

Remarks on Signing the Executive Order on Historically Black Colleges and Universities

November 1, 1993

Thank you very much, Mr. Vice President, Secretary Riley. Ladies and gentlemen, it's a great pleasure for me to be here today with my longtime friend chancellor Vic Hackley and with so many of the distinguished persons in the audience: Dr. Sam Myers; Dr. Joyce Payne; our longtime friend Bill Gray; Dr. James Cheek, we're glad to see you here; Dr. Art Thomas; General Alonzo Short is here, I'm glad to see you, General Short; and Mr. Emmett Paige, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Command, Control, and Intelligence. And I also know that in addition to the Members of Congress already introduced, Congressman Bobby Scott from Virginia just came in. Somewhere he's standing; I saw him. Thank you for coming.

Now, since the Vice President was so parochial—[laughter]—I have four people here I want to introduce: my friends Dr. William Keaton, from Arkansas Baptist College, in the back there; Dr. Katherine Mitchell from Shorter College, I saw Katherine over here; Dr. Lawrence Davis, from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff; and Dr. Myer Titus from Philander Smith College, where I used to run every day in my former life.

I am so glad to see all of you here. For 130 years the institutions you represent have been beacons of hope and opportunity for Americans for whom no other options existed. You have nurtured young minds. You have built self-esteem. You've educated some of our Nation's foremost scholars and leaders. When Thurgood Marshall was refused admittance to the University of Maryland Law School because of the color of his skin, it was Howard University Law School that prepared him for the challenge, for the United States Supreme Court. Seventeen Members of the United States Congress are graduates of historically black institutions of higher education, as well as one United States Senator who is not an African-American, Senator Harris Wofford from Pennsylvania, a graduate of Howard Law School.

Martin Luther King's way to Oslo, Norway, to receive the Nobel Prize was, as the Vice President said, plainly paved by the fact that he was a Morehouse man. The rhythms of my

friend Toni Morrison's writings, which garnered her this year's Nobel Prize in Literature, are rooted in her study of classics and literature at Howard University.

In seeking the best and most skilled Americans to serve here in our administration, graduates from historically black colleges and universities have been a part of our team. Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary and the Assistant to the President for Public Liaison, Alexis Herman, are Xavier graduates. Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy and Under Secretary Bob Nash attended Howard. Our Surgeon General, Joycelyn Elders, was a graduate of Philander Smith. Sarah Summerville, my Alabama campaign coordinator and now at the Department of Defense, attended both Mississippi Industrial and Miles Colleges. And there are many more.

The Executive order I sign today and all the education initiatives that Secretary Riley discussed have to do with change, preserving educational institutions and ensuring that every young person in this country who wants to get a college education has the opportunity to do it and finding new ways to get people into college and into training programs and to help them succeed once they're there.

Since the average person will change jobs seven times in a lifetime, and the 1990 census makes it crystal clear the very harsh economic consequences of not having at least 2 years of post-high school education, we know we have much to do. This year we have begun already by reorganizing the student loan programs to cut their costs of overhead, to lower the interest rates, to change the repayment terms so that young people can now borrow money without fear of being bankrupted in paying the loans back. Now young people can borrow the money at lower interest rates and then elect to pay them back as a percentage of their incomes, without regard to the amount of the loan, so that no one will ever be discouraged from borrowing the money and, even more important perhaps, from taking a job after college which might not be a high-paying job but which might do an awful lot of good for our society, a job in our inner cities as a teacher perhaps or work-

ing in a program to help our young people. I'm very proud of the changes that we made in the student loan program, and I thank Secretary Riley for his outstanding leadership in that regard.

We have also passed the national service program which will give, over the next 3 to 4 years, up to 100,000 young Americans a chance to earn some credit against their college education and help to serve their communities at the grass-roots level, to rebuild lives and to build their own minds in the process.

The Goals 2000 legislation, which Secretary Riley mentioned and to which the Vice President alluded, will forge a new partnership between our National Government and States and communities to set some meaningful national standards about what our young people should know, because we know that they're going to be competing in a global economy, and they're entitled to have a shot at the best we have to offer.

With this Executive order and working in close cooperation with Secretary Riley and Catherine LeBlanc, the Executive Director of the White House Initiative Office, we'll expand the opportunities for participation in Federal programs. Ultimately, we'll strengthen the capacity of historically black colleges and universities to provide quality education. Within the next few days, I'll announce my appointments to the Presidential Advisory Board on Historically Black Colleges and Universities and will ask my longtime friend and the former chancellor of the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, Vic Hackley, now at Fayetteville State University, to serve as the Chair.

I want to say a special word of thanks to the current board, which was appointed by President Bush, for their service and commitment and especially to Dr. James Cheek for his leadership. And I thank you, Dr. Cheek, for what you have done.

I'd like to close by mentioning a very disturbing article that appeared in the morning paper here. You may have seen it, about children in our Nation's Capital, not even teenagers, discussing their own funerals, planning their fu-

nerals, thinking about what they would wear and what music they hope would be played. I am profoundly concerned as we take up the debate this week on the crime bill, on the Brady bill, on the establishment of boot camps as alternatives to prison for young people, on trying to get more law enforcement officers on our streets, that we not underestimate the gravity of the task before us. Somehow we have to get those young people to you, and through you, to the world.

I know this is a difficult, frustrating, perplexing time. Every day the Vice President and I start the morning together talking about problems that have no easy solution. But I know that this ought to be a time of immense celebration and hopefulness for the American people with the end of the cold war, with the receding threat of nuclear annihilation, with the clear evidence that, for all of our problems, our economy is doing better than the other wealthy countries in creating jobs and promoting growth and that there is so much out there for us still to do.

But the truth is that we are squandering our most valuable resource, our young people, at a rate that no other nation would tolerate. We permit so many of them to grow up without the basic supports of family and community. We permit many of them to live in circumstances, frankly, more dangerous than those experienced by people we go halfway around the world to protect. And so many of them, by the time they are old enough for you to get ahold of them, aren't there for you to get hold of.

I say that not to end this on a down moment but to remind you of just how important this is, what you are doing. A lot of these kids still won't have a chance if you don't do your job well. And we have to find a way for you to reach them at an even earlier point. And if we want to make it, we've got to find a way to remind the rest of America that we are really all in this together. We cannot afford to have 11-year-olds thinking about their funerals. They need to be thinking about their children. You can do that.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:38 p.m. in Room 450 of the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Sam Myers, president, National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education; Joyce Payne, director, Office for the Advancement of Public Black Colleges; William H. Gray III, CEO and president, United

Negro College Fund; Art Thomas, former chairman, National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education; and Lt. Gen. Alonzo E. Short, Jr., USA, Director, Defense Information Systems Agency. Following his remarks, the President signed the Executive order, which is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on Signing the Rural Electrification Loan Restructuring Act of 1993

November 1, 1993

I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 3123, the "Rural Electrification Loan Restructuring Act of 1993." This Act modifies the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) direct loan programs for rural electric and telephone cooperatives. It represents the culmination of many months of long, hard work by the Congress and the Administration in our commitment to revitalize the infrastructure of rural America.

Earlier this year in my State of the Union Address, I announced my intent to reform the REA. H.R. 3123 does just that. It represents an important first step towards reforming the REA loan programs and is a good example of the Government doing more with less. This legislation will enhance our ability to provide affordable electric and telephone services in rural areas and to ensure access to the emerging telecommunications technologies that are essential for the economic strength of rural areas and the Nation as a whole. It also allows the REA for the first time to make loans for energy conservation purposes.

This Act makes much needed program adjustments to minimize budget expenditures and save over \$100 million in 1994 alone. Despite this reduction in Federal assistance, rural electric and telephone consumer bills should not change substantially. By using means tests to target Federal funds and raising the maximum interest rate, H.R. 3123 allows the REA to use scarce resources more effectively. We should no longer hear about wealthy electric and telephone bor-

rowers that receive Government loans at extremely low interest rates.

Although H.R. 3123 clearly represents a major improvement over current law, I have one concern with it. The Act places a 7 percent interest rate cap on certain REA loans, including those refinanced through the Department of the Treasury's Federal Financing Bank. Experience with Federal credit programs indicates that such statutorily fixed interest rate ceilings produce unpredictable and unintended results, including (1) inequities among borrowers using the program at different times; (2) extraordinary demands for loans when market interest rates are high; and (3) increased budget deficits. The "open-ended" character of subsidies resulting from the interest rate cap is inconsistent with the Administration's objective of managing Federal subsidies more effectively. Accordingly, my Administration will work with the Congress to remove this provision.

Nevertheless, H.R. 3123 is, overall, a solid step forward. Today I wish to congratulate the Members of Congress and friends of rural America that helped to enact this first major reform of the REA loan programs.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
November 1, 1993.

NOTE: H.R. 3123, approved November 1, was assigned Public Law No. 103-129.