

and “If you’ve got a problem, blame somebody else,” to a culture in which we all understand we’re responsible for the decisions we make. If you’re a mom or a dad, you’re responsible for loving your children. If you’re a proud American, you’re responsible for helping a neighbor in need. If you run a corporation in America, you’re responsible for being honest on your balance sheet with all your assets and liabilities.

But most of all, in order to be a patriot in this country, it is important to serve something greater than yourself. And it’s happening. And it’s happening because I’m fortunate enough to be the President of

the greatest nation—I mean the greatest nation—on the face of the Earth.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:16 p.m. at the Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Bill Frist, chairman, National Republican Senatorial Committee; Representative Tom Davis, chairman, National Republican Congressional Committee; Robert A. Ingram, chief operating officer and president of pharmaceutical operations, GlaxoSmithKline; and country music artists Steve Wariner, Amy Grant, and Vince Gill.

Remarks at the White House Fitness Expo June 20, 2002

Please be seated—except for those of you behind me. *[Laughter]* Welcome to the White House, and thanks for joining us as we launch a new national initiative designed to help the American people live longer, live healthier, and live better lives.

Better health is an individual responsibility, and it is an important national goal. We’re making great progress in preventing and detecting and treating many chronic diseases, and that’s good for America. We’re doing a better job with heart disease and cancer and diabetes. We’re living longer than any generation in history. Yet we can still improve, and we can do more. And it’s not all that difficult to do. When it comes to your health, even little steps can make a big difference.

I really appreciate the First Lady for joining us. She is—she’s a regular exerciser. I appreciate Tommy Thompson, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, for being here. Tommy told me the other day, even at his advanced age he’s thinking about running a marathon. *[Laughter]* I appreciate very much

Gale Norton, who’s the Secretary of the Interior, for being here as well, Gale. Thank you both for coming.

I want to thank all the athletes who are here, and physical fitness experts and Olympians and Paralympians and President’s Council on Physical Fitness are joining us today. I’m honored you’re here.

This is an important message that we’re sending to America. When America and Americans are healthier, our whole society benefits. And that’s important to know. If you’re interested in improving America, you can do so by taking care of your own body.

This year, heart disease will cost our country at least \$183 billion. If just 10 percent of adults began walking regularly, we could save billions in dollars in costs related to heart disease. Research suggests that we can reduce cancer deaths in America by one-third simply by changing our diets and getting more exercise. The evidence is clear: A healthier America is a stronger America.

And today I’m taking two actions to put a new emphasis on health and fitness in

America. First, I'm appointing the men and women you see behind me to the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. These are professional athletes, trainers, U.S. Olympians, executives from the public and private sector, and physicians. Lynn Swann, a friend and a football legend—not necessarily a friend to Cowboy fans, I might add—[laughter]—will be the Chairman of this Council. I named him Chairman because, after a discussion with him and with his friends, he is committed to using the platform that he now has to make America a healthier place by encouraging individual responsibility. I appreciate so very much his Vice Chairman, Dot Richardson, an Olympic gold medalist in softball and an orthopedic surgeon, for joining us as well.

These fine Americans will serve as role models and will join me in working with Americans to encourage exercise and healthy choices in life. Together, we're going to educate our country. We can do so by adopting four guideposts in a new initiative called Healthier US. First, Americans should be physically active every day. Second, develop good eating habits. Third, take advantage of preventative screenings. And fourth, don't smoke, don't do drugs, and don't drink excessively. These four simple measures will help our country a lot by helping our fellow Americans a lot.

First, let me talk about physical fitness. People ought to work out every day, one way or another. A report released today by the Department of Health and Human Services confirms that virtually all individuals can benefit from regular physical activity. Yet more than a third of our children, 9th through 12th grades, failed to exercise at least 20 minutes a day, 3 times a week. More than a third of our children don't get an hour's worth of exercise a week. Secondly, 60 percent of American adults do not get enough exercise to improve their health.

With this initiative, we propose simple solutions. How about just walking 30 min-

utes a day? That's pretty simple. It's easy to do. It will make you feel a lot better, by the way. How about parents just playing a game with children in their backyard for 30 minutes or an hour? It would be good for the child; it would be good for the parent; and it's good for the family.

Regular hiking through a park can add years to a person's life. To honor that commitment, I want to thank Secretary Norton for waiving all entrance fees this weekend to national parks and Federal lands. If you're interested in doing something about your health, go to one of our parks and take a hike. [Laughter]

Second, eat a nutritious diet. That means at least five fruits or vegetables a day. I've got a little work in my family. We've been working on the old—well, been working on "Number 41" to eat broccoli for all these years. [Laughter] But it's good advice. If you're interested in your health, cut out fatty foods; watch what you're eating. And by the way, when you eat better food, it will give you more energy for your 30-minute walk.

Third, get preventative screenings. These are simple tests that can save your life. Screenings available through your doctor may tell you if you're prone to developing certain diseases, such as diabetes or cancer or heart disease. By acting on information, you can help prevent a potentially life-threatening illness.

And fourth, cut out tobacco, drugs, and excessive drinking. Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of death and disease in America. Drug and alcohol abuse destroys our families and lives and hopes of our fellow Americans. Our message is clear: Avoiding tobacco, drugs, and excessive alcohol can save your life.

This initiative is part of this administration's ongoing commitment to raising awareness about the benefits of exercise and healthy choices. Exercise is a part of my daily life. It kind of helps me deal with the stress a little better. After I get a good run in, I even like the press corps a lot

better. [Laughter] I don't know if they like me a lot better after my run. But I value exercise. It's an important part of a balanced life.

I've urged the folks at work inside the White House to exercise on a daily basis. As an employer, I insist that they take time off, out of their daily grind, to get some exercise. I found them to be better able to communicate and happier on their job when they take some time, and it doesn't matter to me when they do it. They can do it any time of the day, so long as they get it done.

Today I'm going to sign an Executive order directing Federal agencies to work together to develop new policies to promote fitness. And at the White House, Federal agencies and businesses and professional sport leagues have set up activities, as you can see, to educate people about better eating, preventative screenings, and the danger of substance abuse.

On Saturday, members of my staff will join the First Lady and me in a fitness challenge to serve as an example to get people running and exercising and walking.

And throughout this year and so long as we're here in Washington, we will do everything we can, as we travel around the country, to demonstrate ways to help keep America fit.

It is important for all of us to be responsible for the decisions we make in life. It's important for us to be responsible for taking care of our own health. And as we do so, not only will we each have a more fulfilling life, collectively we'll make a great contribution to the country we love.

I want to thank you for coming. I want to thank you for your commitment to making America the greatest place it can possibly be. Take a small step for America by exercising on a daily basis.

God bless you all, and God bless the country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. The Executive order of June 6 establishing the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports and the Executive order of June 20 on activities to promote personal fitness are listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Exchange With Reporters at the White House Fitness Expo June 20, 2002

President's Workout

Q. Have you worked out today, sir?

The President. This afternoon. As you know, I'm giving a speech tonight, the Sullivan speech. So after working all day long, before the speech, I'll work out. I'm going to lift weights. I'm going to do a little elliptical training. I'm going to do some physical fitness stuff—not an outdoor run today.

Upcoming Speech on the Middle East

Q. How's the other speech coming?

The President. The speech I'm giving tonight?

Q. No, the other one.

The President. I'll give it at the appropriate time. Thank you all.

NOTE: The exchange began at 8:33 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.