

it's a lot to a lot of people. It's a lot to people whose energy bills have gone up because we don't have an energy policy in America. There's a lot of talk about national debt, and that's important. But there's a lot of credit card debt that are burdening people; \$1,600 can help a lot; \$1,600 can help set money aside for a child; \$1,600 is real money. And I'm going to remind those folks again whose money it is: It's the people's money, your money.

I haven't been your President for a long period of time, but I can report that it is a fantastic experience. I can't tell you what an honor it is. I can't tell you what a high honor it is to represent the American people in Washington. That's why it's important to come out and get my batteries charged in places like De Kalb County, Georgia; to be able to look my fellow citizens in the eye and say, I know you're counting on me, but I'm counting on you, as well.

I'm counting on you, when you find a neighbor in need, to reach out a hand, and say, "What can I do, brother or sister, to help you?" I'm counting on you to run a Boy Scout troop and to teach our children right from wrong. Our Nation counts on people who have got good heart and good will to say, "What can I do to make

my neighborhood a better place," instead of hoping that the Federal Government, in its infinite wisdom, waves a magic wand and there's educational excellence in every school in Georgia. We need the good citizens of these communities to get involved with public education, to make sure our teachers are supported, excellence is demanded, accountability is in place so no children are left behind. No, I'm counting on you.

The reason I'm so optimistic about America, though, is that our land is full of loving people. The great strength of the country doesn't lie in the halls of our governments; it lies in the homes of our people. The great strength of America is the fact that America is full of caring and loving, God-fearing and decent souls. And I am proud to be your President.

Thank you all for coming. God bless, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:10 p.m. in the atrium at the Fernbank Museum of Natural History. In his remarks, he referred to Vernon Jones, chief executive officer, De Kalb County; Georgia State Senators Terrell Starr, Nathan Dean, and Eric Johnson; and Georgia State Representatives Lynn Westmoreland and Thomas Buck III.

Remarks at a Leadership Forum in Atlanta

March 1, 2001

The President. Bill, thank you very much. And Lydia, thank you for the tour. This is a hospital, but it's also—it's a place full of love. And I was most touched by meeting the parents and the kids and the nurses and the docs, all of whom are working hard to save lives. I want to thank the moms who are here. Jim, thank you very much for your hospitality. And Tommy, I'll get to you in a minute. *[Laughter]*

There's a lot of talk about budgets right now, and I'm here to talk about the budget. My job as the President is to submit a budget to the Congress and to set priorities, and one of the priorities that we've talked about is making sure the health care systems are funded. And Dr. Woods talked about our commitment—and it's a joint commitment—it's a commitment I'm confident the Congress will make with me to double the NIH funding by the year 2003.

That's an important commitment of the Federal Government. You know more than me about how effective those dollars can be, and it's a wise use of Federal taxpayers' money. It means that the budget will be increased to 28 billion a year by the year 2003.

Secondly, I want to talk about two other aspects of health care before I get into how this all works. One is, we're going to double Medicare over the next 10 years from \$216 billion to \$549 billion. It's a significant increase of expenditures. It's \$159 billion in new Medicare spending, above and beyond that which was projected. It means that our country is going to make a firm commitment to those who rely upon Medicare dollars, the elderly, the teaching hospitals. It is an important Federal commitment.

By the way, with the expenditure of Medicare money, we also have got to have the courage to reform Medicare to make it a program where seniors have got more choices and more options from which to choose to match their particular needs. And all the reforms must insist that prescription drug coverage becomes an integral part of the Medicare package.

And finally, an interesting opportunity we have in the country, as far as I'm concerned, is to increase funding for community health centers. I'd like to increase the number of community health centers from 3,000 to 4,200 over the next 5 years, doubling the number of people who will be served. Community health centers are good opportunities to take pressure off of hospital emergency rooms, for starters. They're opportunities for people to get primary care who are indigent poor, maybe newly arrived to America. It is a wise expenditure of taxpayers' money.

A point I'm trying to make to the people of Georgia and will make around the country is, the first job of a President is to set priorities. Not only are these, the items I just talked about, priorities, so is public schools. It's a priority. As a matter of fact,

the largest increase in my budget is for public education.

However, I'm mindful of the fact that the Federal Government is only a partial provider of funds and should never run the schools. I strongly advocate and strongly will fight for local control of schools. One size does not fit all when it comes to the education of children.

As an aside, one of the interesting reforms that I hope we get through the Congress says two things: One, we're going to provide flexibility to local folks to run the schools; and secondly, if you receive Federal money, you must measure. You must show us whether or not children are learning to read and write and add and subtract and, if not, correct.

This is an interesting place to talk about diagnosing problems, right here in a hospital. Well, we need to do the same thing in education, particularly in the early years. We must diagnose whether or not a child has deficiencies in reading, for example, and solve them early—and solve them early. And that's the whole spirit of reform that we're proposing.

I want to pay the military more, folks. In my budget, we increase military pay by a billion dollars over the current pay. But having met all these—and set aside all the payroll taxes for Social Security—that's what we do, 2.6 trillion over 10 years will only be spent on Social Security. Now, that sounds like a lot of money, and it is, except we've got much more money than that available to figure out what to do with. And so \$2 trillion will be spent to pay down debt over the next 10 years.

And people say, "Well, you need—why not more? Why not 800 billion more, or maybe a trillion more?" And the reason why is, because the debt doesn't come due over—the amount of debt that comes due in a 10-year period is 2 trillion. There is no need to pay a premium to retire debt early. It would cost taxpayers more money, and that doesn't make any sense.

We still have money left. We've got pretty good cashflows at the Federal level. And what I want to do is set aside a trillion dollars for contingencies and with the remaining money, which amounts to 1.6 trillion over 10 years, remember who paid the money in the first place.

The point I want to make in this haven of love, a place of deep concern about children's health, is that we can fund priorities. If we're wise about how we budget money, we can set aside important priorities, and we can give people some money back. And I think that's really important. I know it's important at this moment in today's—in history, because, one, our economy is sputtering. And the money—if we can accelerate a tax relief plan to people like Tommy and Cynthia and everybody else up here, it will put more money in people's pockets, which will cause them to spend, which will cause the economy to get a second wind, we hope.

Secondly, there are a lot of people paying higher energy bills than they paid in the past. It's like a tax. And I think it's wise—if we're able to prioritize and realize we have more money—to help people manage their own personal accounts, their own balance sheets. A lot of people have got consumer debt that they're worried about. And there's a lot of focus on national debt; I focus on the people's balance sheets, as well.

And so I'm confident that not only can we meet our priorities but make sure a guy like Tommy Winfield and his family, who pay \$1,380 of Federal income taxes, gets relief. In his case, he will end up paying no Federal income taxes under this plan. His tax burden will go from \$1,380 to zero. Now, there are some sophisticates who will say that's not very much money, but it's plenty for him.

Tommy Winfield. Mr. President, let them ask me.

The President. Let the record note, this was not rehearsed. [Laughter]

At any rate, I appreciate the chance to come and make my case for the budget—for the budget. And we had a great rally in De Kalb County, and it gave me an opportunity to remind people that if you're concerned about the budget and you want there to be fiscal sanity in Washington with priorities set and funded, write your Senators and your Congressmen.

I have great faith in the people of America. And coming to this hospital and seeing and feeling the love on the floor we were on, knowing there's dedicated doctors, loving nurses, spending a lot of time trying to help kids, renews my faith in the greatness of America. I told the people earlier, the great strength of this country is not because of our Government; it is because of our people. And this hospital is a living example of what I'm talking about.

So Dr. Woods, thank you for giving me a chance to come, and I'm looking forward to hearing from our other panelists.

[At this point, the forum proceeded.]

The President. Thanks, Tommy, I appreciate you saying that. You triggered something in my mind when you said that. Again, I want everybody to understand we've set priorities and funded them. There's a fundamental issue at stake here. And that is, do you trust Tommy to spend his own money? That's really one of the issues, if you think about it.

And I want the people of Georgia to hear loud and clear my plan trusts the Tommys of the world to make the decisions. You see, I think he—you can best decide what's best for your family, better than I can decide what's best for your family. And I shouldn't be trying to decide what's best for your family, after we meet some common needs in the country. Defense is a common need; health care, health research is a common need. Education is a common need.

Again, I just want to repeat, please don't hope that the Federal Government is going to wave a magic wand and there will be

educational excellence. As a matter of fact, it's less likely there will be educational excellence if there's power in Washington, DC, because the schools in Georgia are different in many ways from the issues that face Texas schools. And so we should not try to federalize education, but there are some things we can do by spending money wisely and insisting upon local control of schools and accountability.

After those needs are met, you're the person I want spending your own money. As a matter of fact, it's not the Government's money; it's yours to begin with. And that's kind of what I'm trying to get changed, the whole attitude about the people's money. As a matter of fact, we're not giving you any money back. As a matter of fact, I am trying to advocate that we're not going to take it in the first place, so you get to keep it. You know, we're spending on tax cuts. Well, that's kind of contradictory language, because it's your money. And anyway, it's a mindset that I'm trying to get—trying to impress upon the people.

And the best way to get this done, in my opinion, is to rally the will of the people. I've got great faith in the American people, and that's what this is all about.

And so I'm so honored that you all are giving me a chance. It's an educational experience for me. It's a heartening experience for me, and it's a chance for me to move around the country, to get outside of Washington and sit face to face with real Americans who are working hard for their families, love their kids, love their country.

And so it's an honor to be here, Bill. And thank you all very much, Lydia. Thanks to the moms. I thank you for your courage and your love, and God bless you all.

Participant. Thank you, Mr. President. God bless America.

The President. Thank you. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:17 p.m. in the auditorium of Children's Healthcare of Atlanta at Egleston. In his remarks, he referred to Bill Woods, chief medical officer, Lydia Gonzalez Ryan, clinical director, and Tommy Winfield, staff member, AFLAC Cancer and Blood Disorders Program, and Jim Tally, president and chief executive officer, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta; and Cynthia DeWild, whose son Joseph was a patient in the program.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report on Critical Infrastructure Protection

March 1, 2001

To the Congress of the United States:

Pursuant to section 1053 of the Defense Authorization Act of 2001 (Public Law 106–398), enclosed is a comprehensive report detailing the specific steps taken by the Federal Government to develop critical infrastructure assurance strategies as outlined by Presidential Decision Directive No. 63 (PDD–63).

This report was drafted by the previous Administration and is a summary of their

efforts as of January 15. However, since this requirement conveys to my Administration, I am forwarding the report.

Critical infrastructure protection is an issue of importance to U.S. economic and national security, and it will be a priority in my Administration. We intend to examine the attached report and other relevant