

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

May 7, 1998

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO MAYORS CONFERENCE ON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The East Room

3:10 P.M. EST

to Mayors

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Mr. Mayor, Secretary Riley, thank you for your outstanding work. And I'd like to thank Attorney General Reno and Secretary Slater, Secretary Herman, Secretary Glickman for also coming, along with James Lee Witt, our FEMA Director. I'd like to thank Mickey Ibarra and Lynn Cutler for the work that they do and all the other members of the White House staff, and say a special word of welcome to Senator Kennedy and Congressman Martinez, about whom I'll say more in a moment.

I'm sorry if I cost Mayor Helmke any votes in the Republican primary. It is his great misfortune to have been my friend for a long time. But surely, whatever he lost he got back by outing me as a law school truant today. I hope he has recovered all that lost ground. Unfortunately, it's true.

Because this is my only opportunity to appear before the press today, before I get into my remarks about education I would like to make a few important comments about the peace process in the Middle East.

First, I think it's important in the temporary frustration of the moment not to forget what Israelis and Palestinians have accomplished in just the past few years: the peace agreement signed here in September of 1993, based on the Oslo Accords, the agreement over Hebron, continuing in very open dialogue, an unprecedented amount of security cooperation. What we are trying to do now is simply to regain the momentum that has been lost in the past few months -- not by imposing our ideas on anyone, because only the parties can make decisions that will affect the lives they have to live, their security and their future.

What we're searching for is common ground to achieve what Prime Minister Netanyahu asked us to pursue a year ago, the start of accelerated permanent status negotiations. It's important not to forget that. We are not talking about a final agreement between the Palestinians and the Israelis. What we're talking about what kind of agreement can they make within the framework of their previous agreements that will get them into discussing all the difficult issues

that would allow them to wrap this up, hopefully on time, by the end of May next year -- which was the timetable established in the Oslo Accords.

Secretary Albright, I believe, made some real progress in London. Both Prime Minister Netanyahu and Chairman Arafat were seriously constructive. They discussed a set of ideas that we believe are necessary to get into those final status talks.

Prime Minister Netanyahu has asked us to send our Special Envoy, Dennis Ross, back to the region to pursue creative ways to make our ideas acceptable to both sides. He leaves later today with my instruction to literally go the extra mile, to seize this opportunity for peace, to launch the final status talks.

The Prime Minister and I agreed to try to do this a year ago, and we're going to do our best. I do not want to minimize the difficulties. Both sides have to make very hard decisions if we're going to keep moving forward. But the prize is a just and lasting and secure peace, and the prize can be attained. We're going to do everything we can to make it a reality.

Now, let me say what I said to you before when I was asked to appear before this conference. I applaud the mayors for holding this meeting on education. You have done an enormous service to the country by being here and by putting this document out. You can lead the way to a revolution of high standards and high expectations, of genuine accountability and real choice in education. And I believe you are determined to do so.

In the past few years, a lot has been done by dedicated teachers, fine principals, supportive parents, other committed reformers, and our students. But all of us know we have a lot more to do. We know that we have the world's best system of higher education, and we've taken unprecedented steps to open the doors of college to all Americans. We're moving forward on other levels, as well.

Tuesday, the United States Senate passed 91 to 7 a bill that articulates the principles that I set out five years ago in my proposed G.I. Bill for America's Workers. I think all educators know that we have to create a system of lifetime learning in America. Everybody has got to be able to go back to school throughout their lifetime. Indeed, one of the most important provisions in the balanced budget was that which provided a HOPE Scholarship tax credit of \$1,500 a year for first two years of college, and continuing tax credits for other forms of education for people of any age when they have to go back to school.

What this G.I. Bill will do, this present legislation that the Senate passed, is to untangle and streamline the current large number of government programs on job training so that workers can get a simple skill grant to choose the training they need. That is very important.

But everyone knows we still have a lot of work to do in our public schools. Our public schools, for generations, have taught our children not only how to read and write, but what it means to be an American. And they have embodied the principle that everyone ought to have a fair and equal chance to live out their dreams. We know we have to strengthen them to do their

job for the 21st century. As I said, there is a lot to be proud of. It's important to remember -- and I think the evidence will show -- that since the issuance of the National At Risk report in 1983, dedicated teachers, visionary principals, committed students and involved parents have accomplished a lot. But a lot needs to be done.

Our schools are still not giving our children, particularly our children who come in from the most difficult circumstances that Mayor Helmke discussed, the best education in the world. And, therefore, I really thank you for this action plan. It reflects the lessons that have been learned in communities across America. It reflects the goals I have sought to advance, that Secretary Riley has worked his heart out on for more than five years now.

And I think it's worth mentioning what they are. Every child in every community must master the basics with national standards in reading and math. Every child must have the chance to learn in small classes, especially in the early grades. That's why I proposed a national effort to hire 100,000 more teachers and distribute them in a way that will enable us to get average class size down to 18 in the first three grades. Every child should have more public school choice and the opportunity to learn in a modern, safe, state-of-the-art school. No child in any community, in my opinion, should be passed from grade to grade, year after year, without mastering the material. I believe that those things are principles that if they were real in every school in America would strengthen education dramatically.

I've often said, based on my own personal experience, that there's no education problem anywhere in America that hasn't been solved by somebody somewhere in America. We have to do more, all of us, to shine a spotlight on reforms that work at the local level and then to encourage people to embrace other people's changes.

You know, our founding fathers set up the states as laboratories of democracy. That was a phrase used by James Madison and by other founders. And in so many ways, they are. I used to say when I was a governor I was much more proud of being the second state to do something than to be the first state to do something, because if we were the second state to do something it meant we were paying attention to the laboratories and we weren't embarrassed to take somebody else's good idea if it would help our people.

I think today, more than any other single group of people, the mayors embody that spirit, and this report that Secretary Riley is issuing today called, Turning Around Low Performing Schools, shows that, number one, it can be done, and shows what is done. Let me just show it to you. Dick just gave me a copy of it before I came in.

I hope this will be read by every mayor, every governor, every school superintendent in the entire United States of America. If nothing else, it will give people to know that no matter how difficult their problems are things can get better, much better. And I hope that others will be as unashamed as I was when I was a governor to take other people's ideas. It's okay to give them credit, but the main thing you need to do is to take them.

When parents and teachers take responsibility, asking more of themselves, their children,

and their leaders, you can replace triumph -- you can replace failure with triumph. That's what this report shows. It shows that no school is a lost cause and that no child is a lost cause.

A lot of you have been kind and generous and open-minded enough basically to embrace and elevate the remarkable experiment launched by Mayor Daley in Chicago. They looked at their schools -- they saw low test scores, high dropout rates, students literally earning diplomas who couldn't read them. But instead of walking away, they went to work. Chicago ended social promotion, but Chicago also gave more after-school opportunities, had mandatory summer school for children who did not pass from grade to grade, and we now see, in addition to a lot of other changes, including far more involvement by parents school by school -- we now see high standards and uncompromising excellence coming back into the classrooms of that city.

And I have been in the Chicago schools, I believe three times in the last couple of years - - I was just there recently -- and it is truly amazing.

The thing that has moved me most, I think, was we were at a school -- not the last time there, but the time before last -- in which there were lots of parents there who had clearly rejected the notion that the worst thing for their child's self-esteem was being forced to go to summer school or forced to repeat a grade. They understood that by the time they were 30 years old, if they couldn't fill out a job application or read it in the first place, that would do far more damage to their self-esteem than having to spend a few more months learning. And that was a terrific achievement. And I think you deserve a great deal of credit for it. And I thank you for what you've done.

I believe we have to use standards in testing to identify children who are failing to learn, to make sure they get the extra help they need. I believe that we have to say to every student that America cares about you, America believes in you whether you believe in yourself, or not, right now; but it is our fundamental value in education that you must learn in order to be certified as a learner.

Let me also say, I think we have to say that it is absolutely wrong to go about this business of saying you're going to social promotion, or have testing with standards, and then not do what it takes to bring the children up to speed. It would be wrong to do this without giving those after-school opportunities, without providing those tutorial opportunities, without providing those summer school opportunities.

And I want to say -- I see Sandy Feldman here -- I want to say that I think that the teachers of this country will lead the way on this if they believe that the kids are going to get the long-term support they need to be held to the high standards. And I think the leaders of the AFT and the NEA feel that way and I think local teachers in every school throughout this country feel that way.

No one wants to be a part of a failing enterprise, especially when the stakes are the highest they could possibly be -- the future of our children. And if you look at these two things, if you say, okay, we know this can be done and everybody wants to do it, then the only

remaining question is what do we have to do and why aren't we doing it. And I see now more and more cities responding to this call -- Boston, Cincinnati, Long Beach, Rochester, Washington, New York, Philadelphia, are all taking steps to end social promotion. I've been in many of the schools in cities that are here in this audience represented, and I know that there are people working to take the kind of responsibility for transforming their schools.

Now, if you're going to do that we have a responsibility to help. As Paul said, there are some disputes about what the role of the national government should be as opposed to the states as opposed to the local level. I think it's important to put on the table first that the federal government's role in education has always been somewhat limited. It's less than a dime on the dollar of the education money. That means that we should focus on what works, on national priorities, and on helping schools that need the most help because they have the least ability to provide for the needs of their people.

We also ought to focus on those that manifest a desire to do the right thing. If you know what works, you ought to reward that. That's why I have proposed a network of what we call Education Opportunity Zones. Today, Senator Kennedy, Congressman Clay, and others, and Mr. Martinez, thank you for being here, will introduce legislation to create these zones all across America.

They will target poor urban and rural communities, where schools are often in crisis. They will spread reforms that work. You get the benefit of these zones if you're prepared to end social promotion, impose higher standards, recognize good schools, turn around failing ones, give parents public school choice, reward outstanding teachers, help those who are having trouble, remove those who cannot make the grade, and make sure that all children get the help they need through after-school tutoring and summer school.

This bill should be supported by everyone in both parties who cares about children and who cares about turning around failing schools. It is the only way we can offer opportunity to, and demand responsibility from, all the children in all of our communities all across America.

I think one of the most interesting things -- I asked for a report before I came out here about the cities that are working in environments where they don't have the level of direct control that the mayor enjoys in Chicago, and I got a good report on what some of you are doing in various cities. And the only thing I would say about that is that, either through a cooperative process or in some other way, in the end someone has to have the ability to make a decision and make it stick. Someone has to have the ability to make a decision. We don't make those decisions in Washington. We can create a framework; we can create opportunities; we can give money; but in the end, if a change has to be made, there has to be someone who can make the change.

I've already said that I believe -- and I strongly believe -- there's enough evidence of what works that if we get the people together at the local level, you can create an environment in which that's happening. But the mayors, even if they don't directly control the schools, have to be willing to speak up and say that this is not being done if it's not being done. You are the only

people who can do that. You are still the single voice of your cities.

And I have now spent hours and hours and hours looking at the Chicago experiment. I have spent no little amount of time on several other school systems, including some represented in this room, and I honestly believe that in the end, if no one can make a decision, and they can always bat authority back and forth, and no one can be held accountable, and no one's willing to be responsible for what doesn't work as well for what does, it's going to be very tough.

So we'll do our best to push this bill. I hope you'll help us pass it. I think it will really support what you're trying to do. But you know as well as I do, that if we have a value of no social promotion, if we have a value that says ever child can learn, if we're trying to propose what works, in the end someone has to be able to take responsibility for making that decision.

Now, let me say that we've got a comprehensive education agenda in the Congress, as all of you know. We're trying to get the funds to aid for school construction and school repair. Many of our cities have average age of their school buildings over 65 years. Many of our other cities have huge numbers of children going to school in trailers every day. I hope we can pass the construction bill. I hope we can pass the smaller classes.

We're doing our best to get full authorization for America Reads, to continue our work to help you hook up all the classrooms and libraries in the country to the Internet by the year 2000, to continue our struggle for national standards, including the tests in reading and math at the fourth and eighth grade.

We have made some progress on some of these issues in Congress. We may have a chance to talk about that in the question and answer period, but so far we have not been able to persuade the Congress to embrace the smaller class sizes, the modernized schools, the more teachers, the higher standards. We're going to keep working to do that. I want to ask Congress to join with the mayors across party lines to do what is right for our children in the 21st century.

You have set an example -- all of you, without regard to party -- who have put your children first. And just remember this, I had a meeting with the head of the Federal Reserve Board, Alan Greenspan, a couple of days ago. And he said -- it was really interesting -- he said, you know, it's hard to be sure about everything that's going on in this economy, but one thing is absolutely clear: it is now being powered by ideas. We live in an economy of ideas. You have more wealth growth on less density of physical product than ever before in human history and the trend will continue unabated. That means all the opportunities of tomorrow are those that are in the minds of our children waiting to be brought out.

You recognize that and together we have to bring them out. Thank you very much.

END

3:35 P.M. EDT

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

September 8, 1998

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
ON NATIONAL SCHOOL MODERNIZATION DAY

School Modernization

Pine Crest Elementary
Silver Spring, Maryland

2:45 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. I want to thank Carla for her introduction and her devotion to teaching. And I thought she did quite a good job of introducing her student. He's now sort of her boss, I guess, indirectly. And, young man, you did a terrific job. You look great and you stood up twice, and I think you ought to run for office some day. You really did a good job. I was very proud of you, I thought you were great.

I'd like to thank the State Superintendent Nancy Grasmick, and Superintendent Vance, and the other officials of this school district. And, Board Chair Nancy King, thank you for being with me again. She said if I came to this school district one more time I would be charged my appropriate tax assessment to help alleviate the overcrowding problem I came to talk about today.

I'd like to thank the members of the Maryland Legislature who are here -- Senator Rubin and others -- and County Council Chair Leggett and the other local officials who are here. I'd like to also thank the representatives of the education associations that are with us, including the NEA and the AFT. And I'd like to say a special word of appreciation to our wonderful Secretary of Education, Dick Riley; to Congressman Wynn, who has been a heroic champion of education; and to my good friend, Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, for everything she has done -- especially for making Maryland the first state in the country to require community service as a condition of public education. It is a very important thing. And I hope state after state, community after community will emulate it.

We are about to have our 100,000th young person in the AmeriCorps national service program. Creating an ethic of community service I think is one of the most important things we can do as America grows ever more diverse and still has a series of common challenges, common problems and common opportunities. And no one in America has done more to promote it than Kathleen Kennedy Townsend. I thank her for that.

I also want to tell you that Congressman Wynn committed the truth up here when he said that the first time we talked, he was hitting on me for more federal funds for education.

And I told him if we could just complete the recovery of the economy, balance the budget, we'd have some money, and that I, for one, would be in favor of investing that money disproportionately in the education of our children and the future of our country. And together we're trying to achieve that.

I think you should know today that this event in which you are participating is one of 84 going on today in communities in 37 states. This is National School Modernization Day for us. The _First Lady, the Vice President, governors, about 40 members of Congress, and the Cabinet -- not just Secretary Riley, but a lot of our other Cabinet members -- are out all across the country at gatherings like this. We are here to say that there is no more important long-term objective for America than world-class education for all our children, and that the children deserve schools that are as modern as the world in which they will live.

All of you know this is a time of great change and transition, and meeting the challenges of this time is daunting work. You have to follow any week, any month, the headlines about what is going on in the world and here at home, with the economy, in international political events, and you can imagine that, even on its worst day, this is a very interesting job the American people have given me. But it is daunting work dealing with the complex and dynamic world we're living in.

I have just seen it in Northern Ireland, where I visited with families, including those who were victims of the horrible bombing in Ormagh, who are determined to abandon the hatreds of the past and claim a different future for the children of Ireland. I have seen it in Russia, where people are working to lift their country out of economic crisis, even as they stay on a road to democracy and open economy.

And as Kathleen said, I had a good talk this morning with Senator Mikulski about Russia, and the Secretary of the Treasury is now, as we're here, in the Senate meeting with our Senate caucus to talk about the situation in Russia and generally what's going on in the global economy and how we can continue to push it forward.

At this moment I think all of us would admit that America, always a blessed nation, has particular blessings. We have the strongest economy in a generation. We have a dropping crime rate. We have the lowest welfare rolls in 29 years. We have the highest home ownership in history. Our country has had a remarkable run of economic and social progress, and we have been able to promote peace and security and freedom and human rights around the world. But people with this many blessings also have significant responsibilities. We have significant responsibilities around the world not to continue to be, in the words of our Federal Reserve Chairman, Alan Greenspan, the other day, an island of prosperity in a sea of difficulty in the rest of the world. We owe it to the world to exercise our responsibilities to try to advance the cause of prosperity and peace. And it's also in our interest, since our destiny is so inextricably bound up with the rest of the world. And we have unique responsibilities here at home. I've talked about this a lot, but I would like to reemphasize it.

Sometimes when things are going really, really well for people, they get a little self-indulgent, easily distracted, and basically just want to kick back and relax. It's a natural tendency for individuals. You go through a tough time, and you work and you work and work, and things get really good -- you say, thank goodness, things are not so bad as they used to be, I'm going to relax. There are people that have this whole theory that since we the lowest unemployment in nearly 30 years and the lowest inflation in over 30 years, and the economy is as strong as it's been, we're about to have the first balanced budget and surplus in 29 years, we can all just sort of pat ourselves on the back.

I believe that would be a serious error -- a serious error -- because I think, again, at times when you have many blessings, your responsibilities are greater. And our responsibility is to say, what should we do? What should we do with the money that the American people have produced through their hard work and industry and through bringing this deficit down? What should we do with our prosperity? What should we do with our confidence?

I think there is no more important thing to do than to get in our minds what the big, long-term challenges facing this country are and to say, we'll never have a better chance to make a big down payment on meeting the huge challenges of the country than we do right now -- because we're in good shape, because we don't have to worry about where our next dollar is coming from, because most Americans don't have to worry about where their next meal is coming from, because we have confidence that we're doing well. Now is the time -- if we can't do that now, if we can't look at the big challenges facing the country now, when can we ever do it?

Therefore, I think we ought to be asking ourselves, what do we have to do to keep this economic recovery going? What do we have to do to meet our responsibilities in the world? What do we have to do to save the Social Security and Medicare systems and make them work for the baby boomers when they retire without bankrupting our kids?

One thing we ought not to do is go out and spend this surplus 60 days before an election on a tax cut when we haven't even manifested the surplus and won't have it until October 1st. We waited 30 years for a surplus; we ought to at least look at the ink turn from red to black for a year before we start throwing it away.

I've been waiting -- I've been counting the days until October 1st so I can say, whew, we actually have the surplus. And now nobody even wants us to get there before they start spending it again.

And more importantly, spending it on a tax cut estimates what the surplus will be in years ahead. Now, we've been very good on estimating. I've been on the right side of that. Every year I've been President I've said, well, here's what I think the deficit is going to be, and it's always been lower. And we've always been fortunate because we haven't made a lot of false claims here. But we need to save the Social Security system before we start giving away the surplus that, in fact, has not even materialized yet. That's a big challenge.

The second thing we need to do is prove that we can not just preserve, but improve the environment as we grow the economy. We know we can do that, but you'd be amazed how many people don't believe we can do that still. You'd be utterly amazed -- not just in America, but all around the world -- who still believe there's this sort of iron law of environmental degradation and economic growth, and that no scientific discovery, no technological advance, nothing will ever enable us to do it. I think it's a big challenge we need to face.

We've got over 160 million Americans in managed care plans. I think it's a big challenge to protect the rights of people in managed care so you can control costs as much as possible without sacrificing quality, or peace of mind for families. I think people ought to be able to go to an emergency room when they need to, or see a specialist when they need to, and shouldn't have the doctor taken away in the middle of treatment. I think these are big issues, not little issues -- big things for the country.

But there is no bigger issue -- and there are lots of others -- the Senate is going to get another chance to do the right thing on campaign finance reform. I wish they would. I'd like to see all my successors be able to spend less time raising money and more time helping you raise your kids. I hope that can happen. But let's not kid ourselves. Nothing we do will have a greater effect on the future of this country than guaranteeing every child, without regard to race or station in life or region in this country, a world-class education. Nothing.

But first things first. You are all -- I mean, this is sort of what's called preaching to the saved because you all agree with all this on education. But even before the education issue, you must first decide what should our attitude be about our present moment of good fortune. I think our attitude should be it is not just a time to enjoy it, to indulge ourselves, to be diverted, it is a time to recognize the very serious questions before us and realize the unique opportunity we have to fulfill our responsibility to the future. And it always begins with our children.

As Secretary Riley said many times this month, we had a record number of school children start school -- 52.7 million -- half a million more than last year, more than at the height of the baby boom, more than at any time. And all the indications are that this will continue, this so-called baby boom echo, will continue to reverberate for years and years to come.

Now, there are a lot of things that we should be doing in education. I came to emphasize one today, but I think it's worth repeating that we have advocated high standards, high expectations, high levels of accountability, and high levels of support to achieve those objectives. We've got a program to expand charter schools; to end social promotion, but to provide after-school and summer school programs to people who need it; to reward our most committed teachers; to train more and certify more master teachers; to do more to help our children master the basics, and to pass voluntary national tests for 4th grade reading and 8th grade math. We've called for more efforts to make our schools safe and disciplined and drug free.

But it's important to point out that with the biggest group of school children in history enrolled, one of the biggest problems is the adequacy and the quality of the physical space itself, and its capacity to hook into the information revolution.

The Vice President and I, for nearly four years now, have been working to hook all of our classrooms and libraries up to the Internet by the year 2000. There are lot of these classrooms that aren't hookable. And basically we have two different kinds of problems. First of all, too many schools are overcrowded: classes in hallways, gyms, portables on campuses -- like here, outside.

I was in a little town in Florida where one school had, as I remember, 12 different trailers out there behind it, maybe more.

Then not very long after that I went to Philadelphia, where the average school building is 65 years old. And they're magnificent buildings. You couldn't afford to build buildings like that today. But they haven't been maintained.

And I always ask people, what kind of signal do you send to an inner-city child whose one chance to make it in life is a decent education if every day the child has to walk up the stairs and go into a school where the windows are broken, the paint is peeling, there's graffiti on the walls, maybe a whole floor is shut down because it is simply physically incapable of being occupied? And then the child will turn on the television and hear every politician like me saying, children are the most important things to our future, education is the most important issue. The actions that the child sees walking up the steps to school every day are louder than all the words to the contrary of the politicians. This is a big issue.

So what we have done within the balanced budget -- I want to emphasize this. It's true. Congressman Wynn will tell you I've disappointed some of my friends because I don't think we can vary from what got us to the dance of prosperity. And what got us to the dance of prosperity is being ruthless about balancing this budget, keeping the interest rates down, getting the investment up and giving Americans a job so they can pay taxes to the local school district, so you can do the lion's share of the work.

Consistent with that and within that framework, we have proposed the first ever initiative at the national level to help communities build and repair and modernize more than 5,000 schools, so that we can meet this huge need out there. It's a school construction tax cut that is completely and fully paid for in the balanced budget. It doesn't touch a penny of the surplus and it is the right way to cut taxes. It respects discipline, it targets investments to the future where they're needed most. And what I would like to ask all of you to do is to help Congressman Wynn reach the other members of Congress and say this ought not to be a Republican or a Democratic issue. It ought not to be an issue that pits the rapidly growing suburbs against inner-cities with old buildings that anybody would love to have if they were just properly modernized and wired. This ought to be an issue where we can all say that it's a national priority. And you can talk all you want to about education, but we don't need a crowded or a crumbling classroom, or permanent reliance on house trailers as the symbol of America's commitment to education. Now, that's important.

I also want to point out that we have paid for, within the balanced budget, in addition to the school construction, enough funds to help school districts hire another 100,000 teachers to lower the class size, average class size, to 18 in the early grades. And I think that's important.

All the research shows it makes a permanent difference if early in the educational experience teachers have the chance to give personal attention to students, and they have a chance to relate to each other in a class that is small enough to embed permanently not only learning skills, but habits of relating and learning in the future. All the research shows that.

Finally, let me say, we have a proposal to provide scholarships to 35,000 young people who will agree to go out and teach in educationally underserved areas, based on the old idea of the National Health Service Corps.

You know, I used to be Governor, as one of my opponents once said, of a small, rural state and we had all these places in the country that could never get a doctor. And the National Health Service Corps came along and they gave these young people scholarships to medical schools and covered the enormous cost of going. And all they had to do was to be willing to go out either to an inner-city area or out in the rural area where they couldn't get a doctor, and serve for a few years and work off the cost of medical school.

That's what we want to do with education. We want to say, we will pay your way to school, we'll help you get an education; after a couple of years, you can do whatever you want to with your life, but we ask you in return for our investment in your education to go to an inner-city school or a rural school or a Native American school -- go someplace where they won't have a good teacher if it weren't for you. I think it is a great idea. It is fully funded.

Now, the last thing I want to say -- and this goes back to the school modernization -- we've got to ask Congress to pass the budget to give us the funds to hook all the classrooms and the libraries up to the Internet by the year 2000. This is a huge deal, and it is a major, major educational issue.

You may remember that last spring the First Lady and I and a large delegation of members of Congress and others went to Africa. And it was the first time a sitting American President had ever taken an extensive trip to several countries in sub-Saharan Africa. It had never happened before. We visited a school in Uganda that will soon be linked to Pine Crest by the Internet. We were actually there.

When you see that school, if you have the visual link through the Internet, you want to give those kids some new maps, you'll want to send them some books, you'll want to do a lot of things, but you'll also know that they are beautiful, good, highly intelligent, and immensely, immensely eager to be connected to the rest of the world and to share a common future with our children.

So this is very important. Unfortunately, nearly half of our schools don't have the wiring necessary to support basic computer systems.

We're doing a great job, and it's not just the government -- private sector, local districts, everybody -- a fabulous job of getting these computers out into the classrooms. More and more, there is good educational software. But what are we going to do when the actual wiring is not there? We have to do this.

So, again, I ask Congress to pass the funds -- in the balanced budget -- for the connection for the Internet. It's a huge thing. And it has more potential to dramatically revolutionize and equalize education, if the teachers are properly trained, than anything else. And in our plan, we have funds for teacher training as well. Otherwise, you'll wind up having the kids know more about it. We can't afford to have that.

So that's what I'm here to say. Number one, let's get people out of the house trailers and get them out of the falling-down buildings, and give our kids something to be proud of, and send them the right signal and have the physical facilities we need. We've got a plan to do it, with the right kind of tax cut, it's in the balanced budget.

Number two, let's fund 100,000 teachers and take average class size down to 18 in the early grades. Number three, let's fund the money necessary to enable all of our classes and all of our libraries in all of our schools to be hooked up to the Internet by the year 2000. If we do that we're going to be very, very proud of how our kids turn out in the years ahead.

Thank you and God bless you. Thank you.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

August 31, 1998

general

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT OPENING OF EDUCATION ROUNDTABLE

Herndon Elementary School
Herndon, Virginia

11:40 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. First of all, let me thank all of you for that warm welcome and, Michele Freeman, thank you for welcoming me to Herndon Elementary School. All of you know, better than I, that this is the beginning of a new school year where parents and children are meeting their teachers for the first time and there is excitement and anticipation of what everyone hopes will be a very successful year for the children, and insofar as it is, it's a good year for America.

I have done everything I knew to do for the last six years to try to focus the attention of the American people on the whole question of education, because I think it is one of the big questions which will determine the shape of our children's future and the world in the 21st century.

If you think about the other major challenges we face as Americans -- reforming Social Security and Medicare so that we baby boomers don't bankrupt the country when we retire -- providing quality affordable health care to all of our people, proving we can preserve and improve the environment and grow the economy, building one America across all the racial and religious and other lines that separate us, something I've been very involved in, in the last several weeks, as all of you know, trying to construct a world free of terrorism and more full of peace and prosperity and security and freedom -- every single one of those challenges depends upon our ability to have educated citizens, not just educated presidents, not just educated secretaries of education -- but citizens who can absorb complicated information and all these things that are flying at them all the time and evaluate it and measure it, who can develop reasoned principles, passionate responses, to keep the idea of America going into this new century.

That's why I wanted to come here today. Many of you know that I am leaving, when I go back from you, I go back to Washington and then the First Lady and I are going to Russia and

then to Ireland with a team of people to deal with the issues there, and I'd like to just say one word about it, because it's my only real opportunity to talk with you and through you, thanks to our friends in the press here, to the American people. Because this trip is an example of one of the most important lessons every child needs to learn in America from a very early age. And that is, we are living in a smaller and smaller world.

This global economy, the global society is real. Information, ideas, technology, money, people, can travel around the world at speeds unheard of not very long ago. Our economies are increasingly interconnected. Our securities are increasingly interconnected. I'm sure all of you have followed the events in the aftermath of the tragic bombing at our embassies in Africa, and you know that there were far more Africans killed than Americans, even though America was the target. And you know that the person responsible did not belong to any government, but had an independent terrorist network capable of hitting people and countries all around the world.

So there's been a lot of good. We've benefitted a lot from this global society of ours. We have over 16 million new jobs in the last six years, and we're about to have our first balanced budget surplus in 29 years. We have benefitted from the world of the 21st century. But we have a lot of responsibilities. And the reason I'm going to Russia is because we have learned the hard way that problems that develop beyond our borders sooner or later find their way to our doorstep unless we help our friends and our neighbors to deal with them as quickly and promptly as possible.

Now, the Russian people are to be commended for embracing democracy and getting rid of the old communist system. But they're having some troubles today making the transition from communism to a free market economy and from communism to a democratic society that has supports for people who are in trouble.

What I want to do is to go there and tell them that the easy thing to do is not the right thing to do. The easy thing to do would be to try to go back to the way they did it before, and it's not possible; but that if they will stay on the path of reform, to stabilize their society and to strengthen their economy and to get growth back, then I believe America and the rest of the Western nations with strong economies should help them, and indeed have an obligation to help them, and that it's in our interest to help them.

If you say why, let me just give you a couple of reasons. First of all, Russia and the United States still have the biggest nuclear arsenals in the world. And at a time when India and Pakistan have tested nuclear weapons, we need to be moving the world away from nuclear war, not toward it. We have to have the cooperation and the partnership with Russia to do that.

We don't want terrorists to get a hold of weapons of mass destruction. A weakened Russia, a weakened Russian economy would put enormous pressure on people who have those technologies and understandings to sell them. We don't want that to happen. We know we need Russia's partnership to solve problems in that part of the world. If it hadn't been for Russia's partnership, we could not have ended the war in Bosnia, which all of you remember a couple of years ago was threatening the entire civility of Europe. Next door in Kosovo, there is a

similar problem today; we've got to have Russia's partnership to solve that. So if Russia will stay on the path of reform, I believe America and the rest of the West must help them.

I'm also going to Ireland, which is the homeland of over 40 million Americans. We trace our ancestry there. And they've been working a long time on a peace process in which we've been intimately involved and I'm going to do my best to advance that. I think we have a good chance to do so. But I want you to understand that I do these things because I think they are in America's interest. They're not just the right things to do, they're not just nice things to have happen.

But every child -- you look around this room and see how many children are here who come from different cultures themselves, whose ancestors come from different countries themselves. There is no nation in the world better positioned than the United States to do well in the 21st century, because we're a people from everywhere. If our values -- if our values and our ideals can spread around the world and we can create a peaceful, secure world. So that's what I'm trying to do.

—

But to get back to the main point, the ultimate national security of any country rests in the strength of its own citizens. And for us, that means we have got to prove that no matter how diverse we are, we can still offer a world-class education to every single American child.

I'm sure all of you know this, but virtually every one in the world believes that America has the finest system of higher education anywhere. We are flooded every year with students and graduate students coming from every other country in the world to our colleges and universities because they think they're the best in the world and they have made us very strong. But we now know that in the world we're living in, it's not enough just to educate half the people very well through university; you must educate 100 percent of the people very well in elementary and secondary schools.

We know we've got a lot of challenges. Our kids come from different places. A lot of them have different cultures, they have different learning patterns, they speak different languages as their native language. A lot of them are poor. A lot of them live in neighborhoods that are difficult. And so this is a great challenge for us. But it is a worthy challenge. It's a worthy challenge for a great country to prove that we can take all this diversity, not just racial and ethnic and religious diversity, but diversity of life circumstances, and still give every single child a shot at living his or her dream. That is what this is all about, and that's why I'm here today.

This is just as much a part of our national security as that trip I'm taking to Russia, and I want you to understand that I believe that. So when we finish the roundtable, I want to say a little about what we can do to help and what's going on in Congress and what will happen in Congress over the next month because it's very important. But the most important thing, as the Secretary said, is what's happening here. So I'd like to stop talking and start

listening now, and we'll do the roundtable and I think we should start with Michele Freeman and let her talk about this school and her experiences and her challenges and what she's doing about it.

END

11:50 A.M. EDT

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

August 31, 1998

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
DURING EDUCATION ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

general-
discussion

Herndon Elementary School
Herndon, Virginia

12:45 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Let me just say very briefly before I move on, you probably know this because you talked about how your school was growing. But I believe Secretary Riley, I think it was last year was the first year that we actually had a school class from kindergarten through high school bigger than the baby boom generation. And this explosion of children into our schools has created enormous strains on school districts all across America.

I was in a school in Florida -- I believe it had 17 trailers outside

THE SUPERINTENDENT: We have that beat, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: This was just one school, not a school district, and it was amazing. But there was an article in The Washington Post and in other newspapers over the weekend about the teacher shortage in America, and I'm very concerned about it. We have two proposals: One is to put 35,000 teachers in the most difficult and underserved areas in the country -- it's part of our budget -- the other would put 100,000 teachers out there across the country in the first three grades, to try to keep class size down below 20. And I think those things are very, very important.

One of the things I'm hoping I can do is to persuade the Congress in the next month to embrace the idea that we clearly have a national obligation now to support what is a national phenomenon, the explosion of the number of schoolchildren in our schools. So when you say what it did, it made me want to think about that.

I'd like to go on now to JoAnn Shackelford, because it seems to be a logical follow-up to what you said about the diversity of your student body and teaching people to read and this Saturday Program, which I'm very interested in. It sounds to me like something everybody ought to be doing.

MS. SHACKELFORD: Thank you. First of all, I wanted to tell you, welcome to our

school. We're so excited you're here. Miss Freeman is a hard act to follow, so I won't try. But I do have a few things to ask for.

THE PRESIDENT: Who picked this questioner?

MS. SHACKELFORD: There's a couple. I'll be quick. Our staff, most of which are seated in the first three rows out here, firmly believe that all of our students can learn to read by the end of third grade, and they will then become lifetime learners, not only readers. But to achieve this goal, we are very convinced that we need smaller class sizes. And we also need intervention in the early grades before it's too late.

— We have two programs here at Herndon that I'm going to talk a little bit about. The first one is one I know you're familiar with from Arkansas; it's the Reading Recovery Program. Reading Recovery teachers, there are two of us, work very closely with classroom teachers, which is the key to build a program for these students. And these are usually our lowest-achieving first-graders. And we build on their strengths and we make them become not only good readers, but lifelong readers. And we have been very successful here with that program.

It's really the highlight of my day when I come to work and I spend that two hours with my four Reading Recovery students and watch them learn to read; it's exciting. But because of our large size -- here comes the asking part -- and only two trained Reading Recovery students, we're not able to reach all of our students; we have a long waiting list of students that would like to be, that need that support. So we would like to see this program expanded in all of our schools across the nation.

The second program that's probably the dearest one to my heart is our Excel Saturday Program. We fondly call it here "Saturday School." And if you came to our library and our cafeteria on any given Saturday, you would find about 90 of our students and about 60 to 70 students from Herndon High School and other area high schools who have actually gotten out of bed to come here. And the high school students serve not only as the tutors, but as the mentors and as the role models for our students.

The teachers provide materials to help their academic skills, and we also try to encourage our English as second language students develop their English proficiency. We have four or five of our teachers every Saturday and four or five of the high school teachers here helping to provide guidance and encouragement for the program. So that is a large commitment from our staff and from Herndon High School.

We feel like this is a winning program for everyone -- not only for our students, but the high school students receive as much benefit as we do. One of the things that's fun to watch is they practice the languages that they're learning at the high school on our native-speaking

children and on our French immersion children. So they're practicing, and yet the children are the teachers. It also gives them a wonderful opportunity to give back to their community, which is so important.

At the same time, Miss Freeman talked a little bit about it, we capture the parents and we're able to provide -- discuss parenting issues, and in my role we talk a lot about how important it is to read to children; but not only in English, but in your own native language. So that has been very beneficial. We also translate the meetings into Spanish or any other language that is needed that Saturday.

Now, what we would like is, we would like to be able to expand this program to serve more students, provide transportation for some of our students that aren't able to get here; we haven't done that in the past, and scholarships for some of our high school tutors so that they can go on. Many of our high school tutors are English as second language students themselves who have gone through the elementary school and are now in the high schools. So if we had more funds, we could do all of those things. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: I'd just like to make a couple of observations. First of all, I'll think about this high school scholarship thing. The only high school scholarships directly for service, community service, we have are the ones that I announced at Penn State a couple of years ago, where we give a modest scholarship that's matched in the local community to one person for outstanding community service in high school.

So we now have 1,000 colleges and universities providing reading volunteers through the America Reads Program to go into schools to help young children learn to read, and most of them are Work Study students, but a lot of them are not eligible for Work Study and they just do it anyway. There may be something we can do on that and I'll think about it.

The other thing I'd say is that I'm a big fan of the Reading Recovery Program. And if you look at the research, it has about the best long-term results of any strategy. But there is a reason for it; it's very expensive because it's so labor-intensive. And it's something that maybe Secretary Riley wants to talk about this a little bit.

We've discussed before that whether the generalized assistance we give to school districts for supportive programs like this, or the states which then the school districts get, should be more focused. And we've tried not to sort of pick and choose among the various reading strategies because of the limited amount of money and the large number of programs under way in the country.

But there's no question that the Reading Recovery strategy, particularly when you've got a lot of young people whose first language is not English, have had, I believe, the best long-term results, but it's because it's so labor-intensive and is quite expensive and it's something we need

to look at.

Dick, you want to say anything about this?

SECRETARY RILEY: No, you said it correctly, that the funds that we give out from the federal government, we really try to have them flexible enough for you to use them for programs of this kind, but that specific decision probably should be a local decision. But, frankly, this reading by the end of the third grade we think is probably as important as anything in this country. And if a child is having difficulties, this concentration through the Reading Recovery Program just makes so much sense to meet that national goal.

THE PRESIDENT: Maybe we should go on now to, since we're talking about this subject, to Maria Gorski, who is a parent liaison. And you talked about involving the parents, so talk a little about that for us, Maria.

MS. GORSKI: Mr. President, welcome to Herndon Elementary once again. We are aware of your busy schedule and we appreciate your time here with us today. My concerns are about our children's parents who have two -- up to three jobs, and they don't have enough time to help with homework for their children, because of the language barriers and the lack of time to have family unity.

As the parent-liaison, I have the opportunity to observe and learn how parents feel frustrated not being able to fully understand the language, help their children and express their concerns about their children's education. Parents, through my own experience, have the willingness to learn the language and get better skills to have a better future.

As you know, if they learn the language, better opportunities, they can find better jobs and spend more time with their children. They have requested programs for after school and weekend tutoring for the children, and also for the parents, for themselves. Please support our existing United Neighborhood Program, which is being run by Captain Smith of the Herndon Police from Herndon and the volunteers from our community. It's a tutoring program that runs three nights a week, three evenings a week, from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., and the volunteers come and tutor the children.

I've been there a few times and the children, their grades improve a great deal. So far, it's been successful, but I said before, it's only -- runs with volunteers only. Please restore the funding which is with support programs like ours, and allows them to work better to make our community stronger. As you know, the future relies on our children and now is the time to think about them as well as for the parents.

Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. How many parents volunteer in this school? Do you know how many?

MISS FREEMAN: We clock the volunteers by hours that they spend in the school, but I would say if you're looking roughly for a figure, we have anywhere during the course of the year from 500 to maybe more than that in terms of volunteers coming in and out of the building. We also have, if you add to that number, volunteers that work from home and send in materials or make things for us so that we add those hours into the clocked hours for the year. So we have a large volunteer corps.

THE PRESIDENT: What about the children who have both parents work and maybe have two jobs? How do you work out time for them to meet with the teachers and --

MS. GORSKI: That's -- usually since that's on Saturdays, I do the translations for the Spanish parents, and the conferences sometimes in the evenings, in the mornings, early mornings. Sometimes, usually they have the day off and I try to work it out for their own convenience and their own schedule. It's very difficult, especially in November, for the conferences. But last year, we had a lot of them that they made the conference.

THE PRESIDENT: What about -- how does the school work? What does the Assistant Principal do to make sure that there are no fires started and everybody sort of shows up more or less on time and all of that?

MS. ISAACSON: Well, life here at Herndon is very, very interesting. And, Mr. President, despite recent events in the past year concerning discipline and safety in the school, we at Herndon Elementary believe that schools should and need to be one of the safest places for our children.

Our teachers and staff are dedicated to meeting the challenge of educating and nurturing every child that enters their classroom. And by being proactive, we have fostered the importance of building a sense of community within the classrooms and throughout the school. Our teachers have been trained in discipline with dignity strategies and teach the pillars of character education.

They get to know the children, they get to know the families. In fact, many of them go to sporting events and dance recitals and take the kids to Orioles ball games. We really have a very dedicated staff.

Our counselors work with the students to learn strategies to help themselves in peer mediation and conflict resolution. They, too, go out; they outreach into the community, into the homes. They run classes on parenting skills and also are a very integral part of the Excel program.

The administration is very visible. And the reason we are very visible is because we

need to know the tone of the day. We like to avoid problems, we like to be proactive, and also to get the sense of the emotional state of our children. So we are visible by greeting them every morning, by being in the cafeteria for breakfast and for lunchtime. We try to model and convey that we care for our children and we are there for them, that they know who they can go to for help.

Our Go for the Gold program has really helped the children set expectations and accomplish their goals, academically and socially, and also our parents, our business partnership and our community has been a very integral part of the team by tutoring, by mentoring and for numerous volunteer hours.

Also, we have a very unique program here at Herndon called "Adopt a Cop." And our local police come in and have lunch with the children. And we find that extremely beneficial, because it has heightened the awareness of the children about safety in the school and within the community. So we are very, very proud of our staff and our community, proactive work in discipline and safety, because discipline and safety are important and are really some of the most challenging issues we are dealing with as educators today.

THE PRESIDENT: Last week, I went up to Worcester, Massachusetts and released there this handbook that Secretary Riley and Attorney General Reno did for all the schools on trying to identify children that have problems and trying to prevent things from happening before they go too far. But I've tried to emphasize to them that the schools -- still, schools are basically the safest places in the country for our kids. But when something goes wrong, it can be terribly tragic.

But I think it's important that the American people know that most schools have people like you in them and other people who are really working hard to do their part to help the children grow up in a safe, secure environment so they can learn. And I know Secretary Riley, he mentioned the Character Education Program; he's been promoting that and worked hard for it ever since we've been here, and I thank him.

What about the teachers? It's about time we heard --

MS. BELL: We're excited, Mr. President. I know at this time of the year, we're all setting up our classrooms and wondering when those students are ready to come in and meet us. But we also are realistic and look at the challenges that each individual child will bring to our classroom. And also, we need to think about how do we communicate with the parents? How do we share our expectations and how do we get them to work together with us as a team.

It's hard enough for seasoned teachers to prepare. But for brand-new teachers who are just entering the profession, in Fairfax County we feel it's important to provide a mentor so they can have support and encouragement and maybe somebody just to listen to their stories and to give them what they need.

We also provide a colleague teacher to anybody new to the county, but who has taught before, because across the nation, we do things a little bit differently. I think, too, we need to make sure that we can convince our middle school and high school students that teaching is a wonderful profession. We need to provide funding so maybe a child who is afraid they can't afford college can be provided that. But then, we also need to go one step further, and when they do choose education, make sure we're there as experienced teachers giving the support that a new teacher needs.

I think across the board in our school, we try to have a really strong mentorship program. And I think it goes across our staff. If you can share with one another, it just keeps building. Because as teachers, we never stop learning and we should never stop reaching out to help others.

THE PRESIDENT: What's the most challenging thing that new teachers face -- first-year teachers?

MS. BELL: I think it's that first conference, sometimes, with the parent, or the first phone call and you're not sure what the concern is from the parent, because you want to establish rapport immediately with the parent, because if you establish that rapport, the rest of the year is so much easier. And so we need to reach out to our parents and make sure they know that we're there to work with them. And we need to share that with the beginning teachers. Don't be afraid of parents. They're there to learn with us, and we must be there for them.

THE PRESIDENT: I could use her in any number of positions. We've got an airplane strike in the Midwest I think you could -- and I'd appreciate it.

MISS FREEMAN: Mr. President, she's taken.

THE PRESIDENT: But one of those parents who is sitting to your left, Mr. Lewis, you're the PTA President. First of all, I know this is not what you are going to say, but what do you do when you're not the PTA President and why did you decide to do this?

MR. LEWIS: Well, Mr. President, before I answer that question -- by way of beginning, we at Herndon Elementary, along with the chorus of voices across this nation want to take this moment to commend you and your administration for your unwavering commitment to the notion of quality education for millions of schoolchildren in America.

We ask you, Mr President, to continue to press forward. Simply stated, Mr. President, we want to say that we appreciate you, and thank you.

Now, to answer your question specifically, Mr. President, my day job is with Communities in Schools, so I'm working with Bill Milligan; I know you know him. And, of

course, we are the largest stay in school program in the nation, and we're in over 1,000 schools across the country, we serve over 350,000 to 500,000 schoolchildren a year. I have a deep, burning passion to help children to achieve their capacity and potential, as well as everyone around this panel and those that occupy the audience today.

My daughter, Christina Lewis, who is here with us today is a student at Herndon Elementary School, and it seems to me that everyone has an incumbent obligation to contribute to their community in every way they possibly can, and that brought me to the PTA. And let me say very quickly that the PTA is composed of teachers and parents and administrators that are world-class in every way and it makes my job very easy.

I do want to say, Mr. President, that in your Inaugural metaphor that you used to call the nation to action, that is, building bridges to the 21st century, the PTA at Herndon Elementary School is about building bridges, it's about connecting the disconnect, it's about building a community context around the school and every student within the school.

Secretary Riley has talked often about the fault lines in America, the emerging fault lines in America. And what we're about as a PTA is building bridges across those fault lines. And let me tell you how we do that, Mr. President. We build community around the school, around every student in the school, and we have something called "Guiding Principles" that inform our decision-making. There are 10, and there are 10 guiding principles because someone came down off a mountain once with 10 principles, so we try to approximate that.

Number one: We believe that within every child there is greatness. Number two: We believe that all children can learn. Number three: We believe that all children should be affirmed and validated. Number four: Every child should feel safe, cared about and capable. We call these four principles, the Principles that Produce Social Capital, that every child can draw upon in order to realize their capacity, potential, hopes and aspirations. Number five: We believe that effective schools should have a abiding source quality. That is, we should constantly examine whether or not we are providing value for our customers in terms of adequacy, relevancy and effectiveness. Number six: We believe that effective schools should be learning organizations. That is, they should be open, responsive and adaptable. Number seven: We believe strongly in parent involvement. The literature tells us and experience tell us that when parents are involved in schools, children succeed in school exponentially. Number eight: We believe that every child should have access to modern information technology and that technology should be integrated in the teaching and the curriculum. We believe that that is essential. Number nine: We believe that children in school should be embraced by a community of collaborative partnerships, that are needs-based focused. And number ten, Mr. President: We believe that every school in every school district should have a vision that is compelling, clear, and is consistent. We believe that these guiding principles, Mr. President, are imperative.

THE PRESIDENT: I would just like to say a couple of things and ask you one question. First of all, I want to thank you for your work with the Cities and Schools program. I brought it

to Arkansas with Bill Milliken probably 15 years ago, and that's a long time ago. Secondly, I want to thank you for your work in the PTA and as a father who used to be an active participant in all our school events, I think it's a good thing to have men as well as women be present. And I think that's good.

How many members does your PTA have? How many parent members?

MR. LEWIS: Last year, 47 percent of the parent population of Herndon Elementary School were members of the PTA. This year, under the able leadership of Mary Mann, who is our Vice President for Membership, we expect to go to scale -- 100 percent.

THE PRESIDENT: I'd say that's pretty good.

MS. MANN: We think big here.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, Mr. Superintendent, are all your schools like this?

MR. DOMENECH: Well, welcome, Mr. President, to Herndon Elementary and to the Fairfax County Public School System. We are the 12th largest school system in America with 152,000 students; and undoubtedly, we are the best school system in America. Clearly, the reason for that, I think, is demonstrated around this table. This is a community that values education, that treasures education, where the parents, the business community, the staff just give 100 percent for all of our children. And in spite of our size, it's a quality school system.

We are a microcosm of America. We have 39 percent of our students are minority students. But we don't see diversity as a weakness, we count diversity, really, as our strength. We have instituted a number of programs, and I think you heard a sample of those programs here that have been very successful for us.

Now, in spite of that, we want to continue excellence. And in order to do that and in order to meet the challenge of the 21st century, because we very much agree with you that the United States of America is the number one power in this country. But we only have five percent of the world's population. And what that tells us is that there isn't a single child that we can afford to lose if we treasure the future of this country.

The challenges that confront us, Mr. President, and the ones that we need assistance with is size. We -- you mentioned before visiting a school in Florida, well, the Secretary visited us this spring at Centreville High School, where we have over 40 -- we don't call them "portables," we call them "learning cottages." That's at just one school. And you'll see that represented around the county. We have a problem in terms of facilities. We need dollars to construct new schools; we need dollars to extend facilities. Herndon -- you'll see a couple of learning cottages outside here as well.

Technology -- it's a major issue, a very important issue for us in education, but again, a big ticket item. We need help there. And definitely we need help in terms of class size. One of our -- (applause) -- one of our initiatives for this coming school year is a program we call "Success by Eight," and that translates into that by the time they're eight years old, by the third grade, we expect all of our children to be able to read, we expect all of them to on grade level in terms of math and the other studies. But in order to do that, we have to be able to create the kind of learning environment for them where the size is small enough that teachers can do the kind of job and the students can learn.

So those are important issues that we face, and we as a school system are making ourselves highly accountable, also, to our public and to our community. And we're saying this is what we expect to do, this is what we will do -- hold us accountable, because in turn, we get this tremendous support from staff and community and business. So we're happy to have you here, and we certainly look forward to your assistance, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, let me say, I think this is a truly extraordinary school district. And I have done my part to promote you, you know, around the country -- (laughter) -- talk about what an amazing school district this is. Some of your schools, particular schools, are as diverse as any in America and a stunning array of people coming from different places. So I'm very impressed and I thank you for what you're doing.

I wonder if -- Secretary Riley, would you like to say anything before I talk a little bit about the congressional agenda?

SECRETARY RILEY: Let me say just a word, Mr. President, and then present you for some remarks. First of all, there was mention made of your speech about the early warning signs, those publications the President charged the Attorney General and myself to come up, including child psychologists and law enforcement people and teachers and all, and we're going to have that to you all within the next couple of days, and all of your schools, then, will have them and I think it will be a big help. It's a child-centered guide. It's not to label children, but to help them. And I think you'll find it very, very helpful.

I -- and what a grand panel this has been.

THE PRESIDENT: Didn't they do a great job?

SECRETARY RILEY: I had the chance to read a very good book a couple of months ago -- some of you might have read it -- "Cold Mountain." And Charles Frazier, the author, could do as much with the English language as anybody I've read lately. And Ada Monroe, his wonderful lead character in there, was making a statement about her father, who was deceased, who was a Methodist minister and from Charleston, South Carolina, in the book, in the novel, and which is -- South Carolina is my home.

Anyhow, associated with that, she said wonderful things about her father all through it, and he was a great community leader, and she said that "he talked of ignorance and developed strategies for its defeat." A lot of people talk about education and ignorance. The important thing, I think, for all of us, though, is to come together on strategies for improving education. No one -- no one has done more to present practical, common-sense strategies for improving education than our President. Whether it's standards -- raising standards, improving teaching, making schools safer -- all of the many strategies, many of which have been talked about today.

Bill Clinton has worked tirelessly to meet these challenges, to prepare America for this Information Age. And he's not just talked about improving education and he's not just talked about defeating ignorance. He has devised strategies to help make it a reality. It's a great pleasure for me, once again, to introduce to all of you in this wonderful audience, this grand panel, the President of the United States, Bill Clinton.

THE PRESIDENT: The way I was prepared for this, I was supposed to go up there to the podium and give a little talk and it's way too past that. We've had too much fun. But what I would like to do is to outline to you -- there are six things that the Congress should pass that are in my budget that don't break the balanced budget, that are in our balanced budget that they can pass or not pass in the next few days that I think would really help our children a lot. Five of them bear directly on our schools, one indirectly.

But I'd like to just mention them so you would know, because I would like to see them get broad bipartisan support. I don't really believe we're best served when education is a partisan issue; I think we're best served when it's an American issue that crosses party lines.

First of all, I have given Congress a plan for smaller classes, better-trained teachers and more modern schools. Let's begin with the teacher shortage. You know what's acute here, it is profound in many places. Now, let me say one other word of introduction. There has been what I consider to be a legitimate question raised of me by many members of Congress who say, well, now, look, Mr. President, you're trying to get the federal government into financing things that the federal government has never before financed. We've never been into building or repairing schools, for example.

There are many states in this country where the states don't even do that, where it all has to be done at the local level, or putting 100,000 teachers out there for smaller classes in the early grades.

My answer is as follows: Number one, it's hard to think of a more important national issue. Number two, I'm not doing anything to interfere with the local direction of the schools or the states' constitutional responsibility to set the framework of public education. And number three, in some places like this district, the level of growth, and in other places the level of poverty, make it simply inconceivable that they can achieve these objectives otherwise.

So I think if we have the money, this is what we ought to do. But I want to prepare you in case any of you feel moved by the spirit to call or write your congressman or senator. There is a legitimate historic pattern here where they'll say, well, you know, President Clinton's got a lot of energy, but he may have gone too far this time because the federal government's never done this. There is a reason we're doing it now. There's a reason we're doing it now. We have to prove that our elementary and secondary schools can be uniformly as excellent as our colleges and universities are and give all of our kids world-class education. And unless we do this, I am convinced there won't be the resources out there to get the job done.

So let me say first of all, the teacher shortage. I've asked Congress to pass a plan to help school districts hire 100,000 new teachers, all trained, tested and certified by state education authorities, targeted to smaller classes in the early grades. Again, where all the research shows, there are permanent gains if kids get the kind of individual attention they need in the early grades.

I've also asked them to help me support better teacher training programs not directed by Washington; those things that all of you know work, all educators know work. There is not today in my opinion a sufficient commitment to helping teachers continue to improve their skills, upgrade their skills, work with other teachers, to have the time necessary to try to continue to improve, to avoid burnout under all the pressures that they're under.

When I go out and talk to educators, there's really a lot of support for increased investment in teacher training. So I hope that Congress will fully fund this class size reduction program. It would give us down to an average of 18 children per class once we do it. The second problem is, it's hard to have a small class without a classroom.

What did you call them, learning cottages? Learning cottages. That sounds like someplace you're sent when you misbehave. Learning cottages. Anyway, so I have also presented a plan to help to modernize or build new, 5,000 schools. Next Tuesday, when I get back from my trip, the Secretary and I and others are going to hold school modernization days all across America to highlight our proposal which would provide tax credit to build or modernize or rebuild 5,000 public schools.

I have been to schools in this country where whole floors were closed because they were so old. But they're wonderful buildings. Structurally, no one could afford to build such buildings today because of the cost of construction. But if you go to an inner-city school, for example, think of what message it gives a seven-year-old child to walk up the steps of a school where the paint's peeling off and the windows are broken.

Think of the message you're sending your child -- you want to say, oh, every child is a treasure, all these things that your PTA President said; I believe every one of them. But

sometimes, the actions speak louder than words. You can tell those children that, but if they have to keep walking up steps into broken-down buildings, do they really think we believe it?

The other day, I was in Philadelphia in a school -- the average school building, the average age of school buildings in Philadelphia is 65 years. That's the average age. Now, the good news is, those structures, by and large, are magnificent. The bad news is, a whole lot of them are in terrible shape and I think it's a worthy investment. I think it's a worthy investment of our money.

So, we want to give fast-growing districts like this one and districts with good structures but old, run-down buildings the chance they need to go forward. So that's the first -- more teachers for smaller classes and more classes.

Second, we want to fully fund my plan to equip our nation's classrooms with computers and cutting-edge educational software and to train teachers to be there to make sure that the technology is properly used. I want to hook up every classroom and library in the entire country to the Internet by the year 2000 and make sure that the software is good and that the teachers are trained to make the most of it. And we have to help you do that. You shouldn't have to fully fund that.

Third, I want to strengthen the charter school movement. There are some school districts that have been greatly advanced by letting teachers and others get together and start new schools within the framework of the school district where the whole district's not reforming, but they want to try something new. We've got now about almost 1,000 of those schools out there. When I became President, there was only one in the whole country. When I was talking about it in 1992, I might have been trying to explain the theory of relativity. Everybody thought I was nuts.

But now, first we had one, now we've got nearly 1,000, and if my budget passes, we'll have 3,000 funded by the year 2000. Fourth, I want to continue to open the doors of college to all Americans who will work for it by reauthorizing the Higher Education Act. Now, that doesn't mean anything, so let me tell you what that means, that reauthorization.

This legislation will help more children reach their potential by improving teacher education, it will help struggling communities to hire 35,000 well-qualified teachers, it will expand mentoring programs, something that you've already said is important to you, it will reduce interest rates on student loans, it will extend Pell Grants and the federal Work Study Program. We've taken it from 700,000 Work Study positions to 1 million in three years. So these things are very important.

You know, we have provided for lower interest rates on student loans, better repayment, 300,000 more Work Study slots, and now tax credits worth about \$1,500 a year for the first two years of college, and then for junior and senior year and graduate school. I am determined that when I leave office, no American will ever, ever walk away from college because of the cost.

We can open the doors to everybody who is qualified, and it's important.

Fifth, let's go back to what we were talking about on reading. We want to pass a bipartisan early literacy bill to help to train teachers and mobilize an army of volunteer tutors. Because as I said, we already have 1,000 colleges participating in this program, and I think it's very, very important.

Sixth, we have a general program to strengthen our schools that would expand Head Start, strengthen after-school programs for hundreds of thousands of children. This is a huge deal in areas with a lot of juvenile crime, with a lot of dangerous streets, with a lot of gangs. These after-school programs and summer school programs have dramatically reduced student problems while increasing student achievement, and I think that's very, very important.

We have a special initiative aimed at Hispanic young people because the school dropout rate is still much higher for Hispanics than for any other group, largely because of language barriers and economic problems. And we also have in this package program I just mentioned our Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program. We've tried to take the initiatives that we know work in schools like this one and make sure they are in every single school in America.

Now, the bill that the House Republican Majority has proposed falls short of these goals in every single one of these areas. But it's not too late. The bill has to be considered in the Senate, then both the Senate and the House must vote on it. So I would implore you, without regard to your political party, just to contact your members of Congress, your senators, and ask them to support this agenda. We have the money.

We have worked hard to balance the budget. We've worked hard to show fiscal discipline, to get the economy going again. There is no more important area in which to spend the money now that we have it, and so I hope you will help us to do that.

Let me just say one final thing. The Senate tomorrow takes up the Summer Jobs Program. Now, that's not for this summer, but the one we just passed, but for the summer about to come. It provides more than 500,000 young people a chance to work. It is a Godsend to this country. And because of the funding -- federal-funded Summer Jobs Program, we have a lot of places which we are able then to go out and get other people to put up money to expand the program. For reasons I do not understand, the House Committee wants to disband it, and I think it would be a disastrous error.

It comes up in the Senate tomorrow, and again, this is fundamentally an education issue because if kids get in trouble over the summer or they have problems and they don't have something to do, or if they need the money and they can't earn it, it increases the chances that they'll drop out. So I hope that you will also support the Summer Jobs Program. The Senate is taking it up quite soon. I believe the Senate, across party lines, will vote to extend it, but we

need help.

So I just wanted to close by trying to close this circle here. We started in this roundtable talking about what you are doing to give the children in your charge the future they deserve and a future America desperately needs for them to have. But we think we have a role here if we're going to build those bridges to the 21st century. And I've done my best to define that role based on 20 years now of working with people in education. I think it's a good agenda. Secretary Riley and I, ourselves, started working together almost 20 years ago on public education. I guess next year will be our 20th anniversary of working together on these things when we were young governors.

I know that you know that there are things we should do, and I believe if we don't be harsh and political in our rhetoric -- we talk about our children and what we know to be true of education, we can get a listening ear among enough thoughtful Republicans to join our Democrats to build a bipartisan coalition to do what the national government should do to help make possible more stories like the ones we've heard around this table today. That is my whole goal. And I know we won't have all the stories we need unless we also do our part. So I ask you: Whatever you can do to contact your representatives and senators, whatever you can do to make it clear that these are not partisan issues, these are people issues, and that our future is riding on it. If you can do that, I would be very grateful. And thank you for what you do here every day. Thank you.

END

12:49 P.M. EDT

general

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

January 21, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
ON EDUCATION

Presidential Hall
Old Executive Office Building

12:30 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Well, Sergeant, I don't think I need to say anything else.
(Laughter.)

Let me thank all of you for coming today and welcome you here. This is the 21st year of a partnership in education that involves Hillary and me and Secretary Riley. We all started working together in 1979, and we've been at it a good while now. Few things that I have ever been a part of have given -- sort of thrilled me more than just listening to Arthur Moore talk. And I'm sure all of you felt the same way.

I thank the members of Congress who are here, and all the other distinguished guests. I would like to recognize just three -- first, we have here the President of the Navaho Nation, Kelsey Begaye; and Samuel Penney, the Chairman of the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee. And Arthur Moore's daughter, Andrea, is here, and she must have been awful proud of her father today and I know he's proud of her. So we welcome all of them. (Applause.)

After the Soviet Union launched Sputnik in October of 1957, President Eisenhower asked the Congress to rise to the challenge of the times and proposed a new federal program to help public school teachers improve their math and science instruction. He understood that teaching is an important part of our national security. And I think, therefore, that President Eisenhower -- and General Eisenhower -- would have been very pleased to see Arthur Moore as a soldier turned teacher.

Two days ago, in the State of the Union address, I asked Congress to rise to the demands of this time, to pass an Education Accountability Act that would offer more investment, demand more accountability, and not as some have implied, have the federal government try to run more of our day-to-day activities in our public schools, but simply have the federal government respond to what the teachers of this country and the principals and the educators have been telling us, and invest in what works.

We now have an opportunity to do that. With the strength of our economy and with the

size of our surplus, we have an opportunity. We also have an obligation.

Research confirms what most of us know from our own experience -- what most determines whether students learn is not family background or even dollars spent per pupil, but the talent, the ability and the dedication of their teachers.

Every adult in this room, I know, can recall the names of teachers who deeply affected our own lives and helped us to get where we are today. I was thinking this morning about my high school band teacher. And you say, you wouldn't think that the band teacher would have a lot to do with a person becoming President, but he instilled not only in me a love of music, but also a reminder that I could never manifest that love unless I worked like crazy; that I had to learn to work in a team. I couldn't play too loud just because I liked to play. (Laughter.) And because we ran the statewide music festival every year, he taught me how to organize and how to manage people and time, all kinds of things that teachers teach children that stay with them for a lifetime.

There are an awful lot of teachers like that in America. But we have to face the fact that because our classrooms are bursting with 53 million children, because, frankly, we still don't pay our teachers as much as we should in most places, a quarter -- listen to this -- a quarter of all secondary school teachers, don't have college majors or even minors in the subjects they are teaching. And the deficit is greatest where the need is greatest.

Schools with the highest minority enrollment, for example, have less than a 50-50 chance -- now, think about this -- less than a 50-50 chance of having a math or science teacher with a license or degree in the field.

I don't know if you remember what I said in the State of the Union the other night about what the international test scores show, but basically our 4th graders rank near the top of all industrialized countries in performance in math and science. Our 8th graders drop to the middle; our 12th graders are near the bottom. No one can doubt, surely, that one reason is the absence of a pool of teachers who have been trained in the subjects they are teaching.

Now, we have a real opportunity to get more good teachers in general, more good education practice, and more properly specifically trained teachers, in particular, this year, because every five years, the federal government revisits the terms on which it invests \$15 billion in our nation's schools. 1999 is the fifth year -- we have to do it again. It gives us a golden opportunity and a solemn responsibility to change the way we invest the money to invest in what works and to stop investing in what doesn't.

So I intend to send Congress a plan that will, among other things, require states receiving federal funds to end social promotion, but will also provide them the funds for summer school, after-school, and other support for children who need it. If you look at what I just said about the progression of the test, it is not the students who are failing, it is the system that is failing the students. And we need to respond accordingly.

Second, to adopt and enforce strict discipline codes, something teachers in the teachers' organizations have asked us to support more vigorously. Third, to give parents report cards on their children's school. Fourth, to turn around the worst-performing schools, or close them, and we will provide funds to help states do that. And finally, to be accountable for the quality of their teachers, with new teachers passing performance exams, all teachers knowing the subjects they're teaching, and we will provide support for that.

We also should build or modernize 5,000 schools; continue our work to hook every classroom and library up to the Internet. But I want to focus for a moment on the teaching. How can we get more Arthur Moores out there? And I'd like to mention just four things that will be in the balanced budget I will submit to Congress early next month.

First, I will call on Congress to invest \$1.4 billion to hire new, better-trained teachers to reduce class size in the early grades. This is the next big installment on our goal to hire 100,000 new teachers, and it's a 17-percent increase over the very large down payment we made last year.

Second, I will ask Congress to invest \$35 million to provide 7,000 college scholarships for our brightest young people who commit to teaching where they can do the most good, in the poorest inner city and rural schools. This is over five times the investment Congress made last year, and I think it is a wonderful idea. We came up with this idea because it's modeled, basically, on the National Medical Service Corps. Some of you who may have once lived in rural America -- when I was governor, sometimes the only way we could get doctors to go into rural areas is that they had taken funds to go to medical school, and they realized -- in return for which they would need to go out into rural areas and practice medicine, and they got to pay off a certain amount of their loan every year.

It's also the way the national defense loans worked. I actually had one of them in law school. If you taught school for a certain number of years, a certain percentage of your loan would be forgiven. And I can't think of a better way to give some of the most gifted young people in this country a chance to do something they might like to do anyway, in ways that would, in effect, work out to supplement the salary they would otherwise be earning.

Third, I will ask Congress to invest \$10 million to train 1,000 Native Americans to teach on Indian reservations and in other public schools with large Native American populations.

Fourth, I will call on Congress to invest \$18 million to recruit and train retired members of the military to become teachers. Since 1994 -- you heard Arthur say this is fifth year of teaching -- our Troops for Teachers Program has helped 3,000 active duty soldiers who were planning to leave the military and find rewarding second careers in teaching. That experience has shown that people like Mr. Moore make great teachers and great role models.

I again want to thank all the members of Congress -- Secretary Riley mentioned them -- one of them, Chet Edwards, is here -- for the work that they have done in this regard. Congresswoman Mink and I were recently together in Korea visiting our troops. And I met a Senior Master Sergeant who was about to retire after 29 years in the military; he was 49 years

old. He could still run a six-minute mile. (Laughter.) And he was going home to Kentucky to teach children. He said, I think I can do those kids some good.

There are a lot of people like this. You go out into-- if you visit with the people in the military, that make the military their career, you just can't fail to be impressed with the accumulated weight of experience. They've dealt with every kind of human problem you can imagine. They understand, increasingly -- and I must say, in the last several years, more and more -- the importance of balancing discipline and creativity, letting people think for themselves, but also reminding them that they have to play on the team and with certain rules. And they understand how to manage people and resources -- and limited resources -- to do a job of limitless importance. They tend to have math and science backgrounds. And they have shown a remarkable willingness to teach in inner city and rural schools that have difficulty recruiting teachers.

So these 25 million veterans -- and there will be more as time goes on, obviously, more and more every year -- are an incredible pool of potential teacher talent. The Secretary of Education always tells me that we're going to have to hire two million more teachers in the next few years, because of the growth of the student population and the retirement of the existing teacher corps.

So I think we should do more, and this is a big down payment on it. And I must say, members of Congress, if you think that we ought to spend even more money on it, I'll support you. (Laughter and applause.) I think we should make it easier for people who have kept our nation strong to provide for a strong American future in the 21st century.

Now let me just mention one other program that is very important to me, and that's the Master Teacher program. The National Board for Professional Teacher Certification has received almost unanimous support from teachers and other educators throughout our country. We are trying to get 100,000 certified master teachers, enough so that we'll have at least one in every school building in America, and when we do that, we know they will have a dramatic impact on improving the quality of the existing teacher corps. So I hope we will have support for that.

And if we do these things, in addition to the other proposals, I think that we will be doing our part to ensure that we'll have the kind of schools our children need, and our country needs, in the 21st century. Because it all starts with a teacher like Mr. Moore.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

END

12:44 P.M. EST

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

May 19, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
ON EDUCATION

The South Lawn

general - inc. DPC
Sec. of Ed.
- on legislation

8:40 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. I'm delighted to be joined this morning by the Secretary of Education and by my Domestic Policy Advisor Bruce Reed to discuss the very important issue of our children's schools.

In my State of the Union address this year, I said that in order to meet our responsibility to create 21st century schools for all our children, we have to do a far, far better job of spending the \$15 billion in federal aid we send to our schools every year.

Building these kinds of schools has been a passion for me, for the Vice President, for Secretary Riley, for our entire administration. We have worked with members of Congress and education leaders, people in every state of the country, for over six years now. We have supported higher standards, better teachers, new technology, modern facilities, innovations like charter schools, character education, school uniforms.

But we know fundamentally that if we are going to change the way our schools work, we must change the way we invest federal aid in our schools.

On the way down here, just down the walk, the Secretary of Education said we have been working very hard to promote school standards around the country; now we have to get the standards actually into the schools. This week I am sending legislation to the Congress designed to do just that.

First, this legislation strengthens accountability for results. It says that states and school districts that choose to accept federal aid must take responsibility for turning around failing schools, or shutting them down. It says they must give parents report cards not just on their children, but on the children's schools. It says school districts must have strong discipline codes that are fair, consistent, and focused on prevention. It says they must make sure that teachers

actually know the subjects they are teaching. It says they must stop the practice of social promotion, not by holding students back, but by making sure they have the support to meet the higher standards.

This legislation triples funding for after-school and summer school programs, provides for smaller classes, and requires other early interventions that lift students up. Second, this legislation will put more highly-trained teachers in our nation's schools. It requires that all new teachers pass subject matter and skills tests, that all teachers be given the support they need to improve their knowledge and skills. It allows Congress to finish the job we started last fall of hiring 100,000 new, highly-trained teachers to reduce class size in the early grades.

Finally, the legislation will help give all our children safe, healthy and disciplined learning environments. For the first time, it will require schools to adopt comprehensive school safety plans, use proven anti-drug and anti-violence prevention programs, intervene with troubled youth, establish security procedures for schools, and give parents an annual report of drug and violent incidents at their children's schools.

It also expands the character education efforts the Secretary of Education has done so much to advance, promotes alternative schools for disruptive students, and strengthens our policy of zero tolerance for guns by requiring that any student expelled for bringing a gun to school receive appropriate treatment and counseling before being allowed back into class.

As I said yesterday, we must do everything we can to keep guns out of the hands of our children. I want to commend the Senate for yesterday's overwhelming, bipartisan support for child safety locks. And I commend Speaker Hastert for his leadership in supporting background checks at gun shows, and for raising the age of handgun ownership to 21. I urge the Senate to keep working on the Justice bill, the Juvenile Justice bill, and to bring these common-sense measures to a vote.

Now, these education ideas are not Democratic or Republican, nor were they dreamed up in Washington. They were invented and proven successful in the laboratories of democracy at the school, city and state levels. They preserve and enhance the flexibility that states and districts need to run successful schools. If the federal government fails to act, the best of these practices will spread, but much more slowly. Just remember, it took 100 years for laws mandating universal education to spread from a few states to every state. That pace of change might have been all right in the 19th century; it won't do in the 21st century. We do not have the luxury of waiting and continuing to subsidize failure.

Nothing we can do will more surely unite our people and strengthen our nation than giving all of our children a high-quality education. We know what works -- our schools, our educators have shown us what works. It is time to put that as a condition of success in the investment of federal aid in every child in America. And I want to thank the Secretary of Education and Mr. Reed and everyone else who has worked on this program.

Thank you very much.

Q Mr. President, on the Balkans, can we ask you a question about the Balkans?

Q Do you like the peace proposal by Talbott -- that Talbott is taking to Moscow? What do you think of it?

END 8:45 A.M. EDT

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

February 1, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT

TO NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS

Grand Hyatt Hotel
Washington, D.C.

4:55 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. First of all, Barbara Wheeler, thank you for your remarks. You covered everything I was going to say. (Laughter.) You talked about the Capitol Steps. (Laughter.) I think they're funny, too, but -- (laughter) -- you must surely know, having heard them, that it is not the School Boards Association that is the Rodney Dangerfield in this town. (Laughter and applause.)

Let me say I'm delighted to be on this platform with Ann Bryant (phonetic) and your other leaders behind me, and to be here with all of you. I see Delegate member of Congress, Robert Underwood, from Guam here. I'm delighted to see him. I was in Guam with him recently. If you haven't been, I recommend it. (Applause.)

And I want to thank you for the wonderful, wonderful welcome you gave to Secretary Riley. We have been working on education together since we first met, over 20 years ago, and he is not only the longest serving, I think clearly the finest Secretary of Education this country ever had. (Applause.)

We've had a very good day at the White House today, and I thought I would tell you about something we did at the beginning of the day that does not directly, but surely will indirectly impact on you and what you do. This morning, I presented my budget for this coming year, and there are a lot of good things in it for education. But the point I want to make is that we were illustrating today that with last year's surplus and the surplus we project this year, that if the Congress will do what I recommend and set aside over 75 percent of this surplus for 15 years, so that we can secure the retirement of the baby boomers with Social Security and Medicare -- since we won't need the money while it's being set aside for about, in the case of Medicare 11 years, in the case of Social Security more -- we will, while we're saving it, be paying down the national debt.

Now, when I took office, the national debt was 50 percent of our annual income, and it was projected to grow to 80 percent. When I took office, we were spending over 14 cents on the dollar of every tax dollar just servicing the debt. It's now down to 44 percent of our annual

income, the debt -- we're spending a little over 13 cents on the dollar. But if we set it aside for 15 years, we will take the debt down to seven percent of our annual income, a third of what it was in 1981 when we started this deficit binge, the lowest it's been since 1917 before we got into World War I. And it will only cost 2 cents of every tax dollar you pay to pay interest on the debt.

That will, as compared with now, free up another 11 cents on the tax dollar every year from then on, that we could be investing in our children, and in education, and in the future. It's an amazing statistic. (Applause.) It will also keep interest rates low and free up trillions of dollars to invest in the economy. And all of you know, running local school boards, that if the economy is strong, then you'll have your tax revenues coming in at the local and state level.

So this is a compact among the generations. It's not simply a way to save Social Security and Medicare, although that, too, is good for young people, because it means that when we baby boomers retire, our kids won't have to give money to us that they could be investing in their grandchildren -- in our grandchildren.

But it was a very good day. And it is a part of what I am trying to get our country to focus on, which is that we have opportunities now that people who came before us, over the last several decades, could only have dreamed of. And we have to decide how we're going to use those opportunities.

I think our most profound obligation is to say that, at a time like this -- with the economy running well, with the lowest peacetime unemployment rate since 1957, with all the economic indicators strong, but with trouble overseas which could affect our economy -- we have got to take this opportunity to deal with the long-term challenges our country faces -- finally, not only to have America working again, but to really build that bridge to the 21st century I've been talking about for so long.

And all of you know that education has to be a critical part of that. You know better than I all the problems that your President just mentioned. You know better than I that we have the largest group of school children we've ever had, and that it is more diverse in every way than it has ever been. The future of our whole country rests so much on how well we educate our children and you have been chosen in your communities to carry that torch into the new century. It is a great honor, and a heavy responsibility. And I thank you for assuming it.

I believe that here in Washington, our duty is to help to give you the tools you need to meet the challenge, and we've worked hard for six years, with all the economic challenges we faced at first, to do that duty.

In the last six years, while we have reduced the size of the federal government to its lowest point since President Kennedy was in office, and eliminated hundreds of programs in order to balance the budget, at the same time we have almost doubled our investment in education and training. We've helped states who adopted tougher standards; we've helped school districts to deal with the challenges of drugs and gangs and violence and guns. We've cut

regulations in our federal programs affecting elementary and secondary education by two-thirds, thanks to Secretary Riley's efforts. We've granted dozens of waivers to states and school districts to give them the flexibility they need to try new approaches.

We've begun to organize an army of tutors, including young people in the America Reads program, from a thousand colleges to help in schools to make sure our young people can read at elementary school; and a new group of mentors in the Gear Up program to mentor middle school and high school students to prepare them for college and to make sure they know they can go.

We have increased our investment in early childhood, including Head Start, as Barbara said. We are making dramatic progress in connecting all our classrooms and libraries to the Internet by early in the next century. And this year the new E rate, the education rate, comes on line, and that should save about \$1 billion in the cost of hookups, something for which we've fought very hard. (Applause.) Also, something I think is very important that all the high school seniors and juniors, and maybe even earlier, know that in many different ways, we have basically opened the doors of college. Millions of young people this year will get the HOPE scholarship tax credit, which is worth about \$1,500 for the first two years of school. There are tax credits for junior and senior years of college, for graduate school. We've increased the size and reach of the Pell grant program, lowered the cost of student loans, added hundreds of thousands of work-study positions and tried to basically put you in a position to say to the children in your school districts, look, if you make the grades, if you don't have any money you can still go to college; no matter what the cost is, you can still go.

Last year, we got the first big down payment on our goal of helping you to hire 100,000 highly-trained teachers to lower class sizes in the early grades. And that, plus what all of you have been doing, is really paying off. I mean, the SAT scores are up, the math scores are up almost everywhere in the country. We see in some of the most difficult learning environments dramatic turnarounds where the proper attention has been paid the school.

But if you look at the country as a whole, there are still some very challenging problems. Number one, reading scores haven't budged. Now, I think that's pretty explainable when you consider the increasing percentage of our children whose parents don't speak English at home. You couldn't expect aggregate reading scores to be going through the roof. That doesn't mean that we can give up on making sure those kids are fluent in English. It just means we have to work harder, we have to work smarter, we have to do better.

Even more troubling to me is the fact that our relative standing on these test scores goes down as the kids go up in school. Our 4th graders were ranked in the top of the world last year in comparative math and science scores. And keep in mind, when we engage in this, we take a representative sample of kids, by income, by race, by region -- every demographic category -- and they're doing well. Our 8th graders are about the international average and our 12th graders rank near the bottom. That tells us that there are things we have to do if we expect to be globally competitive that we're not doing. And I believe we can do better.

Probably most of you heard my State of the Union address, in which I said that we, in my

judgment, in the federal government, should change the way we invest federal funds to emphasize what you have proved to us works, and to stop investing in things that don't work. We will have an opportunity -- and, again, I believe, an obligation -- to do that this year, because Congress must reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. I intend to send them, later this year, an Education Accountability Act to require states and school districts receiving federal help to take five steps that most of you are probably already taking, and that, I think, all of us would admit, have been shown to work.

The components of this bill basically came to us from educators. From people like you -- from principals especially; from teachers, in some cases; and from our own on-site observation -- not just mine and Secretary Riley's, but all of us -- of what we have seen working.

We believe that every district should have a policy of no social promotion, but not identifying the children as failures, and therefore, there should be after-school and summer school programs to support their continued learning. (Applause.) All over America, teachers' groups -- not just the national organizations, but grass-roots teachers' groups -- have pleaded with us to say, if you're going to invest federal money, say that every school district must have a reasonable discipline code, and it must be enforced.

We believe that parents should get report cards on their children's schools. We believe there should be a strategy in every school district to turn around or shut down schools that fail.

I appreciated the comment you made about vouchers. You know, I have steadfastly opposed them. I believe -- (applause)-- I believed when I was a governor, I think we were the second state in the country after Minnesota to have a statewide public school choice bill pass the legislature, and I have steadfastly supported the charter school movement in America, and I still do.

But we must have a strategy that deals with failing schools. If you want to win the argument with people who don't do what you do every day -- on vouchers -- you must have a strategy that deals with failing schools. And it's very important. (Applause.)

I think we have to do more to ensure that all of our teachers are as well-trained as they possibly can be in the subjects they are teaching. Sometimes I think our teachers get a little bit of a bum rap with the schools exploding and all of you having to compete for bright people with other forms of work, not just teaching. It should hardly be surprising to people that we have, in many of our school districts, teachers teaching subjects which they don't have degrees in -- which they may not even have college minors in. But we have to do something about it. We have to do more to try to help support teachers. And the teachers, through their organizations, are clamoring for more investment to help develop skills and learning; to raise their qualifications in these academic subjects.

I'm going up to Boston tomorrow and I'll be able to discuss some of this in greater detail. But what I wanted to say to you today is we need your help. We need your help. We need Congress to understand that -- I do not believe the federal government should run the schools. I

didn't wake up one morning and come up with these five ideas. (Laughter.) I believe that you were showing us what works, and that is what we should invest in. And I think that, both as taxpayers and as school board members, knowing the challenges we face, you should expect us to invest this money based on what you believe will work, and what you have seen will work.

Nothing we can do here involves picking this person or that person or the other person to teach; involves how you select your principals; involves how the climate of learning or the culture of the school is developed, school by school. We can't do any of that. But with limited federal funds, which I have done my best to increase, and an enormous challenge out there, we ought to be investing in what works and we ought to stop investing in what doesn't. And I ask for your help to persuade the Congress that that is in the interests of the local school districts of the United States. (Applause.)

Essentially, we ought to try to take what is common sense to all of you and make it common practice in all of our schools.

Today, as I said, I released my budget, and I wanted to talk a little bit about what it does. First of all, it calls upon Congress to invest \$1.4 billion to hire new, better-trained teachers to reduce class sizes in the early grades. This is a 17 percent increase over the budget I signed last fall, and it brings us another step closer to our goal of 100,000 new teachers. We have to make sure that Congress continues this financial support.

I might say there were some people who didn't want to do that, but the arguments I heard about this were the same arguments I heard in 1994 against my crime bill, when local police officers said, Mr. President, the violent crime rate has tripled in the last 30 years and the policy forces have increased by 10 percent. It was not rocket science to think that if you have more police officers and they were walking the streets and working with neighborhood groups and others, that they could prevent crime from happening in the first place, catch criminals when they commit crimes, and drive the crime rate down. We now have the lowest violent crime rate in 30 years, the lowest overall crime rate in 25 years.

It is not rocket science to know that if you've got a teacher shortage now and a looming one in the future, that the federal government, if we have the resources, ought to be giving you the tools to hire more teachers. So I ask you to help us pass this through the Congress. (Applause.)

The budget also calls for investing \$35 million to provide 7,000 college scholarships for bright young people who commit to teach in places where the need is greatest -- in the poorest inner-city and rural schools. That's five times the investment that Congress made in these scholarships last year when we inaugurated the program. It increases by \$25 million funding to train bilingual and English as second language teachers. It contains \$30 million to train middle school teachers to use technology in the classroom. It calls for \$10 million to train 1,000 Native Americans to teach in Indian reservations and other public schools with large Native American enrollments. It has \$18 million to recruit and train retired military members to become teachers. (Applause.)

We had an event on this at the White House last week, and we had this marvelous retired Army sergeant who is teaching in the Baltimore schools come and make a presentation. He's a special education teacher in the Baltimore schools. It was an overwhelming, emotional event.

And I remember when I was in Korea recently I met A senior master sergeant there who gave me one of his little military coins. And I said, how long have you been in the service? And he said, 29 years. And I said, how much longer are you going to stay? He said, about a year. And I said, what are you going to do? He said, I'm going home to Kentucky to be a teacher. (Applause.) So I hope you will continue to support this.

The budget continues support for the master teacher program, to make sure our finest teachers get the recognition, the reward they deserve, and the opportunity to spread the skills they develop in going through the certification process with others in their schools. Our goal there is to try to get up to 100,000 board certified master teachers in the country, enough to make sure that, with your help, we can have one in every school building in America. And I think that would be a very good thing, indeed.

The budget increases by \$26 million funding to mobilize tutors and trained teachers, to make sure all of our 3rd graders can read adequately. It doubles funding for our efforts to provide middle school students with tutors, with mentors, to spark their interest -- and their capacity -- in going on to college.

We also, again, will try to pass the provision of the budget that would use tax breaks to enable us to build or modernize 5,000 schools, and that is very important, indeed. (Applause.) Again, I heard the argument last year, well, this is really not something that the federal government ought to be doing. Well, the federal government puts a lot of money into state highways, and this is our road to the future. (Applause.)

I, frankly, wish we were doing more. I don't know how many schools I've been in where there were as many kids back in the house trailers as there were in the regular classrooms. I don't know how many I've been in where there were rooms closed off because the buildings were breaking down. We have school buildings in some of our cities now that are so old they literally cannot be hooked up to the Internet without a whole rewiring. (Applause.) I think this is very important.

But again, I say it's important that you understand that you've got to go out and talk to members of Congress of both parties and say, listen, this is not some cockamamie idea that the President had some person with a Ph.D. think up in a windowless office in the White House. (Laughter.) You know, you go out and stroll around the schools of America and it will come screaming back at you. we need some help here. (Applause.)

So I ask for your help. And finally, let me say, our federal after-school programs began just two years ago with \$1 million. That's all I could get for it. And we went to \$40 million. Then in the third year, in our last budget, that I signed just a couple of months ago, we went to \$200 million. This budget calls for \$600 million, and that's enough to keep one million children

in school and off the streets, learning and safe, in after-school programs. I ask for your support for that. (Applause.)

So this budget comes from Secretary Riley and me, two old -- increasingly old -- (laughter) -- governors who believe deeply in education and its promise, who believe deeply in the leadership of people like you at the local level. We don't want to micromanage the schools. We don't want to take resources away from people who need it. But it is unconscionable to continue to support that which doesn't work and to fail to support that which does. So we ask for a partnership that will invest more in our public schools and to invest in ways that you, out on the front lines of change, have demonstrated will work so that our children will learn more. That's all we ask.

Again, I say, as I was thinking today when we started the day, Dick and I did, with the rest of the Cabinet and 31 members of Congress -- and we were looking at this line with the debt going down and what was going to happen in the future -- you just think about where America is and you think about people who were Presidents, Secretaries of Education, members of Congress, governors and school board members, 10 years ago, 15 years ago, 20 years ago. There were people who would have killed to have had an opportunity like this. This is a high-class dilemma we've got here. (Laughter.) You know? Why are we worried about the aging of America? Because before you know it our average life expectancy will be over 80 -- that's a big problem. I like it better as the days go by. (Laughter and applause.)

And the same thing with the surplus . But history is full of examples of people who had golden opportunities and squandered them because there was an easier, more well-trodden path to take. And so I ask you -- I don't think you know the influence you can have if you're determined to bring it to bear. This is a time for decisive action. Don't just go up to Congress and ask them to reauthorize the act the way it was and give you as much more money as you can get. You've got 53 million kids out there. They're from 200 or more different racial or ethnic groups, every religion in the world, every linguistic background in the world. And they are America's gold mine for tomorrow as the world becomes smaller and more and more interdependent.

This is a gift. It is a high-class challenge. And we have the resources and we have the knowledge to do what is right. We have to do it.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

END

5:20 P.M. EST

general -
on budget, to school

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Brighton, Massachusetts)

For Immediate Release

February 2, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT

TO THE STUDENTS, TEACHERS, PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

OF JACKSON MANN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Jackson Mann Elementary School
Brighton, Massachusetts

3:45 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you so much. First, I would like to thank all those who have joined us today. Governor, thank you for your remarks and your commitment. To Senator Kennedy and Senator Kerry, to Congressman Moakley and Congressman McGovern and the other members of the Massachusetts delegation, I couldn't ask for stronger supporters and leaders for the cause of education.

Mayor, thank you for setting an example which I hope will be followed by every mayor in the country in terms of your commitment to education. (Applause.) I want to congratulate Boston on stealing your superintendent, Tom Payzant, from the Department of Education and my administration. (Laughter and applause.) I forgive you for that. (Laughter.) You have given a lot more to me than you have taken, and it is a gift to the children of this city.

I'd like to thank Dr. Joanne Collins Russell and Gail Zimmerman and the faculty and the students, the chorus here at Jackson Mann, all of you, for making us feel so at home. Thank you so much. (Applause.) I want to thank the legislators and the local officials, the others who are here.

I'm glad to be here. I heard a lot about this school. Tom Menino told me the last time he was here that you gave him pasta. (Laughter.) So I didn't eat lunch at the last event -- (laughter) -- just waiting. That's not true, but it's a good story. He liked the pasta. (Laughter.) It is true that he got pasta; it's not true I didn't eat lunch at the last event. (Laughter.)

But I also want to say to all of you, I was terribly impressed by what everyone said, but most impressed by what your principal and what your teacher said, because it convinced me that this is a school which is going to be able to do right by the children of 21st century America. And every now and then, while I'm going through this talk and tell you what I'm going to propose to Congress, just look up there -- there they are, that's America's future. That looks

pretty good to me, but it is very different than our past. (Applause.)

When I spoke at the State of the Union last month -- to tell the American people that the state of our union is strong, that our economy is perhaps the strongest it has ever been -- I asked the American people to reflect upon what our obligations are in the midst of this economic success, with the social successes we've had -- the welfare rolls cut almost in half; the lowest crime rate in a generation. What are we going to do with this?

And I asked the American people to join together to meet the great challenges of a new century -- things like the aging of America, helping families balance work and child rearing, helping communities and states and our entire country balance the need to grow the economy with the need to preserve the quality of life and the quality of our environment -- big challenges.

There is no challenge larger than giving every child in this country a world-class education; for, every child will be not only a citizen of the United States, but a citizen of the world. If you look at these children up here, you won't be surprised to know that all over America we not only have the largest group of schoolchildren in history, it is the most racially, ethnically, religiously, culturally diverse group in history.

Now, as the world grows smaller and our contacts with people all over the world on every continent become more frequent and more profound, there is no country in the world better positioned to preserve liberty and prosperity and to be a beacon of hope than the United States. Because as we look more like the world, we will have more advantages to have a positive influence in the world -- if, but only if we prove that we really can build a successful multiracial, multiethnic, multicultural democracy where we say we cherish, we enjoy, we celebrate our diversity, but what we have in common is more important.

And the challenge of this and every school is to make sure that all of our children understand, and are proud of, what is different about them, but also understand, and are proud of, what they have in common. And understand that all children can learn and all children must learn, and that it will be more important to their generation than to any previous generation of Americans.

The results you're getting here on your test scores, and just the feeling that one gets here in listening to what your principal and your teacher said, make me know that you are on the right track. I was so impressed with Ms. Zimmerman when she got through, I said, you did a good job, you ought to run for public office. (Laughter.) And she said, well, I might. (Laughter.) I hope she'll teach a few more classes of kids with that kind of skill and understanding, first.

There are lots of schools -- over the last 20 years, Secretary Riley and I used to be governors together, and I've spent a lot of time in public schools over the last 20 years. A lot of time. A lot of time as President. And this is actually unusual for me, just to come to the meeting like this. Normally when I come to a school, I also visit a class and talk to the teachers and talk to the students, and listen and observe.

And one of the things that I want the American people who aren't here to know and understand is that every single problem in American education has been solved by someone somewhere. And that many of these problems have been solved in schools where, if you didn't know anything about education, you could hardly believe it. Sometimes they're in the toughest neighborhoods, sometimes they have the most limited financial base. But with good principles, good teachers, a good culture in the school, high values, high standards, it is astonishing what I have seen in places where you wouldn't believe it.

The great trick and difficulty in American education is, and the thing that we have not solved, we have not yet figured out how we can accelerate the pace by which all schools do what works in some schools. And I think every teacher here, everyone who has ever been across the country or across the state, or maybe even across the city and had experience from school to school would say that that is sort of the nagging challenge.

Part of it, of course, is that all schools are different, all kids are different, all classes are different, all circumstances are different. Part of it is that there are internal resistances to doing what the Mayor is now trying to do citywide and the Governor is now trying to do statewide.

That's why this year, our continuing effort to promote educational excellence will be of special importance, because this year we're going to try to do something the national government has never done before. Every five years, we have a great debate in Congress on how we should spend the federal contribution to our public schools. What are the terms under which the states and the school districts get this money. It is called a reauthorization act, and we're going to have that debate this year.

This year, I am going to ask the Congress, for the first time, to invest more money than ever before in our schools, but to invest only in what the schools and the teachers and the parents have told us works and to stop investing in what doesn't work. (Applause.) Now, I don't think we should subsidize inadequate performance, I think we should reward results. And sure enough, more people will follow the lead of schools like this one, if it happens.

Now, this may seem self-evident. You all clapped. Believe me, this will be very controversial. After all, there are some people in Congress who don't believe we have any business investing in more -- more in public education, because it is a state constitutional function, and in every state most of the money is raised either at the local level or at the state level, but only nationwide about seven percent of the money comes from the national level. But it's a lot of money. I mean, \$15 billion -- \$15 billion is not chump change, it's real money. And it can make a real difference.

There's more than ever before. Last year, we got a bipartisan agreement in Congress, after a big debate, to make a big down payment on 100,000 more teachers in the early grades to help you deal with the problem of more teachers retiring as more kids come in. And the plain evidence is that smaller classes in the early grades make a special difference.

We did not pass last year -- I hope we will this year -- my proposal to build or modernize

5,000 schools, through the use of the tax credit. Now, we actually have -- Boston is the first city with all the schools hooked up to the Internet, you heard the Mayor say that. I hate to tell you this -- we have some cities where the school buildings are in such bad shape they are not capable of being hooked up to the Internet. And I have been in school districts, from Virginia to Florida to California, where there are so many kids that the outside is littered with house trailers where they're going to school.

So this is a big challenge. There are some who don't think we should be doing that. They think that's somebody else's job. But there's an even deeper debate you will see this year, about more than money. Some people argue that even though we spend \$15 billion a year on public education, the national government has no business whatever holding the system accountable for results. They say, if we say we're going to hold districts accountable for results, that we're trying to micro-manage the schools.

Nothing could be further from the truth. If I have learned one single, solitary thing in 20 years of going into schools, it is that, if you have a good principal and a good attitude among the faculty, and a decent relationship with the parents, you're going to have a successful school. If you're doing the right things; I've learned that.

So you will not find anybody who is more reluctant to micro-manage the schools than me. But keep in mind what I said -- and you ask the teachers when I'm gone if this is not true -- every problem in American education has been solved by somebody somewhere. The problem is we are not very good at spreading what works to all the rest of the schools in a timely and efficient manner.

Therefore, what I propose to do is to write into the law what teachers and other educators have said to me are the critical elements of dealing with the challenges of this generation of young people, and the dramatic income and other differences we see from school district to school district, and say: if you want the money, you should do this -- not should, you must do this.

This will be very controversial. But I'm telling you, I have been frustrated for 20 years in trying it the other way. We had some school districts in my state that had done things that achieved national acclaim, and I put in a bill -- and I passed it -- to create a pot of money to pay the expenses of educators from other school districts in my state to go to these school districts to see what was going on, and a majority of them wouldn't do it when I offered to pay their way. We should have -- it wasn't because they weren't dedicated; it was just sort of, oh, well, you know, we do it our way, they do it their way.

And I believe that this is a very, very important debate. And I came here because I approve of what you're doing in this school and I'm proud of it. I came here because I'm proud of what the Mayor is doing. I'm proud here because of Massachusetts's historic commitment to excellence in education. I came here because your congressional delegation is as devoted to excellence in education as any in the land. That's why I'm here -- to say that every place should be like this, and that we can help. And I hope you will support that.

Can you imagine any company spending \$15 billion and saying, here, take the money; we don't care what the results are, and come back next year and I'll write you another check. (Laughter.) I don't think any child in America should be passed from grade to grade without knowing the material. I don't think we're doing children a favor. I don't think any child should be trapped in a failing school without a strategy to turn the school around or give the kid a way out. And I believe these should be national priorities, not to tell people how to do this, but to say that, you must have a strategy to do it that you implement that produces results. You decide how to do it.

From now on, I think we should say to states and to school districts, identify your worst-performing, least-improving schools, turn them around or shut them down. There's \$200 million in my budget to help school districts do that -- \$200 million. And we can do this. I'll talk more about it in a minute; I'll give you some evidence of that.

If we fail to do it, how many kids are we going to lose to low expectations? And every one of them can learn. You know it and I know it. If we succeed, our best years lie ahead. Their years will be America's best years.

I'll tell you, I've listened to this debate for two decades now, and half the time, when I hear people say we can't do something, what they're really saying is, those kids are different from my kids and I don't really believe they can learn. Well, that is not true. All of our children can learn and I intend to see that they do. (Applause.)

We're working to help every city follow Boston's lead and be hooked up to the Internet by early in the next century. We're working to expand Head Start. We're working to bring more tutors to elementary schools to help work with the teachers to help make sure our kids can read. And it's very important when their first language is not English to give more and more help in the schools. We're working to send college students as mentors into middle schools and high schools, where hardly any kids go to college, and convince all kids they can go to college.

If you look at the scholarships, the loans, the Pell grants, the tax cuts, the work study programs that this Congress has approved in the last four years, there's no excuse for anybody not going to college because of the money; you can afford to go now. We have put the money out there. And every 11- and 12- and 13-year-old kid in America needs to know this. They need to know that they can make their own future.

I know that some of our America Reads tutors are working at Jackson Mann and several AmeriCorps City Year members are working here too, and I want to thank them. (Applause.) Boston University AmeriCorps, thank you. (Applause.) And I want to get back to the point here. Our schools are doing better all over the country. Almost all the scores are up, the math scores are up, the SAT scores are up, but we have two big challenges, and I want you to focus on them.

Number one, reading scores have hardly budged. Now, that should not surprise you because our school population every year has a higher and higher percentage of immigrant

children whose first language is not English. So it's harder just to stay in place; but it's not good enough, because these children are still going to have to go out into a world where they'll either be able to read and learn and think and reason in this country's main language, or they won't. So we have to do better.

Something that bothers me even more is that these international comparative scores in math and science -- this is fascinating -- American children, a representative group, by race, by income and by reason, rank at the top of the world in the international math and science scores in the 4th grade. You know, they're always first or second or third in the last couple of years. They drop to the middle by the time they're in the 8th grade. By the time they're in the 12th grade, they rank near the bottom.

Now, you can't say that the kids can't learn, otherwise, they never would have been at the top, right? So that means that we have to do some things in our system to make sure that their fast start speeds up, not slows down. There could be no more compelling evidence that our children can learn.

So in this year's budget -- I'll say again -- I not only want to finish hiring the 100,00 teachers, take another big step there, and fix the 5,000 schools and keep hooking up to the Internet, and also give you something to find on the Internet -- we're going to set up a digital library with hundreds of thousands of books that schools can access -- (applause) -- so every school library in America -- literally, within a few years, every school library in America can have 400,000 books if the digital library works.

We also want to pass this bill that says, okay, here's the federal money. But here's what you have to do if you want to get it. First of all, you have to identify the worst-performing, least-improving schools and take responsibility for turning them around just like the Mayor is and the school people are here in Boston. Mr. Payzant is working on that. That's what you've got to do. Why is that? Because we've got to insist that the schools, no matter how difficult their circumstances, offer world-class education.

Now, under our plan, states and school districts would audit failing schools for educational weaknesses, find resources that would help, do what Ms. Zimmerman does on her own: go out and help the mentor teachers, make sure that all the teachers have been given the best development possible, provide reading tutors if they're needed, provide other kinds of help to get more parents involved, do whatever is necessary.

Then, if after two years the student achievement still doesn't improve, states and districts would have to take stronger action, including permitting students to attend other schools if they and their parents want to do so. Or reconstituting the school, making staff changes as appropriate. Or maybe even closing the school and reopening it, completely differently constructed.

Now, this can work. Let me just give you two examples. Six years ago, Houston listed 68 of its schools as low performers. Today, after much aggressive intervention and hard work,

the vast majority of those are off the list. Because they're getting different results -- not because they're trying harder, but because they changed their results.

Dade County, Florida -- that's Miami, one of the most diverse school districts in America, had 45 critical, low-performing schools. They raised their math and science scores so much -- math and reading scores so much now that within two years, all 45 were off the list -- just by focusing on it and by refusing to accept the proposition that just because these kids were having a tough time financially or they live in tough neighborhoods, that their schools couldn't function and they couldn't learn.

Now, this is what Boston is committed to doing, but this is what every place in America should do. And in our budget, we have \$200 million to help them do it. We also call for ending social promotion, but we say -- and I want to reiterate that -- it's not the students who are failing, it's the system's failing them. So you don't want to punish the students, you want to change the system.

Therefore, among other things in this budget, we call for tripling the funds available for after-school and summer school programs to help kids learn more. In three years -- listen to this -- three years ago, Congress appropriated \$1 million for the federal contribution to after-school programs. Then, the year before last, it was \$40; then last year it was \$200, and this year I hope it's going to be \$600 and we'll have one million more children in every state in this country off the streets, in the classroom, learning more and having a better future. (Applause.) We also have to give more support for teachers, more support for teacher development, more support for teacher education, more understanding of what's involved here. You have 53 million people and you're going to have a couple of -- according to Secretary Riley, a couple of million more teachers retire in the next few years.

It should not -- let me just say something. One of the big reasons that the test scores go down in math and science is that the teacher shortage has been so profound that there are a huge number of our teachers in America today in our junior and senior high schools, our middle schools and high schools, teaching courses in which they didn't have a college major or even a minor, because there was no one else available to teach them.

And we have to do more to support the recruitment and the support and the continuing teacher development of those people. One of the things in this budget that I think is particularly important, even though it's not a big number, is that we have funds for 7,000 college scholarships for young people where we pay their way to college in return for their commitment to teach for four years in an inner-city school or some other place where there's a serious teacher shortage of trained teachers. This is a big deal; it can make a significant difference.

I also believe that all parents should get report cards on all schools. That has worked. The Boston schools are doing it, it ought to be done everywhere. People are entitled to information. Most towns in this country, you can find out more about the local restaurants than you can about the local schools if you're a parent -- unless you just go there and hang around. It's important.

And finally, interestingly enough, do you know what the teachers' organizations and teachers at the grass-roots asked us to do to put into this bill? They said we should say that every school district should have a reasonable, comprehensive discipline code that is actually implemented -- teachers asked for that, and I think that's important. (Applause.)

So again I say, look at those kids, think about what you want America to be like in 20 years. Think about what we're going to do with this golden moment for our economy, with this first budget surplus we've had in 30 years. There a lot of things we need to do, but nothing is more important than giving our children a world-class education -- nothing. And I hope you will support it. (Applause.)

Thank you and God bless you. (Applause.)

END

4:10 P.M. EST

general

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

January 7, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
ON EDUCATION

East Room

3:28 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Mr. Vice President. I want to thank all those who have spoken before and all of you who are here. I say a special word of appreciation to the members of the Congress who have come, the members of the education community, the employees of the Department of Education.

I want to thank Congressman Ford for his stirring speech. I was looking at Congressman Ford, thinking, you know, I was 28 once. (Laughter.) And when I ran for Congress at that age I got beat. I see why he got elected. (Laughter.)

I thank Senator Kennedy for his lifetime of literally an example of unparalleled service in the United States Senate. And Secretary Riley, who has been my friend since we started our governorships together over 20 years ago now. And I'm glad to see Mrs. Shriver here. I thank the family of Congressman King for coming, my colleague in the Irish peace process -- we're glad to see all of them.

But most of all, I want to thank Lissette Martinez and Leonard for showing up and reminding us while we're all here today, because they were great. (Applause.) When she held her children's pictures up here, I thought, if those kids and their parents are the future of America, we're going to be just fine. We're going to be just fine. (Applause.)

Even though the definition of well-educated was very different over 200 years ago when this country was founded, our Founding Fathers thought it was of pivotal importance. In 1787, they declared that all new territory set aside land for public schools, establishing the principle that public education, though a state and local responsibility, must always be a national priority.

In 1862, President Lincoln signed the legislation creating the land grant college system. In 1944, the G.I. Bill gave millions of returning veterans tickets to what became the first mass middle class in the history of the world. In 1958, the launch of Sputnik led to federal funds to improve science and math education in our country. In 1965, federal support for education expanded further to bring minorities and the poor, long shut out of the classroom, inside to the full benefits of public education. At each of these turning points in our history, our country strengthened public education to match the challenges of the times.

Now in our time, as others have said, we face another challenge -- the emergence of a global economy that is fast-paced, technologically sophisticated, driven by information, and, at the same time, the emergence in our country of a breathtakingly diverse group of young people -- diverse by race and ethnic background, by religion, by culture, by income, by circumstance.

We now have an economy in which the workplace is no longer just for men, but also for women; the work day is no longer bound by the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; and the workplace is increasingly at home. When I became President six years ago, only 3 million Americans were earning their living at home. When I ran for reelection, the number was 12 million. Today there are about 20 million Americans earning their primary income out of their homes. This is a stunning statistic.

To meet the challenges of this new economy with our new society, we have to rely on our old values, but we have to make sure that we manifest them in modern ways. That means our public schools must change. They must teach our children while reflecting the way we work and live now and will work and live in the 21st century.

In the last six years we have worked hard on this, with the help of all of you in this room and those whom you represent throughout the United States. Forty-eight of our 50 states have now adopted tougher academic standards which we called for when the Goals 2000 program passed back in 1994. Thousands of schools have become safer, better learning environments, cracking down on gangs and guns, violence and discipline, adopting school uniforms and other systems designed to create a better, more equal learning environment.

The percentage of students who report being threatened or injured at school nationwide is down. We've begun to organize an army of tutors to help elementary school children learn to read and middle school and high school students to prepare for college. And I'm very proud of all the young people all across America who are working in these tutoring and mentoring programs.

We've dramatically increased our investment in early childhood learning through the Head Start program. We're making real progress in connecting every classroom and library to the Internet by the year 2000. And as Secretary Riley said, the E rate for which the Vice President fought so hard means that we've not only hooked up those classrooms, but they can actually afford to log on.

Last fall, we fought for and won from Congress a down payment on 100,000 new highly-trained teachers to reduce class sizes in the early grades, and we made a beginning on our proposal to offer to pay off the college costs of young people who will go into our most underserved areas and teach for a few years when they graduate from school. I hope the new Congress will keep up the payments so we can keep the teachers going. And I hope they will work with me to build or modernize 5,000 schools.

The charter school movement, which I have championed since 1992, is growing. When I

took the oath of office as President, there was one charter school in the whole United States -- a public school organized by parents or teachers within the school system, but free of a lot of the bureaucratic limitations that are on so many schools. In 1996, there were 700. There are now about 1,000. We are well on our way to our goal of having 3,000 by the year 2000.

All these efforts and others are beginning to show up in SAT scores, which are up; math scores, which have risen in nearly all grades nationwide -- even on a lot of the international tests, when we didn't do so well for years and years, our younger people are tending to do better and better.

We should be pleased and thankful, but we should not be fooled into complacency. Why? First, reading scores have hardly budged and many of our foreign competitors are improving their schools faster than we are. Secondly, while our children do very well on these international test scores in elementary school, and reasonably well in middle school, by the time they're in high school they're rankings have dropped dramatically.

We know we have more to do. We know that a majority of our schools have not kept pace with the new family patterns and work patterns which dominate America. We know that more and more parents are being drawn into the work force. On any given day, as many as 15 million school children are left to fend for themselves at home, idle in front of the television or out on the streets, vulnerable to gangs, drugs and crime. On any given day when school lets out, juvenile crime goes up, and also the number of children themselves victimized by crime. On any given day when school lets out, tens of millions of working parents look nervously at the clock, hoping and praying their children will be okay.

It is no secret that I believe that the best way for our nation to meet these challenges is to expand the number and improve the quality of our after-school programs. With quality after-school, parents and educators will be given the tools they need to succeed; students learn their lesson in the schoolhouse, not on the street; youth crime and victimization plummet. Quality after-school programs both enhance opportunity and bolster responsibility. In so doing, they strengthen our communities. They honor our values, they benefit our nation.

That's why I've supported grants for these kinds of quality programs through the 21st Century Community Learning Center Initiative, first introduced by Senator Jeffords from Vermont, championed by Senator Kennedy and Senator Boxer, Congresswoman Lowey from New York and others.

Two years go, this program received \$1 million from Congress. Then, it grew the year before last to \$40 million; and then last year, to \$200 million, in the budget I signed, serving a quarter of a million children. Yet, the demand for quality after-school programs, the bipartisan support it has gained and its potential to transform public education in America and the futures of our children far, far outweigh the investment we have made to date.

Therefore, today I am pleased to announce that in the new budget I will present to Congress this year, we will triple our investment in academically-enriched after-school programs

to give over 1 million children across America somewhere to go. (Applause.)

Now, you heard Lissette talking about the Chicago system. It's one I particularly favor. And last year I asked the Congress to set aside some funds that we could give to other school systems to help to adopt the comprehensive approach they have there. That is, no social promotion; more parent involvement in the schools; high standards, but don't flunk anybody because the system is failing the kids. Don't say the kids are failing; give them the after-school programs. Give them the summer school programs. Give them the tools they need to succeed. So we are going to give priority to communities that end social promotion in the right way.

She talked about that 8th grade test. Hillary and I, when we were working together in Arkansas on education, made our state the first state in the country to have an 8th grade exit exam. But I never saw it as a way of identifying children who were failing. I thought it would identify the schools that were failing and give the children a chance to succeed. And that's what they believe in in Chicago, and what we should believe in everywhere. (Applause.)

So I'm looking forward to working with all the senators and the House members who care so much about this, both to improve after-school programs and to end social promotion, but to do it in the right way. We have to do everything in our power -- after school, smaller classes, better teachers, modernized facilities, Internet hookups, summer programs -- to help our kids succeed. We have to have high standards not only for students, but for the preparation of our teachers, and for the performance of our schools. And I'll have more to say about that later.

Scarce dollars should not be spent on failed policies. If we've learned anything -- Hillary and Dick Riley and I -- after 20 years and more of working at this, listening to teachers and parents, going into schools, it is what Congressman Ford said, we do believe all children can learn. And that gives a much greater urgency to this work.

Look, this is not really just about making the American economy strong, or even making sure that when we baby boomers retire we'll be supported by two workers that made Bs or better instead of a 1.7 -- (laughter.) It makes a good point. But that's not really what this is about. Everybody just gets one chance. Everyone just has one life. This is about giving people a chance to make the most of that one life. This is about the sure knowledge we have that the rest of us will just be fine, everything is going to work out all right if we give our children the chance to make the most of their lives.

I watched Harold Ford up here giving that speech and I thought, there's a 28-year-old, young guy with his whole life before him. And I knew that he had a family that told him he had to show up in the morning, that his work was school, that he was expected to learn. And I want that for every child.

You know, I go to a lot of schools today when I speak to children -- I was out in Maryland and Virginia not long before last November, and I was talking to this group of kids, this wonderful group of kids. And they said, you know, all the parents are going to come and we just only wish we had time to translate your remarks into Spanish and into Arabic, because there

are so many parents who can't understand you. That's the America of tomorrow.

In a global society where we're trying to get other people to put aside their hatreds, to lay down the burdens of the past, to embrace one another, to reach across the lines that divide them, that's a great resource. But the challenge of giving all of the children from whatever backgrounds they come from the chance to make the most of that one life is more formidable than ever. Because of these after-school programs, a million kids will have a better chance. That's really what this is all about -- a million more stories like those two beautiful pictures that Lissette showed us today. And that's what we should always, always remember.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

END
EST

3:43 P.M.

Signing of education
Flexibility Partnership
Act

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

April 29, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT SIGNING OF
EDUCATION FLEXIBILITY PARTNERSHIP ACT OF 1999

Rose Garden

3:04 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Let me say, first of all, I thank Dr. Metts for being here, for giving us a firsthand and concrete expression of what this bill will mean to the states of our country and to the local school districts. I thank the members of Congress who have spoken -- Senator Wyden, Senator Frist, Congressman Roemer; my old colleague, Congressman Castle.

We're delighted to have the Vermont Education Commissioner here, Marc Hull, along with Senator Jeffords and Senator Kennedy, and a very large delegation of Republicans and Democrats from the United States Congress from the Senate and the House. I'd like to ask the members of Congress just to stand so the rest of you will see how many people here worked on this bill. (Applause.)

You know, there have been days in the last few years when I'm not sure we could have gotten this many members of Congress to agree that today is Thursday. (Laughter.) This was a truly astonishing effort, and I want to thank them all.

I want to say, too, a special word of appreciation to Governor Carper, and a very profound thanks to Secretary Riley. He and I started, as I have told many people, working on education reform 20 years ago this year. And over the last 20 years, we have done our best to sort out what we ought to do and how we ought to do it, and where the responsibility for what particular action ought to lie.

And I suppose, if I could put it into a sentence, I would say that insofar as possible, when it comes to the education of our children in kindergarten through 12th grade, the beginning of what should be done, should be done by the states. And "how" should be decided by the local districts, but, basically, whenever possible, by the local principals and teachers and parents involved in the schools. That the federal government is called upon to meet the needs that states can't meet on their own -- the needs of poor children, children with special needs -- or to fill in

the gaps when there are crying national needs unmet; and that when substantial federal dollars are involved, it's okay for the federal government to say "what," too. But we should all be singing out of the same hymnal insofar as possible, and we should all remember that all education -- in the schools, at least -- occurs in the classrooms, in the libraries, on the schoolyards, among the students and parents and principals. I think it is quite remarkable to see the places where you're really seeing a turnaround, now, where you have high expectation, high standards, discipline and genuine accountability for the students and the teachers and the principals. You also see a dramatic attempt to cut the cost of education where the money's being wasted, and to increase the investment in education where more is needed.

One of the things I'm very proud of that Secretary Riley has done is -- independent of this bill we're signing today -- is to slash the paperwork burdens on state and local officials by well over 60 percent since he has been the Secretary of Education, while putting an even more ambitious agenda before the educators of America.

Now, the founding fathers understood that this would be a big debate; we'd always be having this debate. Thomas Jefferson once said, "Were we directed from Washington when to sow and when to reap, we should soon want for bread." I may have liked that even more when I was governor, but it still sounds pretty good to me. (Laughter.)

But the framers understood something else, too -- they understood that the country had a right to decide and had to decide from time to time what we were going to do -- maybe not when and how, but what. They believed, for example, in 1787, that education was an important national purpose, and declared that all new territories must put aside land for public schools; thereby establishing the fact that education, though a state and local responsibility, must be a national priority.

This Education Flexibility Partnership Act exemplifies, I think, the founders' vision of how a properly balanced federal system of government can work -- providing freedom from federal rules and regulations. This new law will allow states and school districts not just to save administrative dollars, with less headache and red tape, but actually to pool different funds from different sources in the federal government. But by demanding accountability in return, it will make sure states and school districts focus on results.

Now, Doctor, you mentioned one example. I'll give you an example from my own life that made me so strongly for this bill. In 1990 or '91, when I was governor, the Department of Education under President Bush gave us permission in a very small, very poor rural school district to take all of our federal funds at elementary schools -- including the Chapter I funds and some of the special ed funds -- and put them together and take class size down to 15-to-1, in a district where the test scores were low and the learning was tough.

And this little district had a formula -- they also actually had an idea that even six-year-olds could be used to teach other six-year-olds to read, and to do their alphabet and do basic writing.

And I should tell you that in this first grade class -- they had a rough means of testing the children in the first grade, to test their basic competencies -- and there were four children in these four first grade classes that had been held back for a second year. Everybody else was in the first grade for the first time.

And so we did this. Here's what happened. The four kids that were held back scored four times as high on their basic competencies as they did. All the Chapter I kids scored three times as high, and the overall classes did twice as well as the previous year's class.

It was a wonderful thing, except I couldn't do it everywhere in the state. And I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. See, here we had discovered something that is profoundly important. I got all the help that I think the federal government could give me at the time. And we did the best we could to take those lessons, in the absence of the federal funds, and apply them. We want to produce results. We want our children to learn. We want all of our kids to be able to learn to the maximum of their ability, which means that they can learn at a world-class standard. And we need to give people who are on the ground, working with the kids and committed to that, the chance to do it. And if they're not, and the money's being misspent under this law, then we'll revert to another system.

But that is the meaning of this. This can change children's lives. And again I say, I am profoundly grateful to anyone who had anything to do with it.

I hope that -- now, we're getting off to a good start, and we'll keep on doing this. Last year, at the end of the year, we made our first big down payment on providing 100,000 more teachers, so we can have smaller class sizes. We're going to have to hire 2 million new teachers in America in the next few years, with a growing student population and increasing retirement among teachers. This is an important contribution to that effort.

I hope we can pass the bill to modernize or build 6,000 new schools, because we've got a lot of schools that are too old -- some of them even too old to take the computer hookups that have now been made everywhere in Delaware, as you heard the Doctor say.

I hope that we will reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to reflect the lessons learned in Chicago and elsewhere, and ask the schools that receive these federal funds to end the practice of social promotion, but to increase the efforts to help children through after-school and summer school programs and mentoring programs; to turn around or shut down failing schools; and to ensure that we do more to see that our teachers know the subjects they're charged with teaching.

The greatness of this country has always been the promise of opportunity for everyone who is willing to work for it. Today you not only have to be willing to work for it, you have to know enough to achieve it. Therefore, there is no important responsibility that should have greater weight on our minds as Americans -- without regard to party, and without regard to whether we work in the national government or the state and local government, or the smallest rural school or the biggest inner-city school, or whether we're just taxpaying citizens, with or

without children in those schools -- there is nothing more important for us to be focused on today than making sure that very early in the next century we can look at each other, straight in the eye, and say -- and believe and be right about saying -- that it is possible in America, in every community, to get a world-class education.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

Now, I'd like to ask the members of Congress to come on up and we'll sign the bill.

END 3:20 P.M. EDT