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OA/ID Number: 10984

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7/6/95 NEA [National Education Association] Satellite

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

July 3, 1996

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Washington Convention Center
Washington, DC

2:22 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Well, thank you for that wonderful welcome. And thank you for your good spirit and your enthusiasm. And I want you to keep it all the way to November. (Applause.)

Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to begin by thanking Keith Geiger for seven magnificent years of leadership for the teachers of America. (Applause.) He has been a great leader, a true champion for educational reform. And I was more moved than I can say by the kind words he spoke before I came out.

I'm sorry that we're a little late, but I understand that our security precautions delayed your voting. (Laughter.) I'm sorry for that, but I do want to congratulate Bob Chase and all of you who will be leading the NEA. (Applause.)

I also want to thank our Secretary of Education, Dick Riley, who came over here with me. I believe he is the best Secretary of Education we've ever had, and I thank him for that. (Applause.) I also want to thank Dick Riley for having what at the time was a novel idea. He thought he ought to have an actual teacher working with him in the Secretary's office. And she's here today. I want to thank Terry Dozier for leaving the classroom and coming to work with Secretary Riley. (Applause.)

I'd like to thank the NEA for sending Sharon Robinson, our Assistant Secretary for Education Research and Improvement, to our administration. (Applause.) And I also want to thank -- Debra DeLee who's done a great job managing our convention in Chicago and getting ready for this great new campaign. (Applause.)

Four years ago I had the pleasure of addressing this assembly. And when I looked at the film that you just showed back stage, I

saw that address and I said, gosh, I had a lot less gray hair then. (Laughter.) Well, I earned that gray hair. (Laughter and applause.) But if it advanced the cause of education and insured a better future for the children of our country, every gray hair was worth it. And I thank you for staying with us in these fights. (Applause.)

As teachers, administrators, custodial workers, the member of the NEA are out there every day working with and for our children. I thank you for that. And today, I want to talk to you about where we're going from here.

Four years ago, when you endorsed my candidacy, I told you that I was running because I wanted to see a vision I had of our country in the 21st century fulfilled. I wanted our nation to go into the next century with the American Dream genuinely alive for every American without regard to race or gender or religion or region or the station that he or she starts out in life. I wanted to see our country come together instead of be driven apart by our differences. I was tired of seeing the American people cut up into little pieces at election time for short-term political gain, instead of reveling in our diversity, respecting our differences, and joining hands around shared values. And I wanted to restore the sense of community in America. (Applause.)

And I, finally, felt very strong that our country, at the end of the Cold War and the dawn of this new global information age, had to continue to be the world's strongest force for peace and freedom and prosperity. I had a simple strategy. I wanted to renew the basic bargain in America of opportunity for all, responsibility from all, and a commitment to the community of our country -- the idea that we can do more together than we can apart.

Well, we've been working on that for three and a half years. I guess it's about time for a report card before we make a decision on contract renewal. (Laughter.) I want to talk about three things here -- the record, the alternative and the future.

When I became President, our economy was stagnant. We had the slowest job growth since the Depression. We had a spiraling deficit. I said, please enact this economic plan, to Congress. We'll cut the deficit in half and produce 8 million jobs in four years. Well, you know what the Republicans did. They all voted against it and said it would bring on a recession. Well, they were wrong, and we were right. (Applause.) In three and a half years, we now know the deficit will be cut by more than 50 percent in four years. And instead of 8 million new jobs, our economy has produced 9.7 million new jobs in three and a half years. (Applause.)

I asked the Congress to pass the Crime Bill with 100,000 new police officers, a ban on assault weapons, more funds for

punishment and prisons, but more funds for prevention, too; to allow children to do something constructive after school and on the weekends, and to help them pay for summer jobs in communities that couldn't afford it.

The leadership of the other party fought us every step of the way on that and on the Brady Bill. They told a lot of people out in the rural areas of our country who love to hunt that their weapons would be in danger if our dangerous proposals passed, and that nothing would be done to lower the crime rate. Well, we have had a couple of years to see now. Do you know that we have had two deer seasons in my home state and two ducks seasons, and every single hunter is still shooting with the same rifle they had before the Brady Bill and the assault weapons ban passed. They did not tell them the truth. (Applause.)

But there are some people who didn't get guns -- 60,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers did not get guns under the Brady Bill. They were wrong and we were right about that. (Applause.)

In 1996 the crime rate will go down for the fourth year in a row in America because we're putting more police officers on the street, working with communities, helping kids, giving people something to say yes to, preventing crime as well as catching criminals. They were wrong about that, too. We need to keep on going until we put all those police officers on the street. (Applause.)

When it came to welfare reform, I said we ought to move people from welfare to work, but we should be good to the children and tough on the work requirements -- not easy on work and tough on the kids. That's the fight I had with the majority in Congress today, and why I vetoed what they call welfare reform. They said we couldn't do it. But we have now given over 60 -- 60 -- permissions for experiments to over 40 states. Three-quarters of the people in this country on welfare are already under welfare reform experiments. And you know what -- child support enforcement has gone up 40 percent since I have been in office -- (applause) -- and there are 1.3 million fewer people on welfare today than there were the day I took the oath of office. (Applause.)

When it came to families and communities, it seemed to me what we had to do was to make it possible for more people to succeed at home and at work. Most parents are working people today, and most people who work have to work to support their children. We ought to be struggling to make it possible for people to succeed at home and at work. So we cut income taxes for 15 million hard-pressed working families, so that no one who works full-time and has a child in the home would be in poverty. We passed the Family and Medical Leave law so people could get a little time off when a baby was born or a family member was sick. (Applause.)

And guess what? Poverty began to go down for the first time in many years. And for the first time in a decade average wages are going up. (Applause.) So I believe we're moving this country in the right direction.

Perhaps most important, as the film and as your speakers have said, thanks to the Congress that was in place in 1993 and 1994, we expanded Head Start dramatically, passed the Goals 2000 program, reformed Chapter One, passed the School-to-Work program, expanded Pell grants, passed the Direct College Loan program, which cut the cost and improved the repayment terms so that no person should ever fail to go to college because they were worried about the burden of the loans they would owe afterwards.

These things have made a real difference. And we passed a national service program that has allowed 45,000 young people to earn some money for college by serving their communities all across the United States. (Applause.) That's the first element of the contract evaluation. We had a strategy; it was implemented; the results were good.

The second thing I want to say is that when you're fixing to hire somebody, there's always the questions of, well, if you don't hire this person, who will you hire? And in this case, the happy choice for America's educators, for America's parents and for all American citizens is, you don't have to guess in this election. There is no guesswork. (Applause.)

You know what both parties will do. You know what both candidates will do. They've already put their program in. It would be the law today, except I vetoed it. If you want it, you can get it; give them the White House and the Congress, it will be the law of the land in six months. (Applause.)

You think about that. You just think about that. (Laughter.) If you want, for example, to back away from our commitment to 100,000 police, you want to repeal the assault weapons ban, you want to undermine protection for the environment and safety in the workplace, and made it easier for corporations to raid their employees' pensions funds -- if those are the things that you want, you can have it. Just give them the Congress and the White House, and they'll give it to you. They already tried to do it once. We stopped them, and we will stop them again. (Applause.)

If you believe we ought to drastically cut or eliminate all these education reforms -- even the Eisenhower Professional Development Program, which you have continued to support in your own way, and I congratulate you on your commitment to that -- well, you can get that. Give them White House and the Congress, and they'll give it to you. They tried once, and we stopped them. If you want, in other words, people who believe it was a mistake to pass the Family and Medical Leave law, a mistake to pass the Brady

Bill, a mistake to pass the Crime Bill, a mistake to pass the economic program, you can have it.

But that is the choice. And let's not be muddle-headed about this. We now have the evidence. The American people can simply choose. One position is the one that I embrace and that virtually all the members of our party embrace who are running for the Congress. And that is that the American people should have opportunity -- not guarantees, but opportunity -- to make the most of their own lives if they're willing to be responsible for it. That is the clear understanding that we become a greater country when we work together. The other side says, government is always the problem, and you're better off if you're on your own. I think that we're right and they're wrong. But the American people are being given the chance to decide, and you have to help them make that decision. (Applause.)

Finally, there is the third element of the contract decision and maybe the most important, and that is, so what if you did a good job, that's what we hired you for. (Laughter.) What are you going to do tomorrow and next year and for the next four years? And that's very important, because while things are better now than they were four years ago, this country still has significant challenges. The crime rate is down, but juvenile crime is up. The economy is up, but not every American who works is up. The country is closer to peace than it was, but as we saw again last week, we still face the problems of terrorism, organized crime, the proliferation of dangerous weapons. And we have to work together with our friends around the world to continue to push for peace and freedom.

So what about the next four years? Well, there's plenty to do, folks. In the area of the economy, unless we can get this Congress to act, we've got to raise the minimum wage. We can't let it fall to a 40-year low, it's not right. (Applause.)

Yesterday I was in Chicago -- (applause) -- and I had an occasion to go to Grant Park to that great Taste of Chicago festival they have every year. (Applause.) I hated this, I had to go from food booth to food booth to food booth. (Laughter and applause.) And it was a burden, but someone had to do it. (Laughter and applause.) But, anyway, I was at one of these booths talking to the folks who work there and this young woman looked at me and she said, you know, I really appreciate the fact that you're trying to raise the minimum wage and I hear these people who are opposed to it say everybody in the minimum wage is some middle-class kid living at home with his parents. And she said, let me tell you something: I'm a 28-year-old single mother with two children, I work for the minimum wage and I go to college at night, and it's not true and I need a raise. And that's the truth. And we need to do it. (Applause.)

We need to pass the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill so that people don't lose their health insurance when they change jobs or someone in their family has been sick. (Applause.) We need to pass a real welfare reform bill that is tough on work but good to kids, that lifts up families and enables people to succeed at home and at work. (Applause.) That's what we want for everybody. (Applause.)

We need to finish the job of putting 100,000 police on our streets, because we're not through. The crime rate is still too high, and it will be too high until you go home at night, turn on the television, and you're genuinely surprised if the lead story on your evening news is the latest terrible crime. I want you to be surprised about it again, and we can bring that kind of safety back to American if we work at it. (Applause.)

We need to pass Family Leave II and give working people the opportunity to have more flexible work hours and let people take a little time off not just when a baby's born or when there's a family emergency, but also to take their parents or their kids to regular doctor's appointments and to go to parent-teacher conferences at the school. (Applause.)

And in education we have a lot to do together. I am committed to seeing every classroom and library in every school in this country hooked up to the Internet by the year 2000, and we're going to keep doing it. (Applause.)

I want to thank our teachers who are working -- 100,000 of them -- with the support of the NEA and other groups, to teach another 500,000 teachers in what they call the 21st Century Teachers Effort, to be the kind of teachers who can make maximum use of the new technology going into the classrooms. We need to do that. (Applause.)

We need to make college education even more available. That's why I proposed a \$10,000 tax deduction per year for the cost of college tuition. That's the right kind of tax cut and it would help a lot of teachers who are parents. (Applause.)

But I think we should do even more. I believe if you look at all the evidence, it is clear that it is simply not enough to have a high school education if you want to get a good job with a growing income. And I believe the time has come to make two years of education after high school just as universal as a high school education is. (Applause.)

I believe the way to do that is to give the American people a tax credit, every single person a tax credit of \$1,500 a year for the cost of going to your local community college, and make it refundable so that everybody can afford to go. Give it to everybody the first year; give it to everybody that keeps a B average the second year; let everybody at least have access to a

diploma from a community college and we will raise incomes in this country and bring this country together. It is the right thing to do. (Applause.) Thank you.

I believe that we should do even more for people who are in the work force. I proposed, with the help of the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Education, that we take 70 big federal job training programs and consolidate them and put them into a block of money and give people who are unemployed or underemployed a certificate that basically says, you can take this to your local community college or to any training facility you want for up to two years. If you lose your job, you can immediately begin to get retraining at the place of your choice in your community that will help you the most to start your life again. (Applause.)

I also think we need to do more to help you in your work. I think we should -- I want you to understand that if the budget process this year works out like it did last year -- I hope it won't; I'm working hard with the Congress -- but I am not going to tolerate an assault on the fundamental structure of educational opportunity and educational excellence in this country. It is wrong. It is wrong. (Applause.)

We have to do more to help you to make schools safe and going to and from school safe. We have worked hard, but still no teacher should ever fear when he or she is in the classroom or going to and from school. No student should be so afraid -- (applause) -- no student should be so afraid that they cannot learn. And we work very hard to preserve funding for the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program, to enforce our zero tolerance for guns in the schools policy. And we will continue to work to help schools deal with the problems that they face every day, that teachers face every day, and to try to find opportunities to bring people together.

Last year, I had the opportunity to work with the Secretary of Education and the Justice Department on a set of guidelines to schools to deal with the complex questions that often arise when children seek to practice or at least express their religious convictions. We didn't want to turn our schools into religion-free zones, and we didn't want to violate the First Amendment. Because of the work that Secretary Riley and the Attorney General did, we have heard from schools all over America saying, this is not an issue anymore, we have resolved this, we thank you very much. And I hope it has helped you in your school.

We said to people in California and around the country -- (applause) -- who wanted to try experimenting with school uniforms -- well, they did it in Long Beach, and you can do it, too, if you want to do it. (Applause.) And I went to Long Beach, California, and I heard young people tell me amazing stories about this. A young man stood up and said, we picked our uniforms in our school. We picked green and white because the gang colors are red and blue.

And, for the first time, all our kids can now walk to and from school, and they're not scared anymore. He said, it's the first time in two years, I can walk to school without having to look over my shoulder.

I had another young woman say that even the wealthiest kids in the school district were better off after they adopted their policy because now, people judge themselves based on what was on the inside instead of what was on the outside. (Applause.) I thought it was pretty perceptive. It may or may not be the right thing to do. But I sure think you ought to have the right to do it.

We have worked hard with other communities to develop community curfews. One of our suburban communities here in the Washington area adopted one just last week. I was in New Orleans talking about the community curfew there. (Applause.) There was a huge drop, a huge drop in juvenile crime in the city of New Orleans after they adopted their curfews. Kids don't need to be out on the street at all hours of the night, they need to be home or in a secure place. (Applause.)

And, by the way, the thing I really liked about what they did in New Orleans is that they didn't punish people who were on the streets. They took them to a community curfew center and they started working with them, and they found out what the children needed and what they were facing, so that it would not only have the disciplinary effect of getting kids off the street, it has the positive effect of giving at least them a chance to meet with people who could help them to put their lives in good order and take it in the right direction. (Applause.)

Now, I want to propose today one other thing that I think it quite important, that I have cared a lot about for a long time. One of the most important things we can do to promote learning and to keep our children safe is the most obvious, old-fashioned thing that I dealt with when I was in school myself -- back in the dark ages -- (laughter) -- and that is to insist that children be in school and not on the streets. (Applause.)

Truancy is a warning signal that a child is in trouble and is often a gateway to crime. The difference between success and failure in life for our children is whether they're learning on the streets or in the school where they belong. The street is not an acceptable alternative to the classroom. (Applause.)

When I was governor we actually passed a bill which made it possible for local communities to fine parents if they refused to show up at parent-teacher conferences or permitted their children to be chronically absent. I know the NEA has called for federal action to crack down on truancy. So I want to tell you about two things that we're doing in response to the call that you issued. First, earlier today I directed the Department of Education to send

this manual -- I don't know if you can see it -- it says, "Manual to Combat Truancy" -- to every school district in America. It shows that when parents are held accountable and when communities come together, you can do something about this problem.

In Milwaukee, for example, attendance is taken at every period in all high schools. Police pick up truants and take them to counselling, again not just negative but positive. Parents are called at home if their child did not attend school. Daytime burglaries -- down by one third.

In Atlantic County, New Jersey, -- (applause.) I'd say that's the highest density of teachers per capita in America based on the cheers there. (Applause.) Listen to this. In Atlantic County, New Jersey, families of truants receive intensive counseling and the vast majority of the students wind up going back to school.

In New Haven, middle school truants go before a panel of high school students. (Applause.) This is very interesting. In New Haven, middle school students go before a panel of high school students and have to sign responsibility contracts.

So these are good things to do. The federal government should not decide what to do; we should help you determine what you're going to do. We should support you when you do it. We should make sure it's legally defensible. And we should encourage every community to do the same thing to put our children back in school. (Applause.)

Yesterday Secretary Riley announced that he would give a total of \$10 million to 25 school districts to help them keep their children in school. This is a beginning. But I want you to know because of what you and others in education have said to me all across the country, this will become a national priority, and we will keep at it with you until we turn this issue around. And I thank you for that. (Applause.)

Now, those are the three points I want to make. (Laughter.) One, when you helped me and Al Gore and indeed our entire administration family -- and by the way, I wish the First Lady were here, but she's in Central Europe today, representing the cause of freedom, and I thank you for that. (Applause.) When you helped us, we said, we have a vision for what we want our country to look like in this extraordinary era of possibility. We have a strategy to achieve that vision. Well, three and a half years later, we did what we said we'd do, or we got caught trying. (Laughter.) The results have been positive. Second, there's a clear difference here. And third, we've got good ideas for the future, and a lot of work still to do.

Now, what I want you to think about as I leave -- we've had a great time today, and I loved all the cheering and the shouting,

and it made chills run up and down my spine and kind of got me in the humor for the next three or four months to do what we have to do. And I thank you for that. (Applause.)

But this is what we used to call back home, preaching to the saved. (Laughter.) And there's something to be said for that, but it's not enough. And I want you to take just one moment to be serious before I go. I want you to just ask yourself, now or when you leave, to take a few moments to think about everything you can think about your country today -- all the good and the things that you think are not so good -- and then say, what would I like America to look like when my children or my grandchildren are my age? What do I want America to be like 20, 30, 40, 50 years from now?

We are going to walk across a bridge into the next century beginning with this election. And it's not like 1992 where you can say credibly, this is change against the status quo. That's not so. There is no status quo option. These are two very different visions of how we should walk into the 21st century and what kind of bridge we should build to go there. And the decisions we make will profoundly affect what America looks like when your children and your grandchildren are your age.

Now, in the end, that matters more than all the petty concerns we might have. It matters more than even the immediate and serious personal concerns we might have. Because in the end, for the same reason you decided to commit your careers to education, our fundamental obligation is to maintain and strengthen this country. And we have never been able to do it except by broadening opportunity and by bringing more and more people together, by breaking down the barriers of bigotry and prejudice and fear and bringing this country together in this vast melting pot of freedom that is the most remarkable experiment in self-government in all of human history. We are being given an historic responsibility now, you and I, to pick which bridge we're going to walk into the 21st century. And that will determine what this country will be like when our children and grandchildren reach our age.

So, what I want to ask you to do is to go beyond the preaching to the stage. I want to ask you to walk out of this hall determined, with all your other responsibilities and all your other pressures and all the challenges of the classroom and the schoolhouse, to spend whatever time you can between now and November talking to your family, your friends, people who don't work with you every day, people who don't have the same insight you may have into what goes on here about these big questions.

Because I believe with all my heart, if the American people are given back this choice, if they get to look at the big things not the divisive, distractive, destructive, puny elements that too often dominate our politics, the American people will do what

they've been doing for over 200 years, they will make the right decision. And your children and your grandchildren will be the richer for it.

Thank you. And God bless you all.

END

2:58 P.M. EDT

E X E C U T I V E O F F I C E O F T H E P R E S I D E N T

06-Jul-1995 03:27pm

TO: (See Below)

FROM: Margaret M. Suntum
Office of the Press Secretary

SUBJECT: 1995-7-6 Speech by satellite to NEA

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release
6, 1995

July

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
BY SATELLITE TO NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

2:20 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: I want to thank you for your kind introduction and even more for your many years of distinguished leadership for our children, our schools, our parents and, of course, for our teachers. And to all of you delegates, I want to thank you for the support you have given to our administration to help us to get here and to help us honor our commitments to the children, the teachers and the future of America.

I also want to thank you for the high honor you paid my good friend, Secretary Riley, by naming him your 1995 Friend of Education. I don't have to tell you that education has no better friend than Secretary Riley. I'm proud to have him in my Cabinet, and I'm proud to have worked with him for nearly 20 years now. He's actually doing what others say we ought to be doing. He's supporting more parental involvement. He's supporting higher standards and results-oriented programs. He's supporting accountability, but he's also supporting grass-roots empowerment for teachers, for parents and for local schools throughout this country. He is really making a difference, and he deserves the support of all Americans and all members of Congress, without regard for their party.

You know, of course, that the Vice President very much wanted to be with you today. But, of course, his mother fell ill and had to have surgery yesterday. I'm happy to report to you that of this morning Mrs. Gore is doing much better. She is a remarkable woman. Many years ago she was the first woman lawyer in Texarkana, Arkansas. So I've always thought we've sort of had a claim on her, too.

I know all of you join Hillary and me in praying for Mrs. Gore in her speedy recovery, and for her husband, Senator Gore, and for Al and Tipper and their

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entire family.

I'd like to begin this morning by just taking a few minutes to talk about what I said when I spoke at Georgetown University a couple of hours ago. It's something I believe I should be talking about more as President.

When I ran for this office, I said I wanted to do two things: first of all, to restore the American Dream and, secondly, to bring the American people together again. What I've learned from the journey we've been on for the last two and a half years is that we cannot restore the American Dream unless we do bring the American people together again.

You and I and all Americans must talk about how we treat one another, how we reach the hard decisions we have to make during this time of profound change, how we bridge these great divides in our society. We have got to find a way to reach common ground, a new common ground that honors our diversity but recognizes our shared values and shared interests, drawing strength from both to make the very best of what we can do in America. We have to recognize that

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there are real reasons why Americans feel that our sense of unity and national purpose is coming apart; why they often feel frustration and anger and confusion.

The challenges of this day are new and profound -- as profound as any we have faced in many, many decades. For most people my age and a little younger, two great certainties organized our lives. They've organized the lives of Americans for most of the last half-century -- first, the hope of middle class dreams; and, second, the strength of middle class values.

Today more and more Americans are less certain of both. The middle class dream that work will be rewarded and that the future for our children will be better is fading for too many people. More than half of all of our people are working harder to earn less than they did 15 or 20 years ago. And middle class values -- the values of hard work, strong families, safe streets, secure future -- those things are under attack, too, as we face threats from violence, the breakdown of families, the fraying of our social fabric, the very pace and scope of changes in this technological information age, where ideas and money and information move across the globe in a fraction of a second.

The question, of course, is what are we going to do about this. That's what I've been working on for two years, and that's the fundamental debate now going on in Washington. And we need to have that debate not just here in Washington, but all over the country.

We're really back to some pretty elemental principles. Some people argue that our real problems are all social and personal and cultural problems. So they say if everybody would just get up, go to work, behave themselves, obey the law, all of our problems would be solved. Now, on one level they're obviously right. Our problems can never be solved through purely political and community means. I've said all along, we've got to demand more responsibility from America, from all Americans. Unless people are willing to take responsibility for themselves, as every teacher knows, you can't cram information, learning, reasoning, compassion or good citizenship into the heads of someone who won't be open to it.

But at the same time, let's be completely frank. It's also true that nobody in America, no one, especially me, got where he or she is today alone. To believe otherwise is foolish. We all have to play a role -- individual citizens in their daily lives, people doing their part to help make their communities stronger, their neighbors safer; politicians in the way they deal with and address our problems. We've all got to do a better job. And I believe we have to recognize that one of the ways we all do more together is through the way our government works and what it does to help our people meet the demands of change.

This is not an either-or thing. This is not "are these problems personal and cultural, on the one hand, or social and political on the other." That's not the way the world works. It's both. And there is a role, a partnership role for the government to help you do what you do and to help all Americans make the most of their own lives.

Education is perhaps the best example of this. It's the work of your lives, but it's also the work of America's future. All of these concerns come together in education because school is where young people can learn the skills they need to pursue middle class dreams, especially now when knowledge is more important than ever to our future. School is also the place where middle class values taught by parents are reinforced by teachers -- values like responsibility, honesty, trustworthiness, hard work, caring for one another and our natural

environment, and good citizenship.

Government plays an indispensable role in helping to make sure that the schools that you work in are as strong as possible, have the highest standards possible, provide as much opportunity as possible. The dynamic is pretty simple. A good education clearly is key to unlocking the promise of today's economy in the 21st century. Without it, people are at an ever-increasing risk of falling behind.

Today, a male college graduate earns 80 percent more than a male who's just graduated from high school. That gap is double what it was just in 1979. That's why I have been fighting furiously since the day I took office to expand educational opportunity, to give all Americans a chance to grab the key to a prosperous future. As you know well, we have dramatically expanded Head Start. We passed Goals 2000 to set world-class standards for our schools and then to give grass-roots reform power to empower, really empower teachers and principals and parents to give them the flexibility to decide how to meet those standards and how to improve education.

Our national service program, Americorps, gives a helping hand with college for 20,000 people who are helping their country in grass-roots programs all across America. The Safe and Drug-Free Schools Initiative is helping to make schools safe, places where kids can learn again and be free from fear; places where parents can trust their children to be free from crime and drugs. Our direct student loan program makes college more affordable for millions of Americans while actually cutting the cost for taxpayers.

Now, there is one piece of this that is especially important for us to talk about today. As I noted before you've just honored Dick Riley. I want to commend him for so many things, but in particular for the work the Education Department is doing to teach our children good citizenship and the values we need to stay strong. There is something that we need to remember about that Department of Education that Dick Riley is now heading, and heading in the right direction. Just 18 years ago yesterday, on July 5, 1977, two sons of Minnesota, Vice President Mondale and former Vice President Hubert Humphrey, shared the same stage at another NEA convention.

Now, back in 1977, you all know that education policy in America fell under the giant umbrella of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, a huge bureaucratic agency responsible for health care policy and welfare responsibility, and all the educational responsibilities -- whether it was keeping our classrooms up to date, ensuring our public schools had the tools they need to teach our children, maintaining high curriculum standards, giving special-needs schools and special-needs students the support they need. All those things were all lumped in to this massive bureaucracy that was Health, Education and Welfare.

That wasn't in the best interest of public education then. It's certainly not in the best interest of the country today when education is literally the key to our economic future, to restoring middle class dreams. And it's certainly critical to reestablishing the dominance of middle class values.

At that historic meeting, Vice President Humphrey made a passionate plea, and he was a very passionate man, for something the NEA had been fighting for for over 100 years -- a Cabinet-level Department of Education. America's children would have only two more

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years to wait. The bill creating the Cabinet-level Department of Education was signed by President Carter in October 1979.

In the last two and a half years, Secretary Riley, a former governor who labored for eight years to dramatically improved schools in his native South Carolina, has worked hard to make the Department of Education work better than ever. We need the Department of Education today more than ever before. And we need it even more because Dick Riley has literally reinvented it. It is less bureaucratic. It is smaller. Programs have been consolidated. But he is focusing on the big issues, whether it is the pre-school needs of our kids, the standards in the grass-roots reform we need in public schools, the need we have for school-to-work transition programs in every state in the country, the need we have for expanded and lower-cost and better repayment college loans, or the need he has to cooperate with the Department of Education to give our working people the right to get the training they need the minute they become unemployed because now so many of them will have to find new jobs with higher skills. That is the record of Dick Riley; that is the record of the Department of Education; and that is why we need it.

As all of you know, during this time when we have increased our investments in education, we have also cut the deficit three years in a row for the first time since Harry Truman was President. We're cutting it by more than a trillion dollars over seven years. We're also cutting the bureaucracy of the national government over a six-year period by more than 272,000 positions to make the federal government the smallest it's been since President Kennedy was President.

Let me tell you just how dramatic the changes have already been in two and a half years. The government is already 150,000 people smaller. We have eliminated thousands and thousands of regulations, including regulations in the Department of Education. We have eliminated hundreds of government programs. And the budget would be balanced today but for the interest we have to pay on just the debt run up in the 12 years before I became President.

But we can't stop there. We must continue to cut the deficit until we eliminate it completely and balance the budget. That is why I have proposed a plan to balance the budget in 10 years. While cutting spending to balance the budget, however, under my plan we would continue to invest in our people especially in education.

We must not sacrifice the future of our children in our zeal to save it. But let me also say to you that I know a lot of people who want to invest more money in our country question whether we actually need a balanced budget. They question my wisdom when I proposed a balanced budget. But let me ask you to look at the history of America.

We ran deficits all during the 1970s, but we did it for good economic reasons. That was a period of stagflation, of low growth; a period when it was legitimate to stimulate the economy in a modest way by modest deficits. We never -- I reemphasize -- never in the history of our republic had a permanent structural deficit until 1981. After that, a lot of the people who got the tax cuts spent them and there was no way to reach a bipartisan consensus to lower the gap in the deficit. So we quadrupled the debt of this country in 12 years. We're 219 years old, and we've quadrupled the debt in 12 years. Now, we have to change that.

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Look what's happened to you. Every year in the 1890s, you had to fight to hold on to the educational advances. Every year when you knew that we needed to be investing more because many parents were able to invest less in terms of money and time in their children's education, you were often disappointed because we were spending more and more and more in interest on the debt.

Next year, interest on the debt will exceed the defense budget. That's how big a problem it is. It makes us poorer. It takes our savings. It makes us more dependent on other economies. And it leaves us less money to invest in education, in infrastructure, in technology, in the things that will grow jobs, raise incomes, increase the middle class, and shrink the under class.

So what we have to do is to balance the budget and increase investment in education. That's why I made the decision to veto the rescission bill that Congress sent me earlier last month. But it's also why I gave them an alternative. I am determined to work with the new Congress to cut the deficit and ultimately to balance the budget. But that rescission bill cut investments in our future -- in education, in job training, in the environment -- just to fund things that have a far lower value, even though they may be popular in the short-term with specific constituencies.

Now that Congress has agreed to restore funding for those investments, I'll be happy to sign a bill. It will cut the deficit, and that's good. But we'll also have \$733 million in this year alone in critical investments, including \$220 million for safe and drug-free schools, \$60 million to help train teachers and pay for education reforms at the grass-roots level, \$105 million for AmeriCorps.

As we work in the coming months to balance the budget, we have to do it in the same way. You and I know it would be self-defeating to cut our investments in education. Cutting education today would be like cutting defense budgets at the height of the Cold War. Our national security depends upon our ability to educate better -- not just to spend more money, but to reach more people, to perform at a higher level, to get real results. That's what our security depends upon.

But don't kid yourselves -- we've got a real fight on our hands. The congressional budget, which balances the budget in seven years, cuts education severely, as Keith Geiger just said. My budget, which balances the budget in 10 years, increases education while cutting other spending.

We're also able to go easier on Medicare and Medicaid, to take some real time and promote real health care reform, and to continue to invest in new technologies and research. All we have to do is take three more years and cut the size of that big tax cut roughly in half, maybe a little more.

Now, I think three years is a pretty small price to pay to save millions and millions of dreams. Let me just give you a few examples of the difference three years will make. I want to increase Goals 2000 to about \$900 million so that you will be able to work to improve 85,000 schools serving 44 million students. The congressional budget would eliminate Goals 2000, one of the principal engines of grass-roots reform -- something they say they support.

I want to increase Title I by over \$200 million

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in 1996 to serve 200,000 more children that year. Let me just say something about Title I and your efforts. All the time up here I hear the politicians saying we just throw money at education and it doesn't get any results and we spend more money and we don't show more results. Well, as the Secretary of Labor has pointed out there are public investments in children and private investments in children. We pretty well kept up with our public investments, but our private investments aren't keeping up. More and more of these children are being born in poverty, a higher percentage of them into difficult family circumstances and difficult neighborhood circumstances. And even those who have working parents have parents, most of whom are working longer hours for less money. That means that parents have less money and less time to invest in our kids. That's a much bigger burden for you to bear.

Now, the Congress wants to freeze funding and deprive over one million children of the help that you can provide by 2002. I believe the money will make a difference because I know that you can make a difference. You can't make all the difference for what doesn't happen in the family, but you ought to get a lot of credit for trying and for the difference that you do make.

I want to increase the School-to-Work program by 60 percent next year so 43 states can help thousands of students learn the skills they need to get and keep high-paying jobs, even when they don't go on to four-year universities. We're the only major industrialized country that does not have a system for dealing with all of the high school graduates who don't go on to four-year schools. Now, the Congress wants to cut it to half that amount.

I think that's being penny-wise and pound-foolish. I want to expand AmeriCorps to 50,000 people next year. Congress has proposed to eliminate it completely. I know that's a big mistake. Those 20,000 young people that are out there now, working with each other across the lines of race and region and religion and income are revolutionizing America at the grass-roots level, solving problems, serving their communities, being good citizens, doing things that other people just give talks about, and earning money to pay for their education. We ought to keep national service, and we ought to expand it.

We've reformed the college loan system to make college more affordable for up to 20 million Americans. Secretary Riley has done a masterful job, along with his staff, in administering the direct loan program, which actually increases the availability of loans, lowers the cost to students, lowers the paperwork burden to colleges and universities, and cuts the cost to the taxpayers.

Now, the congressional majority wants to cut \$10 billion from the student loan program by removing the interest subsidy during the time of the student's education which will raise costs significantly for up to seven million students. In the 1980s, the cost of a college education was the only thing that went up more rapidly than the cost of health care among the essential things that families need for the future. I don't think it's a very good idea to cut the college loan program. There are other ways to save the money.

Here's the bottom line. Under my plan, we balance the budget and increase educational investment by \$40 billion in proven programs that work. The plan of the Republican majority in Congress balances the budget, but it cuts education by \$36 billion, not counting the cuts in

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student loans.

Now, I'm not for a minute suggesting that balancing the budget is easy. Even under my plan, there will be plenty of pain to go around. We'll have to cut spending in other domestic programs about 20 percent across the board. But the difference between my plan and the congressional plan is the difference between necessary cutbacks and unnecessary, ultimately self-defeating pain.

One distinguished business analysis has said that the Republican budget cuts so much so fast that it will actually increase unemployment and bring on a recession and, therefore, delay the time when they can balance the budget.

Now, we do have a responsibility to balance the budget. And I give them a lot of credit for proposing a balanced budget. But we've also got a responsibility to invest in our children and our future. We cannot restore the economy, we cannot rebuild the middle class, we can't recapture middle class dreams or reinforce middle class values if we walk away from our common responsibilities, the education of our people.

If we'll just take 10 years instead of seven, if we cut taxes for the middle class and focus on child-rearing and education, and don't have big tax cuts for people who don't really need it

because they're well-off and doing very well in this economy, then we can balance the budget and improve education. We can do both, and that's what I want you to fight for.

Our mission, your mission and mine, has got to be to build a bridge to the future that every American can cross. We have to give people the power they need to make the most of their own lives. That is what's behind this -- balancing the budget and investing in education means building up America. And it's behind what I called for earlier today at Georgetown, a new common ground in which we come together to solve our problems.

I want our children's generation to inherit an America with as much opportunity as the one I was brought into. The best days of America should be, can be, will be before us if we work together. If people take the kind of responsibility you have taken to make our country better, we will do better. But it's going to take a good attitude. It's going to take good citizenship. It's going to take a willingness to listen to one another to find that common ground.

I have made a commitment that when I differ with the Republican Congress, I will offer an alternative.

I have made a commitment that I will have more conversation and less combat, like I did with my conversation with the Speaker up in New Hampshire. I have made a commitment to try to work for the long-term interests of our country, not just for the short-term gain. These are profoundly important things. And I have made a commitment not just to berate the worst in our country, but to try to extol, extol the best -- people like you that are doing things that work.

What you have to do is to be active and good citizens. Tell these members of Congress that you will support cutting the deficit, you will support balancing the budget, but investing in our country and having the federal government play a role, which in the larger scheme of things is still a modest role but a critical one, is absolutely essential for our future.

You've been working hard out there, and a lot of you work under very difficult circumstances. But there is no more noble, no more important task, especially at this moment when we stand on the threshold of a new century.

I thank you for your service to your country. I thank you for your service to the children and to the future of America. I wish you well. I ask for your good wishes and your strength and your willingness to stand for what you know is right for America.

God bless you all.

END

2:48 P.M. EDT

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