

Remarks Announcing the Annenberg Foundation Education Challenge Grants

December 17, 1993

Thank you very much, Secretary Riley and Secretary and Mrs. Bentsen, Deputy Secretary of Education Madeleine Kunin. I want to mention some of the people who are here. I'm glad to see Senator Kennedy, Senator Pell, and Congressman Reed here, and my former colleagues and friends Governor Romer and Governor Edgar, Dr. Gregorian and David Kearns and Ted Sizer and Frank Newman and so many people that I've worked with over the years. When Walter Annenberg was giving his very brief statement, it reminded me of a comment that the President with the best developed mind, Thomas Jefferson, once said. He said, "You know, if I had more time I could write shorter letters." [Laughter] So I think he said all that needed to be said.

Walter and Leonore Annenberg have done a remarkable and truly wonderful thing on this day in giving the largest private gift in American history to the future of America's children. It could not have come at a better time. In a moment all of you will repair to another place and discuss in greater detail exactly what this gift will do and how it will be done. But since I spent the better part of my life in public service laboring to improve public education, I want the press and the American people to know that there are two things that are important about this gift: its size and the way the money is going to be spent.

It could not come at a better time, 10 years after the issuance of "A Nation At Risk" report and on the eve, we all earnestly hope, of the passage of our "Goals 2000 Act," which attempts to put into law a mechanism by which the United States can achieve the national education goals adopted by the Governors and by the Bush administration jointly in 1989.

In our legislation, we attempt to set high academic standards, to give our country world-class schools, to give our children a way to fulfill their dreams instead of their nightmares, along with the other things we've tried to do: reforming the student loan program; opening the doors of college to everyone; trying to develop a national system of moving from school to work for those who don't go to college; pushing a

safe schools act so that we don't have 160,000 kids stay home every day because they're afraid to go to school; establishing a system of lifetime learning. These things make a real difference. But if I have learned one thing in all the years, in all the countless hours that Hillary and I have spent in public schools all across this country, it is that the true magic of education in the end occurs between teachers and students and principals and parents and those who care about what happens in the classroom and outside the classroom.

And one of the things that has plagued me all these years is seeing all the successes, because, I tell you, I have tried to focus the American people in the last several weeks on the crime and violence that is consuming so many millions of our young people. But what is important for America to know is that there is another reality out there. There are two realities that are at war, one with the other. There is the reality that we all see: too many guns and too much violence in schools that don't function. There is another reality: In the most difficult circumstances you can find anywhere in this country, there are children and parents who obey the law, who love their country, who believe in the future, and who are in schools working with teachers who are succeeding by any standard of international excellence against all the odds.

Therefore, it is clear that the most pressing need in this country today, the most pressing need, is to have a standard of excellence by which all of us can judge our collective efforts, down to the smallest schoolroom in the smallest community in America, and then to have a system to somehow take what is working against all the odds and make it work everywhere.

All these people who are in this room who have devoted their lives to education are constantly plagued by the fact that nearly every problem has been solved by somebody somewhere, and yet we can't seem to replicate it everywhere else. Anybody who has spent a serious amount of time thinking and looking about this knows that that is the central challenge of this age in education.

That's why Ted Sizer has devoted his career to establishing a system which can be recreated and adapted to the facts of every school. That's why David Kearns left a brilliantly successful career in business and wrote a book about what works in reinventing schools. That's why my friend Frank Newman stopped being a university president and went to the Education Commission of the States and every year hounded Governors like me to help him, because we knew that there were examples that work, and nobody has unraveled this mystery. That's why people often run for Governor and stay Governors of States, believing that we can somehow have the alternative reality that is out there prevail in the end.

And the way this money is going to be allocated is just as important as how much money is being offered, because Walter Annenberg has challenged the rest of us to match his efforts today and in a way is challenging America to realize that there are millions of good kids and good teachers and good efforts being made out there. And the time has come for us to say, here are the national standards, here is a way

of measuring whether we're meeting them, and here's a way of recognizing that in reality all these things have to happen school by school, neighborhood by neighborhood, student by student. And what is our excuse, when we can give you a hundred examples of where it's working, for not having thousands and thousands and thousands examples of where it's working?

That is the magic of what is being done. This is a very, very important day for American education and for America's future. And the people in the United States will forever be in the debt of these two fine people.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:34 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jim Edgar of Illinois; Gov. Roy Romer of Colorado; Vartan Gregorian, president, Brown University; David Kearns, president, New American Schools Development Corp.; Theodore R.Sizer, chairman, Coalition for Essential Schools; and Frank Newman, president, Education Commission of the States.

Statement on Signing the Government Securities Act Amendments of 1993 *December 17, 1993*

Today I have signed into law S. 422, the "Government Securities Act Amendments of 1993." S. 422 permanently reauthorizes the Treasury Department's rulemaking authority under the Government Securities Act and extends important investor protections to the Government securities market. It also provides important new surveillance tools to the Department of the Treasury and the Securities and Exchange Commission. This legislation will help maintain the confidence of investors in the integrity of the Government securities market. It will thus ensure that the Treasury has access to an efficient and liquid market, which is vital to selling the Government's debt at the lowest possible cost.

I am pleased that the legislative process achieved compromises acceptable to the many interested participants. I thank all involved for their hard work culminating in the enactment of this comprehensive and needed legislation. As a result of their efforts, the Federal Government now has the tools necessary to ensure the continuing integrity, efficiency, and liquidity of the Government securities market.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
December 17, 1993.

NOTE: S. 422, approved December 17, was assigned Public Law No. 103-202.