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Contact: David Thomas
(202) 401-1579

NATION'S SCHOOL ENROLLMENT BREAKS ANOTHER RECORD; HIGH SCHOOLS SWELL, MORE STUDENTS GRADUATING

America's schools and colleges will set another new national enrollment record this fall, with public and private schools surpassing previous years' levels for the fourth consecutive year, and college enrollment breaking the previous level for the second year in a row.

Elementary and secondary schools will pack in 53.2 million students, surpassing last year's record by nearly half-a-million, while college enrollment will rise to an all-time high of 14.9 million, according to a special back-to-school report by the U.S. Department of Education. In addition, new enrollment records will continue for at least the next seven years, and by 2008, 54.3 million students are expected to be in elementary and secondary school.

"Many of our schools are overcrowded and will stay that way since enrollments are expected to continue climbing," said U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley. "And the situation will only get worse if we don't act quickly to build new schools and fix old ones."

"That's why President Clinton has sent Congress a serious school construction plan for three years in a row. This bill will help to build or renovate up to 6,000 schools nationwide."

According to the report, the biggest increase of students over the next decade will be in grades 9-12. Projections through 2009 indicate a nine percent increase in student enrollment, bringing an additional 1.3 million public high school students into the schools. Middle schools will have the next largest increase, where about a third of a million additional students will enter grades 6-8.

"High schools are twice as expensive to build as elementary schools," Riley said, "and we are already hard pressed to fund enough math and science teachers. We need to pay a lot more attention to our nation's high schools."

The report shows a clear shift in the growth rate from elementary to high school. Over the next decade, 15 states will have a least a 15 percent increase in the number of public high school graduates. While every region of the country will experience significant increases, southern and western states will experience the greatest boom in K-12 enrollment.

Nevada tops the chart with an expected 77 percent increase of public high school graduates over the next ten years, followed by Arizona with 56 percent and North Carolina with 40 percent.

And although the bulk of the growth in K-12 enrollment is concentrated in states like California, Texas and Florida, states like Illinois and Indiana also face high growth trends. New York City leads the country in overall enrollment increases between 1987-1997.

The report also shows that a large number of teachers will be nearing the end of their teaching career within the next five to ten years. The retirements, coupled with increased student enrollment, will require an estimated 2.2 million teachers to be hired over the next ten years. There will be a nine percent increase in the need for more high school teachers, especially in areas such as physics and advanced math courses.

Noting that most growth will be in middle and high schools, Riley challenged parents, educators, and communities to take new steps to help them get on the right track for the future.

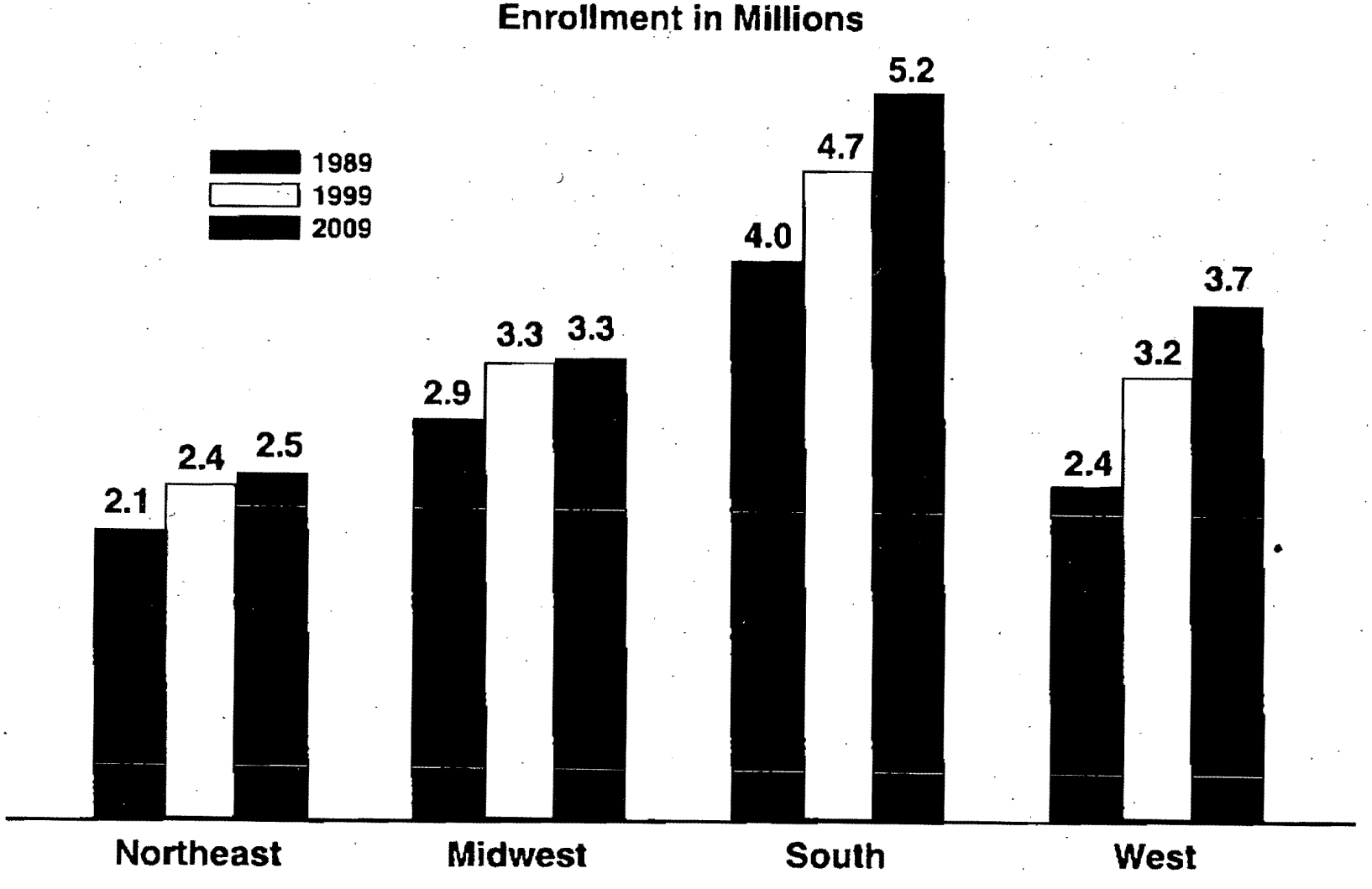
"Earlier this month President Clinton announced the award of 185 new grants totaling $120 million to help disadvantaged children, beginning in the middle grades, to prepare for and get on the pathway to achieve success in college." Riley said. "These grants will allow colleges to form partnerships with schools to provide guidance and advice to help prepare more students to navigate these changing times.

"In addition, we recently awarded grants to allow low-income school districts to fund Advanced placement tests for their students. Research clearly shows that students who take challenging coursework early excel in college and later on in life. These grants can help encourage students to take harder classes and then measure what they have learned as they prepare to move forward into college."

NOTE TO EDITORS: Copies of the department's report are available to media by calling (202) 401-3026, and can be obtained at the following website address: *??????????*

AUG-17-1999 TUE 03:45 PM OFC OF SEC/PUBLIC AFFAIR FAX NO. 202 260 7753 P. 05

HIGH SCHOOL ENROLLMENT UP ALL ACROSS AMERICA



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Projections of Education Statistics to 2009.*

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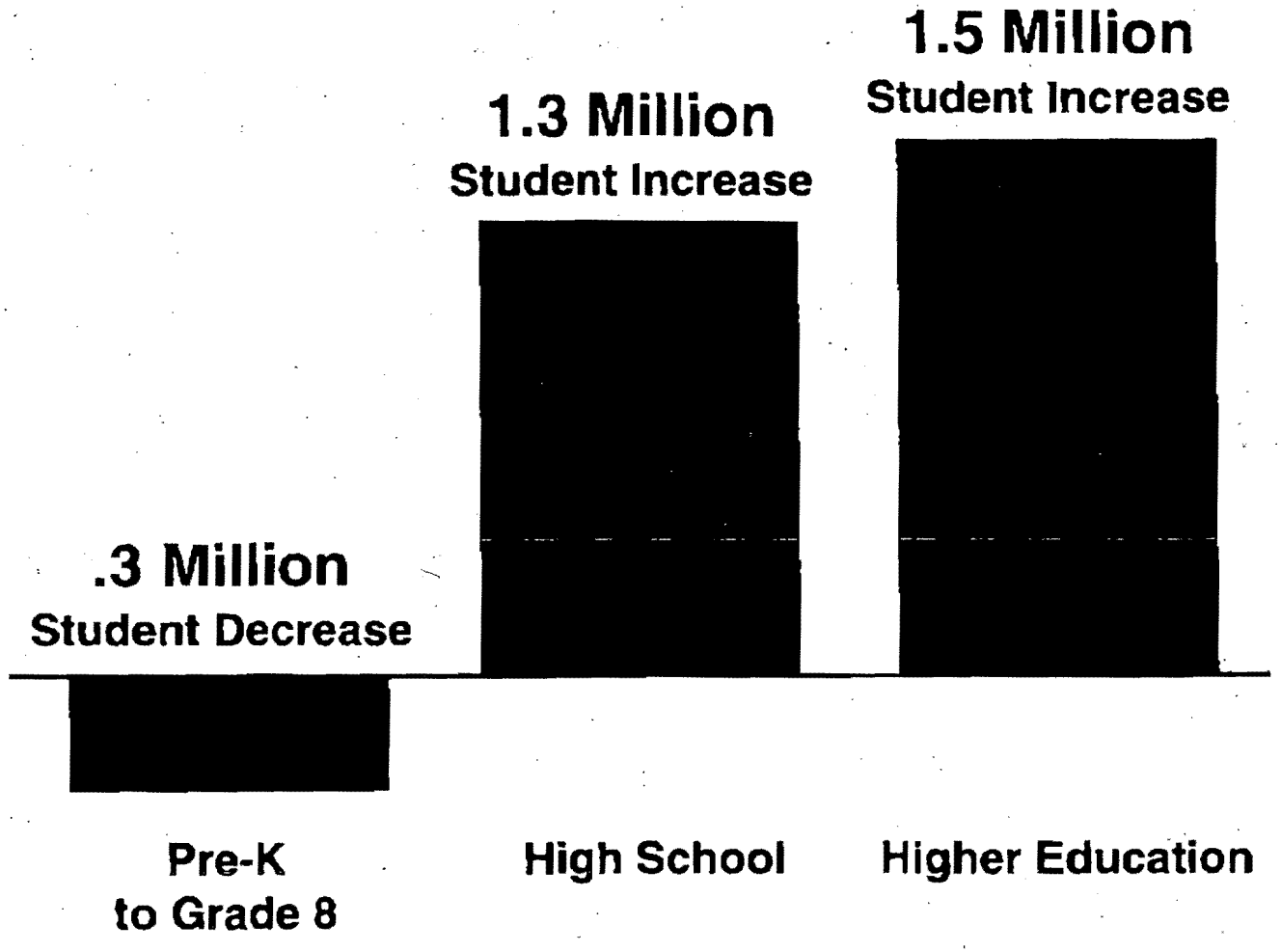
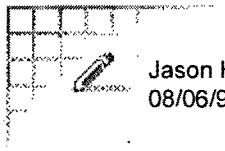
CHANGING ENROLLMENT PATTERNS

Fall 1999 to Fall 2009



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Projections of Education Statistics to 2009.*



Jason H. Schechter
08/06/99 05:09:56 PM

Record Type: Record

To: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message

cc:
Subject: Embargoed Radio Address

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

Embargoed For Release
Until 10:06 A.M. EDT
Saturday, August 7, 1999

RADIO ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE NATION

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. At the edge of a new century and an increasingly competitive global economy, we know that our children's futures will be determined in large part by the quality of the education they receive. More and more, what you earn depends upon what you learn.

Our administration has made education a high priority, focusing on standards, accountability and choice in public schools, and on making a college education available to every American -- with increased Pell Grant scholarships, better student loan and work-study programs, and the HOPE scholarship and other tax credits to help families pay for college tuition. Because of these efforts, more young people have the chance to make the most of their God-given abilities, and take their place in the high-tech world of the 21st century.

Today I want to talk about what we're doing to build on our progress, by reaching out to young people and challenging all of them to reach for their dreams by preparing for college. Because as far as we've come, we know, still, there is much to do -- for too many children, especially in economically distressed communities, aren't getting the chance to reach their highest potential.

That's why we've worked hard to expand Head Start; to connect every classroom in America, even in our poorest communities, to the Internet; to launch the America Reads

program, which has mobilized tens of thousands of student tutors to help millions of children learn to read; and to expand after-school programs, to keep kids in school and learning, not on the street and losing their way.

But to really make a difference in disadvantaged children's lives, we must instill in them the unshakable belief that if they work hard, they will be able to go on to college. And we must give them the tools to achieve that dream.

I know how important this can be. No one in my family had ever gone to college before me. But I never doubted I was going to college, because everyone in my life guided me to reach that goal. That's what I want for every child in America. For years, now, Congressman Chaka Fattah, Eugene Lang -- who started the I Have a Dream Foundation -- and the Ford Foundation have been dedicated to supporting new partnerships to meet that challenge.

Last year, in my State of the Union address, I asked Congress to support our plan to create hundreds of these partnerships -- between universities, colleges, middle schools and community and business organizations. These innovative programs start early, reaching out to students no later than 7th grade, staying with them all the way -- from providing students with mentors who encourage them to have high hopes and high expectations for themselves, to ensuring that schools teach the classes that prepare young people for college entrance exams, to helping families figure out how to pay for college. These programs can make all the difference in whether a young person goes to college.

Last year, with bipartisan support, Congress passed and I signed, legislation creating the Gear Up program, with the leadership of Senator Specter of Pennsylvania and Senator Harkin of Iowa, we secured the funds to put this plan into action. Today, I am pleased to announce the first $120 million in Gear Up grants to help states and communities all over the country inspire and guide their children from the playground to the college classroom.

I'm glad to be joined here today by Congressman Fattah, by Senator Specter and also by Congressman Becerra from California, who supports this program. And I ask Congress to fully fund my request to double our commitment to these programs now, so that we can reach more of our children than ever. Gear Up is a great example of what we can accomplish when we put progress ahead of partisanship and put our children's future first.

Unfortunately, this is exactly the kind of program that the Republican large tax plan would jeopardize. Families don't take a costly vacation and then say they'll figure out when they get home whether they can make the mortgage payments or pay the college tuition. And I don't think we should decide on this big tax cut and just hope there's enough left over to pay for

education and to save Social Security and Medicare and pay off our national debt. We have worked very hard to turn around the deficit. Now is not the time to turn our backs on our children's future.

So today I say again, let's join together, across party lines, to put first things first and build a stronger America for the 21st century.

Thanks for listening.

END

Message Sent To:_____

Education
Question and Answers
July 27, 1999

Q: The Republicans are arguing that the President is being dishonest about the impact of their tax plan on Medicare, Social Security, and the kind of investments in education that the President described today. Are the kinds of cuts the President announced today real?

Are these cuts in education real? They are -- *if* we take the Republicans at their word about the size of their tax cuts already approved in the House, they keep defense spending at least at the levels requested by the President, and pay down debt as much as they promise. Either these cuts are real, or the Republicans are playing risky games with numbers that don't add up on the serious national question of how to use the surplus.

Even if the Republican tax cuts were scaled back so much that not a dollar was squeezed out of education spending, their plan still wouldn't provide adequately for our schools. The President's tax proposal includes support to help build and modernize 6000 public schools, while the Republican tax cut only marginally addresses the needs of one tenth that many. Just 1% of the Republican tax cut would be enough to fully fund the President's school construction proposal. But that commitment to education is simply not reflected in the Republican plans.

Under the Republican budget and tax plan, this nation could be forced --in the tenth year alone of the Republican tax cut -- to deny nearly 6 million students in high-poverty communities extra support under the Title I program; nearly 500,000 young children they need to read well by the end of the third grade, 430,000 young children access to the Head Start program, slash Pell grants and block hundreds of thousands of students from working their way through college.

Q: Republicans are questioning the Administration's use of such specific estimates when the Republican budget and tax plans give no specific indication of which programs will be cut. Where did these estimates come from?

The President asked OMB to calculate the impact this bill would have on key education programs. OMB's calculations assume that Congress -- as envisioned by the tax bill approved by the House last week and the measure being debated in the Senate this week -- allocates nearly $800 billion to tax cuts over the next ten years, and that it also funds defense at the Administration's requested level *[and pays down debt by as much as the Congressional budget resolution promises]*. Given these assumptions, the budget resolution and current Republican tax plans would require dramatic cuts to domestic discretionary programs -- cutting roughly half from current funding levels. OMB assumed that the spending cuts required by the tax cut would be spread evenly across discretionary programs to calculate the estimates of specific education cuts released

today.

The point is that the Republican budget and tax plans simply do not leave room for the vital investments we need to make in education if we are to prepare all of our people for the 21st century.

Q: Last week, the House approved 239-185 (including 24 Democrats) legislation to provide flexibility to states and school districts in allocating funds among several purposes: recruiting new teachers, training current teachers, reducing class size. Why has the President threatened to veto this bill?

A: Last year, Congress came together across party lines to enact a down payment on the President's plan to hire 100,000 well-prepared teachers to reduce class size in the early grades to a nationwide average of 18. The President has repeatedly called on them to honor and build on that commitment this year, but the Republican legislation approved last week would kill the class size initiative and replace it with a program that denies adequate funding to the communities that need it most and doesn't guarantee that one cent will go to hiring a single teacher to reduce the size of a single class. In fact, it could allow federal resources to actually replace local or state funding already being spent on class size reductions, instead of increasing the overall level of investment in public schools. Their approach makes little sense when research shows what parents and teachers have long known: smaller classes make an important difference for our students, especially for our students in greatest need.

The President has already sent Congress a plan that would build on progress to further reduce class size, improve teacher quality, and raise standards and strengthen accountability in our public schools, and he is eager to work with Congress to enact sensible legislation to achieve all of these important purposes. That's why he also supported a Democratic measure offered by Representative Martinez last week, supported by 207 members of Congress (including 3 Republicans), to authorize $3.5 billion to ensure smaller classes in the early grades and improved teaching across America, while targeting funding to high-poverty school districts and providing school districts great flexibility to use these resources effectively. Our children shouldn't have to choose between smaller classes and better teachers – we can and must give them both.

Q: A Washington Post article yesterday suggested -- other than the importance of Democrats seeking to target resources to low-income communities and children -- that the differences between the Democratic and Republican approaches to education might be fairly minimal at this point. Have the Republicans neutralized the President and Democrats' longstanding dominance on the education?

A: The substantive question here, an important one for the American people, is how we are going strengthen our schools and prepare all of our people to succeed in the 21st century?

The President has made education a top priority, making the largest investment in education in 30 years, opening the doors of college to all, working with Congress to enact a down payment on his plan to hire 100,000 teachers to reduce class size all across America. This year, he has proposed an ambitious and specific agenda to help finish the job on hiring those 100,000 teachers, build and modernize 6000 public schools, strengthen accountability in public schools and raise standards for students, teachers, and schools. The President wants to work with both parties on behalf of America's children and schools.

Now, the Republican party that tried to eliminate the Education Department has been talking more about education, but what have they actually done? Last week, the Republicans passed a bill to end the bipartisan national effort to reduce class size in the early grades just when a growing body of research has shown smaller classes have lasting positive effects on student achievement. Now, they are voting for enormous, risky tax cuts that would squeeze out funding for vital investments in modern school buildings, better reading skills, expanded after-school programs, Head Start, access to college and the list goes on.

These actions do not suggest that Republicans are prepared to exercise leadership and work with the President to address his challenges on strengthening our nation's schools.

Q: **Senator Coverdell may try to offer an amendment to the Senate tax bill a measure that would allow parents to withdraw funds from an IRA tax-free to pay expenses for K-12 students who attend public, private or parochial schools or who are taught at home. Last year, the President vetoed a similar measure. What is the administration's position?**

We don't yet know if Republicans are going to offer this measure again. But this measure would have little practical benefit for the vast majority of our nation's students that are enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools. Public schools serve approximately 90 percent of students in grades K-12 and currently face record-breaking enrollments. Rather than siphoning funds away from public schools, the President believes a tax cut should be targeted to build and modernize schools and leave enough funding for all of the other education priorities he is discussing today to ensure that all children get a high-quality education. This bill's predecessors offered by Senator Coverdell would have negligible benefits for the vast majority of American families -- last year's bill provided an average tax return benefit of only $7 to taxpayers with children in public schools and $37 to taxpayers with children in private schools. Moreover, these measures would disproportionately benefit affluent families and provides little benefit to middle- and lower- income families.

Q: **The Republicans appear to be saying, we're for education, we're just for more local control. They say the President is coming out against local control and flexibility for school districts and states. What is your response?**

A: As a former Governor, President Clinton respects that education is a state and local responsibility. But he also believes that our nation has a stake in educating all of our people, and that we should make investments and advocate reforms at the national level to improve our schools. The President's agenda makes dramatic new investments in our schools. It also gives local communities real flexibility in how funds are spent in order to help all students --- particularly those in greatest need -- succeed.

Education
Question and Answer
July 20, 1999

Q: Today, the House is debating legislation to improve teacher quality by providing funding to help states and school districts recruit new teachers, train current teachers, and other strategies to improve teacher performance. Why has the President has threatened to veto this bill?

A: Last year, Congress came together across party lines to enact a down payment on the President's plan to hire 100,000 well-prepared teachers to reduce class size in the early grades to a nationwide average of 18. The President believes that Congress should come together across party lines again to build on this commitment and finish the job of reducing class size in the early grades all across this nation. To accomplish this goal and improve our schools, the President sent Congress legislation earlier this year to build on last year's bipartisan commitment to reduce class size, improve teacher quality, and raise standards and strengthen accountability in our public schools. The President is eager to work with Congress to enact sensible legislation to achieve all of these important purposes. However, the Republican legislation being debated in the House today would undermine last year's bipartisan commitment to smaller classes and would not guarantee the continuation of this nationwide effort to reduce class size.

That's why the President has said he will veto this bill if it comes to his desk in its current form. Instead, he is challenging Congress to work with him to ensure smaller classes, better teachers, higher standards, and more investments in public schools all across America.

Q: House Republicans and some Democrats ask what's wrong with letting school districts decide how to allocate this funding among several purposes such as teacher quality and class size. What's wrong with giving local school districts this kind of flexibility?

A: Last year, Congress approved with bipartisan support a down payment on hiring 100,000 teachers to reduce class size in the early grades all across this nation. That was a promise made to students and their families all across America, and the President believes we must keep this promise and finish the job. The Republican bill doesn't do that because it simply does not guarantee a nationwide effort to reduce class size in the early grades. Their bill would abolish a separate funding stream for class size reduction and replace it with a program that fails to guarantee that any funding will be used for hiring new teachers to reduce class size. The bill also would eliminate any focus on the early grades, deny adequate funding to the communities that need it most, and allow federal resources to replace local or state funding already being spent on class size reductions, instead of increasing the overall level of investment in public schools. The President is challenging Congress to approve a substitute measure to be offered by Representative Martinez that

will support higher levels of funding to ensure better teachers and smaller classes all across America and provides states and school districts great flexibility on how these funds are used. The research is clear: smaller classes benefit students and so does better teaching. We want to ensure that every school district across America benefits from both.

Moreover, this is part of a pattern from Republicans. The President has proposed building in our commitment to smaller classes, and the Republicans would back away from last year's commitment to do this. The President has proposed helping to build and modernize 6000 public schools, and the Republican tax bill would help address the needs of only one tenth as many schools and would squeeze out funding for education.

Q: If many Democrats support the Republican bill, what will the President do? Won't this signal a weakened position for him on Capitol Hill?

The Senate is unlikely to take up the House bill. The real debate over class size will take place in this year's appropriations process. The President and Democrats in the House and Senate will make class size a top priority in the budget debate, and continue to insist that Congress not back away from last year's bipartisan commitment.

Education
Republican "Straight A's" Proposal
July 20, 1999

Q: An editorial in USA Today criticizes the Republican Academic Achievement for All (Straight A's) proposal for not targeting federal funds to the poor and minority students who still lag behind their white peers when it comes to academic achievement. What does the President think of this proposal?

A: The President has sent legislation to Congress that would strengthen accountability in public schools, target resources to those communities and schools who need it most, and help raise standards for students, teachers, and schools across America. The President's proposal to reauthorize the Educational Excellence for All Act would target funding for every federal program to those students who need it most, would strengthen accountability by requiring states and school districts to turn around their failing schools, phase out the use of unqualified teachers, issue report cards to parents on how schools are doing, institute fair and effective discipline codes, and end social promotion the right way -- by giving those children most at risk of failing the extra help they need to meet challenging standards. The Republican legislation fails to achieve some of these important objectives because it doesn't ensure that funding will be adequately targeted to the schools in greatest need, doesn't provide strong enough measures to ensure real accountability for results and standards with consequences for students, teachers, and schools. Instead, the Republican proposal would do away with provisions that target federal funds to disadvantaged students, and would allow schools five years with no accountability for results to experiment with those funds.

Q: The Republican proposal stresses flexibility and local control, while the President is calling for more accountability and more federal control. Doesn't the President's proposal amount to a federal takeover of education?

A: The President is insisting on greater and more effective accountability, but his proposals don't interfere with local control. Under the President's plan, states and school districts will remain in charge of such matters as selecting the curriculum, setting promotion and graduation requirements, and determining teacher certification requirements. What the President's plan does is to target funding to those children most at risk of educational failure, and hold the system accountable for results. No child in America should be taught by an unprepared teacher, or should be passed from grade to grade without having mastered the material, or should be trapped in a failing school. The education of all of our children – not just those lucky enough to live in a wealthier school district -- must be a national priority, and holding our schools accountable must be a national commitment.

THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION
SUPPORTING QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL OF OUR CHILDREN

The Clinton Administration has made an unprecedented commitment to education. Over the last six years this Administration has launched new initiatives and supported existing programs so that all students – from young children to adult learners -- can reach their potential in the best learning environments.

Ensuring That Every Child In America Can Learn

More High-Quality Teachers with Smaller Class Sizes. The Clinton Administration won a down payment of $1.2 billion in FY 99 on the President's new initiative to hire an additional 100,000 well-prepared teachers, helping school districts reduce class size in the early grades to a national average of 18.

Teaching Every Child to Read by the 3rd Grade. The Clinton Administration proposed the America Reads Challenge in 1996 to ensure that all children read independently by the third grade. In FY 99 the President secured $260 million for legislation to create a program that is consistent with the President's America Reads proposal. The new program will provide competitive grants to States to (1) improve teachers' ability to teach reading effectively; (2) promote family literacy programs to help parents be their child's first teacher; and (3) improve the quality of tutoring programs by supporting tutor training. More than 1000 colleges have committed Work Study students to tutor children in reading, and thousands of AmeriCorps members and senior volunteers are organizing volunteer reading campaigns.

Providing Safe After-School Opportunities for Nearly 400,000 Each Year. The Clinton Administration expanded the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program to provide safe and educational after-school opportunities for nearly 400,000 school-age children in rural and urban communities each year. Last year (FY98), the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program was expanded to $200 million. This funding is already supporting hundreds of school-based after-school programs in rural and urban schools in 44 states and the District of Columbia, including weekend and summer programs. In addition, the Education Department released a report in June 1998, titled *Safe and Smart: Making the After-School Hours Work for Kid.* This report shows that after-school programs can lower juvenile crime and improve academic performance. *Safe and Smart* was sent to every school district in the country.

Preparing for the 21st Century by Expanding Access to Education Technology. The Clinton Administration created the Technology Literacy Challenge Fund to help connect every school to the Internet by 2000, increase the number of multimedia computers in the classroom and provide technology training for teachers. Increased overall investments in educational technology by thirty-fold, from $23 million in 1993 to $698 million this year. Secured low-cost connections to the Internet for schools, libraries, rural health clinics and hospitals.

Expanding Choice and Accountability in Public Schools. President Clinton has strongly supported the development of public charter schools – in 1993 there was one independent public charter school in the nation; in 1998, there were more than 1,000 charter schools. The Clinton Administration's FY99 budget included $100 million, a 25-percent increase -- for Charter Schools to keep us on track toward the President's goal of creating 3,000 high-quality public charter schools that will educate more than half a million students by early in the next century. Charter schools are public schools started by teachers, parents and communities, that are given flexibility in decision-making, in exchange for high levels of accountability for results.

Supporting Local Education Reform Efforts. President Clinton signed into law the Education Flexibility Partnership Act of 1999 (Ed-Flex) to give all states the ability to use federal resources in ways that best complement local efforts and innovation. Ed-Flex allows states to waive certain federal requirements if doing so will enhance school reform and improve student achievement. As Congress considered Ed-Flex legislation, the President demanded that the expanded flexibility conferred by this bill be accompanied by strong accountability requirements. The President called for, and Congress eventually enacted, provisions to ensure that waivers are tracked to guarantee they are producing results -- and that waivers are revoked when they fail to do so.

Recruiting More Qualified Teachers. In 1998, President Clinton proposed and signed into law his Teacher Recruitment and Preparation proposal. FY 99 provided $75 million, which will help recruit and prepare thousands of teachers to teach in high-poverty urban and rural communities and will strengthen teacher preparation programs across the country.

Providing Early Education to 835,000 Children with Head Start. President Clinton is committed to reaching his goal of serving one million children with Head Start services, which help prepare disadvantaged 3-5 year olds for school. Thanks to efforts by the Administration, the program now reaches more kids than at any time since its creation in 1965 and more than 200,000 additional children than in 1992. The FY 99 budget included the President's full increase for Head Start.

Establishing the GEAR-UP Mentoring Program for Middle School Children. The Clinton Administration established a new mentoring initiative to help up to 100,000 low income middle school children prepare for college. GEAR-UP, funded with $120 million in FY 99, will expand mentoring efforts by States, and provide new grants to partnerships of middle schools, institutions of higher education, and community organizations, to provide intensive early intervention services to help prepare up to 100,000 students at high-poverty middle schools for college.

Promoting High Academic Standards. President Clinton created Goals 2000 in 1993 to promote high academic standards for all students and proposed a modest expansion in last year's budget which included $491 million to help all 50 States continue raise academic standards and help at least 12,000 schools implement innovative and effective education reforms.

Expanding College Opportunities

Making 13th & 14th Grades as Universal As High School. The Clinton Administration has made the first two years of college universally available with $1,500 HOPE Scholarship credits.

Expanding Work Study To Help Nearly One Million Students Work Their Way Through College. This year, nearly one million students will be able to work their way through college because of the President's expansion of the Work Study Program. The President's FY99 budget included a significant expansion of the Federal Work Study program providing $870 million -- a $40 million increase over the FY 98 level of $830 million -- which keeps us on track to the President's goal to expand Work Study toward one million students by the year 2000.

Expanding College Opportunity with Tuition Tax Credits and Education IRAs. For those beyond the first two years of college, or taking classes part-time to improve or upgrade their job skills, families can receive a 20% tax credit to help offset tuition costs for college or lifetime learning. The expanded IRA allows penalty and tax-free withdrawals for education for tuition, fees, books, equipment, and room and board.

Largest Maximum Pell Grant Award Ever. This year, approximately 4 million students will receive Pell Grant awards. President Clinton has signed into law the largest one-year increase in Pell Grant scholarships in more than 20 years and the FY 99 provided $7.7 billion for Pell Grants, increasing the maximum Pell Grant award from $3,000 to $3,125 -- that's the largest maximum award ever, 36-percent higher than it was in 1994.

Making College More Affordable. The Clinton Administration cut student fees and interest rates on all loans, expanded repayment options including income contingent repayment, and improved service through the Direct Loan Program.

The Challenges Ahead

- **Modernize and Renovate 6,000 of Our Public Schools**
- **Finish Hiring 100,000 New Teachers for Smaller Classes**
- **Increase After School Care to Enable More than One Million Children Each Year to Participate**
- **Make Our Schools and Communities Safer with the Gun Enforcement Accountability Act**
- **Increase Support for Teacher Training; Establish New Recruiting Incentives**
- **Build on Proven Reforms by Passing the Education Accountability Act**
- **Reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to Hold States and School Districts Accountable For Results**
- **Put More Computers and Education Technology in the Classroom**
- **Provide Greater Relief for Working Families by Expanding Child Care for One Million Additional Children**

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07/16/99 05:35:00 PM

Record Type: Record

To: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message

cc:
Subject: remarks on school construction -- Des Moines, Iowa

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Des Moines, Iowa)

For Immediate Release July 16, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
ON INVESTING IN AMERICA'S SCHOOLS

Amos Hiatt Middle School
Des Moines, Iowa

2:25 P.M. CDT

THE PRESIDENT: You know, when Tom Harkin said that anybody with any sense would take their coat off -- (laughter) -- I didn't know whether that meant I didn't have any sense or he just gets hot under the collar quicker than I do. (Laughter and applause.) Actually, I think the answer is a lighter suit.

I am delighted to be here and I thank you all for your wonderful welcome. And I don't mind that it's a warm one. I always love coming to Iowa, coming back here to this wonderful city. I want to thank Ruthann Gaines for her dedication and her remarkable remarks this morning. I want to say that as long as young people like Catherine Swoboda are Exhibit A for Iowa education, this country is going to do just fine. I thought she was terrific. (Applause.)

I thank Secretary Riley for coming with me. Many of you in Iowa may not know it, but Dick Riley and I began our careers as governors together 20 years ago this year, and we've been working at education for a long, long time. I think that history will record that he is the finest Secretary of Education this country has ever had. And I'm very grateful to him and I thank

him. (Applause.)

I would like to thank Superintendent Witherspoon and your principal, Gary Eyerly, for welcoming us to this school.

And I want to thank all the public officials who are here. I know in addition to the governor we have Lt. Governor Pederson, Attorney General Miller, Secretary of State Culver and State Treasurer Fitzgerald. They're all over there. I thank them for joining me today. And Senate Minority Leader Michael Gronstal, thank you all for being here.

I'd like to say a special word of appreciation to my good friend, Congressman Leonard Boswell, who is also a stout supporter of education. And I think it is appropriate that he's here because he's here with his wife, Dodie, and I'd like for her to stand, because yesterday she retired as a teacher after 31 years. Thank you very much, bless you. Thank you. (Applause.)

And I want to acknowledge that Ruth Harkin is here with Tom today, and to tell you that for most of my administration she was a very valuable member of the Clinton-Gore team and played a major role in our economic programs. And I want to thank her.

And finally, let me say that, as you can see, every time he talks, there is no one in the United States Senate who is more passionate about what he believes than Tom Harkin. And he believes in the education of our children. It's easy to understand why, from his own experience. Most of you probably know that his father was a coal miner who didn't finish the 8th grade; his mother was an immigrant with little formal education. Thanks to an ROTC scholarship, he put himself through college. Now he sits next to a Rockefeller in the United States Senate. (Laughter.) It's America and Tom Harkin is the best of America. (Applause.)

You know, I must say, Jay Rockefeller always hates it when we do that to him. (Laughter.) He is also a very good man. And you heard Tom Harkin say that because of his efforts, Iowa will receive another $10 million this year to help renovate schools. But I want to do that for all our schools that need it.

I want to thank some people who are involved in this issue who are not here today: Congressman Charles Rangel, the House sponsor of our school bill; the many members of the AFT, the NEA, the Council of Great City Schools; the building and construction trades who have fanned out to Philadelphia, New York, New Orleans, Buffalo, Houston, Chicago and Miami today to roll up their sleeves and help communities begin to repair their neediest schools.

You know, it is ironic that we're here talking about

this school issue, because we are in America in the last year of the 20th century, in this millennium, enjoying the longest peacetime economic expansion in our history: nearly 19 million new jobs in the last six and a half years, the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, the lowest crime rate in 26 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 30 years, the lowest minority unemployment ever recorded, the highest home ownership in history.

Here in Iowa, unemployment is a whopping 2.6 percent. Home ownership is almost at 75 percent. Wages are rising nationwide for the first time in 20 years for all classes of workers, and even faster here. I feel good about that. I feel good about the fact that compared to six and a half years ago the air and water are cleaner, the food is safer and 90 percent of our children are immunized against serious childhood diseases for the first time in the entire history of our country.

I feel good about the 100,000 young people who have signed up to serve their communities in AmeriCorps and earn money to go to college. (Applause.) I am grateful, with the help of people like Tom Harkin and Leonard Boswell, that this administration has been able to preserve or set aside more land for the American people and our children's future, from the California Redwoods to the Mojave Desert to the Florida

Everglades in any administration in history, except those of Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt. I am grateful for all of that.

But what I came here to ask you is, what are we going to do with our prosperity and what are we going to do with our surplus. This is a time of confidence and pride. But, as many people have said, the time to fix the roof is when the sun is shining. And that is literally true in the case of school construction.

Are we going to develop some sort of collective amnesia and pretend that these times have always been here, always will be here, and we can do whatever we want to do that feels best in the moment, or seems most politically popular? Or are we going to think about the children here, and the 21st century, and what America will be like 10 years from now, 20 years from now, 30 years from now when they will have children in these schools?

That is what I want to say. You know, you folks should be glad to see me in Iowa -- I'm the only guy that's been here in weeks that's not running for anything. (Laughter and applause.) What I am doing is trying to think about everything we can possibly do in these last days of this century. The Clinton-Gore administration is not running out the clock, hoping the good times will last. We are trying to push the ball down the field. We are trying to think about what it takes to build that bridge to tomorrow that all our children can walk across. What it would

take to give opportunity to all of our people; to build a community of all of our people; to maintain our nation's leadership for peace and freedom and prosperity around the world; to look at the long-term challenges.

I'll just mention three today -- to get to the school construction issue. But you have -- to understand where the school construction issue is, you have to see it as a part of the big debate going on in Washington: What are we going to do with our prosperity? How should we handle this surplus, the one we have today and the one we're projected to have tomorrow? Otherwise, you couldn't begin to figure out why in the world we just don't do this. I mean, you must all be sitting out there thinking this is a no-brainer, just from what everybody else has already said before I got up here.

I believe that when you look at where we were just six and a half years ago, we had quadrupled the national debt in 12 years. The deficit was $280 billion. It was projected to go to $380 billion this year. Now we have the biggest surplus we've ever recorded, and we're projected to be able to maintain those surpluses into the future, indefinitely.

Now, every farmer here knows that nobody can predict the future. That does not mean that every year we'll have exactly what is predicted. What it means is, if we have predictable economic performances, which is every so often we'll have a downturn, and then we'll have an upturn, then we'll have a downturn, then we'll have an upturn, on average we will produce the surpluses we project to produce over the next 15 years. That's what it means. These projections are not based on everything will be hunky-dory every day of the next 15 years. So they're not unrealistic.

But we have to decide -- since we haven't been in it -- did you ever think when I was here running in '92 we would be back here having a debate about what to do with the surplus? (Laughter.) This is a high-class problem. But it's just as important to get the answer to a high-class problem right as it is to one that you wish you didn't have to deal with. It's not like going to the dentist. But if we don't handle it right, we'll be going to the dentist and nobody will give us a shot to deaden the pain. We have got to deal with this issue in the proper way.

Let me just mention three things. We have to deal with the aging of America. Iowa has got a high percentage of people over 65. The number of people over 65 will double in 30 years. The older we get the more people that will be drawing Social Security and Medicare and the fewer people will be paying into it. This is not rocket science; this is basic math.

I believe before we pass a big tax cut we should save Social Security and Medicare and add a prescription drug benefit to Medicare for the 21st century so that -- (applause.) Why? That's going to save everybody a lot more money in the long run than a tax cut. What's going to happen? What's going to happen if we don't? This is not just about the elderly. I'm not just looking out for the baby boomers that are going to retire in a few years. You know what will happen.

How many family stories do you know right now where parents with little children are also taking care of their parents, because it's the right thing to do. But we have Social Security and Medicare so that we can balance the responsibilities of the generations, and so that families can take of their own needs and look to their children as they go along. So this is not just about the elderly. This is about the children and grandchildren of the baby boom generation.

The second thing we ought to do is take care of the economy. And I would like to mention just two things, one of which you know very well. One is, there is still a lot of places in this country that aren't participating in the economic recovery. The big problem on the farm is we've had four years in a row of world-wide record harvest for the first time in history, and an economic collapse in 1997 in Asia, so markets shrink, the products go, prices collapse.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Freedom to Farm --

THE PRESIDENT: Exactly right. As Senator Harkin and I warned -- Congressman Boswell and I, we were all three laughing about it -- we said, you know, the people who put in that Freedom to Farm Act acted like there never would be a bad year on the farm. And now last year we dealt with it. Today I'm going to meet with some of your farmers and we're working on it. The Vice President called me after he had a chance to meet with some farmers here this week, and we talked about it.

But the point I want to make is, you have farmers, you have people in Appalachia, you have people in the Mississippi Delta, you have people who live on the Indian reservations, you have people who live in the inner cities, and even though we're doing better than we've ever done, there's still a lot people who aren't part of this train. And there are ways to give everybody a chance who's willing to work to be a part of it. That ought to be something we do with our prosperity. We ought to give everybody who's willing to work a chance to be a part of that prosperity. And I think it's very important. (Applause.)

One thing we can do that will help the economy more than anything else is, if we adopt the plan I put out to save the majority of the surplus for Social Security and Medicare, since

it's not needed now -- while we save it we can pay the debt down so much that by 2015, in 16 years, for the first time since 1835, this country can be out of debt. (Applause.)

If you're a middle class person, why should you worry about that? Because if we're out of debt it means lower interest rates, higher investment, more jobs, higher wages, lower college loan, credit card, car payment and home mortgage rates. It means a more stable world economy over the long run. It means a better environment for farmers and manufacturers and everybody else. It is a good thing to do.

Now, what I want to tell you is, we can do all that and still have a tax cut and still invest in education. But we cannot pretend that there are no consequences to proposing a tax cut that will cut education and prevent us from saving Social Security and Medicare and mean we can't pay off the debt and we can't do these other things. There are choices to be made and we should be thinking about the children and the future. And as we have proved the last six and a half years, when you do things that are right for the long run, often they turn out to be right for the short run, as well.

And so I say to you, this school issue is a part of this debate, this school construction issue. We propose a tax cut to help people save for retirement, take care of long-term care needs of their family, take care of their child care needs; and also to induce people to invest in more school construction with a big tax break. It is very, very important.

And you've already heard about Iowa's needs. You've heard Secretary Riley talk about America's needs. In spite of all -- what you have to understand is, the school enrollments, as big as they are, are fixing to explode. And we've got to do some things about it. We've got to do what Governor Vilsack wants to do everywhere in America. Hardly anybody has done as well as he has. We've got to hook up all the classrooms in the country to the Internet. And we've got to have teachers to go into the classrooms -- 2.1 million are going to retire over the next few years. Dodie is the beginning of a wave in America. And we've got to find young people to go in there and take their places. And we've got to have good facilities for people to visit -- to learn in.

You know, I can still remember every schoolroom that I ever was in in my life. And a lot of old schools can be modernized, but when you've got kids -- I've been to school districts, literally, literally, with one elementary school with 12 house trailers out behind it. Not one or two -- 12.

So we have to deal with this. And there are serious consequences to not dealing with it. Now, if our school

construction initiative passes as a part of our tax cut proposal in our education program, it will help communities have $25 billion over the next two years for school construction. That's enough to build or modernize 6,000 schools.

Now, if you compare that to the Republican proposal you will see that their plan is 644 schools. Ours is nearly 10 to 1. So somebody can say, well, we have a school construction proposal -- 6,000 is better than 644. (Applause.)

We're having the same discussion about teachers. Last year I was thrilled -- in the teeth of an election year, we had a bipartisan agreement to put 100,000 teachers in our schools, because the classes are getting bigger and it would allow us to lower class size in the early grades to an average of 18. We just had another national study come out the other day about how important that can be, and how the learning gains can be permanent. And just two weeks ago, Secretary Riley and I announced $1.2 billion to help states and local school districts hire the first 30,000 of those 100,000.

But now the majority in Congress wants to back off from that. They have other ways to spend the money. They want to give the money out and not guarantee that it will go to hire new teachers. I feel that if you make a promise in an election year, you ought to keep it the next year, too. If it was a good idea last year, it's still a good idea.

So I say to you, these are two things that we ought to do. We need to do this school construction program. We need to finish the work of hiring 100,000 teachers. We need to finish the work that Governor Vilsack has done so much on here of wiring all of our schools. We need to finish these things. It all comes down to this: What do you want to do with this moment of prosperity?

And let me say one thing -- you know, Washington tends to be a more partisan place than most places in America -- maybe more than anyplace in America. I've done what I could to try to unify this country. Most Americans, whether they're Republicans or Democrats or Independents that have kids in the schools want them to go to good schools.

I'll be you there are a lot of school elections in Iowa where Republicans and Democrats vote the same way for school bond issues or on educational proposals. This is not always an ideological issue. This should be an issue that brings America together. But issues that unify people in the country have a way of dividing people in Washington. We had the same thing happen with the patients bill of rights; you probably saw that.

We had this crazy idea, we Democrats did, that

everybody in a managed care plan in America ought to be able to see a specialist if their doctor said they should see one. Or, if they lived in a big city and they got hurt in an accident, they ought to be able to go to the nearest emergency room, not be driven halfway across town. Or, if their employer changed managed care providers while a woman employee was in the middle of a pregnancy or a man or a woman was in chemotherapy, they ought to be able to keep their doctor until their treatment was over.

And if somebody hurts you with a bad decision, you ought to be able to get redress for it. Now those are rights that I enjoy under the Federal Health Care Plan, and that Congress enjoys and every federal employee enjoys. And the Congress -- the Republican Majority's own budget office said this would add at most $2 a month to a managed care premium. In the federal system, it added less than $1 a month when I put them in.

Now, I don't know, but I believe in Iowa when you go to the doctors office, they don't ask you if you're a Republican or a Democrat. (Laughter.) And I don't believe when the children come to school here they ask you if you're a Republican or a Democrat. These are things that should unify us. And so I ask you to please, please do what you can to talk to all the members of this congressional delegation, ask them to support us on 100,000 teachers, ask them -- it's still not too late to pass the patients' bill of rights that gives the rest of you the protections we have in Congress and the White House and the federal government. And ask them to make a part of any tax cut plan a school construction initiative that will build or modernize 6,000 schools.

You think about this young woman who introduced me today. You think about this young woman who introduced me today. I have seen people like her all across America, marvelous kids in the poorest corners of this country -- kids in schools that are 75 years old that haven't been fixed, where the kids walk up the steps and they see broken windows every day. Where there are rooms, in some cases whole floors they can't even go on. They deserve better.

How in the world can we say to them, we had the most prosperous time in American history, we had the biggest surplus in history, we dug ourselves out of debt, but all we thought of was ourselves and the next election -- we didn't have the time or

money or vision to think about you and your future. We are a better country than that. All of us are, without regard to party. Everywhere else but Washington, D.C. you would never hear anybody discarding this argument. I implore you: Help us to get this done this year. The children of America deserve 21st

century schools.

Thank you and God bless you. (Applause.)

END 2:48 P.M. CDT

Message Sent To:_____

"RE-IMAGINING EDUCATION: A MATTER OF JUSTICE AND POSSIBILITIES"
Address to the Jill and Ken Iscol Lecture Series By First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton

Columbia University Teachers College
New York City, New York
April 19, 1999

Thank you. Thank you so much. I am absolutely thrilled to be here, and to see all of the energy and enthusiasm for education and for teachers and children that fills this auditorium.

I want to thank my friend Jill for her dedication and for that introduction. I am very much aware—as those of you who know her are as well—that she is passionately committed to creating a more just world for all children. And she is a very good friend—someone who listens and counsels and provides all kinds of support. It would not, therefore, be surprising that she and Ken would imagine this kind of lecture series—to create an opportunity for this revered institution to re-imagine education; to think clearly about justice and possibility in light of what we know about teaching and learning; to apply research and intuition; to reach out across the lines that too often divide us; and in the process, begin to translate into reality the vision of an educational system that would truly serve all of our children.

I want to thank everyone associated with the college for their kind invitation and for their warm welcome. I also want to thank the Margaret Douglas Elementary School Choir, who, I think, entertained us with a very original and honest song, which I for one was very impressed by. I particularly also want to acknowledge, if she's here—she's on my list but I haven't spotted her yet—my friend, Congresswoman Nita Lowey, and Congressman Anthony Wiener, whom I'm told both are here or will shortly arrive.

Now I have been introduced in many different ways—and described probably in more ways than I care to remember—but I think President Levine did an unusual job of staying true to his mission and creating a little excitement in the room. And that is certainly fitting, because he has brought to his position of leadership here a single-minded determination to reach every one of the students here to give that student the tools to become the very best teacher he or she could be.

And I also want to recognize the creative vision of Peter Cookson, whose Center for Educational Outreach and Innovation brings to the challenges we face some of the best minds thinking about the hard problems of education and equity, justice and community that you are so concerned about. And it isn't an accident. Because, as President Levine said, this institution arose from the thoughts and concerns of people very much like many of you in this auditorium—who, in the Progressive Era, looked around and said to themselves, "What can we do in the midst of this rapidly changing society to create better opportunities and to educate more successfully all of the children?"

And the philanthropists and the college presidents and the bishops and others who came together understood that education was then, as it remains, the key to opportunity in our society. They also knew that people bring very different backgrounds, experiences and expectations to the educational process. And therefore they had to be far-reaching in their thoughts. They had to be willing to take some risks about what it meant to be an educator.

And so, then as now, you would find in this institution people who were on the front lines of educational research and practice. That commitment which you began with, you carry on today. And we see it in the work of Columbia's Teachers College. We see it in the results that your graduates are able to achieve. We see it in the ways that help to change and shape institutions. We see it in the partnerships that you have created with schools, particularly

here in New York City. You've initiated writing projects. You've helped to transform professional development courses. You've mentored first-year teachers. You have worked very hard to make sure that the promise of education within these ivy-covered walls doesn't just stay inside, safe from any challenges, but instead walks out into the bright sunlight—into every street, into every school—to bring the message of change, of justice, of possibility.

The collaborations that you have helped to pioneer between Teachers College and city schools are really creating positive results. And that's important. Because there is a lot of rhetoric about education these days that doesn't necessarily hold up under the scrutiny of research and objective concern. So what you have done is create a database. You created research designs. You've been honest in looking at what works and what doesn't work. And we need that more than ever.

I don't think it is an exaggeration to say that, just as at the beginning of the founding of this institution, today we face serious challenges. Not only to how we will educate all children, but whether we will remain committed to public education. Will we be willing to do what is necessary to continue to support the changes, the reforms, the practices, that will guarantee that 100 years from today someone can still stand in an auditorium here—or more likely a virtual auditorium somewhere—and say that Columbia's Teachers College has continued to make its contributions to a strong, dynamic, vital public education system?

Now there are many stories, as well as research data, that one could compile and tell about why it's important that our country, in particular, remain devoted to public education. That we not give in to the naysayers who point fingers and place blame about what does and does not happen inside our public schools. But that instead we honestly, realistically look at what we do right, and what we need to improve on, and how we can better provide possibility for every child. But without giving an inch in the overall debate about why it is critical that we maintain the strongest possible public education system that we can have here in the United States at the end of this century.

Now I am privileged to travel to many different countries and visit with many different people. And I have become convinced over all of those travels that one of the great reasons that the United States has been successful and remains successful is because of our public education system. And when I talk about success, I am not merely talking about economic or monetary success. I am talking about how we have, through fits and starts and difficulties over our entire history, maintained this unusual experiment in democracy. How we have welcomed to our shores and integrated into our society people from all backgrounds, cultures, walks of life, races, religions and ethnicities. If we need to be reminded of how essential it is that we still invest in and believe in common institutions that help to fill the public space that defines who we are as citizens, we have only to look around our world today.

I remember being in Belfast, Northern Ireland, with a group of women who we had helped to bring together—Protestants and Catholics who had never been in a room with each other before. They had never listened to each other talk in any personal setting. And slowly, as they traded personal stories and experiences, they began to say what you and I would think of as commonplace. One would say to the other, "I didn't know you felt that way." Or, "I had no idea that's how you people acted and thought." All of this time that had gone by, with all of the troubles that had been endured, and there had been so much separation—there was no opportunity to listen.

And I particularly remember, at the end of one of the workshops, a woman saying to me, "We have a very big obstacle to lasting peace in Northern Ireland, and that is that our children have never gone to school together. There's a separate school system for Protestants and a separate school system for Catholics. And our children don't play together; they don't learn together. And insofar as it's been possible, when they grow up,

they don't live or work together either." And she went on to say, "We will never have a unified, peaceful society if we don't have a public education system that is open to and encourages children from all backgrounds."

I think about that when I look at what's happening in Kosovo. You know, here in America it is easy for us to sometimes just shrug our shoulders and roll our eyes, isn't it? We say, "My goodness, these people are still fighting over things that happened 600 years ago. How can that be?"

Well one of the reasons it can be is that all sides to whatever historical event happened 600, 500, 200 years ago have kept alive the grievances and the problems that they feel are left unsolved and put them in a position of disadvantage—to the extent that their schools teach a brand of history that goes unquestioned because there's no one else sitting in the classrooms to question them. If there's a particular ethnic view of history, and the teacher is promoting that and the children are dutifully writing it down, and there's no one to say, "But that's not what I'm taught at home. Maybe we should have a discussion about that." Imagine how unlike that is in the classrooms of the public schools of America.

Now for many of you who are teachers, you may wish that it was a little more like that, because you can hardly get a word in edgewise sometimes when you start talking in front of a group of young people from many different backgrounds, all of whom have been perhaps told something at home or watched a certain version of an event on TV, and somebody else has a different or contrary point of view. But it is through that debate, it is through that dialogue, that discussion among differences, that people have to work out what it means to be citizens in a democracy. You cannot expect to maintain a democracy that requires debate and compromise among strongly held and often opposing viewpoints if people have not been given that opportunity to work with and understand and relate to and, yes, I hope, respect difference as they are coming through their own educational experience.

So the public education system, which you here at this college have been devoted to improving, is one that all of us have to be willing to stand up and support. Yet we know that our public schools are, in many places, under great challenge. And there are many reasons for that—more than we could possibly discuss in one lecture, but which you study and worry about here at the college. But the bottom line is that when our public schools do not work, and do not prepare to the highest possible standard the girls and boys entrusted to them, then several things happen.

One, those young men and women are not prepared for this changing environment. Just as the immigrants who came in the great tidal waves of immigration at the end of the last century and the beginning of this one had to be in some way helped to understand what it would be like to live in this new society, to acquire skills that would be useful in the marketplace here; so—as we face not the Industrial Age but the Information Age—do the young men and women from all walks of life, from every background—whether they've been here for many generations or just recently arrived—have to be prepared and challenged as well. So we don't do any service to the young men and women whom we hope to educate if they are not prepared.

Secondly, if our public schools don't work, it gives ammunition to those who don't want them to work for many different reasons which I think are shortsighted and unfortunate. Because they would, as I believe, undermine what everyone in this country has come to take for granted: our blessings—despite our difficulties—a social stability and economic prosperity and opportunity for those who are prepared to seek it. And the undermining of the public education system leads to an undermining of the public good—that intangible something that keeps us all connected together. That prepares the ground for all of us to meet despite our differences and disagreements.

So it is not only an issue of individual children and the impact it has on their lives and the

impact it has on the economy with respect to future workers and citizens. But it also betrays our capacity to continue to support those public institutions that are vital for our common future.

So therefore, how do we face those issues of justice and possibility that should be addressed? And what kind of framework do we use to try to have common ground among us about what needs to be done in order to promote the best possible outcomes for the greatest number of students in our public schools? Well, clearly, if you see the challenges as I do—of unleashing the potential, the possibility, and Ken and Jill's title, within every human being, every little boy and girl who was up here singing for us—then we can't be complacent and we can't just continue to do what we've always done if it doesn't work. And we have to do a better job of presenting the legitimate needs of our public schools, and particularly our public school teachers, to the broader community. And we have to enlist more allies, and we have to be sure that parents understand their role and responsibility as well.

Now over the years, I've heard many different ways of expressing what we should be doing with our public schools. But I must say that the simple mantra that is used at Public School #1 here in Manhattan, I think states it as well as any treatise I've ever read. Here's what it says: "All children can learn... No exceptions... No excuses."

Now if you think about that, that is a revolutionary and profoundly American statement. There are not many cultures who would say it, and far fewer who would mean it if they did say it. There are great groups of children all over this world who are written off from the moment of birth—or maybe at the age of 11, or maybe at the age of 14 or 17—when it comes to education. So by our commitment to this very simple value that all children can learn, we are already starting from a breathtakingly revolutionary point. Because we know that children learn differently. We know that some come with the nature/nurture combination that make them destined for educational success whether we do anything or not, to be honest. And we know that some have so many problems that it doesn't seem possible that any group of dedicated teachers in the best school in the entire country could make much of a dent. Yet we have to believe that. Because by believing it, we are constantly poised to do everything possible to make it as real as we can. And that requires re-imagining.

I have been privileged to be involved with re-imagining the education system for quite a number of years. Jill mentioned one of my earliest experiences—first as a law student working for the Children's Defense Fund, and then as a lawyer working for the Children's Defense Fund. We were concerned about children who were dropped out, kicked out, or never entered into the public school system. We did an extensive survey. And I did, as Jill said, actually knock on doors and go into people's homes. Because we looked at Census track data from the 1970 Census, and we looked at school enrollment, and we saw this great discrepancy. Where were all these children that were of school age? They certainly weren't in the schools in many states. And by going door to door, I personally saw a lot of the obstacles that thankfully we have reduced—not completely eliminated.

But just think, it wasn't that long ago that children with even the slightest handicap were not welcomed anywhere in school. I remember going into a small apartment and a child had a very bright and eager look on her face, but she was confined to a wheel chair and had never been to school.

Not only the physical disabilities that were in many ways minor and other ways more profound, but in every case eliminated public school enrollment, but many social and family problems as well. In an immigrant community that I knocked on doors, there were children who were taken out of school when they turned 10 or 11 to help in whatever the family business was, or to care for younger children. So there were many reasons why justice was not served, and we began to try to remedy that by legislation and by education of public

officials, parents, and others.

I had a further chance to re-imagine education when my husband asked me to chair a committee in Arkansas aimed at improving the educational system there. And that too was an incredibly eye-opening personal experience for me. Because I didn't just meet with people who were already convinced of the problems and the inadequacies. But I traveled to school districts, I met with all kinds of groups of people, and I saw that there was a real disconnect between some of the expectations that parents and teachers held, and some of the realities about what children would face when they left the protected environment of those small community schools.

Because of the hard work of a lot of people and the leadership that my husband gave, we began to create alliances with businesses to improve public schools. We began encouraging parents to do more to understand what it meant to have a true education that would make a difference. We put in systems of accountability. We tried very hard to raise expectations across the board, and to try to say in a united way that we were not doing any of our children any favors by not having high expectations for them and not providing the means through which they could realize those high expectations. That worked. It was going on in Arkansas. It was simultaneously going on in a number of states all over the country because of the Nation At Risk report back in 1983 that flatly declared we were committing unilateral disarmament because we were not doing what needed to be done to keep our schools performing at the level that that generation of students required.

And then for only the third time in our history, the president—President Bush then—convened an Education Summit in Charlottesville, Va. And my husband was one of the co-chairs. They came together with what was also a revolutionary concept: that we ought to have national standards. And those national standards would be useful for states and localities and even classrooms to have a better idea of how to measure themselves in terms of what they were achieving. Because there were many people around our country, and still are, who didn't know quite what it was they were supposed to measure up to.

What was the benchmark? It's fine to talk about standards, but what does that mean if you're in a poor school district, on an Indian reservation, or in an inner-city? And you're told that this is what you're supposed to do, but you don't really know how you're supposed to get there. So that began a national effort, and when my husband became president, he set to work with another former governor, Dick Riley, who he made secretary of Education, to support national goals—and to help schools, teachers, and students meet them.

Now we've made progress, I believe. Among the President's, and certainly the Administration's, proudest achievements in the first term were Goals 2000 and the 1994 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Because really, from the national level, you don't have all that many tools. You have the bully pulpit, and you do have the federal legislation that provides a very small amount of direction and money for the states and the cities. But if we didn't try to do what we could at that level, then how could we influence what went on further down the line?

So the idea was to go ahead and set goals. And for the first time, Goals 2000 required states to establish academic standards and develop assessments aligned to those standards. The newly revised Title I built on that requirement by mandating that states use these standards for disadvantaged students, thus ending the practice of setting lower expectations for low-income students.

I recall very well speaking to a group of school superintendents from a number of states back in the early 80s. And I was asking them if they had had an opportunity to keep up on any of the research that could perhaps give them guidance about how to set and implement higher standards. And their basic response was that they just couldn't keep up with all that because they were just trying to keep things going at home.

And I knew of one school district that, through the help of some foundations and enlightened schools of education, had transformed the entire district in the way that it related to kids and what it expected of them. And I remember saying to these superintendents, "Well, have any of you thought about maybe traveling to district so-and-so, and spending the day and seeing what they're doing and maybe getting some help from them?" And I'll never forget this one superintendent looked at me and said, "You know, that just wouldn't work in my district. Our people just don't expect that sort of thing. They know that most of our kids won't go to college, and there's just no point in getting all excited about it."

And I said to him, "Well, how do you know that every child yet unenrolled in your school district won't want to go to college? You're making decisions that not only set low expectations, but set insurmountable obstacles because you're not providing the kind of curriculum and challenge that these kids need to be able to go on."

So Goals 2000 said, "Here are some standards, and here are some ways that you can meet them. And you have to make sure they're equally applicable to poor, disadvantaged students."

These two reforms fundamentally changed the federal role in elementary and secondary education. In the past our system had too often supported, and even encouraged, a two-tiered education system that did have and was satisfied with low expectations for poor children. And over the past six years, we have been working very hard to dismantle that unequal and unjust system. And I think throughout the country, we've begun to see some results.

Now the most important ingredient in seeing those results is the quality and dedication of the teachers who are asked to try to meet those standards. There isn't any argument that there is no more important ingredient. And if we do not do more to support and respect and understand and, yes, pay better our public school teachers, much of our hopes will not be realized.

We have learned that standards-based education reform that puts teachers in a position of authority and respect actually works. A recent study of education reform in North Carolina—which has one of the best track records of improving achievement generally and closing racial achievement gaps—shows us how it can be done, particularly for disadvantaged students: you need to have a sustained commitment to raising academic standards. And that is critical. Not a commitment that comes and goes with different superintendents, or is viewed as some kind of a fad, but one that is truly incorporated into the operation, ongoing, of a school system. We need to provide schools with the flexibility to target resources to help low-performing students, and hold schools accountable for their results.

A few weeks ago the government released new data that tells us our nation's reading scores are up for the first time in all three grade levels that are tested—4th, 8th and 12th. Our achievement scores are up for math and science. SAT scores are once again heading in the right direction—with the largest gains in mathematics. For the first time in history, SAT and ACT scores have increased each year for the past five years.

Now because we have seen these signs of success, and because we can look at states like North Carolina and districts that have made the sustained commitment, we have a much better idea of what we need to do to help fulfill the possibility of every student.

The President has laid out a bold strategy for the future. Because once again we have the opportunity to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and through this process, we can, we believe, continue to push forward on the agenda of justice and

possibility equated with high expectations and results.

Now the three-part strategy that is going to be employed with respect to this authorization is to first provide federal support to help improve teacher quality. Second, target increased investments to disadvantaged children with particular attention to the early years of schooling. And third, promote real accountability for results.

John Sanford, the late superintendent of the Seattle school system said, "The victory is in the classroom." And there is no doubt in anyone's mind that that victory only comes because you've got a dedicated, qualified teacher in that classroom. And certainly, I would argue and I think any fair assessment would agree, that the vast majority of our teachers are both dedicated and qualified. But that doesn't mean that they are always given the support they need or the encouragement they desire to improve their skills, to have opportunities that are not just meaningless workshops, but sustained professional development that enable them to translate into action what they want to do for their students.

Today the President, back at the White House, honored the 1999 Teacher of the Year, a gentleman from Georgia, Andy Baumgartner, who—I love this description—is an ex-Marine who now teaches kindergarten. And some would argue that that is probably one of the best qualifications for teaching kindergarten these days. But he was honored because of the dedication and the quality and the imagination that he brings to his classroom. And we could honor so many countless other teachers. But in order to do that, we have to make sure we fulfill our obligations to our teachers, that they are provided with the support they need through training and other means.

Let's be very frank. Many teachers teach subjects for which they lack adequate preparation. Fully one quarter of secondary school teachers do not even hold a minor in their main teaching field. And that number is even higher in schools with high proportions of disadvantaged students.

We have to do a better job of creating an environment in which state licensing is based on demonstrated performance, knowledge of subject matter, teaching skills. And there are examples all around that we can look to if we can persuade states and districts to really value that kind of preparation and continuing professional development.

The President's ESEA proposal will require states and school districts to phase out out-of-field assignments and emergency certification. We want to send a message that we really encourage school districts to put the resources into recruiting and retaining teachers who are fully qualified to teach the subjects they are assigned to teach by the districts. That sounds like a tautology. But if you look at the data, indeed it seems not to be connected at all in the administration of school districts all over our country.

The reauthorization legislation will also ask states to adopt performance examinations for new teachers requiring demonstration of subject matter knowledge and teaching expertise, and will provide federal resources to help teachers meet those goals. Now because of retirement, we will need to hire up to 2 million new teachers over the next 10 years. Now there are those who say it can't be done; but I believe it can if we do more to improve the opportunities and the teaching conditions for teachers. If we adopt new strategies to recruit talented candidates; if we show respect for our teachers; and if we provide the financing that teachers need to do their jobs.

One of the ways we have been planning to try to recruit more people into teaching is to get the word out to as many people in as many different settings as possible—from the Marine Corps to the Peace Corps—that teaching is an exciting, satisfying profession, and that our attitudes—our national attitudes—toward the importance of teaching and education are beginning to really turn around. After a period of, I think, unfair, unnecessary, unwarranted teacher bashing in too many quarters, we are finally back to a more sensible position, saying

clearly that teachers are the most important resources we have if we expect education to work in America. And in order to do that, we need school boards, administrators, unions, and the entire community to work together to make sure that the best interest of students are the top priority, and that the interest of teachers are understood as absolutely linked to meeting that top priority.

Now there is a lot of interesting discussion among a lot of my friends who are teachers about what has been the reaction in the last several years as people have said, "Well, we need more professional development." I cannot tell you how many times I have been told about the totally useless, one-shot workshops that last a half a day, that are required for teachers to attend, that have absolutely no relevance to their subject matter or the classroom environment. We do not need one-shot, for-profit, faddish workshops. We need a program of serious, sustained development based on research that works, which is relevant to a teacher's classroom needs. And in order to do that, we should use that data that has been collected at places of excellence like Teachers College to design such programs. And the President has proposed a fund of $1.2 billion for true professional development activities.

We also believe it is imperative to reduce class size, particularly in the elementary grades. We're very pleased that Congress last year, at the very end of the Congressional session, made a down payment toward the goal of hiring 100,000 new teachers. But we have a lot of work to do if we are really going to fulfill that promise. And it's not just something that teachers tell us is a good idea. We know, based on research, it works. You would probably know more about the latest research than any of us who could come and talk to you, but I know that study after study over the last few years has confirmed that schools having a smaller classroom teacher-student relationship really does make a difference.

A recent five-year study of Milwaukee schools confirms that schools having a 17-1 student-teacher ratio outperform not only students in the public schools, but also those students who received vouchers under the Wisconsin plan to go outside the public school system.

Small class size is also good for teachers, not just students. I have been in classrooms where a single teacher is attempting to teach 25, 30, 35 students, and it is a daunting task that some teachers, yes, can handle very well. But most teachers, with the variety of students and learning levels and backgrounds and languages and many other differences that our young people bring into our schools confront a teacher with, find it very difficult to give all the students the attention they need.

The Administration also supports the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards to create, as it has been since 1987, a national voluntary system to assess and certify teachers who meet higher standards. But, of course, we believe that if a teacher goes through that voluntary system, that teacher ought to be rewarded with higher compensation for having demonstrated the professional competence that the voluntary system at the Board requires.

So we're not there yet in terms of systems in place to give teachers the kind of support they need, but we have some good examples and models that we need to build on.

We also, very much, have to make a point, as I mentioned earlier, of helping our teachers have classrooms of students who are ready to learn. It is incredibly difficult for many teachers to stay in the profession in the face of the needs of students they know they can not meet. That is why we lose every year large numbers of teachers in their first, second or third year of teaching, who feel somewhat lost, unmentored and overwhelmed by the needs that their children bring in. I have met so many people who started out as teachers, and wanted to stay as teachers, but didn't feel that they were given the support, and they certainly weren't given the compensation that they could easily find if they shut the door on those kids and walked across the street to push some paper and perform another task. It was a lot less demanding, but far more remunerative.

Until we clearly state that we will only have as good an education system as our teachers can make it, if we can recruit and retain vital, dynamic, intelligent, dedicated individuals, then we will not have done all we can to make sure our public school system not only survives, but flourishes. And as we raise standards, we ought to raise salaries as well.

I also believe that it is a simple question of justice as to how well prepared children are for school. The disparity among children begins even before birth when a mother's access to prenatal care can make the difference between a healthy baby and one who will suffer lifelong disabilities. We now know from brain research what happens in those first three years of life as a child is either stimulated and those brain cells multiply and those synapses connect, or a child is not. It's very important that we continue to do what we can to provide better pre-school opportunities for as many children as possible. That is why I have supported increased federal support for programs such as home visiting, for Head Start, for child care, for early Head Start. And I'm pleased that we've made some progress, but we still have a long way to go to ensure that every child is school ready.

And there are many challenges to school readiness, and again, you know them well, those of you who are students and teachers here at Teachers College. But just some of them that we need again to be honest about and confront. We still have not done the job that we need to do to persuade parents, particularly parents with limited educations themselves, that they must do all they can to encourage the highest expectations and the best performing schools for their children. We still have far too high a dropout rate among some of our communities. We have closed the dropout rate and the high school graduation rate for African-American students. And I am very proud, because that was a concerted effort by families, communities, educators. But we have not done a good job closing that gap with Hispanic students who still drop out at a very high rate. Or with Native American students who have probably the highest dropout rates of any population right now in our country.

So parents must be more committed. And we have to give parents the tools to act on the commitment. That's why reaching them in the early years, giving them the opportunity to know what they can do to help their own children, understanding how simple things like telling stories and reading books can help prepare their child for school—that is the kind of investment we should be making in families. We know that if we target parents, we can make a difference. And we know if we target low-performing students we can break the cycle—so that if students don't have the help they need before school, they need to get it once they enter school. And if there are many, many students in a school which leads to a low performing school, then we should make sure we do all we can to help turn that school around.

And there are a lot of plans and proposals for that. The President's proposal is to require states to identify the schools with the lowest achievement levels that will then be required to take corrective action. I have been in too many schools, and I know many of you have, where you can tell when you walk in the door what the attitude is, can't you? You can walk in a school in one part of a city, and you can walk in a school not very far away where the kids come from the same socioeconomic and racial backgrounds. But in one school, learning is happening. And in another school, there's a feeling of just being in a dead end. I have been in public schools where I have seen sixth graders sitting at their desks doing workbooks that have been erased and crossed over because they were so old and there was not money to buy new ones for the increase in the student population. And they're not even workbooks that challenge an 11- or 12-year-old. And I've been in the same kinds of schools not very far away where the sixth graders are alive with learning and energy, because there is that commitment and that understanding of what it takes. And there are still too many schools that are not performing well, and nobody is holding them accountable. And the teachers I know who are assigned to those schools, they shut their door in September and they hope nobody interferes with their kids so they can let them out in June and hopefully they will have learned something. But they get no help, no encouragement, no challenge

from that school or from the community it serves.

Now that leads me to an issue that I alluded to earlier, and that is: What do we do about creating more competition, more challenge, more encouragement within the public school system? Well, I believe strongly in giving parents more choices in selecting their public schools. I believe that charter schools and magnet schools are making a difference. Not only for the students and teachers they serve, but for the systems in which they operate. By giving schools greater flexibility and freedom, they can experiment with new approaches and still be held accountable.

When the President came into office, there was one independent, public charter school in America. Now there are 1,100. We hope there will be 3,000. And much of the reason for that hope rests in districts and examples like East Harlem, the first public school choice system. That district was ranked last, as many of you know, when it adopted public school choice over 20 years ago. It is now still performing better than schools in New York City with similar concentrations of poverty. I've seen it in other cities. I've seen the kind of change that can happen when teachers are empowered, when citizens feel obligated to once again be part of the public education commitment.

We need to make sure that as we move forward, we have greater accountability, we have higher standards, we have greater public school choice, and we do not allow ourselves to be pulled off track by false debates, particularly by those who claim that using public money for vouchers for private schools are a solution to improving public education and fixing failing schools. At a time when we are beginning to see the fruits of the labor of many people over the last two decades to turn schools around, to understand the mix of socioeconomic and racial characteristics with teacher and learning characteristics and community support; when we are beginning to really unwrap that and understand it. We need to fix our public schools, not abandon them. And as a result I hope the re-imagining of education that Jill and Ken have asked us to do and that will be the theme of this lecture series is truly committed to both of the goals they set: justice and possibility.

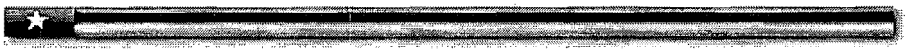
Now all of us know that schools by themselves—no matter how well staffed, no matter how many resources—can not, in and of themselves, give any child a world-class education. We as a nation, we as communities, we as citizens, not only must hold our schools accountable, we must hold ourselves accountable. What is it we will do to help schools succeed? What is it we will do to encourage parents to believe in the importance of education and to support their schools, their teachers, and most importantly, their children? What is it we will do to persuade businesses to really make an investment in the schools that will provide them an educated, skilled workforce? What is it we can do to sound our voices together on behalf of the value of public education, and on behalf of the changes that are transforming schools all over this nation?

We can never take for granted that America's public school system is a cornerstone of our democracy. And the interdependent world of the next century requires constantly expanding knowledge—at its base, not just at its elite top. Failure to spread that knowledge not only perpetuates injustice, but injures our common potential for growth, prosperity and social stability.

America's greatest markets for future opportunity are right here at home in our inner-cities, in our rural communities, in our aging suburbs. Their hopes, and our hope, begin with a constantly revitalizing dynamic system of public education. Yes, the maintenance and reform of the public school system is not for the faint hearted. It requires imagination and daring, commitment and experimentation, resources. But standing here in front of all of you who are part of this great institution of teaching and learning, I'm absolutely convinced we are on the right track if we will sustain our commitment, if we will learn from one another, if we will be unafraid to change what does not work and adopt what does. We can do no less, not only for our children, but for the future we hope to share together in the kind of

America we value in the years to come.

Thank you very much.



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Albert Shanker Award for Distinguished Service
New York State United Teachers

Remarks by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
Niagara Falls, New York
April 22, 1999

Thank you very much, Tom [Hobart, Jr., president of the New York State United Teachers]. I am deeply honored and moved by this award. I feel very grateful to you for your leadership and to all those who lead with you and to all who are assembled here for your commitment and dedication to the causes in which we believe so strongly--our children's future, a nation of which we can be proud citizens--and for your willingness to meet the responsibilities that each of us has to do our part to make certain that those objectives can be realized.

I am delighted to be here in his district with Congressman John LeFalce and with Randi Weingarten [president, United Federation of Teachers] and Sandy Feldman [president, American Federation of Teachers]. I want to recognize and thank each of them. I also want to recognize all of the officers and executive committee who are here. And I congratulate the Niagara Falls All City Marching Band. You are a beautiful sight over there in your red and white uniforms.

This is the second time I have been in this convention center. I was here before on important matters relating to health and education, and I am particularly pleased to be back here among people who are so committed. Each of you who represents your constituency--as classroom teachers, college and university faculty and staff, school bus drivers, custodians, secretaries, cafeteria workers, teachers' assistants and aides, nurses, health care technicians--all of you are really on the front lines of caring for people, particularly young people. I am personally very grateful for what you do every day. Sometimes we take for granted the work that you know has to be done to help encourage a young person , to bind up his or her hurt feelings or resolve a problem that is even worse. I for one as well as the President know how essential the services you perform are.

I also know that we stand here in large measure because of the leadership of an extraordinary man. Al Shanker is someone whom we should be celebrating all of the time. Because he, in his inimitable way, caused us all to look at education--the future of our country--in a different way. For more than fifteen years, I had the opportunity to work with him on various issues. I considered him, of course, a remarkable union organizer. But he was also a world leader and a true friend. He had real courage to stand up and be counted--sometimes when it was not popular, often when he knew that the stand he would take would be controversial even with people he cared about and sometimes represented. He showed that courage in so many ways, from the voter registration drives in the South, to the fight for collective bargaining for public workers, to the arguments he eloquently made about raising standards in our public schools. He reminded Americans time and time again that our public schools are the very bedrock of our democracy and that anyone who forgot that or anyone who wished to undermine that was doing a grave disservice to democracy in America as we have known it and as we have learned to appreciate it.

I was privileged to speak at Columbia University Teachers College earlier this week, and I said there what I would say again. The public education system of America is one of the essential reasons that America is what it is today. You cannot feel good about our country as we end this century if you cannot understand the fundamental role that public schools have played in giving us not only the resources and the opportunities that we enjoy, but also in making it possible for us to come together in our diversity and to appreciate our commonality.

So each of you who is here as a teacher or an employee of a public school or an institution of public higher education is doing what you can do to make sure that not only our education system is successful, but also that America continues to offer that dream of potential to every young person.

Al Shanker would remind us that we cannot be complacent. We cannot rest on our past laurels if we are to ensure that education is always up to the standards we need it to be. As we move into a new economy with new challenges, it requires each of us to ask hard questions. I recall very well when the national report, A Nation at Risk, came out in 1983, and it made some very controversial claims. It flatly stated that we were committing what it called "unilateral disarmament" because we were not doing what we needed to do to create world-class schools. Both my husband and I noticed that Al Shanker was the first union leader in the country to come out and say, "This report is a good thing. We have a lot of work to do, and we are going to roll up our sleeves and get about the business of doing the work." I have seen the results of his leadership and your work as I have been privileged to visit schools throughout our country.

I was planning to give a very different speech tonight than the one that I will give. I was going to come here and talk about the progress we have made together with thanks, in large part, to the leadership of people like Al and Tom and Sandy and others, and the incredible effort and creativity that you have brought to establishing standards-based education reform and putting teachers once again in a position of authority and respect.

I was also going to talk about how in some of our most distressed neighborhoods I have seen schools that are turning around and giving their students the opportunities those young people deserve. But how I, along with all of you, still see many situations in which children who are poor or of color or of some other background--that are in some way left out of that educational advancement--are still falling behind.

And I wanted to talk with you about what we still needed to do to make sure that quality education was available to every child in America. At Teachers College I quoted the motto of a public school in Manhattan, PS Number One. It is a very simple motto that every child can learn: No excuses. No exceptions. And that is what you have been attempting to prove in the efforts that you have been making.

I was also going to thank you for the role that you have played in demonstrating that we can make tangible improvements. Our nation's reading scores are up for the first time in all three grade levels. We have made progress across the board in math and science. We see the SAT and ACT scores going up. So we have a lot to show on paper that you and the students and the communities here in New York, and indeed around America, are really getting results.

I also wanted to talk about the Administration's plans to build on this progress by putting 100,000 more teachers into classrooms to lower classroom size so that teachers can give their students the attention they need. I wanted to talk about how we do need to target more investments to disadvantaged children; and promote accountability for results; and focus on teacher quality improvements like real professional staff development and not the one-day, one-shot workshops that you have to attend. I also wanted to talk about how publicly funded vouchers are not the answer to any problem in our public schools.

These are all very important discussions, and I hope that I will have many opportunities to talk with you further about every one of these matters, and to hear from you about what is on your minds about how we can form a better partnership at all levels--not only of government but of society as well--to make sure that the goals we share in common can be realized. In coming here tonight, I know that my heavy heart is not the only one in this great hall. I thank Tom for his moment of silence, because I think our thoughts and prayers are

with people thousands of miles away--the families, the teachers, the students, the law enforcement officials, the citizens of Littleton, Colorado who have lost so many beloved members of their community. This terrible tragedy has put our entire nation into mourning, and it reminds us once again that everything in life pales in comparison to our ability to keep our children safe and out of harm's way.

I have talked with a lot of people in the last 48 hours and each of them has expressed a sense of helplessness and sometimes even hopelessness. They ask, "What can we do? How do we talk to our own children? How do we reach out to the people of Littleton to let them know that we are thinking of them and standing with them?"

My husband went to a school today and talked with students and listened to what was on their minds. He reminded them, as I have reminded others, that there is no way to explain or even understand a tragedy such as this. But we have to try. And we have to recognize that we are not helpless or hopeless. There are steps we can take, ways we can try to prevent such tragedies from ever happening again. All we have to do is to look at the people of Littleton to remind ourselves of how good our country fundamentally is. I saw the lines of men and women waiting for hours to give blood, turning out for vigils, and donating money to help with long-term counseling. I thank you, Tom, for your donation to the healing process. Local hotels are providing free rooms for family members of victims who have rushed to Littleton. Clergy, teachers and psychologists are gathering from all over the state to comfort parents and students. So we can see, even now, that in the face of this terrible tragedy people are not helpless or hopeless.

But we have to do more than just reflect on what has happened in Littleton. And again, I turn to Al Shanker. I think about how in 1995 he announced on behalf of the AFT [American Federation of Teachers] a national campaign to argue for safe and orderly schools with rigorous academic standards. He knew, as all of you know, that we had to do the best we could to provide a safe and orderly environment in all of our schools.

Now I am not sure that many of us would have pictured in our minds--when we first heard Al Shanker say that or read his column promoting that--the school in Littleton, would we? We would have had a very different picture about where the problems were, where the violence occurred, the kinds of kids involved. What this spate of school shootings and killings of the last two-and-a-half years have proven, if we ever needed to be reminded, is that there is no community that can afford to think it is immune from what happens in the larger society.

We also need no more powerful reminder that every single day our teachers are on the front lines in our schools. Even as the bullets whizzed around them, the teachers at Columbine High School never forgot their responsibilities to the students in their care. They risked their lives to shield their students and help lead them to safety. One teacher, William David Sanders, gave his life to protect his students. And two teachers were wounded.

So as we gather here tonight, I want to commend this union for being at the vanguard of the movement to stop the violence and to create safe schools where all children are ready and able to learn. And yet I am not sure that we have really absorbed the lessons you have been trying to teach us. We know that most schools in America are safe. They are, in fact, often the safest place that children can be in a community. I do not need to tell you that they are not islands cut off from the rest of society. No school security system can keep society out of the school house door. When a tragedy like Littleton happens, too often the immediate response is a lot of finger pointing. The gun lobby points at the media. The media points back at the gun lobby. Parents point at the schools. And everyone points at the parents. I do not think that is a very useful exercise.

There are reasons why the young men have made so well known the names of their towns--Littleton and Jonesboro and Paducah and Springfield and Pearl. There are reasons why these

events have happened, and there are ways we can better try to prepare ourselves to intervene and prevent them in the future. There is no way to outline completely all of the factors that go into what we have seen with the two young men in Littleton. But there is no escaping the fact that there is responsibility for all of us to fulfill. I believe, as I said in my book, that it takes a village, because I think that all of us have to be willing to accept our share of responsibility for the raising of our children. There were some who criticized me and said, "No, it is only parents." Of course parents are the primary and foremost influences in their children's lives. There is nothing that can, in any way, overtake parental responsibility in the understanding of what motivates and shapes children. But parents do not act in a vacuum. Children are not raised in test tubes. They are influenced by all that goes on around them. And those of us who have lived long enough know enough circumstances where the family does not seem to have played the major role in the creation of the problem that we can see in a young person. So we have to be thoughtful about how we understand the various factors at work and the responsibilities each of us should be taking.

There are a few points that I would like to see us make. I would ask you, who understand more about these issues than most people in our society, to join with me and others in trying to present a clearer picture of what needs to be done. Here are just some thoughts I would like to share with you.

We held a White House Conference on School Safety last October. We brought together parents and teachers, law enforcement officials, religious leaders, elected office holders, child advocates --everyone we could imagine who had a direct stake in contributing to the safety and well-being of our children. We looked at all the experts' opinions and the research about school violence.

Out of that came a guide to safe schools called Early Warning, Timely Response that was issued jointly by the Attorney General and the Secretary of Education. The report was sent to every school district. It would not surprise any veteran teacher to know what it contained in terms of what we should be looking for if we are going to try to intervene and help young people to avoid violence.

I do not know how many of these brochures actually ended up in the hands of teachers, but we are going to be sending out more to try to give those on the front lines, the teachers, the arguments and the support that they need to be able to get the resources that are required to do the job you know needs to be done. We do not have enough resources available to most of our schools to take care of the problems that teachers identify among students. We have got to do a better job of creating more psychological counseling resources, social work counseling resources, and other support services.

I have friends who are teachers--and I am sure this is an experience some of you have had--who have had to work for countless hours and days to try to find some help for a student that they know is likely to hurt himself or others. It is often a lonely and frustrating search. So the community and the school system have to be more willing to provide the support and the resources so that when the alarm bells go off in your heads, you have somebody you can turn to. I hope we will begin to focus on that and have a national response, but we will need your leadership and voice in order to achieve that.

We also have to find some ways for students to make referrals--anonymously, if necessary--so they can bring to teachers' and administrators' attention what they know is happening among some of their peers. I would like to see in every community some kind of hotline, some kind of number that can be called, both to report concerns and to seek help, and a referral service that can really back up the referrals with the services that are needed.

We are attempting in this Administration to provide more support for people with mental illness, and we have dramatically increased the funding for children's mental health services. I want to thank my friend, Tipper Gore, who has been a real champion of mental

health for everyone, particularly for children. We will not make the progress we need until we treat mental illness just as seriously as physical illness and provide the resources to treat it. We know there is a lot of confusion, alienation, and just plain growing-up adolescent angst out there. Some of it is just normal development, and some of it is more serious than that. So we do have to begin to make a distinction, and have enough trained people to treat and counsel those whom we believe are in trouble.

We also have to stand up and say what needs to be said about guns and firearms and bombs. We know that young people will have disagreements, arguments, even fights. We know that adolescents have problems with impulse control. Why on earth would we permit any young person to have access to the kind of firearms that these two young men brought into that school?

In preparation for the White House Conference on School Safety and Violence, we had a roundtable discussion with a lot of very accomplished people--experts and researchers. And I will never forget the comment that one of them made. He said, "You know, I've studied the attitudes and the psychological profiles of young people in many different societies around the world. And I believe that the single biggest difference why our rate of violence is higher than others is because we have so many weapons that are easily available." Unless you take away that capacity to immediately discharge those feelings, to use that weapon against others instead of learning how to deal with your own emotions, we know too well the results.

Now some have still argued against the need for sensible gun control, but we can see the results. When my husband stood up against the gun lobby and fought for the Brady Bill, there were those who said it would not make any difference, it would just interfere with the right of Americans to have access to weapons. Well today we can look back. Since the Brady Bill was enacted, 250,000 felons, fugitives and stalkers have been denied handguns, and I am grateful that they have.

The President will be sending crime legislation to the Congress shortly. In it he is going to ask the Congress to extend the Brady Bill so that young people who commit serious and violent offenses cannot ever purchase handguns when they become adults, and also to ask that child safety locks be put on all guns, and to raise the penalties for juveniles who possess handguns and for adults who illegally transfer them to young people. We should hold people who allow children easy access to firearms criminally responsible for their reckless actions when children get access to their guns.

We also have to recognize something else. Why is it, in addition to the accessibility of these weapons, that a young American can take one and turn it on his fellow classmates, and then on himself? We also have to be willing to stand up and talk about the culture of violence that infects the lives of our children. You can no any longer argue against the research findings that started with the Surgeon General's report in 1972 and have continued unabated from this country and others that the constant exposure to violence--on television, in the movies, in the video games, in the music--does not have an effect on the way children see themselves and others. There is just too much evidence that children are desensitized, they lose empathy. There is increasing concern about the impact on vulnerable young people of video games that are interactive and that you win based on how many people you kill.

I was reading about a study that discussed what needed to be done in the military to prepare people to overcome the natural inhibition that most humans feel about killing another human being. The military often has to work very hard to prepare people to be on the front lines. How do they do it? By repetitive practice. By target shooting where the targets look like people. By creating an instantaneous, habitual reaction, much as we see in these video games.

In the last five years we have had an additional concern raised by the Internet. And again,

we are getting increasingly worried about the access that children have on the Internet to all kinds of information and propaganda and how difficult it is to mediate between them and the information or to control their access to it. Now in the last several years we have tried in various ways to empower parents and other responsible adults so that they can be the ones to be those mediators. That is the idea behind the V-chip, where parents would be able to control what came in on the television set. That is the idea behind putting some kind of standards in place through legislation for what is pornography on the Internet. So there have been efforts made to try at the national level to equip parents and adults so that they did not feel quite so helpless in the face of this explosion of media images, many of which are violent.

Now the problem of course is, as anyone will quickly recognize, that there is so much of it, we are awash in it, and most kids are not terribly affected by it. The combination of parenting or genetics, resilience, empathy, experience, whatever, guides them through this climate of violence. But for other young people, who for whatever reason are vulnerable, we do not have early warning signals and we do not have enough safeguards built in. We are going to have to do some serious thinking in our country about how we will take more control over what our children see, and what they experience, and how they understand what they see and experience.

Now rightfully we have a lot of concerns about the First Amendment and government censorship, so we have to be very thoughtful about how we navigate through those. But I hope to be working with community groups, parents' groups, educators' groups to try to think of some better ways we can take back responsibility in this area.

We can no longer shut our eyes to the impact that the media is having on all of our children, and on the potentially violent impact it is having on some. I will be asking you to help us--to help Tipper Gore and me and the President, the Vice President and others--to think of ways we can devise to persuade parents to exercise more authority, to help peers influence each other, so that we can begin to fight back against the violence and the impact that it has.

It raises large questions about why we as a culture glorify violence, why we consider it acceptable, why we laugh at it, why we turn our backs to it when our children are involved in it. And I think we are going to have to be very honest about what kind of steps we are willing to take to do something about it.

Finally, parents, of course, have to be equipped and empowered to feel that they have more responsibility and authority on the lives of their children. I hear it from teachers all the time. How for so many reasons, parents are not able to be as involved in their children's lives as they used to be. How you do not see them in school meetings or parent-teacher conferences. How you cannot find them if you are trying to call to discuss a problem. Of course, much of that is because of the long hours and the emotional demands of work and family and single-parent families. We know that from recent reports, parents often have a high level of conflict between the obligations they feel at the workplace and what they feel to their family. Because of these pressures--the breakup of families, the disappearance of fathers from children's lives--we have many young people trying to navigate to adulthood without enough adults around them.

So how do we provide more support for working parents? How do we encourage more parents to stay involved in their children's lives, especially as those children get older? Some say that it is a task for each individual family. I do not believe that. I think we should help parents more than we are. I believe that legislation like the Family and Medical Leave Act should be extended so that parents can go to parent-teacher conferences off the job. I believe it is in all of our interests to subsidize quality child care and after-school programs so that children can be safe. I believe that communities have to work harder to involve parents in taking care of children, and provide opportunities and places for children to be during summers and evenings and weekends.

There is a lot we can do that we know works. We just lack the will to put into effect what we know works. We are not willing to do all that is necessary to give parents the tools they need to be the best possible parents they can be. We also have to be sure that we help parents know where they can go for help. A lot of parents do not know, and they throw up their hands and they walk away.

We have seen what parents can do when they join together. Just think about how before Mothers Against Drunk Driving, it was considered more or less okay to have a few drinks and get behind the wheel of a car. MADD fundamentally changed the way we think about that now. We have designated drivers. We have people who are under more social pressure not to drink and drive. Well that is one way that parents coming together, citizens banding together, have been able to change the environment and do what they needed to do to change behavior.

There is much we have to talk about. But I know that if Al Shanker were here, he would tell us to say what has to be said and to do what has to be done. Not to be afraid or hide our heads in the sand or back away from the challenges we face. Because we can meet them. It takes courage and faith and sometimes a really thick skin to overcome the hopelessness and helplessness that we can feel at times like these. But think about the amount of courage and faith it took for those students and teachers in Littleton during that crisis--or what the community has shown us in the days since. We owe it to them, and we owe it to all of our children and all of our teachers and all of our parents. And we owe it to ourselves to make sure that we adopt whatever strategy it takes
--wiping out gun violence, reaching our kids with counseling, standing up against the culture of violence. Because that is what we should expect from ourselves.

I go back to that motto from PS Number One: No excuses. No exceptions. I can think of no more important tribute to those who lost their lives or those who will be struggling to rebuild theirs than to take on this issue that you led the way on years ago. Help us. Help us to understand how to make our schools safe and orderly, how to make our communities safe and orderly, and how to give hope to children who otherwise feel that no one cares. There is no better group to lead us in this effort than our nation's teachers. I thank you for what you have done. I thank you for this honor you have given me. And I look forward to working with you on behalf of America's children.

Thank you very much.

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