

of checks and balances, the Bill of Rights, and its process of amendment, the Constitution maintains an inspired balance between authority and freedom and between the ideals of unity and individual rights.

For more than 200 years the Constitution has provided our Nation with the resilience to survive trying times and the flexibility to correct past injustices. At every turning point in our history, the letter and spirit of the Constitution have enabled us to reaffirm our union and expand the meaning of liberty. Its success can be measured by the millions of people who have left their homelands over the past two centuries to become American citizens. Its influence can be measured by the number and vigor of new democracies springing up across the globe.

In giving us the Constitution, our founders also gave us a powerful example of citizenship. They were deeply involved in governing our Nation and passionately committed to improving our society. The rights we sometimes take for granted today were secured by their courage and by the blood of patriots during the Revolutionary War. As we observe Citizenship Day and Constitution Week, let us remember that with the many gifts bestowed on us by the Constitution comes the responsibility to be informed and engaged citizens; to take an active role in the civic life of our communities and our country; and to uphold the ideals of unity and liberty that have sustained us since our earliest days as a Nation.

In commemoration of the signing of the Constitution and in recognition of the importance of active, responsible citizenship in preserving the Constitution's blessings for our Nation, the Congress, by joint resolution of February 29, 1952 (36 U.S.C. 106), designated September 17 as "Citizenship Day," and by joint resolution of August 2, 1956 (36 U.S.C. 108), requested that the President proclaim the week beginning September 17 and ending September 23 of each year as "Constitution Week."

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim September 17, 2000, as Citizenship Day and September 17 through September 23, 2000, as Constitution Week. I call upon Federal, State, and local officials,

as well as leaders of civic, educational, and religious organizations, to conduct meaningful ceremonies and programs in our schools, houses of worship, and other community centers to foster a greater understanding and appreciation of the Constitution and the rights and duties of citizenship. I also call on all citizens to rededicate themselves to the principles of the Constitution.

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

William J. Clinton

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NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on September 19.

Remarks at a State Dinner Honoring Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee of India

September 17, 2000

And Mr. Prime Minister, on behalf of the American people, let me welcome you again to the White House, along with all your party from India.

I hope that in your time with us, we have at least come close to repaying the warm hospitality with which you and the Indian people greeted me, my family, and our fellow Americans on my visit in March.

One of the most remarkable things to me about our relationship is its scope and its increasing interdependence. There are hundreds of American businesses, foundations, and universities with long commitments to India. When Americans call Microsoft for customer support today, they're as likely to be talking to someone in Bangalore or Hyderabad as to someone in Seattle.

There are more than one million Indians here in America now, and I think more than half of them are here tonight. [*Laughter*] And I might say, Prime Minister, the other half are disappointed that they're not here. [*Laughter*]

Indian-Americans now run more than 750 companies in Silicon Valley alone. In India,

the best information available on maternal health and agriculture can now be downloaded by a growing number of villages with Internet hookups. And Indian-Americans can now get on-line with people across the world who speak Telugu or Gujarati or Bengali.

Americans have fallen in love with Indian novels. I'm told that Prime Minister Vajpayee, when he's not writing Hindi poetry, actually likes to read John Grisham. [Laughter] You might be interested to note, Prime Minister, that he's a distant relative of mine. All the Grishams with money are distant relatives of mine. [Laughter]

And don't forget, whether we're in California or Calcutta, we all want to be a *crorepati*. Now, for the culturally challenged Americans among us, that's from India's version of "Who Wants To Be a Millionaire?" [Laughter]

Of course, our interdependence is about more than commerce and culture. We are also vulnerable to one another's problems, to the shock of economic turmoil, to the plague of infectious diseases, to the spread of deadly military technology, and as we have all too painfully seen, to the terrorists, drug traffickers, and criminals who take advantage of the openness of societies and borders.

The simple lesson of all this to me, Mr. Prime Minister, is that if we're already all in the same boat together, we had better find a way to steer together. We must overcome the fear some people in both our countries sometimes have, for different historical reasons, that if we meet our friends halfway, somehow it will threaten our own independence or uniqueness.

That is why I am so gratified that, with your leadership and the efforts of so many people in this room, we have together built the strongest, most mature partnership India and America have ever known.

We have so very much more to learn from each other. In both our societies, you can find virtually every challenge humanity knows. And in both our societies, you can find virtually every solution to those challenges: confidence in democracy, tolerance for diversity, a willingness to embrace economic and social change.

So it is more than a slogan for Americans to say that India's success will be our success and that together India and America can change the world.

Ladies and gentlemen, I ask you now to join me in a toast to Prime Minister Vajpayee, to the Government and people of India, and the enduring partnership between our two great democracies.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:03 p.m. in a pavilion at the White House. The transcript made available by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee.

Statement on the Reentry Initiative for Ex-Offenders

September 18, 2000

Working together, we have made great strides in reducing crime across the country. The overall crime rate is at its lowest point in 25 years, and America is the safest it has been in a generation. But I believe we can make America even safer for our families. We must continue to confront emerging public safety challenges if we want to keep reducing crime in the 21st century.

One of the key challenges we must address is ex-offenders returning to their families and communities after their release from prison. While the Nation's prison population growth rate has slowed to its lowest level in two decades, more than 1.9 million individuals were incarcerated in State and Federal prisons and local jails in 1999. As a result, an unprecedented number of individuals will be released from prison in the coming years—nearly 600,000 in the next year alone. Moreover, this population poses a serious public safety risk. Studies show that nearly two-thirds of all released offenders will be arrested again within 3 years.

That is why I have proposed a new public safety initiative aimed at providing greater supervision for offenders reentering the community. My fiscal year 2001 budget includes a total of \$145 million for innovative "re-entry" programs to promote responsibility and help keep ex-offenders on track and crime- and drug-free. Through this reentry initiative, the Departments of Justice, Labor,