

As many of you know, throughout my campaign I met tax families all across the country, diverse people from all walks of life who represented the hopes and dreams of American families. Joining us today is one of those families, the Petersons, Paul and Deborah and Juliette and Sarah Kate.

They work hard. Paul works during the day at Ukrop's Supermarket in downtown Richmond, Virginia. At night he's working on an MBA at Avery College. Deborah works at home caring for their daughters. The Peterson family was here last February when the prospects for tax relief were not exactly what they were—like they are today.

Well, Paul and Deborah, I'm delighted to let you know that your family will receive \$800 in tax relief this year—600 from the check and another 200 from the immediate increase in the child credit.

I have even more good news for the Petersons and folks like them all across America. When you were here in February, we calculated that your ultimate tax savings would be \$1,100 a year. Well, when all aspects of the plan are phased in, you will receive not \$1,100 a year, but \$1,700 a year. That is 1,700 more dollars for this good family to spend on their children and on their dreams. I'm confident about one thing: These good folks can spend the \$1,700 better than the Federal Government can.

Tax relief was the right thing to do, and it is the responsible thing to do, for the American people and for our economy.

I, once again, thank and applaud the Members of Congress, both Republicans and Democrats, who joined together to get results on behalf of the American people. The tax relief package that was voted on today was agreed on last night, after this week's change in the balance of power in the United States Senate. And it can be a model for the work that is ahead. Tax relief was based on important principles, principles that are compassionate and conservative and principles that were preserved during the legislative process of give-and-take.

We listened to the voices of those in my party and in the Democratic Party who wanted additional help for those at the lowest end of the economic ladder. We listened, and as a result, this plan has even more help for

lower income Americans. The earned-income credit is expanded for low income married couples, and the child credit is refundable for parents, providing the most help for those who earn between \$10,000 and \$25,000 a year.

We acted on principle. We worked together to build consensus and to get results. This is significant, and this is only the beginning. The Peterson family, and families like them all across America, need more than just a tax cut. The Petersons want us to work together to improve public education, strengthen their retirement security, modernize Medicare, and strengthen and modernize our national defenses.

Again, thanks to the Members of Congress. I hope you enjoy your Memorial Day recess. And then, let's work together to complete the great progress we are making on legislation to improve America's public schools.

Again, I want to thank you all for coming. This is an historic day. It explains the art of the possible. It shows what can happen when good people come together with the intention of doing what's right for the American people. And we have done right by the American people today.

God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:08 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

## **Remarks at a Memorial Day Breakfast**

*May 28, 2001*

Thank you. Well, Tony, thank you very much. I appreciate so very much the fine work you are doing on behalf of the veterans for America. I knew that I made a pretty good selection when I picked Tony. I didn't realize that so many would agree with me so quickly, and I thank you very much for taking on such a tough assignment.

I am also honored that the Secretary of Defense is here. Mr. Secretary, thank you, and thanks for bringing your great wife, as well. I'm pleased to know that Mel Martinez and his wife are here, another Cabinet Secretary, as well as Ann Veneman and Tommy

Thompson, head of Health and Human Services. Thank you all for being here today. Jeni, thank you for your kind prayer.

Senator Dole, it's great to see you, sir. I'm really pleased you brought your better half. [Laughter] Elizabeth is one of our all-time favorites. I know you've worked hard for this moment, and I want to thank you for being here. I see Freddie Smith, as well, who—you did a fine job of twisting his arm to take over the head of the World War II Memorial Fund. And thanks, Fred, so much for your hard work.

I'm glad Members of the Congress who are here—I thought most of you were trying to escape town, but some of you stayed behind to help celebrate this occasion. Senator Hutchinson from the great State of Arkansas is here. Thank you very much, Tim, for being here. Senator Bob Smith, thank you, sir, for coming. Senator Ted Stevens, I appreciate so very much, you being here. And of course, the chairman, John Warner, thanks for coming. Members of the House—Cass Ballenger and Ralph Regula, Ike Skelton and Chris Smith—are here, as well. Thank you all for coming.

I've got to say something about an ex-Congressman. I just saw Sonny Montgomery sitting here, and Sonny, you may not be in the House but a lot of people wish you still were, and thanks so much for being here.

I want to thank the members of the Joint Chiefs who are here. I also want to thank all the World War II vets who are here. And if you wouldn't mind standing, I wish you would, please. [Applause]

William Schmidt, an ex-POW, and Joseph Alexander, a Defender of Bataan & Corregidor, are here. You just stood, but I want to thank you two gentlemen for coming, as well.

I want to welcome everybody to the White House. Laura and I are so honored you are here this morning. Later today I will lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns, one of the many acts of remembrance that will mark this day. Many of you will be there. Thank you for coming, not only here but there, as well.

Each of you is not only a veteran in this room, but each of you is a servant to other veterans, and for that our Nation is grateful.

America's veterans have earned not only honors but specific benefits, and those only become more necessary with the years.

My administration will do all it can to assist our veterans and to correct oversights of the past. My budget provides a significant increase for health care at the Department of Veterans Affairs, where Senator Principi is very much in charge. We are making considerable progress on implementing the Veterans Millennium Health Care Act. And the Secretary—did I say Senator Principi? [Laughter] Always worried about that balance of power. [Laughter] Secretary Principi has begun a top-to-bottom review of VA claims processing in order to identify weaknesses and areas of improvement. These are good first steps, but they are only first steps.

We must also improve the way the VA and the Department of Defense work together to provide care to those who have served in uniform. I am today announcing the creation of a Presidential task force to recommend major reforms in the delivery of health care to veterans and military retirees.

I have asked two distinguished Americans to lead it. Dr. Gail Wilensky is a prominent expert on health policy and a faithful friend to veterans. She will work with Gerry Solomon, who is a long-time advocate for veterans and a former Congressman. One might be tempted to call him an ex-marine, but we all know there is no such thing as an ex-marine. [Laughter] I'm honored that both have agreed to serve. I am honored they are both here. Please stand. [Applause] Thank you for coming.

America really has been given so much. Yet, of all our assets, resources, and strengths, none have counted more than the courage of our young soldiers in the face of battle. They have cleared the seas, crossed the rivers, charged the hills, and covered the skies, and they have never let America down.

I know that those who have seen war are rarely eager to look back on it, and the hardest memories of all concern those who serve their country and never live to be called veterans. Yet, memory is our responsibility. We are in their debt more than a lifetime of Memorial Days could repay. Their sacrifices left

us with a duty that goes on through the generations, to honor them in our thoughts and our words and in our lives.

We have been given that opportunity this morning. On your way to Arlington National Cemetery you will pass The Mall, where our Nation raised up memorials to Washington, Lincoln, and those lost in Vietnam. That same Mall will soon be the site of the World War II Memorial.

The generation of World War II defeated history's greatest tyranny, leaving graves and freedom from Europe to Asia. Our Nation must always remember their heroism and humility and terrible suffering. And that memory must be and will be preserved on the Washington Mall.

The World War II Memorial has been in the works for a long time. The Congress of the United States has acted to remove the obstacles and begin the project. What is required now is a signature, and I am glad to give it. In the 60th year after Pearl Harbor, it is my huge honor to set my name on this bill, ordering construction of a monument that will stand for the ages. Not only will I sign the bill, I will make sure the monument gets built.

Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:40 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi, who introduced the President; Kitty Rumsfeld, wife of Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld; Joyce Martinez, wife of Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Mel R. Martinez; Jeni Cook, Director of Chaplain Services, Department of Veterans Affairs; former Senator Bob Dole, national chairman, and Frederick W. Smith, cochairman, World War II Memorial Campaign; and Elizabeth Dole, former Secretary of Transportation. Following his remarks, the President signed H.R. 1696, to expedite the construction of the World War II Memorial, assigned Public Law No. 107-11.

### **Statement on Signing Legislation To Expedite the Construction of the World War II Memorial**

*May 28, 2001*

Today I have signed into law H.R. 1696, a bill to expedite the construction of the

World War II memorial in the District of Columbia. It is indeed fitting that this measure becomes law on Memorial Day.

This legislation will allow the Nation to express the appreciation due the World War II generation for their selfless sacrifices that preserved the freedoms we all enjoy. I commend the Congress for a truly bipartisan effort to expedite construction of the memorial.

Now that debate over the site and basic design is concluded, the time has come for all concerned with the creation of the memorial to act with the same determination and sense of common purpose so wonderfully displayed by those we honor. We must get the job done, so that those who served are able to see the Nation's permanent expression of remembrance and thanks.

**George W. Bush**

The White House,  
May 28, 2001.

NOTE: H.R. 1696, approved May 28, was assigned Public Law No. 107-11.

### **Executive Order 13214—President's Task Force To Improve Health Care Delivery for Our Nation's Veterans**

*May 28, 2001*

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including the Federal Advisory Committee Act, as amended (5 U.S.C. App.), and in order to provide prompt and efficient access to consistently high quality health care for veterans who have served the Nation, it is hereby ordered as follows:

**Section 1. Establishment.** There is established the President's Task Force to Improve Health Care Delivery for Our Nation's Veterans (Task Force).

**Sec. 2. Membership.** The Task Force shall be comprised of 15 members appointed by the President. Two of the 15 members shall serve as co-chairs of the Task Force. The Task Force membership shall include health care experts, officials familiar with Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense health care systems, and representatives from veteran and military service organizations.