

what we achieved, why I fought hard for priorities like better schools and safer streets, and what we still must do to finish a budget that prepares for the future, continues to pay down the debt, and honors our values.

I wanted to make sure the very first budget of the 21st century puts education first. That's why I stood firm on our commitment to hire 100,000 quality teachers to reduce class size in the early grades. We made this promise with Congress last year, and schools around the country already are hiring more than 29,000 teachers to give 1.7 million children the chance to learn in smaller classes.

The research is clear on this. Students learn more in smaller classes where they get more attention. And as I said in the State of the Union Address, we not only need more teachers; we need better teachers. Under the plan we worked out with Congress this week, every teacher hired with these funds must be fully qualified and know the subjects he or she is hired to teach. School districts can also use some funds to better prepare their existing teachers to meet the needs of 21st century students. We need to stay on this path of hiring 100,000 quality teachers to reduce class size.

The budget agreement also more than doubles our investment for after-school programs and increases funding for our efforts to connect all our schools to the Internet, for our GEAR UP program which provides mentors to prepare at-risk children for college, and for our Hispanic education initiatives. I am pleased Congress has put politics aside and put education first in this budget.

We're making progress in other areas as well. We know America is safer. The crime rate is at a 25-year low. But it's not nearly as safe as it can and should be. We must keep the crime rate coming down. The budget agreement invests in the success of our COPS program which has already funded 100,000 community police officers, by providing the resources to hire up to 50,000 more of them over the next 5 years in neighborhoods where crime rates are still too high.

We've made progress on the efforts that Vice President Gore and I have developed to set aside funds to preserve natural areas and to protect our environment for future generations. However, we've still got some

work to do on this and we must oppose anti-environmental provisions that put special interest ahead of the public interest.

With all this progress, our budget work isn't complete yet. And I'm committed to working with Congress to reach agreement before they recess this year on the issues that are still outstanding, from passing meaningful hate crimes legislation to providing relief for families suffering under the impact of Hurricane Floyd, to paying our U.N. dues, to passing the "Work Incentives Improvement Act" so that people with disabilities can gain a job without losing their health care.

In addition to the budget, I urge Congress to keep working on other critical issues—commonsense gun safety legislation to keep guns out of the wrong hands; a real Patients' Bill of Rights families have been waiting for for too long; a raise in the minimum wage, which shouldn't be held hostage to special interest tax cuts that aren't paid for and don't address national needs; and finally, measures to save Social Security and Medicare for the 21st century and modernize Medicare to include a voluntary prescription drug benefit. I urge Congress to work with me in meeting all these goals.

This has been a good week for America. We're staying on the path that has brought us the longest peacetime expansion in history, the highest homeownership in history, nearly 20 million new jobs, a 30-year low in unemployment, a 20-year low in poverty rates, and the first back-to-back budget surpluses in 42 years. Now we've got the chance of a lifetime to shape the future of our dreams for our children. Let's finish the job.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 3:15 p.m. on November 12 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on November 13. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 12 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Statement on the Announcement of Cyprus Peace Talks

November 14, 1999

The Secretary-General of the United Nations has just informed me that President

Clerides of Cyprus and Turkish Cypriot leader Denktash have accepted an invitation to start proximity talks in New York on December 3. The goal of the talks is to prepare the ground for meaningful negotiations leading to a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem.

The talks will be held under U.N. auspices. They will go forward without precondition. They will focus on the substantive issues that divide the parties. The United States will work closely with the Secretary-General to ensure that the talks are productive.

This summer the United States took the lead in calling on the United Nations to convene Cyprus talks. Ever since, together with our European allies and the U.N., we have been intensively engaged in an effort to bring the parties back to the negotiating table after a stalemate of more than 2 years. I am pleased that these efforts—including my meeting with Turkish Prime Minister Ecevit at the White House, Secretary Albright's conversation with President Clerides, and a month of shuttle diplomacy by my Special Envoy, Al Moses—have helped to produce this result.

These Cyprus talks can bring us one step closer to a lasting peace. A negotiated settlement is the best way to meet the fundamental interests of the parties—including real security for all Cypriots and an end to the island's division.

The Cyprus problem has been with us for far too long. It will not be resolved overnight. But today we have new hope. I ask the parties to approach this opportunity with good faith—and the determination to build for all the people of Cyprus a future that is brighter than the past.

Remarks to the American Embassy Community in Ankara, Turkey

November 15, 1999

The President. Thank you very much. Good morning. Ambassador Parris, it's hard for me to say—you may know, Mark worked for us in the White House for a long time and, you know, it's difficult for me to be sufficiently respectful of him now that he's here with this vast array of support. [*Laughter*] I

do want to thank you, Mark, and all of you for the wonderful job you've done under particularly adverse circumstances. And I thank Ambassador Albright for her representation of the United States here in Turkey, after the terrible first earthquake.

World Trade Organization Talks in China

I think I should give you an explanation for why we're running a little late this morning. We have been up late last night and early this morning, following the 11th hour of negotiations between the United States and China. And I am pleased to say that the United States and the People's Republic of China have now successfully concluded a strong accession agreement for China to enter the World Trade Organization.

This agreement is a major step forward in bringing China into the WTO, and a profoundly important step in the relationship between the United States and China—

[*At this point, there was technical difficulty with the room's lighting.*]

The President. Somebody apparently doesn't like it very much. [*Laughter*] Have we put too much strain on the lights? [*Laughter*] Yeah, what do you say? Can you guys pick this up with this light if I go on? Okay.

The China-WTO agreement is good for the United States; it's good for China; it's good for the world economy. Today China embraces principles of economic openness, innovation, and competition that will bolster China's economic reforms and advance the rule of law. President Jiang Zemin and Premier Zhu Rongji have shown genuine leadership in committing China to open its markets and abide by global rules of fair trade. In opening the economy of China, the agreement will create unprecedented opportunities for American farmers, workers, and companies to compete successfully in China's market, while bringing increased prosperity to the people of China.

The trade agreement is part of a broader agreement, designed to bring China into global systems on issues from nonproliferation to regional security to environmental