

Remarks Honoring Blue Ribbon Schools May 14, 1993

Thank you very much. Thank you, Secretary Riley. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

I want to welcome you all to the White House today on this gorgeous day. I hope you've enjoyed yourselves. The Marine Band has been in especially fine form this morning. I woke up to them; I went jogging to them. I almost felt like a President this morning for sure when I was walking over to the Oval Office. They were playing a march that was written for the coronation of a British monarch, so I almost got myself confused. *[Laughter]*

There are 228 schools here represented today, the winners of the Blue Ribbon Awards this year. And all of you are winners, representing what is best in American education in public and private schools and urban and suburban and rural schools. You all share some common features with all your differences: visionary leadership, a sense of shared purpose, a climate conducive to learning, impressive academic achievement brought on not only by gifted teachers but also by responsible and open student behavior, and real involvement of parents and often the broader community in the life of the school.

I spent a lot of time thinking about these educational issues over the last 12 or so years. I spent more of my time as a Governor on education than on any other single issue except for the economy of my State. I spent hundreds of hours, I suppose, in schools in my State and around the country over the last 12 to 15 years and some time in one of the schools from Arkansas that's being honored today.

A hundred years ago the key to a strong economy was our raw material base. Fifty years ago it was mass production. Now it is clearly the trained human mind. We live in a world where the average person will change work seven or eight times in a lifetime, when the volume of knowledge is doubling every few years. When people in Silicon Valley making new computers and new computer programs tell me their average product life is now down to 18 months, clearly the reasoning, creative, facile but also deep mind is key to the future of the United States. We also live in a time when hardly anybody can get and keep a decent job without more education that too many of our people lack today.

If we could multiply the grade schools here represented on this lawn all across the country, we could really revolutionize education in America. I must tell you that the most challenging—*[applause]*—give yourselves a hand. That's a good idea. The most challenging thing I ever faced as Governor and the most continually frustrating was going into our schools and realizing that virtually every challenge in American education has been met successfully by somebody somewhere.

There are people succeeding against all the odds and producing magnificent results in extremely difficult circumstances. There are schools producing world-class results by any rigorous measure. The problem with American education is that we have never found an effective way to help replicate success, partly because the magic of education is always what happens in the individual classroom between the teacher and the student, supported by the parents, strengthened by the culture of a school that is set overwhelmingly by a gifted principal. I know that.

But there have to be ways to recognize the plain fact that notwithstanding the funding problems, notwithstanding the inequalities, notwithstanding all the problems of American education, you can find virtually every problem in our country solved by somebody somewhere in an astonishingly effective fashion if you look at enough schools. So the challenge for us here is to figure out how to replicate that. That is what Secretary Riley and I are trying to do with the "Educate America Act," the Goals 2000 act that we presented to the United States Congress, a bill we believe will lead to the creation of world-class learning standards and also help to promote the idea that, clearly, all reforms must occur school by school.

Goals 2000 will, in effect, enshrine the national education goals in the law of the land, raise expectations for all students, and help to enrich the content of our courses, the training of our teachers, and the quality of our textbooks and our technology. Finally, the bill will challenge our schools to show real results. We believe students and schools should have more

flexibility in dealing with Federal programs and should be shooting toward real results and clear standards. Goals 2000 is the framework for that educational effort in this administration. It will facilitate fundamental reforms in our schools, and I must say that's probably why some people don't like it all that well, including some members of my own party in the Congress.

But we can't raise standards and achievement either by leaving things the way they are or simply by piling on more particular governmental programs and mandates from Washington. After all, we're only providing about 7 percent of the total financing of public schools today, and while I hope to reverse that trend and over the next 5 years get the percentage back up to somewhere to where it was over the last several years, still the lion's share of the financing and the lion's share of the learning reforms must come from you and people like you. And that means we have to have a different approach in the way the National Government relates to our schools. I hope that the Congress will not dilute the package that I sent to them. I hope we can pass the bill in a way that will represent a real change in the way the National Government relates to the schools and a real increase in confidence in proven local leaders.

I'd also like to say that the private sector in this country has shown an astonishing willingness to become more involved in education ever since the issuance of the "Nation at Risk" report 10 years ago. The New American Schools Development Corporation, on which Governor Baliles serves on the board and which Governor Riley and now Secretary Riley mentioned, has already raised millions of dollars from public spirited business leaders. It has path-breaking design teams which are providing us with valuable lessons about how school innovations all around America can help us to reach world-class standards. And it is trying to help to replicate what works, which I still believe is our most urgent task.

Through these new designs they will be able to provide promising alternatives for schools and States as they work to reinvent their schools with the help of Goals 2000 and other reform efforts that this administration will make. I ask all of you to support this legislation and the work of the New American Schools Corporation. I ask you to support it in the larger context of what we must do as a nation.

Think of what has happened to bring us to this point where we have come to 17 months

in a row with unemployment rate at 7 percent or higher in every month, even though we are allegedly in an economic recovery. What has happened to bring us to a point where most American families are spending more hours on the job than they were 20 years ago with lower real incomes than they made 10 years ago, including some of the families represented in this audience? What has caused that? Our lack of ability to be continuously productive, our lack of ability to create more and more new jobs that will stand the test of the rigorous global economy. What we have to do in our administration and what I earnestly ask for your support in doing is to reverse the trends that have brought us to this past.

Let us first of all bring down the Government deficit that has gotten our debt from \$1 trillion to \$4 trillion in the last 12 years simply by telling people at election time what they wanted to hear: I'll cut your taxes and write you a check. All the arithmetic teachers in this audience could have figured out that sooner or later that would get us in trouble. Nobody could have passed math in this town in any of your schools in the last 12 years who with a straight face said, "I've got you a deal. I'll cut your taxes, and I'll send you a check."

So it fell to me to try to change that ratio. And the House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means yesterday reported out a bill which does a lot of that. It restores both spending cuts and tax increases to a proper balance. It will bring the deficit down by \$500 billion over the next 5 years. It will provide important new incentives for small businesses and for larger businesses to continue to invest, to create jobs in our country. It provides a real tax break for working families with children with incomes of under \$29,000 to offset the impact of the energy tax and reward work so there will never be an incentive for people with families not to work. Because if this tax bill passes, for the first time in our country's history, because of the changes in the Tax Code, we'll be able to say that if you work 40 hours a week and you've got a child in the house, you will not live in poverty. These are important things. And over 70 percent of the money comes from people with incomes above \$100,000.

The budget package also over the next 5 years will increase our commitment to Head Start, to apprenticeship training, with partnerships

with our schools and our post-high school programs, and opens the doors of college education to everyone through a radical reform in the student loan program and national service. It focuses on, in other words, increasing investment, bringing down the deficit, and bringing us together as a country again. This Goals 2000 legislation is an important part of that. It is our effort to do our job here as well as you do

your job back home. If we did our job here as well as you've done yours, then America could celebrate and give itself a blue ribbon in just a few years.

Thank you very much, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:51 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

The President's News Conference *May 14, 1993*

The President. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I'm glad the weather permitted us to do this outside.

Three months ago, I presented a plan to our country and to the Congress designed to address what I believe were the significant challenges of this time. For more than 40 years, our country was organized to stand up against communism, to try to help develop the free world, and for most of that time we took our economic prosperity for granted. It is now clear that, at the end of the cold war, we must organize ourselves around the obligation we have to be more competitive in the global economy and to enable our people to live up to their full potential.

That means we have to do a lot of things to turn this economy around, beginning with a serious effort to reduce our national debt, to invest in jobs and new technologies, to restore fairness to our Tax Code, and to make our political system work again.

This week I was able to go back again to the American people to take my case into the country, into Cleveland and Chicago and New York. And here in Washington there were new efforts to break the gridlock and to put the national interests above narrow interests. The results were particularly impressive in the work done by the House Ways and Means Committee, achieving over \$250 billion in deficit reduction through spending cuts with \$2 in spending cuts for each dollar in new investment, in new jobs, in education. The program provides significantly everything that I presented to the Congress, even though there were some changes. In fact, some of the changes I think made the bill better.

Let me reiterate them: number one, significant deficit reduction; number two, taking on entitlements issues that have for too long been left on the table; number three, real investments for small businesses and for big businesses, incentives to get people to invest money in this economy to create jobs; and perhaps most importantly, a break for working-class families, a huge increase in the earned-income tax credit for people with incomes under \$30,000 to relieve them of the impact of the energy tax and to say for the first time, people who work 40 hours a week with children in the home would be lifted above poverty; and finally, of course, the plan was very progressive, 75 percent of the revenues coming from the top 6 percent of the American taxpayers.

I also reiterated that I don't want a penny in taxes without the spending cuts. And I proposed in New York that we create a deficit reduction trust fund into which all the taxes and all the budget cuts could be put and kept for the 5-year life of this budget. This is a very important thing. I realize some have said it is little more than a gimmick, but the truth is there is no legal protection now for the life of the budget for these funds. This will provide it in stone, in law.

In every element of this, there has been some willingness on the part of those who have supported our efforts to take on powerful vested interest in behalf of the national interest, whether it is in repealing the lobby deduction or in going for a direct loan program for college loans that will save \$4 billion but which will remove a Government-guaranteed income from several interests who like the system as it is now.