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I WANT TO THANK YOU ALL. IT'S GOOD TO BE BACK AMONG SO MANY LEADERS, FROM OUR OWN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, TO THE AMERICAN LEGION, TO THE TEN PROFESSIONAL EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS THAT HAVE SPONSORED AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK FOR SO LONG, AND WITH SUCH DEDICATION. LET ME ALSO THANK AND WELCOME THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MANY LEADING EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE AUDIENCE TODAY.

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AND FINALLY, I WANT TO THANK THE STUDENTS AMONG US, FOR UNVEILING THIS REMARKABLE STATUE, AN INSPIRATION FOR US ALL. WELCOME TO THE WHITE HOUSE.

((AS EDUCATORS, I'M SURE YOU'LL APPRECIATE THE STORY ABOUT THE SCHOLAR WHO WAS GRADING AN EXAM SHORTLY BEFORE CHRISTMAS, WHEN HE CAME ACROSS THIS NOTE FROM A STUDENT: "GOD ONLY KNOWS THE ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION, MERRY CHRISTMAS."

THE SCHOLAR RETURNED THE PAPER WITH THIS ANNOTATION:
"GOD GETS AN A. YOU GET AN F. HAPPY NEW YEAR.))\ \

WELL, WE ARE HERE TODAY NOT TO FLUNK OUR SYSTEM,
BUT TO EARN A HIGHER GRADE. AS A NATION, WE PROCLAIM
THAT AMERICA IS SERIOUS ABOUT LIFTING THE HOPES AND
DREAMS OF YOUNG AMERICANS, SERIOUS ABOUT EDUCATION AND
THE FUTURE.

THIS CONCERN WITH EDUCATION IS TO BE FOUND WHEREVER
MEN AND WOMEN SEEK TO EXTEND HUMAN LIBERTY.

JUST YESTERDAY, I MET WITH LECH WALESIA AND ONCE AGAIN
WAS DEEPLY IMPRESSED BY THE CHANGES UNDERWAY IN
POLAND -- AND THE FERVENT COMMITMENT OF THE POLISH
PEOPLE TO MAKE THAT CHANGE PERMANENT THROUGH EDUCATION.

FOR AMERICANS, THIS VITAL CONNECTION BETWEEN
EDUCATION AND A STRONG, FREE NATION IS SYMBOLIZED BY
THE FLAG OF LEARNING AND LIBERTY. IT WAS THIS SAME
FLAG THAT CHRISTA MCAULIFFE TOOK WITH HER ON THE
CHALLENGER.


SHE APPRECIATED THIS SYMBOL, AS ONLY A TEACHER COULD. NOW RECOVERED BY NASA, IT IS BEING TAKEN TO EVERY STATE IN THE UNION.

CONCERN FOR EDUCATION AND DEMOCRACY BROUGHT ME TOGETHER WITH THE NATION'S GOVERNORS IN A SUMMIT IN CHARLOTTESVILLE -- ONLY THE THIRD SUMMIT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVES IN OUR 200 YEARS AS A NATION. AS WE WORKED TOGETHER IN CHARLOTTESVILLE, THE HANDIWORK OF OUR FIRST EDUCATION PRESIDENT, THOMAS JEFFERSON, WAS ALL ABOUT US.

IT WAS JEFFERSON, AFTER ALL, WHO FOREVER LINKED AMERICAN DEMOCRACY WITH UNIVERSAL PUBLIC EDUCATION. HE PUT THE MATTER IN A LETTER IN 1816 WITH THESE WORDS: "IF A NATION EXPECTS TO BE IGNORANT AND FREE, IN A STATE OF CIVILIZATION, IT EXPECTS WHAT NEVER WAS AND NEVER WILL BE."

SO IF THERE WAS A SENSE OF URGENCY TO OUR SUMMIT, IT WAS BECAUSE, LIKE THOMAS JEFFERSON AND CHRISTA MCAULIFFE, ALL THE PARTICIPANTS UNDERSTOOD THAT THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN EDUCATION IS THE FUTURE OF AMERICA ITSELF.

THAT IS WHY WE WORKED AT THE SUMMIT TO REACH AN HISTORIC AGREEMENT -- A COMPACT, A JEFFERSONIAN COMPACT -- TO PROTECT OUR DEMOCRACY BY BETTERING OUR SCHOOLS.




PERHAPS NO ONE EXPRESSED OUR ASPIRATIONS IN A BETTER WAY THAN A GROUP OF TEACHERS IN NORTH CAROLINA, WHO HUNG A LITTLE SIGN ON THE OUTSIDE OF THEIR CLASSROOMS THAT READ: "QUIET PLEASE . . . TEACHERS AT WORK . . . FUTURE UNDER CONSTRUCTION."

IT IS TO CONSTRUCT A BETTER FUTURE THAT WE AGREED TO DEFINE NATIONAL GOALS IN EDUCATION. WE AGREED TO LOOSEN RULES THAT RESTRICT THE CREATIVITY OF STATES AND SCHOOLS. AND THEN WE AGREED THAT EVERYONE SHOULD BE ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE RESULTS.

IT IS IN THE SPIRIT OF THIS COMPACT THAT I WILL SIGN THIS DOCUMENT TODAY. SOME MAY ASK, "WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES A PROCLAMATION MAKE?" IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE WHATSOEVER -- IF WE ARE SATISFIED WITH A SIMPLE DECLARATION. BUT WE ARE NOT.

SECRETARY CAVAZOS IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE TODAY, CONDUCTING A REGIONAL STRATEGY MEETING TO DETERMINE HOW TO BEST REFORM OUR SCHOOLS WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF CHOICE.



PARENTS NEED THE POWER TO CHOOSE THEIR CHILDREN'S SCHOOLS. AND SCHOOLS NEED THE POWER TO CHOOSE KNOWLEDGEABLE MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY THROUGH ALTERNATIVE TEACHER CERTIFICATION.

THE MEN AND WOMEN HERE TODAY ARE ALSO USING AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE, TO SHINE A SPOTLIGHT ON MILLIONS OF DEDICATED TEACHERS, CONCERNED PARENTS AND ACTIVE VOLUNTEERS.

AND DURING THIS WEEK, NOVEMBER 12TH TO THE 18TH, AMERICANS WILL WORK TOGETHER ON SCHOOL BOARDS, IN ADULT LEARNING CENTERS, IN RAISING FUNDS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AND IN COUNTLESS OTHER WAYS.

THIS WILL BE A WEEK OF BOARD MEETINGS, OPEN HOUSES, OF SPECIAL SCHOOL PROJECTS AND PLAYS -- A WEEK TO REFLECT, TO PLAN AND TO ACT. AND TO KICK-OFF AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK, BARBARA IS HOSTING A SPECIAL SHOW ON THE DISNEY CHANNEL, INTRODUCING 31 OUTSTANDING TEACHERS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY.

((SO JUST IMAGINE THAT -- THE CHANNEL THAT FEATURES MICKEY AND MINNIE NOW HAS THE SILVER FOX.))\ \

WHAT THIS WEEK COMES DOWN TO IS NOT JUST A FEDERAL EFFORT; NOT JUST A STATE EFFORT; NOT JUST A LOCAL EFFORT. AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK IS A NATIONAL EFFORT, ONE THAT CALLS ON EVERY ONE OF US TO PITCH IN, TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

THIS IS IN THE TRUE SPIRIT OF AMERICAN EDUCATION AND DEMOCRACY.

**THIS IS THE FONDEST DREAM OF THE GREATEST AMERICAN
DREAMERS, FROM THOMAS JEFFERSON TO CHRISTA MCAULIFFE.
AND THIS IS WHAT AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK IS ALL ABOUT.**

**THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU DO. MAY GOD BLESS YOU ALL.
AND NOW IT WILL BE MY PLEASURE TO SIGN THIS
PROCLAMATION DESIGNATING AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK.**

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