

young people face, even when they are difficult to talk about. Each year, about 3 million teenagers contract sexually transmitted diseases that can harm them or kill them or prevent them from ever becoming parents. In my budget, I propose a grassroots campaign to help inform families about these medical risks. We will double Federal funding for abstinence programs so schools can teach this fact of life: abstinence for young people is the only certain way to avoid sexually transmitted diseases. Decisions children now make can affect their health and character for the rest of their lives. All of us, parents, schools and government, must work together to counter the negative influence of the culture and to send the right messages to our children.

A strong America must also value the institution of marriage. I believe we should respect individuals as we take a principled stand for one of the most fundamental, enduring institutions of our civilization. Congress has already taken a stand on this issue by passing the Defense of Marriage Act, signed in 1996 by President Clinton. That statute protects marriage under Federal law as the union of a man and a woman, and declares that one State may not redefine marriage for other States. Activist judges, however, have begun redefining marriage by court order, without regard for the will of the people and their elected representatives. On an issue of such great consequence, the people's voice must be heard. If judges insist on forcing their arbitrary will upon the people, the only alternative left to the people would be the constitutional process. Our Nation must defend the sanctity of marriage.

The outcome of this debate is important, and so is the way we conduct it. The same moral tradition that defines marriage also teaches that each individual has dignity and value in God's sight.

It is also important to strengthen our communities by unleashing the compassion of America's religious institutions. Religious charities of every creed are doing some of the most vital work in our country: mentoring children, feeding the hungry, taking the hand of the lonely. Yet government has often denied social service grants and contracts to these groups, just because they have a cross or a star of David or a crescent on the wall. By executive order, I have opened billions of dollars in grant money to competition that includes faith-based charities. Tonight I ask you to codify this into law, so people of faith can know that the law will never discriminate against them again.

In the past, we have worked together to bring mentors to children of prisoners and provide treatment for the addicted and help for the homeless. Tonight I ask you to consider another group of Americans in need of help. This year, some 600,000 inmates will be released from prison back into society. We know from long experience that if

they cannot find work or a home or help, they are much more likely to commit more crimes and return to prison. So tonight, I propose a 4-year, \$300 million Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative to expand job training and placement services, to provide transitional housing, and to help newly released prisoners get mentoring, including from faith-based groups. America is the land of second chance; and when the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life.

For all Americans, the last 3 years have brought tests we did not ask for and achievements shared by all. By our actions, we have shown what kind of Nation we are. In grief, we have found the grace to go on. In challenge, we rediscovered the courage and daring of a free people. In victory, we have shown the noble aims and good heart of America. And having come this far, we sense that we live in a time set apart.

I have been a witness to the character of the people of America, who have shown calm in times of danger, compassion for one another, and toughness for the long haul. All of us have been partners in a great enterprise. And even some of the youngest understand that we are living in historic times. Last month a girl in Lincoln, Rhode Island, sent me a letter. It began, "Dear George W. Bush. If there is anything you know I, Ashley Pearson, age 10 can do to help anyone, please send me a letter and tell me what I can do to save our country." She added this P.S.: "If you can send a letter to the troops, please put, 'Ashley Pearson believes in you.'"

Tonight, Ashley, your message to our troops has just been conveyed. And, yes, you have some duties yourself. Study hard in school, listen to your mom and dad, help someone in need, and when you and your friends see a man or woman in uniform, say "thank you." And, Ashley, while you do your part, all of us here in this great Chamber will do our best to keep you and the rest of America safe and free.

My fellow citizens, we now move forward with courage and faith. Our Nation is strong and steadfast. The cause we serve is right because it is the cause of all mankind. The momentum of freedom in our world is unmistakable, and it is not carried forward by our power alone. We can trust in that greater power Who guides the unfolding of the years. And in all that is to come, we can know that His purposes are just and true.

May God continue to bless America. (Applause, the Members rising.)

At 10 o'clock and 6 minutes p.m., the President of the United States, accompanied by the committee of escort, retired from the Hall of the House of Representatives.

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms escorted the invited guests from the Chamber in the following order:

The members of the President's Cabinet.

The Associate Justice of the Supreme Court.

The Acting Dean of the Diplomatic Corps.

JOINT SESSION DISSOLVED

The SPEAKER. The Chair declares the joint meeting of the two Houses now dissolved.

Accordingly, at 10 o'clock and 12 minutes p.m., the joint meeting of the two Houses was dissolved.

The Members of the Senate retired to their Chamber.

MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HOUSE ON THE STATE OF THE UNION

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I move that the message of the President be referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union and ordered printed.

The motion was agreed to.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. ABERCROMBIE (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and the balance of the week on account of business in the district.

Ms. BALDWIN (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of travel problems.

Mr. CRAMER (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of official business in the district.

Mr. REYES (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and the balance of the week on account of family illness.

Mr. NADLER (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of personal reasons.

Ms. CARSON of Indiana (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and January 21 on account of official business.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of a death in the family.

Ms. DUNN (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today on account of illness.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today on account of being detained in his district.

Mr. EVERETT (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today and January 21 on account of having the flu.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. MCNULTY) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. EMANUEL, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. MEEK of Florida, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. SOLIS, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.
 Ms. NORTON, for 5 minutes, today.
 Mr. WU, for 5 minutes, today.
 Mr. LEVIN, for 5 minutes, today.
 Mr. McDERMOTT, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. CONYERS, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. BURGESS, for 5 minutes, January 27.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Member (at his own request) to revise and extend his remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. PAYNE, for 5 minutes, today.

SENATE BILLS REFERRED

Bills of the Senate of the following titles were taken from the Speaker's table and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. 1172. An act to establish grants to provide health services for improved nutrition, increased physical activity, obesity prevention, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

S. 1177. An act to prevent tobacco smuggling, to ensure the collection of all tobacco taxes, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

S. 1267. An act to amend the District of Columbia Home Rule Act to provide the District of Columbia with autonomy over its budgets, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Government Reform; in addition to the Committee on Rules for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned; and in addition to the Committee on Appropriations for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

S. 2000. An act to extend the special postage stamp for breast cancer research for 2 years; to the Committee on Government Reform; in addition to the Committee on Energy and Commerce for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned; and in addition to the Committee on Armed Services for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 13 minutes p.m.), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, January 21, 2004, at 10 a.m.

NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING

U.S. CONGRESS,
 OFFICE OF COMPLIANCE,
 Washington, DC, December 8, 2003.

Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,
 Speaker of the House, House of Representatives,
 Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER:

WITHDRAWAL OF NOTICE OF PROPOSED SUBSTANTIVE RULE MAKING, AND ADVANCE NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULE MAKING

On November 13, 2001, the Board of Directors of the Office of Compliance submitted proposed substantive rules for comment, pursuant to section 4(c)(4) of the Veterans Employment Opportunities Act of 1998 ("VEOA") (2 U.S.C. 1316a(4)), and section 304(b) of the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 (2 U.S.C. 1384(b)). The proposed substantive rules would implement section 4(c) of the VEOA, which affords to covered employees of the legislative branch the rights and protections of selected provisions of veterans' preference law. The Notice of Proposed Rule Making was printed in the Congressional Record on December 6, 2001 at H9065, et seq., and S12539 et seq.

In response to that Notice, the Board of Directors received comments which addressed the difficulty in promulgating regulations applying substantive veterans' preference rights in the absence of formal civil service merit personnel systems in the legislative branch. In view of the comments, and upon further consideration, the Board has decided to withdraw the notice of proposed rule making of November 13, 2001, printed in the Congressional Record of December 6, 2001.

The Board of Directors has initiated a new process of drafting proposed substantive regulations which would implement section 4(c) of the VEOA. The Board invites the informal input of interested parties in advance of the Board's completion of new draft regulations and publication of a new Notice of Proposed Rule Making in the future. Interested parties are invited to contact the Executive Director of the Office of Compliance, Room LA-200, 110 2nd Street, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20540; 202-724-9250, TDD 202-426-1912.

We request that this notice be published in the Congressional Record. Any inquiries regarding this notice should be addressed to the Office of Compliance at our address above, or by telephone or TDD.

Sincerely,

SUSAN S. ROBFOGEL,
 Chair.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

5945. A letter from the Congressional Review Coordinator, APHIS, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule—Ports of Entry for Certain Plants and Plants Products [Docket No. 03-067-1] received December 19, 2003, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

5946. A letter from the Congressional Review Coordinator, APHIS, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule—Pine Shoot Beetle; Additions to Quarantined Areas [Docket No. 03-120-1] received January 13, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

5947. A letter from the Congressional Review Coordinator, APHIS, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's

final rule—Golden Nematode; Regulated Areas [Docket No. 03-082-1] received January 13, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

5948. A letter from the Congressional Review Coordinator, APHIS, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule—Karnal Bunt; Regulated Areas [Docket No. 03-047-1] received January 13, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

5949. A letter from the Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service, Science & Technology, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule—Removal of Cottonseed Chemist Licensing Program, Updating of Commodity Laboratory and Office Addresses, and Adoption of Information Symbols [Docket Number ST02-03] (RIN: 0581-AC18) received January 5, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

5950. A letter from the Administrator, Agriculture Marketing Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule—Tomatoes Grown in Florida; Increased Assessment Rate [Docket No. FV03-966-4 FR] received January 5, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

5951. A letter from the Deputy Associate Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule—Fluroxypyr; Pesticide Tolerance [OPP-2003-0377; FRL-7340-5] received December 29, 2003, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

5952. A letter from the Deputy Associate Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule—Cyprodinil; Time-Limited Pesticide Tolerance [OPP-2003-0394; FRL-7337-5] received December 29, 2003, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

5953. A letter from the Deputy Associate Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule—Vinclozolin; Time-Limited Pesticide Tolerances Technical Correction [OPP-2003-0311; FRL-7337-7] received December 9, 2003, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

5954. A letter from the Deputy Associate Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule—Extension of Tolerances for Emergency Exemptions Multiple Chemicals [OPP-2003-0402; FRL-7339-8] received January 8, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

5955. A communication from the President of the United States, transmitting the request and availability of funds for the Department of the Treasury's Counterterrorism Fund, pursuant to Public Law 106-554; (H. Doc. No. 108-148); to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed.

5956. A communication from the President of the United States, transmitting a request to make the subsidy budget authority necessary to support a \$30 million Federal credit instrument for World Airways, Inc.; (H. Doc. No. 108-150); to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed.

5957. A communication from the President of the United States, transmitting in accordance with provisions of the "1997 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Recovery from Natural Disasters, and for Overseas Peacekeeping Efforts, Including those in Bosnia" (Public Law 105-18), a request to make available emergency funding for the Department of the Interior's National Park Service; (H. Doc. No. 108-151); to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed.

5958. A letter from the Comptroller, Department of Defense, transmitting a report