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**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS***Serving All Elementary and Middle School Principals*

DATE: January 6, 2000

TO: Stephanie Streett
Assistant to the President and
Director of Presidential Scheduling

FROM: Deborah B. Reeve, Ed.D. 
Associate Executive Director

REQUEST: A videotaped message from the President to the 8,000 elementary and middle school principals who will be attending the National Association of Elementary and Middle Schools Principals 79th annual convention in New Orleans, Louisiana

PURPOSE: To underscore the important leadership that school principals bring to quality schools in the early years of learning and to thank principals for the important job they do everyday on behalf of our nation's children. Our society and our system of education are facing far-reaching changes. The entire nation is working together to answer President Clinton's Call-to-Action for American Education—to prepare our children for the New Millennium and the 21st century. This requires the strong, dedicated and visionary leadership of America's elementary and middle school principals.

BACKGROUND: Over the past 79 years, NAESP has become the most powerful voice of the ~~pre-K~~ ^{pre-K} principals across America. NAESP has been dedicated to ensuring that all children receive the best education possible. America's elementary and middle school principals are truly leaders of leaders—they foster and promote leadership among students, teachers, and parents while they direct the schooling of 33 million children in our public, private and parochial schools. Our nation's principals care about America by caring deeply about our children. They also believe that no barrier should separate a child from the best possible education—that neither race nor sex nor ethnic heritage nor geography nor social nor economic status may be used to deny a child the opportunity to acquire a solid foundation in reading, writing, mathematics and the arts—in critical thinking—and in the values of friendship, compassion, honesty and self-esteem. America's principals are committed to instructional excellence and they support the aspirations of our nation's teachers to give every child a quality school experience during the crucial years of childhood. They also accept the challenge of the research showing that quality education in every school depends upon the expertise, dedication and leadership of that school.



National Association of Elementary School Principals

Serving America's Children

MISSION

The National Association of Elementary School Principals is dedicated to assuring that every American boy and girl receives the world's best elementary and middle school education.

In carrying out that mission, we are mindful of two particularly striking findings of research: First, that children's early years in school are the most crucial to their future, not only in the classroom but indeed, in life. And second, that the key figure in assuring a top-quality school is the principal.

We accept the profound challenges inherent in those findings, and we emphasize that the school's first and foremost concern must be the progress and welfare of its students. Each of them must be helped to achieve their full potential.

We recognize an obligation to make continuing contributions toward strengthening the principalship and the profession—through cooperation with the institutions that prepare school administrators; through counsel and constructive relationships with governmental bodies at all levels; and through a wide range of NAESP training programs, publications, conferences, and professional meetings aimed at helping aspiring principals reach their goal and practicing principals hone their skills.

Overall, NAESP is dedicated to serving our nation—to assuring its continued strength and prosperity by assuring the best possible schooling for our most important resource, our children.

HISTORY

The National Association of Elementary School Principals was founded in 1921 by a group of principals who sought to promote their profession and to provide a national forum for their ideas. Over the past 75 years, NAESP has grown to become the most powerful voice of Pre-K-8 principals across the United States and around the world.

Since its beginning, NAESP has been dedicated to ensuring that all children get the best education possible. We serve the professional interest of elementary and middle school principals, and we promote the highest professional standards. Today, NAESP provides a peer network of more than 27,000 principals worldwide. We understand the needs, concerns, and problems of Pre-K-8 school leaders – and we offer extensive support, expert counsel, and proven solutions.

GOALS

Our society and our system of education are facing far-reaching changes. The entire nation is working to improve its educational system and to prepare its children for the 21st Century – and this requires the strong leadership of America's elementary and middle school principals.

As the largest professional association of K-8 principals, NAESP realize the complexity of the tasks principals face every day. We've developed a wide range of programs and services to help principals succeed in their critical roles.

As an organization of outstanding principals, NAESP listens closely to what our members say, and our programs, publications, and services are designed to meet their needs. **Our mission is to serve as advocates for children and to help principals do the best job possible, because we know it's one of the most important jobs in the nation.**

NAESP is committed to:

- Serving the educational needs of children.
- Serving the nation's elementary and middle school principals by providing them with vital benefits, services, and professional development opportunities.
- Gathering and disseminating important educational research.
- Articulating and promoting a common national vision of the future of Pre-K-8 education.
- Influencing legislation that strengthens Pre-K-8 education.
- Enhancing the status and visibility of Pre-K-8 principals and the importance of the profession.
- Strengthening ties with state principals' associations to help them reach their goals and expand their national impact.

Our commitment to these ideals makes membership in NAESP an indispensable resource for every elementary and middle school principal.

PLATFORM

The NAESP Platform consists of a summary of all resolutions adopted since 1974, by NAESP Delegate Assemblies. It has been maintained as a living document, constantly reflecting the current beliefs and positions of NAESP members. Created, monitored, and revised by the Association membership through its chosen representatives, the NAESP Platform serves as a basis for NAESP strategic action planning in continuing to meet the needs of NAESP members and the principalship.

ORGANIZATION

NAESP is proud to be an association governed by our members, for our members. NAESP's Delegate Assembly is our basic governing body, and delegates are selected by our affiliated state associations and meet annually at our national convention. A 15-member Board of Directors, elected by the membership, oversees the fiscal and program management of the association and adopts policies and procedures accordingly. The Board includes three officers, and directors representing nine geographic zones, a director representing ethnic minorities, a director representing middle schools, and the executive director. A professional headquarters staff, located in our own building in Alexandria, Virginia, carries out the day-to-day operations of the

association.

MEMBERSHIP

The 27,000 members of NAESP provide the administrative and instructional leadership for elementary and middle schools throughout the United States, Canada, and overseas. Membership in NAESP includes:

Active Members. Practicing elementary and middle school principals and assistant principals and related professional educators. (In nearly half the states, NAESP membership requires joint membership with the state association.)

Associate Membrs. College and university faculty members and other interested non-principals.

Aspiring Principals. Teachers, students, and others interested in becoming principals.

Libraries, schools, and other institutions can join NAESP as institutional members in order to receive NAESP periodicals. Emeritus and Retired membership categories are also available for active members who have retired.

SERVICES & BENEFITS

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NAESP

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NAESP**PRINCIPAL
ONLINE****National Association of Elementary School Principals**

April 19, 1999

**EXCERPTS FROM THE REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT AND TEACHER OF THE YEAR,
ANDREW BAUMGARTNER, AT CEREMONY HONORING TEACHER OF THE YEAR**

10:10 A.M. EDT

The White House, Presidential Hall

THE PRESIDENT:

Now, let's talk about why we're here. The first Teacher of the Year Award was presented in 1952 by a man who was one of my heroes as a child growing up, Harry Truman. He did it right here on the White House grounds. The recipient was a Miss Geraldine Jones, who taught first grade in Santa Barbara, California, in a school whose name I rather liked — the Hope School. (Laughter.) Harry Truman said on that occasion that next to one's mother, a teacher had the greatest influence on what kind of citizen a child grew up to be.



Every year since, Presidents or members of their families have personally handed out this award, as Terry said, to recognize not only the awardee and all of you, but, through you, all teachers in our country.

Eight hours a day, five days a week, nine months a year, teachers hold the future of America in their hands. They teach our children to read, to write, to calculate — to sing, to play, to paint, to listen, to question, hopefully to work with others and think for themselves. They excite our children's imaginations, lift their aspirations, open their hearts and strengthen their values.

Everyone probably can recall a story like the one I told you at the opening of my remarks today. Many of us can remember our teachers in stunning detail — their faces, their expressions, their voices, their favorite admonitions. The way their hands gripped the chalk at the blackboard. We can still, most of us, summon the pride we felt when they praised us and the absolute chill we felt when we were scolded. (Laughter.)

The role of teachers, while hard to exaggerate, unfortunately, is too often easy to overlook. Teachers do their jobs quietly, largely isolated from other adults. Their work, therefore, is seldom glorified by Hollywood, and rarely sufficiently rewarded by society.

Andy Baumgartner is our Teacher of the Year. He spent two years in the United States Marines. He gained inner confidence, self-motivation, physical stamina at Parris Island and Camp Lejeune. I imagine they have been useful to him in dealing with young children. (Laughter.)

Since he is a former Marine, I think it's worth pointing out that today we rightly honor the men and women serving in and around the Balkans as patriots. We should also honor our teachers as patriots.

Andy's colleagues marvel at the way he rivets the attention of his kindergarten students by keeping himself

in constant creative motion. That's the first impression I had of him. (Laughter.) I have met a person who has even more energy than I do. (Laughter.) One minute he's using popcorn and M&Ms to teach counting. The next, he's conducting a sing-a-long to "This Land Is Your Land." A few minutes later, he's marching the class up the hill behind the school to conduct a solemn funeral for a departed pet tarantula named "Legs." (Laughter.)

As the father of a son with a learning disability, he knows firsthand the struggle many parents go through to get the individual attention their children need. He works hard to give that kind of attention to all his students.

When he's not teaching, he can be found directing a school play, teaching other educators, writing guidebooks for parents, working in community theatre, participating actively in his church. He is an example of the kind of vital, active American that Alexis D'Tocqueville marveled at when he came here so long ago and talked about the unique quality of our citizenship.

If he were alive today, D'Tocqueville I think would agree that America could do more to honor classroom teachers like Andy Baumgartner. Perhaps more of our best and brightest young people would choose teaching as a career if we did more to lift our teachers up and honor them. Even though I am one, we don't need many more lawyers. We have plenty of financial analysts on Wall Street. But we desperately need more teachers.

When our finest young people pass up teaching, they're missing out on rewarding careers, and we're missing out on a chance to put our talent where we need it the most today. With 53 million children in our public schools — the greatest number ever — from more diverse backgrounds than at any time in our history, certainly since the turn of the century — with enrollments growing and a wave of teacher retirements about to hit, our schools will have to hire 2 million more teachers in the next decade.

At the same time, we're trying to bring down class size and that requires more teachers. And the new teachers must be better trained. A quarter of all secondary school teachers today do not have majors, or even minors, in the subjects they are teaching. And, of course, the deficit is worse in low-income neighborhoods where the need is greatest.

Now, these are enormous challenges. I believe we can meet them if we act now when our economy is the strongest it has been in a very long time. But we have to act now. There are things the federal government can do, to be sure, and I want to talk a little about them. But I'd like to point out that we provide only about 7 percent of the funding of total public school funding in America. That's a higher percentage than it was when I became President. When we were cutting the deficit and cutting programs, we doubled our investment in education in about five years. But it's still important to remember that a lot of this has to be done at the state and local level.

And so as the governors of our various states enjoy great prosperity, and as the crime rate comes down and, presumably, therefore, they don't have to keep spending all their new money on building prisons, as was the case when I was a governor, too often. I certainly hope that as much money as possible will be put into our public school systems, to hire those teachers and to raise teacher pay. That has to be done at the state level, primarily, and it is absolutely imperative.

At the national level, we're going to do what we can to pass a bill to build or modernize thousands of schools, to help to hire 100,000 highly trained new teachers to reduce class size in the early grades. The studies, of course, confirm what a lot of our teachers have been saying for a long time, that smaller classes means more individual attention, more discipline and more learning.

Last fall, Congress reached across party lines to put down a down payment — they paid for about a third of these 100,000 teachers. I certainly hope we can finish the job this year.

We have to redouble our efforts to recruit more of the best and brightest young Americans into teaching. A lot of our young people in the AmeriCorps program are getting some of their college education paid so they can go and become teachers. Our budget now calls for an investment to provide 7,000 scholarships for students who will commit to teach in the poorest inner city and rural schools. It calls on an investment to get 1,000 Native American young people to teach on Indian reservations, and in other public schools with large Native American populations.

It calls for more money to recruit and train members of the United States military when they retire to become teachers through our Troops for Teachers program, something that has really been very, very successful. Our 25 million veterans represent a vast pool of potential teachers. Many of them, because they're going into military retirement, can actually afford to be teachers. (Laughter.) And most of them have their kids gone. So it's a pool that we need to look at and draw on. Our Teacher of the Year, here, is pretty good evidence that soldiers can be quite good teachers. We ought to make it easier for others to do the same thing.

Third, in our budget we provide more funds for teacher training. I think it's quite important that teachers — our new teachers especially — demonstrate that they know what they're supposed to teach. But we cannot expect the schools out there, who have to teach the kids, to be able to do what they're supposed to do unless we provide — we in the public sector — provide the resources we need not only to recruit, but to properly train the teachers in the subjects they have to teach.

Fourth, we should do more to make our schools attractive places where people want to work. In our Educational Accountability Act, we have a lot of funds for better schools, and for turning around schools that aren't performing, and for after-school and summer school programs to help the children who need extra help.

Now, last thing I'd like to say is something I've already said. I know I've given 131 speeches on education — I now know that — so I've learned a new fact today, and I love facts. But the larger truth is this. Everybody is for education in general, but not enough people are for it in particular. It's easy to give a talk, and harder to foot the bill. And I think it is very important that we not only remain committed to substantive reforms — you know, I believe that every school district should have a no-social-promotion policy, but I don't think the kids should be branded failures. I think if they're not making it, then they should get the extra help they need. And that's why we have moved on from \$1 million, and \$20 million, to \$200 million, to \$600 million this year in federal support for after-school programs and summer school programs. We're working at this. But America needs to focus on this.

We're going to honor Andy — I'm going to bring him up here to give him his award, and he's going to give a speech, and we're all going to practically laugh or cry. And it will be a wonderful thing. But I want America to hear this, when they see you tonight on television. We have 2 million teachers to hire in the next few years. And in the best of all worlds, they would every one of them, be just as committed and just as knowledgeable and just as effective as you are.

And it isn't going to happen unless we make the necessary decisions, and put the necessary priorities in place, not only in Washington, but in every state capital, and every local school district in the country.

So I say today, the best way we can honor America's teachers is for the rest of us to give them the tools to

succeed with our children in the 21st century. (Applause.) Thank you.

Ladies and gentlemen, the 1999 Teacher of the Year, Mr. Andy Baumgartner. (Applause.)

MR. BAUMGARTNER:

He would emphasize that I was height-challenged to begin with. (Laughter.) You're a hard act to follow.

Thank you, Mr. President. Ladies and gentlemen, I am filled with immense pride as I stand here in our Capitol City today and take part in this national celebration on teaching and teachers.

My 23 years' experience as an educator has proven to me that our schools are filled with many of the brightest, hardest working and most enthusiastic and capable professionals that can be found anywhere in the world. My pride is compounded by the fact that we teach in a country that guarantees the right of every child to an education.

I am greatly encouraged by the fact that the attention of our nation is being focused on our education system. We are constantly being reminded that there is an undeniable correlation between the attainment of an education and the realization of the American Dream. We are being energized by the debates over standards and accountability, to make changes that will certainly cause the performance levels of our schools and the individual achievements of our students to prosper. We must use care and caution to enact only those changes that are both responsible and prudent.

The time has come when we must exchange laying blame for cooperative and collective problem-solving. We must constantly remind ourselves that the mission of an effective teacher should not be bounded by a particular book or program or test. Instead, it should extend to meet the individual needs of each and every student. We must realize that educational accountability is the shared responsibility of all Americans. We can no longer continue to make excuses for not providing optimal learning environments for our children, who deserve nothing less than the best.

Reducing class size, strengthening parental involvement and community support, and providing access to the most current and innovative materials and technology must be considered necessary basics. We must end any disparities that exist between schools by upgrading those with the most numerous and significant unmet needs without lessening support to any others. We must furnish every classroom with a highly qualified and respected teacher who is adequately and professionally compensated for his or her commitment.

When together we have achieved these goals we will have provided all schools with the necessary components to enable their students to excel in the face of all challenges. The proof that it can be done lies in this beautiful and historic city in which we have gathered. For here we are inundated by sights and sounds that make it impossible for us to doubt that ideals can, indeed, be made into realities.

Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you. (Applause.)



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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

VIDEO SESSION IN THE ROOSEVELT ROOM

DATE: WEDNESDAY, MARCH 1, 1995
LOCATION: ROOSEVELT ROOM
TIME: 12:00 - 12:45 PM
FROM: DAVE ANDERSON *DA*

I. PURPOSE

You will do eight video messages.

II. BACKGROUND

The first video is for a television special called "Kids and Crime--It's Time to Act" which will air on WHAS-TV in Louisville. The message will play as part of a town meeting being aired tomorrow on the station. The studio audience will include: parents, students, teachers, ministers, judges, police officers, attorneys and juvenile offenders.

The second message will be a recognition of Eid al-Fitr which signifies the end of the Muslim holiday, Ramadan. The video will be played at a number of key celebrations nationwide as well as over USIA's WorldNet and virtually all domestic Muslim broadcast outlets. Your message will reinforce the Administration's commitment to the Middle East peace process. You recorded a similar message last year.

The third video is for this year's Arkansas Jefferson-Jackson Dinner. Senator Dodd will be honored as the new Chairman of the DNC and many of your friends will be in attendance.

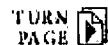
The fourth video is to the annual gathering of the National Association of Elementary School Principals. Six thousand principals will be in attendance and the transcript will be circulated to 26,000 members in the post-convention newsletter. Your message will also be distributed to a number of education media outlets.

The fifth video is a public service announcement for the 1996 Paralympic Games in Atlanta. The Paralympic Games are the second largest sporting event in the world (only the Olympics itself is larger) and will be held next year in Atlanta. As the honorary Chairman, you are recording this message to raise the profile of this important event.

The sixth video is a public service announcement for Cable Television's "Voices Against Violence" Campaign. Spearheaded by Showtime, this cable industry anti-violence effort will be featured over forty different cable channels nationally (including MTV, VH1, CNN, and the Nashville Network). Your PSA is expected to run on many of these channels between March 19 and 26.

The seventh video is to the Mayor's Youth Council in Boston. You agreed to do this video during a recent trip to Boston. Many major corporations are sponsoring the day of youth speakers, performers and skill-building workshops and Olympic Medalist Dan Jansen will speak to the group on how much young people have to offer their communities.

COPY



Remarks to the **National Association of Elementary School Principals** in Arlington, Virginia, July 25, 1997

Thank you very much, Superintendent Paz, President Allen, my longtime friend Sam Sava. Thank you, Secretary Riley. I believe the record will reflect when your tenure is over that you have done more for the children of America than any Secretary of Education who ever served, and I thank you.

I want to say, we are joined today by a number of other distinguished education leaders, other superintendents from cities around our country, along with Bob Chase, the president of the NEA; Sandra Feldman, the president of the AFT; Michael Casserley, the executive director of the Council of Great City Schools; and Anne Bryant, the executive director of the National School Board Association; and my good friend Mayor Beverly O'Neill from Long Beach, California. And a lot of superintendents are here. I thank you for joining the elementary school principals and for your support for better education for our children.

I want to begin by thanking the elementary principals for what they do for America's children. Like every parent, I remember very well the first time I sent my child off to school, putting her in the hands of a principal I did not know but whom I came to know and like very well. [Laughter] Every year hundreds of thousands of children arrive on your doorstep, entrusted to you by their parents. And every year you prove their trust is well-placed.

When I was the Governor of Arkansas, I had the opportunity to cochair a national task force on school leadership for the education commission of the States. And we found about a decade ago what you have always known, that when it comes to the quality of education in the school it is the principal who makes all the difference.

As school enrollments reach record levels—up to 54 million by the year 2006—and as we move into the 21st century's knowledge economy where learning for a lifetime will be essential to success, your leadership will be more important than ever. And your ability to inspire people and to make them believe that we can achieve

educational excellence will be more important than ever. Beginning with our Nation's elementary schools, we have to demand excellence from every school, every teacher, every student. We have to repair and rebuild our schools. We have to make sure they take advantage of the newest technologies. We have to make sure that they are safe and drug free. We have to make sure that we are supporting promising reforms like charter schools and other initiatives under way in many of your districts. But I believe the single most important thing we can do to give our children world-class education is to insist on high national standards, so that we make sure that we've done everything we can to see that every single child learns what he or she knows to succeed in the exciting world of the 21st century. For too long we've been unwilling to insist on that as a Nation, perhaps for fear that some of our children could not reach those standards, perhaps out of a misguided notion that such standards would lead to too much Federal Government involvement or too much loss of local control.

I believe a lot of Americans have always feared that children from disadvantaged backgrounds and struggling communities just might not be able to hold their own. I believe that too many Americans have thought that with so much diversity and poverty and family difficulties among our young students, American children would simply always lag behind other countries that had more homogenous, less disruptive cultures, and perhaps longer school years. Still, for more than a decade now, at least since the issuance of "A Nation At Risk" report in 1983 and, indeed, going back some years before, Americans have been working hard, led by their^[p.1122] educators and reform-minded public servants, to improve our schools, and it is making a difference.

As Secretary Riley said, last month we learned that our fears were wrong when America's fourth graders finished second only to Korea in science in the international math and science tests. They scored well above the average on the annual math tests. Six years earlier, our fourth graders had scored well below the international average. These tests, of course, are not of all of our fourth graders, but they are of a rather large and representative sample of them. And they tested enough of them to prove that we don't have to settle for second-class expectations or second-class goals for any of our children.

They also show, frankly, that by the time our students reach the eighth grade, the high test scores drop back below the international average. I think we all know that the problems our children face are aggravated in those middle school years when they move into

adolescence, and that in many of our communities the structure and organization of the middle school was more adequate to a previous time when a lot of those problems did not exist.

Nonetheless, the fourth grade test proved, number one, that you're doing a good job and, number two, that our kids can do it. And that is, after all, the most important thing. Therefore, I believe it is imperative now to take action and to begin the movement to high national standards for all of our children. When we don't expect or encourage our children to learn we indirectly encourage them to fail. When we set high standards and when we insist on them, there's no end to what our kids can do. You see that every day; you know that better than anyone.

In my State of the Union Address I challenged every State and every school to adopt high national standards and by 1999 to actually test all our fourth graders in reading and all our eighth graders in math to make sure the standards are being met. Not Federal standards but national ones—standards that every child can meet in every city and State in America, and standards that every child must meet if we want every child to be able to live out his or her dreams. After all, national standards are defensible because reading is reading and math is math in Appalachia and in Alaska and all points in between.

Since I issued that call, education leaders or Governors or both in seven States—California, North Carolina, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Kentucky, and West Virginia—along with our Department of Defense schools all over the world have announced their support for national standards and their desire to participate in the testing program as soon as it becomes available in 1999.

Today I am pleased to make an announcement that would have been literally unthinkable just a couple of years ago. Fifteen of our largest school districts, including schools in six of the seven largest cities in the United States, have committed to meet these standards and to participate in the tests to measure the progress of their students against them.

Now, I don't know how much news this will be tonight on the news or tomorrow in the papers, but every one of us who has been involved in education—if I had told you 5 years ago that the leaders of the school districts in New York; Philadelphia; Atlanta; Broward County, Florida; Cincinnati; Detroit; Chicago; Houston; San Antonio; El Paso; Omaha; Los Angeles; Long Beach; Fresno; and Seattle—that the leaders of these school districts have asked that their students

be held to and measured against the same standards in reading and math that we expect our children to meet to have a world-class education, no one would have believed that. Educators know this is an historic, astonishing, wonderful moment in American education. And I thank them for doing that.

This commitment means that 3½ million more children, one out of every 14 public school children in America, will be held to these world-class education standards in the basics. And it means after the test is given all of them will get better education because we'll all learn from the test results and keep working until we get the results we want in every one of those districts.

I would like to ask the representatives of those 15 school districts who are here to stand up and be recognized: the superintendents, the teachers, the principals. Thank you very much. [Applause] [p.1123]

And let me say, the Secretary of Education and I are about to leave to go out to Las Vegas to meet with the Governors. Now, if this event had gone on in 1979 or 1980 or 1983 or 1984, the Governors would have been the first group out there. And they've been dragging their feet, and don't you believe for a moment that Dick Riley and I aren't going to tell them what we saw at the elementary school principals convention.

When we get these results, they ought to be incorporated into school and school district report cards, so that parents and taxpayers can see how our kids are doing but can also measure their progress. Keep in mind—you all know this, and we have to explain this to the citizens and the parents—these tests are not graded on the curve. If you make the highest grade in the class and it's not high enough, you don't know enough. If you make the lowest grade in the class and you're over the bar, you're at least qualified to do well in the world you will live in. It is very important that we get that message across to our people: We are measuring what is required to succeed in the world our children will live in.

We in the National Government will continue to do our part. The balanced budget agreement we reached with Congress, that was voted for overwhelmingly in both Houses, by Members of both parties, takes Head Start the next step toward our goal of a million children. It will fund the Technology Literacy Challenge to help us participate with the private sector in hooking up every classroom and library to the Internet by the year 2000. It will help to fund America Reads, our program to get a million trained reading tutors available to give extra help to children who need it most, to make sure that all of

our 8-year-olds can read independently. I urge Congress to act to implement this program. All told, you should know that if this balanced budget agreement passes, the increase in education funding, Federal support for education, will be the largest since 1965.

I also want to emphasize that we know that one of the challenges especially that a lot of our big-city schools will face is a looming teacher shortage, that we're going to have more students coming in and more teachers retiring. Just last week I offered a new initiative to provide extra scholarship money modeled on the Federal Health Service Corps, where we pay for medical school costs for doctors who will go out to underserved areas, to pay for the education costs of young people who will agree to teach for 3 years in areas that are especially challenging. And I hope Congress will pass that as well.

Finally, let me mention in regard to the budget that in addition to the support for education from Head Start through high school graduation, this budget takes another huge step toward opening the doors of college education to all Americans. The agreement provided for a tax credit for the first 2 years of college that would be sufficient to virtually guarantee universal access at least to community college for every high school graduate in the United States and for every adult who needs to go back to school. In addition, it provides tax relief for the 3d and 4th years of college and for graduate school. And that's what we're working on now in these budget negotiations. The agreement provided for that. The tax plan that the Republicans released a couple of days ago falls far short of the commitment in the agreement.

Now, let me say again, I believe we should have a tax cut. We can afford it and still balance the budget, because the budget is now going to finish this year over 80 percent below what it was when I took office. We've already done over 80 percent of the work in balancing the budget. But the tax cut has to, first of all, put middle class families who need the relief most at the heart of its objectives. It should help families to pay for all 4 years of college and for graduate education. It should help working people get training throughout a lifetime. It should help middle class parents to raise their children. And equally important, it should keep us within the limits of balancing this budget and keeping it balanced and not having it explode in the out-years.

We have been handicapped severely for years and years and years because we went on a binge of deficit spending in the early eighties that we couldn't break. Now we have done it. You see the results in our economy: When we have fiscal discipline you have lower interest

rates, you have more investment, [p.1124] you have a growing economy. And it's required us to show some restraint here over the last few years, but it's also helped to swell the coffers of State and local government, which fund our schools, primarily because we have a healthy economy. So all of this has to be observed.

I have to tell you that even though there are differences which are clearly and publicly stated between the White House and the Republican leaders and, to some extent, also clearly stated between the Democrats in Congress and others, I think we're going to get this agreement. The negotiators are working even as we speak. And I think we all know that this is a remarkable moment in American history, and we have an obligation to balance the budget for the first time since 1969, to keep this economic growth going, and to do it in a way that gives us the biggest investment in education in over 30 years, and I might add also, the biggest investment in expanding health coverage to our children since 1965. And this is important. That will also help you do your jobs better. And I want to emphasize that if we pass college benefit provisions as contemplated by the budget agreement, it will be the biggest increase in access to college, federally supported access to college, since the GI bill passed in 1945. This is a very good agreement.

So this is a day that we celebrate these 15 school districts stepping forward, representing so many of our children, putting the lie to the notion that our children can't meet the high standards because they're from immigrant families or because they're from poor families or because they live in difficult circumstances. We can all make excuses until the cows come home, but in the end, these kids have to get up and live their lives. And we've got to give them a chance to live their lives in the best way possible. And we have done that. We celebrate that. We live in the expectation of a successful conclusion of these budget negotiations.

But the thing I want to close with is that when you go back to your school, I want you to know that I know that you are leading the fight for the future of our children. More than anybody else, you have to have the conviction that every child can learn to high standards. You have to have the conviction that your teachers can do what they have to do. You have to have the convictions that you can establish the alliances with your parents and your communities that you have to establish. You have to believe that if you demand high standards and have high expectations that our kids can meet them. You have to believe that we actually can succeed in giving our children the tools they need to make the most of their own lives and to keep our country the great beacon of hope and freedom and opportunity in the 21st century.

Pearl Buck once said that if our American way of life fails the child, it fails us all. It follows that if our American way of life supports, ennobles, lifts up our children, it does that for all of us. That is what you do, and I am very grateful.

Thank you, and God bless you.

[At this point, Samuel G. Sava, executive director, **National Association of Elementary School Principals**, presented the President with a gift.]

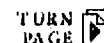
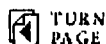
The President. Well, I may use this in unconventional ways. Thank you very much, Sam. This means more to me than you know.

The young man you mentioned, Michael Morrison, is a wheelchair-bound young man, raised by a single mother, who became my friend. On that cold November Tuesday in 1992, when it was really cold in New Hampshire, Michael Morrison got up to go to the polls to work for me, and his car was broken down, his family car. His mother couldn't take him. And so he wheeled his wheelchair alongside an icy highway for more than 2 miles to reach the polling place. He is now a college honor student. Don't ever forget what you do makes a difference.

Thank you, and God bless you.

Note: The President spoke at 11:19 a.m. at the Crystal Gateway Marriott Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Stanley Paz, superintendent, El Paso Independent School District; and Yvonne Allen, president, **National Association of Elementary School Principals**. [p.1125]

Source: United States. Executive Office of the President, Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, Week Ending Friday, July 25, 1997 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), 33:1121-1124



THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

January 20, 2000

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AND THE FIRST LADY
AT COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY EVENT

Presidential Hall
Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building

1:55 P.M. EST

MRS. CLINTON: Welcome to the White House. And we are really a white White House today with all of the snow. And we thank all of you for the considerable effort that you went to to be here -- no one more than Senator Schumer, who had to take the train and there was a lot of delay in that. So we are delighted to have you all here with us.

It's an honor to be joined by so many people who have worked so hard on behalf of improving access to education in our country. I'm pleased that, in addition to Senator Schumer, we are joined also by Congressman Rush Holt, who has been a leader on behalf of college access. As a former college professor that's an especially appropriate role for him to assume. Secretary Slater, we're glad you could be with us. And you'll hear in a moment from Secretary Riley.

The idea that we can transform lives in America through education is one that is especially rooted in our own experience, because each of us have seen over and over again what a difference it can make. By opening the doors of college to more and more Americans, we will be extending the possibility of the American Dream to countless young, and not so young, Americans into the 21st century.

From the moment a child is born in our country, many of us have the same question lurking in the back of our minds, how am I going to pay for college? It's a vague concern at first, when we worry more about toddlers bruising their knees and pre-schoolers getting ready to go to school. But as the years progress and as our children begin high school, as they sign up for SATs and the college brochures start coming in the mail, our pride in our children's future and our hopes for them is certainly mixed with some anxiety -- because we start looking at the numbers under the section on the application marked "tuition." And then we look at the numbers in our bank statements and wonder again, how am I going to pay for college?

The challenge of paying for college is one that has gotten even more acute in the last 20 years, because the average tuition has doubled, while median family incomes and financial aid have not kept pace. And this challenge touches Americans in all incomes and from all walks of life. Not just lower-income parents, but parents who, by most standards, are doing well, have told me about sleepless nights worrying about how they will pay the tuition bills without going broke or shortchanging their younger children. Mothers and fathers have talked about taking second jobs or second mortgages, scrambling to make sure their children are not denied this essential tool for their future. And young people themselves, like those on the stage here with us, are graduating and incurring thousands of dollars of debt.

I wonder how many worthy, but less lucrative professions, from

teaching to social work to public service, are losing many young people because they are too burdened by debt to afford to take such jobs.

At the turn of the century, we are seeing not just how college education can open a path to a better and brighter future, but how in many ways it has become the principal, the most important path, that any of us can take in the information age. In the coming years, the number of new jobs requiring a bachelor's degree will grow almost twice as fast as the average for all jobs. The three fastest-growing occupations, all of them in the field of technology, require at least a bachelor's degree, and pay much higher than average for all full-time workers.

That's why it's more important than ever that we as a nation continue to make college more affordable for more Americans. For the past seven years, with the President's leadership and the help of so many of you in this room, we've worked very hard to make the dream of a college education a reality for millions of Americans -- with new HOPE scholarships and Lifetime Learning tax credits, more work-study opportunities, higher Pell grants, and more affordable student loans. But we know that even with this progress, our work is not yet done.

Growing up in the 1950s, I saw how the G.I. Bill opened the doors of college for millions of Americans who had never dreamed that they could go to college, and it really did fuel the American middle class and the expansion that so many of us have enjoyed and taken for granted. Today, the challenge of paying for college, though, has become a daunting one for that very same middle class that was really created by the G.I. Bill.

In this era of unprecedented prosperity, at a time when higher education is not just an advantage, but essential to individual and national progress, no one who wants to improve his or her prospects through education should have to risk poverty to gain that education. That's why, as we balanced the budget, we must also support targeted tax cuts to help middle class Americans afford college. We cannot afford to keep college out of the reach of any American.

We'll hear in a moment from a young woman who can speak firsthand about the importance of college in her life, Nina McLaughlin. And she is speaking for not only the young people here behind me and in this audience, but young people throughout America.

Over the past seven years, I've certainly spoken at or attended my share of college commencements, and it always is one that brings tears to my eyes as I see the graduates walking across the stage and proud parents and grandparents sitting in the audience, whether it's a small private college or a great public land grant university or a community college. So I think we're here today to recommit ourselves to making that experience truly available to every American. I'm particularly grateful to Senator Schumer for his hard work and leadership on this issue, and so pleased he could join us.

And it's now my great privilege to introduce someone who has been a champion for education at all levels and really understands the importance of what we're doing today -- the Secretary of Education, Richard Riley. (Applause.)

* * * * *

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Nina, for being exhibit A for the announcement that we're here for today. Thank you, Secretary Riley, for your leadership in every aspect of education, and especially in this one.

I thank Secretary Slater for coming. I expect he's here for two

reasons. One is, Rodney Slater grew up in a county that, when I was governor, was one of the 10 poorest counties in America. And he happened to be a good football player, and was able to go to college in Michigan and play football. And he, later in his career, became an officer at a university in our home state. So he also is exhibit A for why every child should be able to go to college.

I want to thank Representative Rush Holt for being here. He is not only a former distinguished professor at Princeton, but he has a task force on access to higher education in his congressional district. And the people who live in his district actually are among those who will be most benefitted if this entire proposal passes, as we hope it will.

In their absence, I want to thank Congressman Ford and Senator Olympia Snowe, who have been very, very strong on this issue. And the two people I want to thank most, obviously, are Senator Schumer and the First Lady, who lobbied me relentlessly on this for the better part of a year. If you've ever been lobbied by either one of them, you know -- (laughter) -- it's sort of like, are you going to say yes now, or put yourself through all this misery and say yes later? But it's been very interesting. I'll say more about it in a moment. (Laughter.)

We know when we open the doors to college, we open the doors to opportunity. When we make college more affordable, we make the American Dream more achievable. That's why we're all here today. I'm glad there are so many young people here today. They're probably sorry that they're not really getting out of school; they could have gotten out of school anyway -- (laughter) -- but I'm glad you all came and waited.

Some in Congress, I note, are saying that because this is an election year, we really shouldn't try to do anything for the American people. We're here today to give perhaps the most powerful example for why we should reject that view. Nothing -- not a national election or a Washington snowstorm -- should get in the way of making a college education more affordable for all Americans. (Applause.) Students can't put off their growing up for a year; families can't put off going to work for a year -- and neither should we.

Today is a happy day for me. This is my 7th anniversary as President of the United States. (Applause.) I am profoundly grateful for the long way we have come as a nation in these last seven years; that today we have the lowest poverty rate in 20 years, the lowest unemployment and welfare rates in 30 years, the first back-to-back budget surpluses in over 40 years. I am grateful that we are coming together; that we have the lowest African American and Hispanic unemployment rates we have ever recorded; that we have the lowest female unemployment rate in 40 years; the lowest single-parent household poverty rate in 46 years; and that in the last couple of years we have finally begun to see a reversal in the increase in inequality of incomes of working people, which was going on for nearly three decades.

So the family of America is growing stronger, and that is fundamentally a tribute to the hard work and adaptability of the American people. It has also been helped along the way by our hard-won economic strategy of increasing trade, getting rid of the deficit, and investing in the education of our people and in the economy in which they will live.

More than ever, with globalization and the information-based economy, investing in the minds of our people is the most important thing we can do to assure our continued success as a nation. But that has been the American policy for quite a long time now. The land grant college system was established under Abraham Lincoln; the G.I. Bill after World War II; the Pell grants in the 1970s; and the HOPE Scholarship in 1997. We have made education and access to higher

education a bipartisan, national priority for quite a long while.

You heard the other stories that were told. I was sitting here thinking, I was the first person in my family to go to college. And I remember when I was accepted to Georgetown -- rather late, I might add, in the year. (Laughter.) And they gave me a \$500 scholarship, for which I was very grateful. And I think the tuition back then was about \$6,000, which 37 years ago, -6 years ago, seemed like all the money in the world to me. And I was literally guilt-ridden when I went off to college to think of the burden I was imposing on my family.

And I remember we had a family meeting about it. I remember my high school guidance counselor called me in the office and said I was nuts, that I'd pay it back many times over in the future. But it bothered me a lot. And then later, as I stayed in school and went on to law school, I was able to do it all because I had the help of scholarships and loans and jobs. And if I hadn't had that help, there's no way in the world I would be standing here today. I know that.

And because of the changes in the financial costs of higher education that Senator Schumer talked about, and because of the changes in the economy, it's even more important that we do more today, not only for individual students, but for the health and well-being of the American system.

So that's why we're here. You have already heard that we have been working on this hard for seven years. We've more than doubled college aid in those seven years, increasing Pell grants by more than 50 percent, rewriting the student loan program to make it easier and cheaper to get student loans, and then importantly, to let students pay off their loans as a percentage of their income, so there would never be an incentive for people who had those loans to drop out of school for fear that they could never repay them anyway.

We established AmeriCorps, which now has allowed 150,000 of our fellow citizens to serve in their communities and earn some money to go to college. We've expanded the work-study program from 700,000 to 1 million work-study slots. We've allowed families to save more in their IRAs and then to withdraw the money tax-free if it's being used to pay for a college education.

And, of course, as Secretary Riley said, we created the \$1,500 HOPE Scholarship tax credit to make two years of high school after education through a community college just as universal as a high school education is today. That HOPE Scholarship tax credit and the Lifetime Learning tax credit, which helps families pay for the last two years of college, graduate schools, or going back to school or to a training program, were designed to open the doors of college to all, and to recognize that in this economy, learning must go on for a lifetime.

And it's working. Today -- listen to this -- today, 67 percent of high school graduates will be enrolling in college next fall. That's an increase of 10 percent just since 1993. But we know we haven't truly succeeded in opening the doors of college to all if you mean everybody who wants to should be able to go to a four-year school and stay -- and stay -- until they finish.

Parents all across the country are genuinely stretched. And parents in a surprisingly wide range of income groups are stretched because of the loan eligibility, the Pell Grant eligibility limits and other things. So today what we're attempting to do is to launch an agenda for higher education and lifetime learning for the 21st century that will make college more affordable for more families and, in the process, genuinely open the doors of college to everybody.

But we also want to encourage more people to stay in college once they go. And we want to do more to guide young people, starting in their middle school years, to be thinking about college so that if they can't afford it, they'll be able to get in and go.

First, the centerpiece of this budget for the coming year will be a landmark \$30-billion college opportunity tax cut, to help millions of middle-class families pay for college. It will give families a tax deduction of up to \$10,000 in tuition costs, providing as much as \$2,800 in much-needed tax relief. And as Senator Schumer said, this has never been done before.

Now, let me tell you how this works. I am for this, and I believe it's the right thing to do. But all of you need to know that we think there's a pretty strict limit on what the total aggregate tax cuts I can propose and sign into law is. I had to veto one last year, because I thought it was too big. Why? Because the main thing that's brought us all along is the strength of our economy, and that requires us, in my judgment, to keep this budget balanced, to keep running surpluses, and to get this country out of debt over the next 15 years for the first time since 1835.

So as you might imagine, one of the things that we have to do, we have these huge, fascinating debates at this time every year about what does or doesn't go in the administration's budget. And that's where the arm-twisting from Senator Schumer and the First Lady came in. And they made the compelling argument -- and you heard Chuck say he and Olympia had this bill in the Senate -- that there was no benefit we could give to middle-class people that would benefit more families more than this one, and no benefit we could give to families that would benefit America more than this one.

So again, I say we know this idea has bipartisan support, even in Washington. And I'll bet you would have to take a magnifying glass to find anybody out in the country who is against it, once I can explain that it won't affect our ability to balance the budget and pay off the debt.

So this is the core -- this has never been done before by our country. And when you take this, plus what we've done with the HOPE Scholarships, with the other lifetime tax credits, with the Pell grants, with the work-study slots and with the changes in the student loan program, we will really be able to say, everybody who wants to go to college can go. It is important that it pass, and I want to ask all of you to help me to pass it in this session of Congress. (Applause.)

Nina talked a little about her situation, but she was too modest to tell you that she's on the Dean's List, so that helps her qualify for additional scholarship aid. But her father works overtime when he can, her mother works two jobs. Now, what does all this mean to her? For her family in their income group, with the HOPE Scholarship, the new college opportunity tax cut would translate into a \$4,300 tax break for her family by the time her brother, George, enters college. That's real money. That will make a difference to her family and it will make a difference to America.

This plan, I say again, is important for families, but it's also important for the state of our economy. We give tax relief today for businesses that invest in new plants and equipment; in an economy that runs on brain power we ought to give tax credits and tax cuts for people that invest in that brain power. With this action we are much closer toward taking the worry out of paying for a child's college education. We're another step forward toward helping the middle class with a targeted tax cut. And we're another step forward again in saying that we have literally opened the doors of college to all. I am also pleased

to announce that we will increase Pell grants to up to \$3,500, and that will benefit nearly 4 million Pell grant recipients. And that's important. (Applause.)

Now, for all of you who are in higher education -- this is the second thing I want to say that's important -- the second element of our plan is to strengthen our efforts to help Americans stay in college. We have really good numbers now, and it's going to get better with this -- with the number of young people going to college. But the dropout rate is way, way too high, given the needs of the economy and the benefits to young people in staying and getting their degrees.

One-third of the lowest-income students drop out of college and less than half of them earn degrees within five years. Our budget will establish the college competition challenge grants to reduce the dropout rate and improve the chances of success for nearly 18,000 of these students. We're also going to expand the successful TRIO program to help even more students stay in college. We will launch a dual degree initiative to expand opportunities for students at minority institutions to allow about 3,000 minority students to earn a degree in fields where minorities today are woefully under-represented.

The third and final part of our higher education agenda is focused on helping young people get on the right track to college and to stay there. We need to encourage more students at an early age to get them excited about academic achievement and to give them a sense that they actually can go to college and get a degree, and have the life of their dreams.

We passed an initiative we called Gear-Up, which does just that. It reaches out to middle school students who are at risk, using college students to mentor them -- to encourage them to set high expectations, to stay in school, to study hard, to take the right courses to go to college, and to make sure they know exactly what kind of aid they would qualify for, so they don't decide when they're 12 or 13 or 14 that they won't be able to afford to go.

Our budget will double the number of students who can participate in Gear-Up to include 1.4 million young people. Many of them come from families where they would never entertain the prospect of going to college, and where the message they get now -- on the street, in the school -- is that because of their circumstances, they won't be able to make it. We're giving them the exact reverse message: that they will absolutely be able to make it. And young people in universities all across America who have participated in mentoring these kids deserve the thanks of a grateful nation. We're going to double this program, and I hope you'll help us pass that as well. (Applause.)

One more aspect of this is our Youth Opportunity grants, under the leadership of Secretary Herman at Labor, and the Youthbuild initiative at HUD. These things are working again to reach young people who otherwise too often get left out and left behind. Taken together, these steps will provide families with the college relief they need; students with the support they need; our economy with the skilled work force we need; and our communities and our nation with the better citizens we all need.

People who decide to invest in their futures through education are taking the long look ahead, making sacrifices today for rewards tomorrow. That is the challenge we face today as a nation. We have, for the first time in my lifetime, economic prosperity, social progress, national self-confidence, the absence of serious crisis at home or paralyzing threat from abroad. All those conditions have not existed at one point in my lifetime. And it is imperative that we take the long look ahead. There is no better way to make the most of this magic

moment than by helping all Americans make the most of their God-given abilities.

Thanks for being here.

END

2:33 P.M. EST

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Newsweek

January 31, 2000, U.S. Edition

SECTION: Pg. 55**LENGTH:** 1406 words**HEADLINE:** My Father's Battle With **Alzheimer's****BYLINE:** By **Maureen Reagan****HIGHLIGHT:**

You start with a 600-acre ranch and wind up in the den. What I've learned from his struggle.

BODY:

No actor ever forgets a role, so I should have realized something was wrong. It was late in 1993 and we were having dinner with my father. We were discussing a 1950s film he made, Prisoner of War. For years he had told me about the gruesome tortures inflicted on American prisoners by the North Koreans. But now he seemed to be hearing me tell the stories for the first time. Finally he looked at me and said, Mermie, I have no recollection of making that movie.

That was my click of awareness. Another six months went by before Dad complained to his doctor of feeling disoriented in unfamiliar surroundings, like hotel rooms. It was in the fall of 1994, at the Mayo Clinic, that my father was diagnosed with **Alzheimer's** disease.

The click of awareness. A woman drives to the supermarket and sits in the car for 30 minutes because she can't remember how to open the car door. An engineer stays home from work because he can't remember how to tie his necktie. My father's experience was much like theirs. One, they forget something very familiar; two, they display no other major symptoms for several months, and three, they are diagnosed with **Alzheimer's**.

Though the symptoms are different for every person, it is our responsibility to be aware of the early warning signs. We begin using tests at the age of 40 for all sorts of things that kill us--mammograms, prostate exams, colonoscopies. Well, **Alzheimer's** can kill us, too. It's not just about forgetting your wedding day. The brain tells the body what to do: to stand up, to walk, to swallow and to breathe. At some point these things will break down and you will die. So part of our protection should be minimal cognitive testing to provide a benchmark that will alert doctors down the road to changes that require further examination. In that way, a doctor could intervene, instead of putting the burden on family members to recognize the disease and then battle to get a loved one to medical evaluation. There are therapies today that were not available for my father. They won't cure the disease, but they may buy time.

When people ask me how my dad is doing, my response is not so good. But it is hard to say that because he makes it so easy for us. In other words, he's still him. But his motor skills are going. I thank God for Nancy and the wonderful care she gives him and then I thank God again for sending

Diane, a nurse extraordinaire. They are quite a team and he couldn't be better cared for. They, like millions of caregivers, make sure his days are as stimulating and fun as possible.

I try to visit every couple of weeks and we've found he likes my bright red fingernails. Since neither Nancy nor Diane wears bright polish they always say, Oh, Maureen, you sit over there, and he looks at those nails and we get a big smile. Earlier in the disease we did jigsaw puzzles, usually animal scenes: a farmyard, horses in a meadow, a jungle scene. We started with 300-piece puzzles and worked our way down to 100. Unfortunately, he can't do that anymore. It was great fun and he had a tremendous sense of accomplishment. There was a time when he enjoyed the pictures in an art book and would read out loud. He could recognize the words even after aphasia had robbed him of his ability to put his thoughts into words. My father has always been my hero, but never more than when he wrote his final letter to the American people. He made it all right to talk about the disease. Whether it afflicts a neighbor who quietly fades behind the upstairs curtains, a relative who no longer comes to visit during the holidays or a former president, the effects of **Alzheimer's** disease are drawing closer to each of us every day. We must be the last generation to face this disease without hope.

The **Alzheimer's** Association was started by family members who had no place to turn. Our chapters are constantly gathering information, which is shared through support groups. These caregivers do not sit around feeling sorry for themselves. They share their experiences. One woman told me that when her husband was finally bedridden she would bring home helium balloons. He loved the bright colors and how they moved across the ceiling. We promote a safe return bracelet registered with the local police. **Alzheimer's** patients tend to wander.

We who work in public policy at the association are always pushing for attention from Congress. This spring, our family members will be calling for more research funding. Every fall we sponsor Memory Walks across the country to provide funding for local chapter programs. There is a great deal of work to do and we need your help. We are in a race against time for all of us. Contact the **Alzheimer's** Association at 800-272-3900 or at alz.org and tell them Ronald Reagan said to call. I'll say it for him: Thank you, and God bless you.

GRAPHIC: PHOTO: Great Communicators: Maureen and Ronald Reagan in 1986

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

November 8, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
ON CLASS SIZE

South Grounds

2:30 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Good afternoon. Over the weekend, we made some progress toward creating a budget that reflects the values of the American people, respects the need for our government to live within its means and looks to our future. I believe we can finish our work by Wednesday if we put partisanship aside and focus instead on achieving goals that the vast majority of the American people want us to achieve: a better education for our children, safer streets, a clean environment, more Americans brought into the circle of our growing prosperity.

Improving education is perhaps the greatest domestic challenge our nation faces. Education is at the heart of this budget debate. Last fall, we took an important step to improve learning in the classroom. We reached an agreement with Congress to help states and school districts begin hiring 100,000 new, highly-trained teachers to reduce class size in the early grades.

The need was obvious. School enrollments are exploding. Record numbers of teacher are or will soon be at retirement. And the research is clear that students do learn more in smaller classes with quality teachers.

Last week, we learned from a new survey of the nation's largest school districts that our class size reduction initiative so far has done precisely what it was intended to do. It has put more teachers in the classroom and increased training for those already there with a minimum of red tape and bureaucracy. Now we have even more new evidence that our class size reduction is working.

Today I am releasing a new report from the Department of Education. It's called "Local Success Stories: Reducing Class Size." It shows that in just one year, schools across America have actually hired over 29,000 new, highly-trained teachers, thanks to our class size reduction initiative. The report also shows that in the early grades in those schools, class size has been reduced by an average of five students per class. Over 1.7 million students are now directly benefiting from this class size initiative.

It shows we are headed in the right direction, and that's the good news. But we must remember, only a fraction of America's students have been reached. So we must continue down that path, not abandon it. I am committed to providing more teachers and better teachers for all our schools. I want to make sure every young student in America receives the benefits of more individual attention, and a more disciplined learning environment in a smaller class size setting.

Now, last fall, congressional Republicans agreed to support this initiative. Indeed, it was election season and they even went home and campaigned on it. It was a good idea then, and it's still a good idea. But suddenly the Republican majority has mysteriously changed its

mind.

Instead of keeping their commitment to hire more teachers and reduce class size -- again I say something they bragged on and ran on last year -- now they want an open-ended block grant which could even be used for vouchers for private schools. I think that is wrong.

Nine out of ten students in our country attend public schools. The percentage of the funding coming from the federal government is already too meager, in my judgment. Therefore, our taxpayer money should go for more teachers and smaller classes in our public schools, not for vouchers for private schools.

I am absolutely committed to keeping the promise that I made, and the promise that Congress made, to reduce class size with more quality teachers in the early grades. We need to work together to find a way to keep that promise.

We also must demand more accountability for results, so I call on Congress to pass our plan to help states and school districts turn around failing schools or shut them down. Working together we can find a way to deliver a budget that meets our values.

We also value the safety of our families, so we must extend our successful COPS program, which has given us already the lowest crime rate in 30 years, and now put up to 50,000 new community police officers in our neighborhoods with the modern equipment they need to keep the crime rate coming down.

We must support our Lands Legacy Initiative because we value the environment, to set aside precious natural areas for future generations, and reject special interest riders that would endanger our environment.

Because we value one America with justice for all, we must pass strong hate crimes legislation. And I would like to say that I want to express my personal appreciation to the parents of Matthew Shepard and to the police officers who have come with them here today and have gone to Capitol Hill to lobby for the hate crimes legislation.

We value our national security and our leadership in the world. Therefore, we have to pay our dues to the United Nations. We value equal opportunity. And so before Congress leaves we should tackle one more urgent priority: We ought to raise the minimum wage so that more people will participate in our prosperity. And we ought to raise the minimum wage without holding it hostage to special interest tax cuts that are not paid for and don't address national needs.

We can do all this, and we can do it and pay for it, not spend the Social Security trust fund and continue to pay down the debt so that in 15 years we'll be debt-free for the first time since 1835. I urge Congress to continue to work with me in a bipartisan fashion to finish the job the American people sent us here to do.

Thank you.

Q Mr. President, on the issue of funding for teachers, sir, you resent it when Congress tells you to spend money in ways in which you do not deem appropriate. Why should a state governor who would like to spend that money differently feel any differently?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, because it's not their money. If they don't want the money, they don't have to take it. If they're offended by it, they can give it to other states and other school districts.

Look, we have -- the difference is, we are acting on evidence,

based on what the local school districts tell us and what we know. We have a record number of schoolchildren; we have a record number of teachers starting to retire. We have mountain upon mountain of evidence that smaller classes in the early grades lead to permanent learning gains if the teachers are well-qualified.

And Congress agreed with that last year. I'd like to see them answer instead why they're ready so -- excuse me, so willing to abandon something they campaigned on and asked people to vote for them for doing just a year ago.

This is the right thing to do. It's good educational policy. And let me remind you that the teachers have supported this; the educators have supported this. And the evidence supports this. That's why I'm for it.

Q Mr. President, do you expect China to get into the --

Q The Department of Labor --

THE PRESIDENT: One at a time, sorry.

Q The Department of Labor, at your direction, is drafting regulations to change the use of unemployment insurance so that it could be used for family leave purposes. Opponents of this idea say you don't have the authority to do this, that any such change should be done by federal legislation. How do you respond to that?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I was informed that we did have the authority to do it in the narrow way that we're doing it. And I think if you want more information on what the arguments are, you will have to talk to either the Labor Department Counsel or the appropriate people at the White House. But I obviously would not have done it if I hadn't been told that we had the authority to do it.

Helen.

Q Mr. President, do you expect China to get into the World Trade Organization this time around?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know, but I hope so. Ambassador Barshefsky and Mr. Sperling have gone over there to work on it and we're doing our best.

Q Are things looking better?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I don't know yet. Let's not characterize the in-between until we see whether we can produce the product.

Q Mr. President, -- (inaudible) -- real sticking point --

THE PRESIDENT: Obviously, we have a big difference of opinion on education, and I feel very strongly about it. The education community and the country feels strongly about it. And the Democrats in Congress feel strongly about it. And the Republicans felt strongly about it when they were facing an election, and I think it's wrong for them to abandon a commitment the next year that they were proud of in an election year. So I hope we can work that out.

But the other issues I mentioned are all important to me, as well. Can we do it all my Wednesday? In a heartbeat if we decide to get together. We resolved very quickly many of our differences over the foreign operations bill, and we can do that on these other bills if we really work at it.

Q Mr. President, Mexico has held its first presidential primary. The PRI has governed Mexico for over 70 years. What do you think about it, the primary yesterday?

THE PRESIDENT: I think it's a good thing that they held a primary, and I think the more democracy they embrace, the better. So I would applaud them and congratulate them for having done so. And particularly, I would like to congratulate President Zedillo, who took the initiative to promote this primary and to open up the political process in his country.

Q Mr. President, how would you characterize the situation in Pakistan differently than George W. Bush did this last week?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I -- look. I don't want to get into that. You all can handle the presidential campaign without me. You know that I'm very concerned about the interruption of civilian leadership in Pakistan. We would like to see a stronger democratic system there, not the abandonment of the system that they did have. And we are -- we have communicated that to General Musharraf and to the others, and we will continue to work with them, and hope that we can achieve some progress there.

And I also want to encourage them to continue to work to diminish tensions with India and to resolve matters in Kashmir, not to continue to use that, as has been done in times past, to inflame tensions on both sides of the line of control, and in both countries. Those countries need to be working on their long-term challenges and their common interests. And so I will continue to push for that as well.

Thank you.

END

2:42 P.M. EST

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

October 28, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT AWARDS CEREMONY FOR BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS

Washington Hilton Hotel
Washington, D.C.

10:23 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Good morning. Congratulations. I want to begin by thanking Ruth Summerlin for her introduction and for the power of her example, which includes not only turning her school around, but asking for a little more help. Did you notice the way she slipped that in there? (Laughter.) That was pretty impressive.

I want to thank Secretary Riley for his wonderful leadership. All the things he said about me he might have said about himself. He is clearly not only the longest serving, but the ablest, the most dedicated and most effective Secretary of Education we have ever had. (Applause.) When the new millennium rolls around in January we will have completed 21 years of working together, as friends and colleagues, since we were young governors in the south trying to start our education reform programs, more than two decades ago. And every year has been a joy and I'm very grateful for what he's done in this administration.

I want to acknowledge the presence in the audience of Vincent Ferrandino, the Executive Director of the National Association of Elementary School Principals. And I also want to thank Bill Ivey, as the Secretary did, the Chair of the NEA. And say just a brief word about -- before I get into a couple of other announcements -- about what Ruth said about bringing the arts back into the schools. I would urge all of you to see this new movie that's out, that I had screened at the White House, starring Meryl Streep, called "Music of the Heart," about the East Harlem Violin Program.

But I have been mortified at the collapse of the availability of music and the arts in the schools all over America, because of all kinds of issues that you understand better than I do. But I've been active in VH-1's effort to get people to donate instruments, and other support for music programs back in the schools. The NEA has worked very hard to support arts programs in the schools.

There is not only concrete evidence that such programs improve student learning in others areas because of the way they make the brain work; there's also a lot of evidence that many people with equal learning capacities learn in different ways, in ways that sometimes are nonlinear. And I think it is a terrible mistake to deprive these children of access to music and the arts if we can avoid it at all. So I urge you to look at the movie. And for those of you who agree, this movie may give you a lot of boost, because I'll be surprised if it's not also a commercial success. It's a terrific film.

Now, I'd also like to say a word about some new economic news before I get into talking about education. When I came here as President, almost seven years ago, our administration -- Vice President Gore and I -- we said we would try to turn America around. And a lot of people have forgotten that there was a lot of economic distress then, an enormous

amount of social division -- we'd had that big riot in Los Angeles -- a lot of alienation, and a sense of political drift. And so, we said, give us a chance, and we will have economic policies that promote opportunity for all, social policies that promote responsibility from all, and a community of all Americans. We'll try to pull this country together and move it forward.

A big part of our economic policy was investing in our people, from early childhood up; also, expanding our ability to sell American products; and finally, getting this deficit down and getting rid of it, which was keeping interest rates high and stagnating the economy all over America.

We just got the news today that in the third quarter of this year -- that is the quarter ending on the last day of September -- our economy grew at an amazing rate of 4.8 percent, after growing 4.3 percent last year, 4.1 percent in 1996 -- (applause) -- and all of this with the lowest inflation rate in decades, while we were actually cutting the size of the federal government.

So in the years since I've been President, the economy has grown 3.8 percent. If you take out the shrinking of the federal government and the shrinking of the deficit, it's grown over the last seven years by well over 4 percent, and with no inflation. It's virtually, as far as I know, unprecedented in our time. (Applause.)

It has given us over 19 million new jobs; along with the welfare reform law, it's given us the lowest welfare rolls in 30 years; the lowest poverty rates in 20 years. And, in the new housing numbers released today, more Americans now own their own homes -- over two-thirds of us -- for the first time in the history of the United States. (Applause.)

The percentage of Hispanic and African American homeowners has also broken new records, as Hispanic and African American unemployment has dropped to record lows since we've been keeping separate statistics 30 years ago.

This new report shows, once again, that if we have strong fiscal discipline, strong investment and a strong commitment to education and the new economy, we can get an investment boom and maximize the benefits of the information and technology revolutions now going on all over the world.

If we keep this going, in February, without having had a war, we will have the longest economic expansion in history. It's now the longest peacetime expansion in history. Wars guarantee you an economic expansion. In February, it will be the longest economic expansion of any kind in history, without a major conflict. And we can be very grateful for that. It's a tribute to the American people and their innovation. (Applause.)

Yesterday, I pointed out that we had the first back-to-back budget surpluses in 42 years -- 42 years since the government was in the black two years in a row. And that has saved us about \$1.7 trillion in debt over what it was projected to be when I took office. And those savings are worth, to the average American family, \$2,000 in lower mortgage rates; \$200 in lower car payment rates; \$200 in lower college loan rates.

This is the good news. But we now have a chance that no generation, at least in my lifetime, has had to shape the future of our dreams for our children in the absence of an overarching threat from without, and in the absence of an overarching crisis within our borders. And I say that because the last time the economy was remotely this good was when I was a young man finishing high school in the early 1960s. But we had to deal with the civil rights challenge. It was an honor and a responsibility, but it had to be done. And then we had to deal with all the controversy about the war in Vietnam, our role in it, the cost of it,

and we never got around to finishing our assault on poverty and doing a lot of other things.

But a lot of great things happened then, including Medicare and Medicaid, and the first substantial federal aid to education, because of the potential. But never in my lifetime have we had the chance we now have to shape the future of our dreams for our children.

And since all of you deal with children all of the time, I think you know the wisdom of something a wise, old sage told me 20 years in politics when I got elected governor at 32. I was too young to know what I was doing, I think, at the time. (Laughter.) But he said, let me tell you something, Bill. In this life, you're always most vulnerable when you think you're invulnerable. And if you think about it, what I want you to understand is, countries are no different than businesses or schools or families or individuals. When things are rocking along really good, because we're human, it's easy to get distracted. When there is a threat, it's easy to be focused.

I told somebody the other day -- I got a big laugh -- I said, you know, I get so angry at all these conflicts around the world, and these expressions of hatred here at home based on race or religion or sexual orientation. If we were being attacked by space aliens, like in that movie, "Independence Day," we'd all be looking for a foxhole to get in together and a gun to pick up together. The absence of a threat sometimes causes us to lose our sense of focus, our center, our concentration.

But the truth is that this is the greatest opportunity that we've had in my lifetime. And so we have to look to the great challenges of the future, because we know that they're out there. There's going to be twice as many of us over 65 in 30 years; only two people working for every one person drawing Social Security. So for younger people, it's imperative that we reform Social Security and Medicare, so that the baby boom generation, when we retire, doesn't bankrupt our children and their ability to raise our grandchildren.

We know the recovery of our economy has left a lot of people and places behind, probably in a lot of communities represented here. We now have a chance to embrace those places, and the working poor of our country, in a way we never have. And we better do it now, when the economy's good.

We know that we have a chance to get not only -- now we're paying down the debt. We paid the debt down \$140 billion in the last two years. The most we ever did. We can actually get rid of it in 15 years. Can you imagine, in 1992, if I'd run for office and said, folks, we've got this \$300 billion deficit. Vote for me; I'll give you back-to-back surpluses, I'll pay \$140 billion on the debt, and I'll show you how to get us out of debt for the first time since 1835? People would have said, you know, he seems like a nice young man, but we'd better send him home to Arkansas. He's a little touched in the head. (Laughter.)

But we can do that now. And we ought to do it, because we ought to keep the interest rates down, we ought to keep the economy going, we ought to keep things moving. And I'm smart enough to know when this happens, the state taxes roll in and the state coffers are in good shape, and they have more money to give to schools. And that's important, to keep the economy going to help the schools. It's important. (Applause.)

But one challenge above all we have to look at, and that is the fact that we now have the largest and most diverse group of students in our history, and more diversity everywhere. And my home state of Arkansas, which, in the 1980 census was second only to West Virginia in having the highest percentage of people living in the state that were born in the state; this year was second in the country in the percentage growth of the Hispanic population. There's a Catholic church in the northwest part of my

state in an area where there were no minorities 20 years ago, literally, none when I started out in politics, that now has to have mass in Spanish every single Sunday.

Across the river here, there's a Baptist minister from Arkansas who is the cousin of my minister at home, who moved up here to find that the biggest congregation he had besides the regular one at 11:00 a.m. every Sunday morning was a separate Korean congregation. And he now has these massive language classes in his church. These things -- America is changing, and all of you are dealing with this.

Now, our founders understood all this. If you go back to the dawn of the republic, Thomas Jefferson said, "an enlightened citizenry is indispensable to the proper functioning of a republic." And, keep in mind, what does the Declaration of Independence say? We're establishing a democratic republic because it's the best way for people to pursue life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Then Jefferson said, because an enlightened citizen is indispensable for the proper functioning of a republic, he went on to say, "therefore, education and inform the whole mass of people."

So they knew then what is even more true today because of the nature of the economy and society in which we live. Every one of you representing every one of these 266 blue ribbon schools is, therefore, living out the faith of the founders of this country: that all of our children can learn and that all of them must learn. And for that, we are all in your debt. There are schools here from every region and every neighborhood. In each of your schools there are many differences, but in each school, students are learning at a high level.

We have already made some real progress in the last few years and I think it's worth pointing out. The very idea of standards, which was championed in our Goals 2000 legislation and embodied in 1989 in the National Education Goals, is now taking root across the country. But it takes a good while to turn the education system around. In 1996, as late as 1996, there were only 14 states with measurable performances for students -- measurable standards for students' performance -- 1996. Today, there are 50. That may be one reason why reading and math scores are up nationwide, including in some of our most disadvantaged poor areas -- urban, small town, and rural.

More and more schools are reducing class size with the help of the initiative begun last fall with the bipartisan support of Congress to put 30,000 of our goal of 100,000 new, highly-trained teachers in the classroom. Greenwood Elementary in Newport News, a blue ribbon winner, hired new teachers this fall, bringing class sizes down in first and second grades, from 27 children per teacher to 20. And you just heard Ruth say that they had used the class size funds to have teachers in her school.

Many other blue ribbon schools are using the Vice President's E-rate program to connect their classrooms and libraries to the Internet. I just want to talk about that a minute. A few years ago the Vice President and I went out to California for the first of our NetDays, and we hooked up -- we wired a school so that all the classrooms could be hooked up to the Internet, as part of our goal of trying to get everybody hooked up by the end of next year. And we were wiring this school, and I looked at him and I said, well, how are these places going to afford to use the Internet? It's sort of an Alphonse and Gaston routine we do -- the fact that I'm technologically challenged has become legendary in our administration. (Laughter.)

And he said, well, we've got to give them a discount. And so we came up with this idea in the Telecommunications Act of giving the Federal Communications Commission the ability to give a discount for schools and hospitals and libraries. And there was the awfulest squalling about it you

ever heard around here for a long time. And our political opponents started calling it Goretax -- (laughter) -- you know, on the takeoff, because he likes to run around in Goretex, I guess. But anyway -- (laughter) -- but we were attacked for it, we were opposed in it, but we hung in there. And it was the right thing to do and that E-rate has literally empowered -- some of our poorer schools get a 90 percent subsidy for the E-rate. And it has been a wonderful thing, because one of the things we cannot do in this country is allow a digital divide to develop. It already exists, we're determined to close it. (Applause.) Thank you.

Our objective is to see Internet access in America become as universal as telephone access. And if we can do that we will open up all kinds of educational and economic opportunities to people and places left behind. I also believe if we can have the same sort of penetration around the world in poor countries of cell phones and the Internet as quickly as possible, a lot of countries with whom we deal and whom we'd like to help could skip 30 years of economic development and make a great leap into the new century.

So I want to thank all of you who supported us with the E-rate program, because it's making a big difference. For example, to mention one of the schools here, with the help of the E-rate, seventh graders at Whitehead School in Pauls Valley, Oklahoma, are communicating directly with scientists conducting research in Africa. I didn't do that when I was in the seventh grade. (Laughter.) Students are writing papers based on that research. The E-rate gives every seventh grader in America at least the chance to do that, as we get the schools wired and hooked up. (Applause.)

And Secretary Riley would never forgive me if I didn't mention this, just parenthetically. Some of our schools are too old to be wired, and too decrepit. And they need to be modernized and rewired in all kinds of ways. One of our proposals here that is not particularly costly would allow us to help local school districts build or modernize 6,000 schools. And if you're for that, I hope you'll help us pass it. (Applause.)

In Philadelphia, the average school building is 65 years old; New York City, 40 percent of the schools are over 70 years old -- 40 percent. All kinds -- there's a lot of them that are schools that are still heated by coal furnaces. And then I've been to -- I was in a little town in Florida the other day where they had a dozen trailers behind the school building -- a dozen -- just one little school. So this is a big issue, and I hope that we can continue to work on it.

But to begin with the good news. You should all be very proud, not only of what you have done, but of what you represent. In the last 16 years since the issuance of The Nation At Risk Report in 1983, there has been a sea change in attitudes and commitments on the part of American educators and their supporters, among parents and business leaders and community leaders, and a genuine commitment to excellence in education, from all kinds of schools in all kinds of places.

And it's been a difficult process because some schools have adequate funding and some don't, and because, at least for the public schools, they get their money from three different places, which means that you have to hire more people in the administrative arm of the schools to keep up with and be accountable to, and there are all kinds of issues here.

But we are getting it, and you prove that all of our kids can learn, and that we can turn America's education system toward the 21st century, and that is the good news. But it is terribly important that we all recognize that we still have work to do and that this will always be a moving target. No one believes, yet, that we are giving every child in America a world-class education in K-12. Everybody knows we have the best system of higher education in the world. Therefore, we cannot quit until we know that we have done the same with K-12.

And I think that this is the attitude we ought to have. Keep in mind, you don't know when we'll have an economic time like this again. You don't know when we'll be living through a time when we feel secure from outside threat again, for this long a period of time. And I think when you go home, you need to try to give people some historical sense of this. And in your communities, you need to get people imbued with a passionate commitment about this and every other challenge.

I'll give you another example. We've got the lowest crime rate in 30 years now. Now, that's wonderful -- (applause) -- but everyone who thinks it's low enough, please raise your hand. (Laughter.) You see what I mean? So why should we quit until America's the safest big country in the world? If we want to be the freest big country, why not -- why shouldn't we be the safest big country in the world? Why shouldn't we keep working to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and children? Why shouldn't we keep working to make our -- we should do it. (Applause.)

The point I want to make -- again, I know I'm preaching to the choir, here, but this is important -- is that this is a time for intense focus and commitment. And we are most in danger of being distracted and drifting around because things seem to be going so well. But make no mistake about it, we will pay an enormous price, in opportunities foregone and future problems in our lap, if we don't use this magic moment to build the future of our dreams. And it's especially true in education.

And I am worried that what we see in Congress today in this debate on education is an example of the kind of mental lapse or focus on short-term politics that we can see in other areas, not only in the Congress and in Washington, but in the country -- because it's so easy to indulge yourself in whatever's in front of your nose when things are rocking along and you're doing well. But it's a huge mistake.

Now, in Washington the good news is -- assuming we work through this attempt to have an across-the-board cut, which includes education, that I'm against -- but assuming we do that, the big issue in Washington now is more on how we spend money. I mean, I've been fighting for four or five years on whether to spend adequate amounts of money; now, we're fighting about how to spend it.

For example, last year we reached an agreement with Congress to begin hiring 100,000 new, highly-trained teachers to lower class sizes in the early grades for obvious reasons. The size of our schools is exploding. And the research is clear that smaller classes and quality teachers bring higher achievements. Last year, congressional Republicans not only agreed to it, they went home and campaigned on it and bragged about the fact that the proposal I made reflected Republican principles, because there was no bureaucracy in it, we just gave the money to the schools and they hired the teachers. We disbursed the money; schools have gone out, they've hired new teachers.

Now, suddenly, the same people who, just before the election last year, thought this was the greatest thing since sliced bread, have not only refused to add any more teachers, they have abandoned the commitment to the ones we've already hired and proposed, basically, to just send the blank check to the districts, and if they don't keep the teachers, fine.

So you have to understand, one of the key things in my mind about what this education debate is about is whether we're going to keep what we've done and continue to add to our goal of putting 100,000 teachers in the classroom. It's very important. (Applause.) This debate is eerily reminiscent of the debate I had in 1994 in the Congress about putting 100,000 police on the street. And it wasn't rocket science -- violent crime tripled between 1964 and 1994, and the size of our police forces went

up 10 percent. A 3rd-grade arithmetic student could figure out the ratio had gotten worse and that was part of the problem. And part of the reason we've got the lowest crime rate in 30 years is we put those 100,000 police out there, ahead of schedule and under budget.

So if it was true in law enforcement, it will be even more true in education. It's a very important issue. I thank you for your applause, but I want you to stay with us on this. This is not a partisan issue anywhere but Washington. And, frankly, I still can't figure out how it got to be a partisan issue since just a year ago we were all being canonized by the same people for doing this.

Now, the budget debate is also about accountability, about getting real results for the education dollars. When all of us are held accountable for meeting higher standards, and all the actors in education are given the resources they need to meet those standards from smaller schools to after-school programs, we have progress. And we have seen whole schools can be turned around in a relatively short period of time. Ruth explained how her school was selected by the State of South Carolina, given more resources, and turned itself around. This is not an isolated case.

Two years ago, North Carolina drew up a list of the state's 15 worst-performing schools, sent assistance teams to each school and focused on them. A year later, 14 of the 15 schools had been taken off the bad performance list.

Last year, I was in Cabrini Green in Chicago, one of the biggest housing projects in the country, one of the most difficult areas of the country, and one of the poorest areas in any big city in the country, to visit an elementary school which has had unbelievably poor performance. In two years, under the new system they have there, they doubled their math scores and tripled their reading scores. That's pretty good in two years. And even though they started from a low base, they're moving in the right direction. If you double your performance every two years, you can go from a very low base to 100 percent in no time. So it's very important.

Our budget has dedicated \$200 million to set aside funds to help states and school districts all over America put together teams that would identify and help to turn around or shut down the lowest-performing schools. It's not a lot of money, but it's a very big deal because not every state is doing this. And I have a very strong conviction that -- you know, I believe that social promotion should be ended. But I don't think you should identify schools or students as failures and then tell the kids there is something wrong with them when the system is failing them. So I think we have to have systems in every state in the country to turn around these schools, because they can all be turned around. (Applause.)

I don't understand why the Congress has refused to put a dime into this \$200-million proposal to turn around low-performing schools. I know there is not going to be a press conference where the Republican leaders stand up and say, we are unalterably opposed to accountability. Or, we're fine on accountability, but we want to punish the students instead of make the schools better. Maybe they think people just wake up in the morning knowing how to do this. But if everyone knew how to do it, it would be done now in every state in the country, in every school district.

So, again, I ask for your help here. I presume in this room there are people who are Republicans and Democrats, people who disagree on all different kinds of issues. But if we've got something that we know works, then -- to go back to the Framers, they said all of the states were supposed to be the laboratories of democracy. But in a laboratory, when you find a scientific democracy, you publish the results as soon as possible. Then everybody takes it on board and they build on that scientific discovery and go on to the next one.

In education, when somebody does something that's a true breakthrough, sometimes it takes three years to get 15 miles down the road. You know this is true, don't you? You know this is true. This is true. (Laughter and applause.) I have been working this for 20 years. I can say it's one of our continuing difficulties here. So that's what we're trying to do.

Now, I don't believe that the leaders in Congress can explain why they thought the 100,000 teachers was a good idea last year, and this year they're against it. I don't believe they can explain why we have a measure here that we know has succeeded in turning around failing schools in more than one state -- that, I might add, the Republican governors have come out and endorsed -- that they won't fund.

They also are opposed to our proposal to help build or modernize 6,000 schools. Now, they also are opposed to funding our Troops to Teachers program, which has been very successful but very limited, trying to get retired military people to go into the schools in the areas where there's a teacher shortage. Very important where we need more male teachers, particularly for role models. It's a very important issue here. (Applause.)

Although, I might say that because the military has opened up more opportunities for women, more and more women are staying as career officers and coming out, too, and enlisted people. But this is a really successful program. And I asked them to make it much bigger because we've got to hire 2 million new teachers, as Dick Riley has been telling me for years, as so many retire. So we've got a large number of teachers retiring, more and more kids coming into the schools, we've got to hire more teachers.

But again, for reasons I do not understand, there was no funding for our Troops to Teachers program to get more of these good people who are leaving the military, many of them quite young, in their 40s, to go into the schools and give 20 more good years or more to the education of our children.

So the labor and education appropriations bill that the Congress is about to consider short-changes education. You should also know that now, they're proposing to make across-the-board cuts in everything from the FBI to national defense to the environment, to education. Now, if that bill passes, I will veto it, because I think we need more teachers, more accountability and more investment in education. (Applause.)

I do not believe that the proper response to America's education challenge is fewer teachers, no accountability and across-the-board cuts in education. I want to hire 100,000 more teachers, 50,000 more police. I want to protect the environment. I want us to invest in education strategies that work.

Look, we've got the first back-to-back surpluses in 42 years. The debate you're hearing over the budget is because, for the first time in decades, it is now possible for us to separate the surplus that comes from your Social Security taxes from the surplus that comes from other things. All these years before last year, all these years, for 20 years, you've been seeing what the deficit was. If you took away the surplus we got from people paying more into Social Security than they were taking out -- which was a way of preparing for the baby boomers -- the deficit would have been much bigger.

So for the first time -- you need to know that's why we're having this -- you must think this is crazy, why -- they've got a surplus and they're cutting stuff. What is going on here? What you need to know is that leaders of both parties agreed at the beginning of this year that they

would not spend the Social Security surplus anymore and only spend money coming out of the non-Social Security surplus.

Now, the good news is that that helps us pay down the debt. It doesn't do anything for Social Security, however, unless you take the interest savings from paying down the debt and put it into the Social Security trust fund, as I have recommended, so we can take it out to 2050 and take care of all the baby boom retirement, take a big burden off all your minds. That's another issue that I want to do.

But, so, the reason we're having this budget fight is that our prosperity and this surplus made it possible for the first time in two decades to segregate out the Social Security surplus. We've been spending the Social Security surplus up here since who shot John. (Laughter.) And, economically, there's no difference in the two. It's just a good thing to set it aside, because it helps us to pay the debt down. And then it will make it easier, I hope, for Congress next year, if not this year, to agree with me to take the interest savings from paying the debt down and put it into Social Security, which so far, they haven't done -- which leaves a

much smaller amount of money to fund things. And this Congress has already spent \$18 billion more than that, and they tried to say they weren't spending the Social Security surplus, trying to blame us with wanting to, which is a miracle how they got that done. (Laughter.)

But you need to know, and when you go back home, I can imagine the American people must be totally bum-fusseled -- keep announcing surpluses and we keep having budget fights. That's what's going on here. They committed to start right now not spending the Social Security surplus. So I said, okay, if you want to do that, and you want to spend all this money on defense, and we're going to adequately fund education, the environment and health care, then here's what we ought to do -- here's some corporate loopholes we ought to close. We ought to make the polluters pay for their toxic waste dumps. And I think we ought to have an increase in the cigarette tax, and that's good health policy anywhere. That's what I said. (Applause.)

They said, nah, we don't want to do any of that. So they did things like say the census was an emergency. We've seen it coming for 10 years; most emergencies are something of a surprise. (Laughter.) They said that -- I mean, this is a strange world up here. (Laughter.) I want you to know what's going on here. They also said that a lot of the ordinary expenses of the Pentagon -- I mean, people go to work over there every day -- they've said that these are emergencies, even though the Cold War's over. Just showing up for work is an emergency. (Laughter.) I mean, this is -- because if they can -- you know, they take this stuff off the books, and then that helps them play these budget games.

And then when I say, but you're not spending enough on education, and we've got to fund the Middle East peace process, and we've got to fund our efforts to take down and destroy nuclear weapons in Russia, make the world a safer place; and we've got to fund our responsibilities to the United Nations -- then they go out and say, oh, Bill Clinton wants to spend the surplus for foreign aid -- run all these little ads and stuff. It's a strange world up here.

And what I'm saying is -- you all laughed when I said this before, I referenced that movie, "Independence Day" -- but, you know, if we were being attacked by space aliens, we wouldn't be playing these kind of games. These kind of games are only possible because the economy is strong and the American people are self-confident, and people believe, therefore, that this is a moment when they can do frivolous things that they otherwise would never consider doing to try to get short-term political advantage. But it's a huge mistake. Because our children are still out there -- and they are bigger and more diverse than ever before as a group, and they have

these massive challenges. And all of you have proved that we can give them a world-class education. So we don't have any excuse anymore. You show up in town and you say, look, all children can learn; look what we did. We don't have any excuse.

So I will say again, this should not be a partisan issue. We can find a way through this budget business. It's about accounting and taking modest, difficult measure. But we cannot sacrifice our responsibility to meet these big, long-term challenges -- because we have never had a chance like this in our lifetime. Everybody in this audience that's anywhere remotely my age, you just think about it. Think about it.

We spent the 1930s trying to survive the Depression; we spent the 1940s trying to survive World War II and get ready for the Cold War; we spent the 1950s and the 1960s trying to survive the Cold War, dealing with the civil rights crisis and then dealing with Vietnam. And it drug into 1975. And then we had the oil price shocks and all of our economic problems that went all the way into the 1980s. The Berlin Wall fell 10 years ago. We spent the early part of this decade turning the economy and the social problems around of this country, and getting us in a position where we could literally explode. That's where we are now.

You represent proof positive that we can give every American child the education that he or she deserves, not only to thrive in a new century, but to ensure the success of the United States. And your dedication to tomorrow, and the fact that every day you have to get up and think about not only today's lesson plans, but what these little children are going to turn out like -- that is the attitude we need here in Washington, across party lines. (Applause.)

So I ask you all -- you have shown us the way -- do what you can to effect the attitudes here. Do what you can to be heard here, and say, let's take this way beyond partisan politics. There's plenty to argue about down the road, but our children deserve our best. And our best should be driven by what our local principals and our local educators say, what the education research says, what we know works.

You have proved to us what works. All I'm trying to do is to figure out how to spread it more quickly, and give people who are in real economic binds the opportunity to access things that others regularly take for granted.

We could be going into America's greatest years. I believe we are. But we dare not squander this magic moment. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

END

11:07 A.M. EDT

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

October 22, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR PROFESSIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS

Hyatt Regency Washington
Washington, D.C.

10:25 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Thank you so much. (Applause.)

I was thinking how much help I need in trying to get what I say to certain people in the Congress not to go in one ear and out the other. (Laughter.) And that maybe I should go through this training program. (Laughter.) I believe everything Carole Moyer said, except the part about having been a teacher for 32 years. She looks like she was about 12 when she started. (Laughter.)

I want to thank Carole and your Chair, Barbara Kelley. Thank you, Jim Kelly and Bob Wehling and Betty Hastert and all the others that are involved with the Board. I'm glad to see the President of the National Education Association, Bob Chase, here. Thank you for coming, sir, for your support.

And I have been honored to support this endeavor, since before I was President, as has been said. But the person who deserves all the credit, in my view, without whom none of us would be here today, is Governor Jim Hunt from North Carolina. Thank you. Thank you. (Applause.)

I've told this story before, but I probably wouldn't be here today, either, because in 1979, Jim Hunt -- who was a far senior governor to me, then -- decided that I should become the Vice Chair of the Democratic Governors' Association. And then I became the Chair. Then I became the youngest former governor in history, but that wasn't his fault. (Laughter.) But it was sort of my board certification in national politics that Jim Hunt gave me. So I might not be here as President today if it weren't for him, either.

This has been a great week for me and for our Administration. We celebrated the fifth anniversary of AmeriCorps, our national service program. And we've now had 150,000 young people serve and earn credit for going to college. It took the Peace Corps about 23 years to have that many volunteers. So that's been really great. And we also might say we've been able to get from the Congress the largest expansion in the Peace Corps in a generation, as well. That's been a very good thing. (Applause.)

Today Hillary and I are sponsoring a White House conference on philanthropy. And we're going to try to find ways not only to increase the aggregate level of private giving in the aftermath of the vast amounts of wealth that have been generated in our country in the last seven years, but to target it in the right way. In ways that I hope it will help your children and your concern.

I even had a pretty good meeting with the Congressional leadership. (Laughter.) We're actually working to try to work through our

differences on the budget, and I'll have more to say about that in a few moments. A couple of them who weren't there persist in trying to accuse us of what they have done on the Social Security surplus. But I'm committed to turn the other cheek until we see if we can work it out together. I guess it's easier when you're not running for anything to do that. (Laughter.)

You might find this interesting, as a sort of a prelude to what I want to say. Hillary had this great idea that we should do some special things for the millennium, that we shouldn't build a big building or anything like that; we should try to preserve as many of our big, national treasures as possible, like the Star Spangled Banner and the Bill of Rights and the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, all of which are in danger -- and so we have been working to raise the funds to do that -- that we should go around the country and help people in every community preserve their own piece of our national heritage; that we should have a big -- then we should think about the future we want and make a big effort to increase research dollars, which we have done; and that we should sponsor at the White House an unusual set of what she called Millennium Evenings, where we would talk about topics that were either important to the last century, the one we're leaving, or important to the next century.

It has been an amazing experience, an amazing educational experience. C-SPAN covers all of these. Sometimes, CNN takes a big chunk. But the main way by which we communicate with the rest of the country and the rest of the world is through the Internet and at the end of our little programs, we take Internet questions. They always come in from all over the world. It's just an amazing experience.

We started out with the great professor of American history and constitutional history, Bernard Bailyn, from Harvard who talked about our past and our institutions and how we got started and how that will be relevant to the 21st century. We've had all kinds of other fascinating topics. We had the three last poet laureates of America come with inner-city kids from Washington and just ordinary citizens, read poetry and talk about what it meant. We had the great Wynton Marsalis, the only living musician from New Orleans, he is the only living musician who is both the best classical and the best jazz musician in his instrument in the world, come and talk about the history of jazz as a uniquely American art form in the 20th century.

We had the great British scientist, Steven Hawking, who has lived longer with Lou Gehrig's disease than anyone else, come and talk about black holes and undiscovered galaxies in space, and how our notion of time will alter, and our understanding of it will alter in the 21st century. Elie Wiesel came and talked about the price of indifference, from the Holocaust forward, and all the racial and ethnic turmoil we've had. It's been amazing.

But last week, we had a man named Vince Cerf there, who was sort of the creator and the architecture of the Internet, who sent the first e-mail, 18 years ago, to his profoundly deaf wife, who had been deaf from early childhood, and so deaf that no hearing aids would help her. So the e-mail got started as a way of communicating. He was there, along with a professor from Harvard of genomics, named Lander, who was talking about our efforts to complete the Human Genome Project, to break down all the secrets of the gene.

Now, what they did was, they talked about the interconnection of the computer revolution to the genomics revolution. And both said, look, we couldn't be unlocking the mysteries of the gene if it weren't for computer advances, because that's really what enables us to map out the gene, chart it, and see what's going on. And it will also enable us to actually find practical applications for the challenges we find when

we look at the human gene structure.

And then Mr. Cerf, who was the Internet fellow who did the e-mail 18 years ago to his wife said, now, for example, my wife was profoundly deaf for 50 years. And a very small digital device has now been inserted deep within both her ears, and she can hear after 50 years of total deafness. And he introduced her, and she stood up, and she talked about what it was like. She said, I went to a James Taylor concert the other night -- (laughter) -- some of you are too young to appreciate this. (Laughter.) And she said, I'm quite sure I'm the only person who heard "Fire and Rain" for the first time in the late '90s. It was an amazing thing. She talked about what it was like to hear the birds sing in the morning.

But the point is, digital technology combined with medical science, made this possible. And they speculated that -- we've been spending a lot of time in the medial research trying to help people with spinal cord injuries. And last year we had a nerve transplantation in a laboratory animal from the legs to the spine in a way that for the first time ever in the lab with an animal allowed an animal with a severed spine to recover movement in its lower limbs. Stunning. These people were saying what we may be able to do now is to develop digital technology, key to the genetic breakdowns in the nerves, that we can insert -- we can actually insert a device in the spine that will replicate the normal spine and give people movement without having to figure out whether the nerve transplants will take.

What does all that have to do with you? First of all, it means that it's important that all of our children learn, and that we develop a level of comfort with basic technology and basic scientific concepts that most people didn't need in times past.

The second point I want to make to you, which will be important to you because you know we have the largest and most diverse student population in history, is the genomist said -- a fascinating thing -- he said we've got these 100,000 genes and billions of possible permutations; but what you should know is that all human beings, genetically, are literally 99.9 percent the same.

He said the second thing you should know, which he said was to him even more amazing, is if you take any given racial group; let's say you had a bunch of Hispanics here and a bunch of Asians here and you had people from the Mediterranean countries and Europe here, and people from an African country over here. He said, if you get 100 people in each of these separate racial groups, the genetic differences of the individuals within the group would be greater than the genetic differences from group to group.

Very interesting -- providing scientific support for what you try to do every day, which is to convince your kids that all children can learn, that there is no reason for us to fight with one another because of our differences, that all these troubles that are gripping the world, all over the world, the racial, the ethnic, the tribal, the religious differences have to be somehow overcome by understanding and teaching people that our common humanity is more important than the differences and that once you accept that, then the differences become interesting and make life more fun. But it is a very important thing and it shows, again, the importance of learning to our common progress on this Earth.

Now, that's why I think what all of you have done with the board certification is so important. I remember when you came to the White House with only 177 board-certified teachers. Some of you were there then. Now there's not enough room to keep you all in the White House, and the next time we might have to use RFK Stadium to have a meeting of all of you, and I would like that very much. (Laughter.)

I am very grateful for the progress that our country has made economically, socially and in education. I am grateful that we've got the longest peacetime expansion in history and 19-and-a-half million new jobs, the lowest unemployment rate in 29 years, the lowest welfare roles in 30 years, the lowest poverty rates in 20 years, the lowest crime rates in 26 years, lowest murder rate in 31 years, first back-to-back budget surpluses in 42 years and the government is the same size it was when John Kennedy was here in 1962, 37 years ago. We have worked at this.

But it's not enough. I am glad that we have virtually opened the doors of college to all people with the HOPE Scholarships and the expanded Pell grants. I am glad we probably will succeed in connecting all of our classrooms to the Internet by 2000, except in the places where the school buildings are literally too decrepid to accept the wiring. I am glad that we have dramatically increased our investment in after-school programs. But there is more to do.

I am very proud that the idea of standards is now taking root around the country. In 1996 -- listen to this -- in 1996, there were only 14 states in the country that had measurable standards for student performance. Today there are 50. But there are still only about a dozen that have genuine accountability measures when the standards aren't met, and aggressive strategies to identify failing schools and to turn them around. North Carolina does; that's one of the reasons they've had the best increases in student performance in the country. But all over the country, you see test scores going up even in the poorest inner-city and rural schools.

Now, I say that -- and I gave you all this introductory information -- to try to set the proper context for the present budget debate. To most Americans, it's a lot of numbers and a lot of noise. To most Americans, it's the Republicans making the absurd claim that the Democrats want to spend the Social Security surplus -- which has nothing to do with anything that's really going on up there.

But there are things going on in the budget debate, which are, in some ways, different from the ones we've had in the past, but still very important. When it comes to education, the debate is not so much about money anymore, as it is about values, priorities, and direction. Not just about how much we spend, but how we spend it. And a big part of this debate is about honoring our obligation to our children and our future. I was glad that you said your classes were smaller, but still not small enough. (Laughter.) There are many, many tens of thousands who can make that statement because we had the biggest class, biggest student load in history.

So last year, right before the election when everybody said -- you know, there was so much acrimony in Washington, we can never get anything done, we passed this remarkable education budget that provided more funds for after-school programs and a big down payment on my commitment for 100,000 more teachers to lower class sizes -- first in the early grades and then, when those class size numbers are met, the districts can have the money to use it elsewhere.

And it was wonderful. The money we appropriated was enough for about 30,000 of those 100,000 teachers, which is a lot in one year. It took us, for example, five years to get to our goal of 100,000 police officers. So I look forward to coming back this year and taking the second tranche. And imagine my surprise when the leadership of the Republican Congress, who had gone home and happily campaigned on this, and how it might have been a Republican program because there was no bureaucracy, we just gave the school districts the money and they hired the teachers, all of a sudden voted to do away with it. Not only not to

expand it above 30,000 but to take away the requirement that the money that was going to the teachers, go to them.

Now, I don't understand exactly what's going on, but I do intend to stop it if I can because I think that's a mistake. That's bad educational policy. We need to help the school districts hire more teachers. Last year we agreed and we should do it again. So one of the things the budget debate is all about is whether we will continue our commitment to help our schools hire 100,000 well-qualified teachers. And we have to reject the idea that we can't raise both the numbers of teachers in the classroom and the standards we hold them to.

Our budget invests in improving teacher quality. We know one of the most important factors in a child's educational success is a trained, dedicated, talented teacher. And through your good work, we're adding more and more, and I intend to keep supporting you in every way I can. (Applause.) And I hope that as time goes on we'll get more explicit support from the majority in Congress for this program, because it's so important.

For all the good work you're doing, the fact is a quarter of all secondary school teachers don't have college majors or even minors in the subjects they teach. Students with the highest minority enrollment have less than a 50-50 chance of having a math or science teacher with a license or degree in the field. Now, we can do better than that. And we have to.

I think we should require states and school districts receiving federal funds to stop the practice of allowing children to be taught by uncertified teachers -- school districts should do that. (Applause.) So when we reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, one of the things we ought to do is to say, if you want the federal money, this is one of the things you have to do. I think it's important. That's one of the things that our debate is all about.

But we also have to invest. I've asked Congress to invest in recruiting, training and supporting high-quality teachers in high-poverty areas. We have offered scholarships to a number of people that go to school and then, in effect, wipe off the cost of their education if they will go into areas where there is a high need. I have asked for an expansion of the Troops for Teachers Initiative, which has already helped 3,000 active duty soldiers, who were planning to leave the military anyway, find rewarding second career in teaching in our public schools.

The budget bill, even though it has quite a lot of money in it -- for reasons I don't understand -- underfunds the teacher quality initiatives and doesn't provide a single penny for the Troops for Teachers program. We need more and better teachers. The skills that a lot of these career military people have are desperately need and a lot of the places where there is a significant teacher shortage. So that's what I am fighting for. It's not about money; it is about things that we know will work that will help our kids. That's one of the things this debate is all about.

It's also about accountability. Where there is rising accountability to go with rising standards and a strategy to help people meet the standards, not just define them as failures, we have seen progress. Two years ago, North Carolina sent assistance teams to their 15 lowest performing schools. A year later, 14 of them had met their goals and were taken off the list -- one year. We have seen the same kind of improvement in Chicago, Dade County, many other places. I was in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Chicago, in the large Robert Taylor Homes project, where they had an elementary school with terrible performance. In two years -- two years -- they doubled their math

scores and tripled their reading scores.

So we can -- by the same sort of concentrated effort -- remember, if we're 99.9 percent the same genetically, we owe it to these kids to give them their chance at the brass ring of their life. (Applause.)

Our budget has \$200 million to help states and school districts identify, turn around or shut down the lowest-performing schools. For example, districts could send board-certified teachers to help students and teachers get their schools back on track. Unfortunately, this Republican budget bill doesn't put a dime into the strategy of turning around low-performing schools. This is not just about saying, well, I put that money up there, and they'll figure out how to spend it. If you know what works -- based not on what somebody in Washington thinks works, but based on what you proved works at the grassroots level -- we have an obligation, in a world of limited resources, to spend the money on what you have told us, and what you have demonstrated to us, works. That's what this budget debate is all about. (Applause.)

That's why we've invested in after-school and summer school programs, providing extended learning time so that school districts can say, okay, we're ending the practice of social promotion, but we're not branding the kids failures; we're giving them a chance to succeed.

And let me say another thing that I think will be increasingly important as we try to come to grips with the drop-out rate and the consequences of it, is to reach young people at an early age to get them excited about academic achievement and to give them the sense that they have a personal possibility in the future.

That's why we have worked hard to establish last year this Gear Up mentoring initiative which allows college students and others to go into middle schools and show young people that if they do their work and they learn their subjects that they can all go on to college. Explain to them the HOPE Scholarship. Explain to them the Pell Grant; show them, let them take home to their families exactly what kind of assistance they'll be able to get, so that they will know it is actual reality. It isn't enough to open the doors of college to all Americans. People have to know they've been opened. They have to be aware of these things.

We do things in Washington, I sign a bill, we just assume everybody knows about it. That is the beginning, not the end. If nobody knows about these things they might as well have not have been done. So that's a big part of what this budget is all about.

We also have to ensure greater access of all kinds of students to a successful and complete high school education. That's what our Hispanic Education Action Plan is all about. That's our fastest growing student group. And the Hispanic drop-out rate exceeds 30 percent. It's a big problem. Last year, for all practical purposes, the African-American and white majority high school graduation rates were identical. There was a smidgen of a difference, for the first time ever in our history. That's very good. (Applause.)

I might say that I don't think either one of them were quite high enough, but they're good, they're up in the high 80s percent. Our national goal that we set 10 years ago was 90 percent on-time graduation. But that's good. But the Hispanic drop out rate -- I think largely rooted in the fact that you've got a lot of first generation immigrant families whose first language is not English, compounding the fact that a lot of those kids may think they can get out and work for their families because they all just got here. And all first generation immigrant families, going back 100 years or more, have had a heritage of people of all ages in the family working.

But the point is that long-term economic consequences to these

children, and therefore to their families, are far more adverse and far more severe now than they would have been 30 years ago to dropping out. And a 30 percent dropout rate is simply too high.

So one of my problems with this budget bill is that it underfunds the after-school programs, the summer programs. The House bill actually would have shut down the Gear Up Program that they created last year and bragged about in the election, and it's way short on the Hispanic Education Priority. So we've got to give people the tools they need to succeed.

Finally, this was mentioned earlier, but I am still fighting for our bill to build and modernize 6,000 schools. (Applause.) There are too many kids in old school buildings that can't be wired, too many kids in house trailers and too many school districts that can't undertake the costs of the building program all by themselves. So here is where we are. The good news is that we have, I think, an appropriate amount of money that has been set aside for education. The good news is yesterday we had our voucher debate and the public school side won. (Applause.)

That's the good news. But we do not have anything like having -- because at this moment we have this surplus and we're at a moment of prosperity, we were able to agree generally on what I think is an adequate increase in funding. But there is no commitment yet for more and better teachers, for smaller classes, for increased accountability, for higher standards, for giving the tools out there that we know that you know work.

So the good news is that the debate is not about dollars. But the more important news is it is very much about direction. It is very much about direction. And just as I fought to get a modest amount of federal money to support your program, because I do believe that when you are certified and you go through this process, it is not only good for you and good for your students, it's good for everybody that you come in contact with in your school. (Applause.)

We were talking about, now you can see on the near horizon 25,000 of them. The reason that I said 100,000 -- that I want at least 100,000 board-certified teachers is, I do believe when you are dense enough -- when there is one of you in every school building in America -- there will be an exponential increase in your impact, that it will change the whole culture of virtually every school. And your skills, and what you learn, and how you will impart it to your colleagues, will then be exploding, echoing across the country in a way that will embrace all the children in all our schools.

But if you believe in what you've done, then I ask you to also believe in this, and help us say, okay -- to the Congress -- thank you very much for not trying to cut out the money anymore. That's a big first step. But it does matter how you spend it.

And we're not trying to micromanage the schools. Dick Riley has gotten rid of two-thirds of the paperwork requirement on states and local school districts. We have scrapped more rules and regulations than all the previous administrations who railed about the federal government put together. But what we have not done is to abandon our responsibility to take the research and the reports from the grassroots level and say, if we're going to spend this money, since it's limited, we have to spend it in ways that it will have the highest impact -- more teachers, higher standards, the tools that you need to do what you're out there trying to do. (Applause.)

So I ask you to support it and help us and I think we will prevail. Thank you and God bless you. (Applause.)

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Norfolk, Virginia)

For Immediate Release

September 6, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
ON SCHOOL MODERNIZATION

Coleman Place Elementary School
Norfolk, Virginia

2:28 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Wow! Let's give her a hand, she was great. Come on, more. (Applause.) I asked Le'Shia when we went up here, I said, are you going to have a good time. She said, yes, I am. (Laughter.) I think she's got a good future in politics if she keeps it up.

Well, good afternoon to all of you and happy Labor Day. I want to thank you for coming out today. I want to thank those who are here -- my longtime friend and former colleague as governor, Senator Chuck Robb; and Congressman Scott and Congressman Sisisky. They are working to pass legislation in Washington which would make what we do today part of a national movement so that all of our children could have what Le'Shia says she wants, and the children here deserve. And I think we owe Senator Robb and these members of Congress our support for their leadership for our children. (Applause.)

I also want to thank our wonderful Secretary of Education, Dick Riley, who, as Chuck Robb said, worked with us nearly 20 years ago -- the three of us were working together. He just finished a big bus tour all across the South, celebrating the start of a new school year and the rededication of the American people and our educators and our families to higher standards and better performance for all of our children.

I want to thank your Mayor, your Superintendent, your board President, our principal here, Jeanne Tomlinson, who showed me around, and the teachers who visited with me. (Applause.) The great labor leaders, John Sweeney and Bob Georgine, who are here, and the Presidents of the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, Sandra Feldman and Bob Chase; the Norfolk Federation of Teachers President Marianne Flickinger; the Tidewater Central Labor Council President Jerry Hufton; the Virginia state AFL-CIO leader, Jim Lehman; Sherry James of the Virginia Education Association; and all the state legislators who are here. Will you raise your hand, all the members of the legislature who are here? We've got a ton of legislators who are here. (Applause.)

I wanted to do that to show you that what we are here about -- the education of our children and the modernization of our schools -- has broad and deep support, and I am profoundly grateful to all of them.

Before I get into my remarks -- most of what needs to be said has probably already been said -- but I want to just say a word, if I might, about the harm that Virginia has sustained from Tropical Storm Dennis, and from the tornadoes that have devastated parts of your state.

On Saturday in Hampton, which is quite near here, 150 homes were destroyed and six people were injured. As we pray for their swift recovery, we are also already working on those who lost their homes, and

to help them get their homes and their property back. FEMA is on the ground in Hampton, and I want to say a special word of thanks to the state and local officials for their prompt and very able action, which might well have saved lives.

I also want you to know that, as has been requested, I have declared a major disaster for the Commonwealth of Virginia, and have ordered federal aid to be made available to help the state and local recovery efforts. (Applause.)

Now, this is a remarkable day. This is Labor Day, which is really mis-named. Labor Day really means No Labor Day. It's supposed to honor the working men and women by giving them a day off. So all of you had to show up here, and the leaders of American labor and education, the leaders of Virginia labor and education, have shown up here -- many of them swinging hammers when they'd rather be swinging in hammocks.

I want to thank the students, who have made even a greater sacrifice. They have shown up in school a day early. (Laughter.) And I see several, like Le'Shia, in their school uniforms, a policy that my family and I and our administration heartily support.

I want to thank those of you who work here at this school and throughout this district. Your superintendent has already spoken eloquently. But there are tremendous gains which Norfolk students have made on your achievement tests, improving at greater than the statewide average, and I applaud you for that.

I want to thank those who have helped this school achieve its improving excellence. I know your principal has gotten the Navy to donate computers and wire the rooms so that they can all be connected to the Internet, which is what we're trying to do for every schoolroom in America by our new millennial year, next year. I thank them. I thank the union electricians who are finishing the job today. (Applause.)

And let me say I'm also very pleased that the Norfolk District has taken advantage of the federal E-rate program, which was spearheaded and developed by Vice President Gore. It enables districts to purchase network equipment and other services, and where appropriate, to get cheaper rates to hook up to the Internet, because we want there to be no digital divide in our schools. The poorest children in America deserve to be a part of America's high technology future. (Applause.) And we're determined to see that it will happen.

Let me also say that I'm very pleased the Norfolk has been able to hire 33 new teachers this fall, thanks to funds that we won with the support of all three of these members of the Congress last fall when Congress agreed to support my plan to hire 100,000 new highly-trained teachers around America. (Applause.)

All this shows that when we work together, when we put our children ahead of politics and leave politics at the schoolhouse door, we can make progress. President Kennedy once said that the time to fix the roof is when the sun is shining. We are here literally fixing buildings today at a time when it may be a little overcast, but surely the sun has been shining on America.

We have the longest peacetime expansion in our history during these last six and a half years I have been privileged to serve as your President; 19.4 million new jobs; the lowest unemployment rate in 29 years; the lowest welfare rolls in 32 years; the lowest crime rates in 26 years. (Applause.) We had a \$290 billion deficit when I took office; it was projected to be \$100 billion more than that this year. Instead we have a \$99 billion surplus with more to come, thanks again to Senator Robb, the members of Congress who are here and others who

supported our program. (Applause.)

I say this because now the big debate in Washington is what are we going to do with our prosperity. There is a huge debate about this. Well, first of all, I think we ought to ask ourselves whether we've got any roofs in America that need to be fixed while the sun is shining, before the rain comes again. I believe that we need to look at the great, long-term challenges of America. And I'll just mention three today.

One, how do we keep this economic prosperity going and spread it to the people in the communities that have still not felt the positive effects of these recoveries. That's a big issue. Two, how do we deal with the challenge of the aging of America. The number of people over 65 will double in 30 years as we baby boomers retire. And I can tell you, my generation -- and I'm the oldest of the baby boomers -- is determined that our retirement will not impose a huge burden on our children and their ability to raise our grandchildren. We don't want that to happen. (Applause.)

And third, how can we meet the challenge of giving all of our children, from increasingly diverse backgrounds, a chance at the future that they deserve, beginning with a world-class education. And they, these children, are the first generation of American children to be larger than the baby boom generation.

Now, I think we ought to meet those challenges. I think we ought to use this moment to get America out of debt for the first time since 1835 and guarantee long-term economic prosperity with low interest rates and more investment and higher incomes and more jobs for all our people. (Applause.) I believe we ought to give tax incentives to people to invest in the poorest neighborhoods in America, whether they're on Indian reservations or in the Mississippi Delta, or in the inner-cities. We ought to give people the same incentives to invest in markets here in America we give them today to invest overseas in developing countries. (Applause.)

I just finished a tour around America called the New Markets Tour. And I want to say a special word of thanks to a man who has been in business here many years who flew down with us today, Ron Dozoretz, for his efforts to help me bring economic opportunity to people who haven't had it. But let me tell you something -- all of you know this -- we may have the lowest unemployment rate in 29 years. We may have the lowest welfare rolls in 32 years. We may have the longest peacetime expansion in history. But you know as well as I do there are still people and places that have not been part of our recovery.

Now, in Washington, all of the experts worry how we can keep this expansion going without inflation. How can we keep creating jobs and raising incomes without inflation. The easiest way is to put people to work who don't have jobs and turn them into consumers and taxpayers. That means no inflation and continued economic growth. And that is what I am committed to. (Applause.)

The second thing we ought to do is recognize that if the baby boomers don't want to be a burden on their children and their grandchildren, then we ought to take this opportunity, the best we will ever have in our lifetime, to fix Social Security and Medicare and add a prescription drug coverage to the Medicare program and strengthen it so it will be there for the baby boom generation. (Applause.)

And the third thing we have to do, if we want our children to have a good future, is to have enough investment in defense, in science and technology, in the environment, and especially in their education. (Applause.)

Now, I'm not against cutting taxes, but I think we ought to take care of the big, long-term challenges of America. If you pay the debt off, interest rates will be lower and that'll be worth more to most average people and most wealthy people than a tax cut. If you, on the other hand, return to deficits and have a big tax cut at a time when the economy's going, the interest rates will go up and take the tax cuts away, and higher home mortgage rates, higher car payment rates, higher college loan rates, higher credit card rates.

But if we say, okay, here's what it takes to get us out of debt, to save Social Security and Medicare, to invest in education and the other things for our future, then we can give the rest of it back to the American people in a tax cut that they can use for retirement, for education, for child care, for the things that the American people need. But let's take care of first things first.

In my lifetime, the United States has never had an opportunity or an obligation like this to prepare for the retirement of the baby boomers, to prepare for the future of the largest and most diverse generation of children our country has ever produced, to get this country out of debt, and keep a generation of prosperity out there as a beacon of shining hope to children from all backgrounds in America. We ought to take this chance to deal with the long-term challenges of the 21st century for America. (Applause.)

Now, one of the tax cuts that we can afford that meets more than one objective is the one I have proposed that would help school districts build, renovate or expand 6,000 schools. I've already said that Senator Robb is the sponsor of the bill in the Senate to do that. Two representatives here, Bobby Scott and Norm Sisisky and others are helping us in the House. We now have 222 members of the House -- that's a majority -- so we have some Republicans along with the Democrats helping us; there's a bipartisan effort there.

But why are we trying to do this? A lot of you here who are older people remember the end of World War II when, in this school district, so many people came home with so many kids, they had to put up Quonset huts for people to go to school in. Now, there are those who say to me, Mr. President -- I've had members of Congress say -- it's a laudable thing you want to do, but the federal government's got no business helping local school districts build schools; most states don't even do that, and it's a state and local responsibility.

Well, normally, that might be true, but just like World War II, these are not normal times. Harry Truman, in 1950, signed legislation to help school districts that needed it build the necessary facilities to get the kids out of Quonset huts. It happened right here where we are standing, and it ought to happen again because we have a bigger challenge now than we had in 1950. (Applause.)

Your school district has already invested \$45 million to expand and modernize schools, but as your superintendent told you today, it's still not enough. The window frames of this building are so old that if you tried to power-wash the windows, the glass would pop out. The electric service in the classrooms is so inadequate that if you plugged a new computer into the wall the circuit-breaker might cut off. When the door opens in some of these trailers, and it's raining, the kids sitting near the door get wet. When it's winter and the kids in the trailers need to go to the bathroom they have to put on their coats and walk across the parking lot through the snow, or the rain and the freezing, to the main building.

Now, folks, we have to fix this. You can say this is a Norfolk problem, but Chuck Robb told me there are 3,000 trailers in Virginia

alone. This is a national problem. I was in a grade school in Florida the other day that had a dozen trailers out behind the main building. One little school. I have seen this everywhere. And if we can meet this big, long-term challenge to America, don't we have the obligation to do it? What is more important than the education of our children and their future? (Applause.)

And let me say this -- you can say if you want, and it would be true, that buildings don't make an education, that education is not a money problem -- that's one of my laws of politics, by the way. When somebody tells you it's not a money problem, they are never talking about one of their problems. (Laughter.) They are always talking about somebody else's problem. All these legislators are laughing at me when I say that.

That's true. Of course, it's the magic with the teachers and the kids and the parents' support. But we now have evidence -- there is a serious study which shows that children in adequate and well-furnished classrooms do better on achievement tests than kids from the same social-economic backgrounds who go to places where the windows are broken and the paint is chipped and the facilities are inadequate and you can't hook them up to the Internet. So I say, let's give all of our kids a chance to maximize their God-given potential. (Applause.)

Now, here's the problem that we're about to confront in Congress when the Congress comes back. They passed a tax cut that's too big to do this. And in order to fund their tax cut they have to do one of two things, both of which they said they won't do. They either have to get into the surplus produced by your Social Security taxes, which they promised to save to pay the debt down, or they have to cut what we're already spending on education, on the environment, on health care, on technology and research. That's what the problem is.

So that's why they haven't sent me an education bill. I guess if I had that choice I wouldn't send one to the President either. They don't want to cut education when they said they wouldn't. They don't want to eat up the Social Security surplus when they said they wouldn't. And they can't figure out what to do. But I'll tell you this -- if their tax cut passes and they respect the Social Security surplus, here's what would happen.

Today we're helping 12 million kids in poor communities to make more of their education. If their plan passes, 6 million of them wouldn't get help anymore. Today we help a million kids to learn to read by the 3rd grade. If their plan passes, half of them wouldn't get help anymore. Today we're almost at our goal of a million kids in Head Start. There were some Head Start teachers out there when I was driving in today -- if their plan passes, over 400,000 of them would lose their support. It means larger classes, fewer students, more trailers and more leaky roofs.

Now, I don't believe the American people want that. We can have a tax cut, but we've got to do first things first. Let's look after the long-term needs of the country, fix the economy long-term, deal with Social Security and Medicare, deal with education, figure out what's left and then give it back to the people in a tax cut. Let's deal with our responsibilities to our children and our future first. (Applause.) I have put forward a plan that does that.

Back in 1950, when he sent his school construction program to Congress, President Truman said this -- 49 years ago; it sounds pretty good still today. "The nation cannot afford to waste human potentialities, as we are now by failing to provide adequate elementary and secondary education for millions of children. Equal opportunity in education is America's ticket to the future. It is a bedrock value in

this country. It is indispensable to the 21st century for individuals and for our nation alike."

Fifty years ago it was quonset huts; today it's trailers and broken buildings. Ladies and gentlemen, I thank all of you who worked to fix this building. I ask you to leave here on this Labor Day committed to fix all the buildings.

I thank you for the applause you gave Le'Shia, and I thank all of her fellow students and their families for being here. I ask you to leave here thinking about all the little boys and girls like them all across America. I have been back and forth across this country and I have seen the conditions that exist here today everywhere, in the largest cities and the smallest towns. There is nothing more important.

Here in Norfolk we honor our military, which has made such a major contribution to this community. I want to thank the Navy Band for being here today, by the way. (Applause.) Thank you very much.

There are those who believe that -- and I saw some of their signs outside -- that we don't need a strong military today because the Cold War is over. I can tell you that's not true either. We still have significant challenges to your security. But I also want you to understand something I know you know, which is, maybe more than anything else, the future security of the United States of America will rest upon our ability to give every single child in this country the ability to do well in a global economy, in a global society, to live up to his or her dreams. That's what we're here on this Labor Day to support. (Applause.)

Thank you and God bless you all.

END 2:50 P.M. EDT