

Americans have fallen in love with Indian novels. I'm told that Prime Minister Vajpayee, when he's not writing Hindi poetry, actually likes to read John Grisham. [Laughter] You might be interested to note, Prime Minister, that he's a distant relative of mine. All the Grishams with money are distant relatives of mine. [Laughter]

And don't forget, whether we're in California or Calcutta, we all want to be a *crorepati*. Now, for the culturally challenged Americans among us, that's from India's version of "Who Wants To Be a Millionaire?" [Laughter]

Of course, our interdependence is about more than commerce and culture. We are also vulnerable to one another's problems, to the shock of economic turmoil, to the plague of infectious diseases, to the spread of deadly military technology, and as we have all too painfully seen, to the terrorists, drug traffickers, and criminals who take advantage of the openness of societies and borders.

The simple lesson of all this to me, Mr. Prime Minister, is that if we're already all in the same boat together, we had better find a way to steer together. We must overcome the fear some people in both our countries sometimes have, for

different historical reasons, that if we meet our friends halfway, somehow it will threaten our own independence or uniqueness.

That is why I am so gratified that, with your leadership and the efforts of so many people in this room, we have together built the strongest, most mature partnership India and America have ever known.

We have so very much more to learn from each other. In both our societies, you can find virtually every challenge humanity knows. And in both our societies, you can find virtually every solution to those challenges: confidence in democracy, tolerance for diversity, a willingness to embrace economic and social change.

So it is more than a slogan for Americans to say that India's success will be our success and that together India and America can change the world.

Ladies and gentlemen, I ask you now to join me in a toast to Prime Minister Vajpayee, to the Government and people of India, and the enduring partnership between our two great democracies.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:03 p.m. in a pavilion at the White House. The transcript made available by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee.

Statement on an Initiative for the Reintegration into Society of Ex-Offenders

September 18, 2000

Working together, we have made great strides in reducing crime across the country. The overall crime rate is at its lowest point in 25 years, and America is the safest it has been in a generation. But I believe we can make America even safer for our families. We must continue to confront emerging public safety challenges if we want to keep reducing crime in the 21st century.

One of the key challenges we must address is ex-offenders returning to their families and communities after their release from prison. While the Nation's prison population growth rate has slowed to its lowest level in two dec-

ades, more than 1.9 million individuals were incarcerated in State and Federal prisons and local jails in 1999. As a result, an unprecedented number of individuals will be released from prison in the coming years—nearly 600,000 in the next year alone. Moreover, this population poses a serious public safety risk. Studies show that nearly two-thirds of all released offenders will be arrested again within 3 years.

That is why I have proposed a new public safety initiative aimed at providing greater supervision for offenders reentering the community. My fiscal year 2001 budget includes a total

of \$145 million for innovative “reentry” programs to promote responsibility and help keep ex-offenders on track and crime- and drug-free. Through this reentry initiative, the Departments of Justice, Labor, and Health and Human Services will target resources in high-impact communities for increased law enforcement, drug testing, and treatment, and critical employment, training, and other services to help young ex-offenders work and meet their family responsibilities, including child support. The initiative would fund reentry partnerships between police, correctional agencies, local service providers, and key community organizations like faith-based fatherhood, and victims’ groups. Additionally, the initiative would fund reentry courts, based on the drug court model, to provide critical supervision and services for offenders.

Today the administration is taking some important steps to move us forward in this area. The Justice Department is announcing over \$57

million in Residential Substance Abuse Treatment (RSAT) grants to all 50 States to provide substance abuse treatment to offenders in State and local correctional facilities. The Department of Health and Human Services is also releasing child support demonstration grants, including a model approach to improve child support and promote responsible fatherhood among incarcerated fathers in Massachusetts. In addition, the Attorney General and other members of my administration are hosting a roundtable discussion with State and local leaders to spotlight an innovative reentry partnership already underway in the Druid Heights neighborhood in Baltimore, Maryland. Congress could significantly expand and help launch similar efforts across the country by fully funding our reentry initiative. I urge them to do this without delay. If we all do our part, we can build on our progress and strengthen America’s communities and families.

Remarks on Signing Legislation on Long-Term-Care Insurance for Federal Employees and Retirees and Members of the Armed Forces

September 19, 2000

I should say Joan is, first of all, an amazing person. And her husband and her three children are here. Their son and daughter thanked me for getting them out of school today. *[Laughter]* I just want the Members of Congress to know there are extended social benefits to these sort of—*[laughter]*.

I want to thank Senators Cleland, Mikulski, and Sarbanes for being here, and Representatives Scarborough, Allen, Davis, Morella, Holmes Norton, Cardin, Moran, and Cummings for coming. All of these Representatives in Congress—I think that’s 11—and many more are truly responsible for this happy day, and they worked in a genuine bipartisan spirit to produce this legislation.

I want to thank Janice Lachance and the others at the Office of Personnel Management who worked so hard on it, and the National Association of Retired Federal Employees, the Retired Officers Association, the Treasury employees union, and others.

I’m very honored to be signing this legislation today, so near the end of my service, because

the first bill I signed as President was the family and medical leave law. And since then, some—more than 25 million of our fellow citizens have taken time off from work to care for a child or an ill loved one without losing their job. It’s made a difference in America. Everywhere I go, somebody comes up and mentions it to me even today.

We come in the same spirit to sign the Long-Term Care Security Act, and over time, this legislation will help more and more families to meet the challenge of caring for our parents and grandparents and others in our families that need long-term care.

Part of the long-term-care problem is what I affectionately call a high-class problem. We’re living longer. In 1900 the average American couldn’t expect to live beyond 50. Today, the average American’s life expectancy is 77. Americans who live to be 65 have the highest life expectancy in the world. They can expect to live to be almost 83. Amazing as it sounds, there are currently more than 65,000 living Americans who are at least 100 years old. That’s enough