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For Immediate Release  
Office of the Press Secretary  
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## President's Radio Address

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THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. Every day in America, parents struggle to raise their children in a culture that too often glorifies instant gratification and irresponsible behavior. During this time of great change in our Nation, government must stand with families to help them raise healthy, responsible children.

Yesterday, the federal government released its annual report called "America's Children in Brief." This report collects a broad range of statistics that tell us about the promises and challenges facing America's young people. The good news is that we have made significant progress during the past decade. Strong families and communities are instilling responsibility and character in our children, and we are seeing encouraging results.

Violent crime among our teenagers has decreased dramatically. From 1993 to 2002, the rate of teens committing violent crimes dropped 78 percent; and the rate of teens becoming victims of violent crimes dropped 74 percent. Among our youth, smoking and illicit drug use have declined. Teen birth rates have fallen to the lowest levels ever recorded, with the greatest progress occurring among African - American teenagers.

Studies tell us that children raised in a household with married parents are far less likely to live in poverty, fail at school, or have behavioral problems. Fortunately, after a decades-long downward trend, the percentage of children living with married parents has remained steady since 1995. And through our proposed Healthy Marriages Initiative, my Administration is committed to ensuring that more of our children grow up in a stable home with a married mother and father.

We are headed in the right direction. But we still have work to do, so my Administration is acting to encourage teens to make healthy choices. Although teen drug use has decreased, we can and must do more. We know that random drug testing in schools is effective, and it allows us to identify kids who need help. In my most recent budget, I proposed spending an additional \$23 million for school drug testing. And although teen birth rates have declined, about 3 million of our teenagers contract sexually transmitted diseases each year. So we've requested a doubling of federal funding for abstinence-only education programs. We have also requested \$25 million for our Character Education Initiative. This program will encourage schools to develop curricula that promote good character and help children develop a sense of responsibility to their community. Today, I urge the Congress to act on all these important initiatives.

When parents, schools, and government work together, we can counter the negative influences in today's culture and send the right messages to our children. As yesterday's report shows, we are making progress in changing the culture of America from one that said, "if it feels good, do it; and if you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. The decisions our children make now will affect their health and character for the rest of their lives. And when they



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make the right choices, they are preparing themselves to realize the bright future our Nation offers each of them.

Thank you for listening.

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