



Expanding U.S. Technology

Excerpts from recent speeches by Governor Bill Clinton

If we want to help U.S. companies keep pace in the world economy, we need to restore America to the forefront not just in inventing products, but in bringing them to market. Too often, we have won the battle of the patents but lost the war of creating jobs, profits, and wealth. American scientists invented the microwave, the VCR, the color TV, and the memory chip, and yet today the Koreans, the Japanese, and other nations make most of those products.

The research and development arm of the Defense Department did a great job of developing products and taking them to production because we didn't want them produced overseas. We should launch the civilian equivalent -- an agency to provide basic research for new and critical technologies and make it easier to move these ideas into the marketplace. And we can pledge right now that for every dollar we reduce the defense budget on research and development, we'll increase the civilian R&D budget by the same amount. We should commit ourselves to a transitional plan for converting from a defense to a domestic economy in a way that creates more high-wage jobs, and doesn't destroy our most successful high-wage jobs, and with it the careers of many thousands of our best scientists, engineers, and workers.

The private sector must maintain the initiative, but government has an indispensable role. A recent Department of Commerce report is a wake-up call that we are falling behind our major competitors in Europe and Japan on emerging technologies that will define the high-paying jobs of the future -- like advanced materials, biotechnology, superconductors, and computer-integrated manufacturing.

I have mentioned a civilian advanced research projects agency to work closely with the private sector, so that its priorities are not set by government alone. We have hundreds of national laboratories with extraordinary talent that have put the United States at the forefront of military technology. We need to reorient their mission, working with private companies and universities, to advance technologies that will make our lives better and create tomorrow's jobs.

Not enough of our companies engage in export -- just 15 percent of our companies account for 85 percent of our exports. We have to meet our competitors' efforts to help smaller and medium-sized businesses identify and gain foreign markets. Our relationship is based on ties of democracy, but as we cooperate, we also compete. And the maturity of our relationship allows American Presidents, as I will, to insist on fair play. As we put our own economic house in order, Japan must open the doors of its economic house, or our partnership will be imperiled with consequences for all the world.

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