

299.1987

While we work to improve our schools, we must also remember that our national commitment to children cannot end in the classroom. We must nurture our children in the traditional values of home and family, and dependence on God. And as President I would continue my consistent and lifelong effort to protect the rights of the unborn -- the first of which is the right to life.

Just as our children's minds constitute a vital national resource, so too is the good health of our citizens. This Nation's health care system must be judged not only by its ability to cure us, but also by its ability to keep us well. As we balance the competing priorities on our national agenda, we must be certain that we provide adequate medical care at both ends of the age spectrum -- for infants and children as well as our elderly citizens. We're still not giving our infants the fighting chance they deserve to be born healthy, and prenatal care is the key.

At the same time, the graying of the baby-boom generation -- and projections of a rapidly expanding elderly population -- provide the impetus for a complete review of our health spending priorities.

Today's health care system has serious gaps and leaves many of the elderly and disabled without any assistance -- and strikes terror in the hearts of those who will need long-term care.

As we make the hard choices and re-examine what is most important, we must never lose sight of the fact that our number one priority is liberty and freedom -- hence a strong national defense.

Under President Reagan, we have rebuilt our defenses, revitalized our alliances, and rekindled our hopes for real nuclear arms control.

America has become strong again, but we must keep our guard up. We will not tolerate waste or inefficiency in defense spending. But we cannot afford to short-change the defense modernization programs that keep us strong.

Keeping our alliances vibrant is also vital to our own defense and security. Long-time friends achieve that status for a good reason: We share common concerns and mutual trust. Our European and Asian allies deserve first consideration in our foreign policy deliberations. But they must also recognize that an alliance is a two-way street. It's high time for those who owe their own security to America's military might to assume

their rightful role, and bear their rightful burden, in the defense of our common interests. Let us start the next administration with an alliance summit -- aimed at forging a new formula for burden-sharing: Our allies can afford to pay their share -- and they should.

Today, as we prepare for a summit with our adversaries in the Kremlin, we must also remember what brought them to the table, the linchpin of President Reagan's arms control strategy -- the development and phased deployment of the Strategic Defense Initiative.

The American people understand, more clearly than many in Washington, that SDI is our best insurance policy against a still-uncertain future. The Soviets are working on strategic defenses at a furious pace, and so must we. There must be no curbs on our research effort. Ronald Reagan has galvanized the nation into action on SDI -- and I will begin phased deployment when it's ready.

Our security must always include a willingness to negotiate. But any missile reduction treaty has to provide for adequate verification, ensure firm compliance and strengthen -- not undermine -- the Western alliance. Abolition of intermediate-range nuclear missiles can only be the first step toward eventual reductions in long-range strategic missiles -- those that can actually strike here, on the very soil where we stand. Any treaty must also be accompanied by a restored balance of conventional forces in Europe.

But arms control is not the only item on our agenda with the Soviet Union. Whatever Glasnost turns out to be, it is not democracy. We must use every opportunity to address the plight of Soviet Jews, the Poles, Armenians and the people of the Baltic States whose basic human rights continue to be crushed. We must press the Soviets to pull back from their reckless involvement in regional conflicts in Afghanistan, Kampuchea, Angola and Nicaragua. But our commitment to freedom should not end there. We must stand in support of genuine freedom fighters who hope to escape from terrorism, dictatorship and oppression. And this I pledge: When I am President, America will never retreat from those who need our help. We will act with the knowledge that freedom is indivisible not only for Americans, but for all humanity.

I came here today because my home is at the core of everything that I believe about America. Our families, our neighbors, our communities were at the center of everything we did. We welcomed all newcomers who were willing to band together for common goals. And if it does nothing else, my campaign will make clear that our party will never practice the politics of exclusion. The Republican Party, like our Nation, has an open door.

So we must never forget that there are some people in America -- be they poor or handicapped, black or brown, veterans, farmers, the young or the old -- who may be waiting for an invitation to participate, who are looking for hope, opportunity and security like the rest of us.

And so I will be sensitive to the needs of the left-out and the down-and-out in our society as they try to fulfill their own dreams.

For the hungry and the homeless -- for older Americans whose wage-earning years are behind them -- for children who are disadvantaged or abused -- for the disabled -- we will provide care and assistance. For those racked with addiction or disease, we will provide hope and help while restoring the moral values that are our best defense.

We will do these things because this is America and because we are a good and caring Nation.

To do these things will not be easy. The choices will be tough. It will require leadership, strength and determination to summon our national will to face them.

I am often asked if there is one fundamental theme to my campaign -- one critical quality or perspective that the next President of the United States must have. My answer is this:

America must stop living for today while ignoring the long-term implications of our decisions and actions for our children and for generations to come. When Congress passes a budget, when we establish trade policy, when we set educational and health priorities, when we sit across the table from the Soviet Union and negotiate reductions in nuclear weapons -- we must extend the lines of our planning beyond the immediate future.

The President of the United States should demonstrate in his every decision a sense of history and a sense of the future -- an understanding that what is efficient and appropriate in serving our national interest today must survive the test of protecting our national interest for years to come.

Last week, on a sunny Washington afternoon, I thought about what I would say here today. I sat on a balcony of the Capitol building overlooking Washington's inspiring panorama. Above me, the awesome Capitol dome -- the symbol of our democracy. On the horizon, the monuments to Jefferson, Washington and Lincoln -- people who made a difference.

Just out of sight is the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and across the river, Arlington Cemetery -- and they made a difference, too.

And I looked back on my career, and thought about the step I am taking today. Was I really ready? Was I strong enough? Could I really make a difference?

Then I thought about America, and what the giants of America's history -- our past Presidents and our people -- have been able to achieve over the last 200 years. And I realized that the President gets his strength from the people.

And then I thought about you, and this place. And the fact that people are my strength.

Together we are strong enough. Together we will make a difference.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

####