

transmitted diseases. Decisions children make now can affect their health and character for the rest of their lives. All of us—parents, schools, 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 Star of David or 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 the 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 can't 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 the 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 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 American people, 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 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 confidence 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 bless the United States of America. Thank you.

GEORGE W. BUSH.
THE WHITE HOUSE, *January 20, 2004.*

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 2:16 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Ms. Niland, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has agreed to the following concurrent resolution, in which it requests that concurrence of the Senate:

H. Con. Res. 349. Concurrent resolution providing for a joint session of Congress to receive a message from the President on the State of the Union.

The message also announced that the House of Representatives has agreed to (H. Res. 487) that the Clerk of the House inform the Senate that a quorum of the House is present and that the House is ready to proceed with business.

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE DURING ADJOURNMENT

ENROLLED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS SIGNED

Under the authority of the order of December 9, 2003, the Secretary of the Senate, on December 9, 2003, during the adjournment of the Senate, received a message from the House of Representatives announcing that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bills:

S. 811. An act to support certain housing proposals in the fiscal year 2003 budget for the Federal Government, including the downpayment assistance initiative under the HOME Investment Partnership Act, and for other purposes;

S. 877. An act to regulate interstate commerce by imposing limitations and penalties on the transmission of unsolicited commercial electronic mail via the Internet;

S. 1680. An act to reauthorize the Defense Production Act of 1950, and for other purposes;

S. 1683. An act to provide for a report on the parity of pay and benefits among Federal law enforcement officers and to establish an exchange program between Federal law enforcement employees and State and local law enforcement employees;

S. 1929. An act to amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 and the Public Health Service Act to extend the mental health benefits parity provisions for an additional year;

S. 1947. An act to prohibit the offer of credit by a financial institution to a financial institution examiner, and for other purposes;

H.R. 622. An act to provide for the exchange of certain lands in the Coconino and Tonto National Forests in Arizona, and for other purposes;

H.R. 1006. An act to amend the Lacey Act Amendments of 1981 to further the conservation of certain wildlife species; and

H.R. 1012. An act to establish the Carter G. Woodson Home National Historic Site in the District of Columbia, and for other purposes.

Under the authority of the order of December 9, 2003, the enrolled bills were subsequently signed by the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

Under the authority of the order of December 9, 2003, the Secretary of the Senate, on December 10, 2003, during the adjournment of the Senate, received a message from the House of Representatives announcing that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bills and joint resolution:

S. 686. An act to provide assistance for poison prevention and stabilize the funding of regional poison control centers;

H.R. 100. An act to restate, clarify, and revise the Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act of 1940;

H.R. 2620. An act to authorize appropriations for fiscal years 2004 and 2005 for Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, and for other purposes; and

H.J. Res. 82. Joint resolution making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 2004, and for other purposes.

Under the authority of the order of December 9, 2003, the enrolled bills were subsequently signed by the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

MEASURES READ THE FIRST TIME

The following bill was read the first time: