President Clinton Speaks To Graduates:
Meeting Our Challenges, Preserving Our Values
May 10, 1996

Today, in his commencement address at Pennsylvania State University, President Clinton called on all Americans to take responsibility for ourselves and our communities, to honor our values and meet our challenges. The President urged all Americans to help him reform welfare, stop teen pregnancy, hold fathers accountable, fight crime and restore our community.

Preserving the values of opportunity, responsibility and community. As he did in 1991, President Clinton will deliver a series of commencement addresses in which he will begin to lay out his vision and direction for the country as we move toward the year 2000. In the first of this series, the President will outline a number of specific ideas, plans and challenges to help Americans enjoy and expand those American values. Today's speech will focus on responsibility, for ourselves, our families and our communities.

Responsibility to give back to our communities. President Clinton is proposing three challenges to give young Americans the chance to give back. They include:

* A challenge to colleges to use work study funding to help promote service.
* A challenge to every high school to make service a part of its basic ethic.
* A challenge to every community to help high school students answer that call. This challenge was enhanced by the offer of matching federal funds of up to $500 that a community raises to reward high school students who perform significant service for their communities. This would create a National Service Scholar in every school.

Responsibility to fight crime in our communities.

President Clinton has a drug strategy targeted against juvenile drug use. We are taking on gangs like we took on the mob. President Clinton is putting 100,000 new police on the streets, in our communities. But parents and neighbors must teach our children right from wrong. President Clinton called on 50 new people to join each of the 20,000 neighborhood watch groups in America by the year 2000, adding to that force 1 million new recruits.

Responsibility to our families.

President Clinton has proposed tougher child support enforcement, to make sure that both parents share the responsibility of raising a child.

We must continue to fight domestic violence. Today, the President called on Congress to pass the Kassebaum-Kennedy health care reform bill so that insurance companies will cover medical costs for women who have been abused, and stop calling being battered a "pre-existing condition."

Giving every child a loving home. President Clinton has urged Congress to enact a $5000 tax credit to help middle-class families adopt a child.