

why it's important for the economic vitality of the country. We're making good progress. We'll get a good bill, and I look forward to signing it.

### **Russia-U.S. Relations**

**Q.** Mr. President, are you going to apologize to the Russians for digging under their Embassy?

**The President.** You need to talk to the appropriate folks involved with that.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:45 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

### **Remarks Honoring the NCAA Football and Women's Softball Champion Oklahoma Sooners**

*March 5, 2001*

**The President.** Sit down. [Laughter] It's an honor to be here. This is the first championship teams that I've had a chance to honor since I've been the President. And it's a big deal for a boy from Texas to welcome the folks from Oklahoma here. [Laughter] I was going to say, "my fellow Texans."

I am so proud of you all. Thank you for coming. Senator, thank you for being here. Congressman, I appreciate you being here. President Boren, you had quite a year—you had quite a year.

First, let me say to the unsinkable bunch of upstarts, the ladies softball team: Congratulations. Coach Patricia Gasso has done a fabulous job, and I'm honored that you all have come. I am fully aware of the dominance of California teams in ladies softball, and you proved that those of us who live in the middle part of the country can win, as well.

And to the football team. Congratulations, coach, I know you're proud of these people. We share a lot in common. We both started our respective campaigns as underdogs. [Laughter] We both won our championships in the State of Florida. [Laughter] There's a big difference though: It took you all 60 minutes. [Laughter] It took me 36 days. [Laughter]

But it's my honor to welcome you all here. I like to remind those who are champions on the field that it's important to be a champion off the field, too; that there's a lot of young men and women who look at you all as champs. And that adds an added burden, an added sense of responsibility; that if part of our role as role models is to set the—is to explain the difference between right and wrong to people looking at us, then we've got to live that way.

Being the champ, the national champ, is an awesome responsibility. It means not only do you get to carry a trophy, it means you have the burden of setting the example, of saying to young kids, somebody cares about you enough so that we'll help you make the right choices in life, so they get to be a champion, not only on the football fields or on the softball diamonds but in life—in life. And so, I am so honored you're here. I really appreciate you coming.

I'm proud of your victory. It's a big deal to be the national champs. But it's also going to be a big deal to set the right example for some young lady or some young man who wonders whether or not life's worth it all, as you've proven it is. You've proven that if you set a goal and work hard, you can achieve it. And so congratulations to the great University of Oklahoma teams. I'm proud to welcome you. I'm proud you're here in the people's house. It is an honor to be your President—more than you can possibly imagine. And it's an honor to welcome you here.

God bless.

[At this point, University of Oklahoma President David L. Boren, head softball coach Patty Gasso, Director of Athletics Joe Castiglione, and head football coach Bob Stoops each made brief remarks and presented the President with gifts.]

**The President.** Well, thank you all for coming. I look forward to shaking everybody's hand. And I guess it's time to get a few pictures.

But again, I want to welcome you all here. This is a majestic place, as you can see. It is a magnificent home, and it's the people's house. That's what we like to call it. We're just temporary residents. But it's an honor to have you all here. I hope you get a good

tour and realize this country is a fantastic place. It's based upon the greatest principle of all: We're all free, and we're all equal under the eyes of God.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:45 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

### **Proclamation 7413—Save Your Vision Week, 2001**

*March 5, 2001*

*By the President of the United States of America*

#### **A Proclamation**

As part of our regular health routine, we often overlook vision. Good vision affects how we work, communicate, and learn. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, about 80 million Americans suffer from potentially blinding eye diseases, 3 million have low vision, and 200,000 more are severely visually impaired.

Visual impairment can strike at any time. Some eye diseases, such as diabetic retinopathy, can develop and damage the eye without warning. Also, visual impairment can develop more often in certain groups. For example, some groups of Americans have a higher risk for glaucoma, including those over the age of 60, African Americans over the age of 40, and people who have a family history of the disease.

Visual impairment can also strike the future of this country: our children. Infants and young children are not immune to eye disorders. Amblyopia, poor vision in an eye that did not develop normal sight during early childhood, causes problems in very early life. Early vision screening is important for our young people to ensure that their eyes receive immediate treatment if problems are found. Also, myopia, or nearsightedness, affects 15 percent of those entering high school.

Many occupations and forms of recreation can present dangers to the eye. Eye protection is a necessity when jobs create the possibility of eye injury. Wearing protective eyewear when playing sports can cut down on eye injury by as much as 90 percent, and

wearing eye protection when working in the yard can also reduce the number of serious eye injuries.

The best way to detect eye diseases and disorders is through a dilated eye exam. Many eye problems can be prevented or reversed with early detection and appropriate intervention.

There are many other ways we can help reduce vision disorders. We can make healthy lifestyle choices for ourselves and our families, clinicians can emphasize prevention in their practices, and scientists can pursue new treatments and prevention strategies through research. Using both traditional and innovative approaches, we can all work to make better vision and vision protection an important part of our Nation's public health agenda.

The Congress, by joint resolution approved December 30, 1963 (77 Stat. 629; 36 U.S.C. 138), has authorized and requested the President to proclaim the first week in March of each year as "Save Your Vision Week."

**Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush,** President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim March 4 through March 10, 2001, as "Save Your Vision Week." I urge all Americans to participate by making eye care and eye safety an important part of their lives and to ensure that dilated eye examinations are included in their regular health maintenance programs. I invite eye care professionals, the media, and all public and private organizations dedicated to preserving eyesight to join in activities that will raise awareness of the measures we can take to protect and sustain our vision.

**In Witness Whereof,** I have hereunto set my hand this fifth day of March, in the year of our Lord two thousand one, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fifth.

**George W. Bush**

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NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on March 8.