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PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION OF PRINCIPALS
VIDEO GREETING
JUNE 13, 1997

On behalf of the United States, I welcome you to the International Convention of Principals. I thank you all for being here. I especially want to thank President Mary Robinson of Ireland and ~~former President Vigdis Finnbogadóttir~~ [PRONOUNCER] of Iceland. Your presence is an honor and a testament to your strong commitment to education.

As we approach the 21st century, we know that education is the key to success, for our children, our countries, and our world. That is why I have made education my top priority as President of the United States. My call to action for American education begins with the establishment of high national standards for children, our teachers, and our schools. I believe that every 8 year-old should be able to read, every 12-year-old should be able to log on to the Internet, every 18 year-old should be able to go to college, and every adult should keep learning for a lifetime. America's principals play a critical role in meeting these goals.

William J. Clinton
Around the world, educators are raising the level of teaching and learning for all of our children by learning from each other. I'm pleased that the United States and 41 other countries participated in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study. Along with comparing our students' educational achievement, this test has taught us a lot about our teaching practices, our curricula, and what we need to do to improve the quality of education in all of our countries.

Learning from one another has never been easier. Through the Internet, our children are discovering-- often before we do-- how small the world is becoming. Here in the United States, thousands of volunteers are helping to meet my goal of connecting every classroom and library to the Internet by the year 2000. Just think what this can mean for global education. A boy in Boston can visit a museum in Helsinki and share his ideas with a girl in Japan who just visited the library of Congress in Washington. Now we must follow our children's lead by integrating technology into our teaching practices, and learning from each other.

I'd like to thank each and everyone of you, not only for being here, but for the leadership you provide everyday. None of us could have gotten where we are without good educators to guide us . . . and neither will our children. I salute each of you for your commitment to ~~the future~~ of education . . . and your dedication to our children's futures.

Thank you and God Bless You.

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National Association of Elementary School Principals Convention
San Antonio, Texas
April 12, 1997

Good afternoon. Although I cannot be with you today, I'm pleased to have this chance to thank you for the outstanding work you do for America's children, and to talk about my number-one priority as President: making sure all Americans have the best education in the world --that every 8-year-old can read; every 12-year-old can log on to the Internet; every 18-year-old can go to college; and every adult American, including our teachers, can keep learning for a lifetime.

As America's principals know so well, there's never been a more challenging time to meet these goals. Enrollments are rising, reaching an all-time record this school year. We need to rebuild and modernize our schools. We need to make sure they are safe, and drug-free. We need to connect every classroom and school library to the Internet. We need tax cuts to make the first two years of college as universal as high school is today. That is why I have an aggressive education plan that will help us do all of these things.

But if we truly want to prepare our children for the knowledge economy of the 21st Century, nothing is more important than the things our children learn in school each day. We will never get the highest performance from our children until we set the highest standards. That is why I have challenged every state in America to adopt high national standards in the basics, and by 1999, to test every 4th grader in reading and every 8th grader in math to make sure these standards are met.

Just last week, California's educational leadership and hundreds of high-tech industry leaders endorsed my call for standards --joining with Maryland, Michigan, North Carolina, and the nation's military schools. This means states and school systems that educate nearly 20% of America's school children are now on the road to measuring their students against those high standards. I urge you to make sure your own states join in this crusade. By challenging our children to meet high standards, we can inspire them to new heights of excellence, and truly give them the tools to make the most of their God-given potential.

I also urge you to take a strong leadership role in my America Reads challenge, which will build a citizen army of one million volunteer tutors to make sure every child can read independently by the end of the 3rd grade. You know --and I know --that these volunteer tutors can work very well with our outstanding teachers and principals, to make a real difference for our children. It is a way to engage Americans from all walks of life in our schools, which is something we must do.

In closing, I thank Sam Sava, Carole Kennedy, your Board of Directors and each and every one of you for your partnership. I am especially grateful for your commitment to work with your communities, to answer my 10-point Call to Action for American Education. And I know that, together, we will give our children the best education in the world.

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American Association of Community Colleges Annual Convention
Anaheim, CA
April 12, 1997

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Hello to all of you gathered in Anaheim. Although I cannot be with you today, as I was in Minneapolis a couple of years ago, it is a tremendous honor for me to receive your Harry S. Truman Award --and to talk about the things we must do together, to sustain President Truman's legacy and to build on it.

The Presidential Commission on Higher Education that was appointed by President Truman back in 1946 did a lot to spark the growth of America's community colleges in the 40's and 50's. We all know what a remarkable contribution community colleges have made since that time. But today, we need them to play an even more important role. In the knowledge economy of the 21st Century --as we prepare for unimagined new work and careers --a high school education is simply not enough for our children to make the most of their lives.

That is why expanding access to higher education is one of my biggest goals as President. In the past four years, we've already expanded scholarships and student loans. My reformed college loan program has allowed 10 million students to borrow for college at a lower cost, and then pay back their loans as a percentage of their incomes. But I am committed to opening the doors to college even wider --by making the first two years of college, a basic community college education, as universal as high school is today.

Because community colleges have always been so accessible, and sensitive to the needs of America's families, my higher education plan is built around them. It starts with a HOPE Scholarship tax credit of \$1,500 for the first two years of college --the cost of a typical community college tuition. It includes a \$10,000 tax deduction for all college costs. It increases the maximum Pell Grant to \$3,000, and helps more students to qualify. And it expands IRA's so parents can save for college --because middle-income Americans shouldn't be taxed on the money they spend for college.

My education plan is about more than dollars and cents --it's about opportunity. It's about giving all our children a chance to succeed --not a guarantee, but a chance, if they're willing to work for it. And it's about complementing the mission of America's community colleges --to educate and prepare the workforce of tomorrow. To ensure that all Americans have the tools and skills to make the most of their lives.

Personally, I can't think of a better tribute to President Truman. And I can't think of a better, more committed group of educators to help me get the job done.

So I thank you for this honor --I thank you for all you have done for generations of Americans --and now let's keep working together, to build an even better future for ourselves and for our children.

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