

The survey also reported that children in Virginia, for example, in urban school districts—let me—I live across the river from one, from the most diverse school district in America, Fairfax County, Virginia—children from 180 different national and ethnic groups in one school district. And the survey concluded that the reason that the urban students in Virginia scored better was because they had specific, rigorous standards to which they were held and consequences for failure. So I say to you, I hope you will all support that.

Finally, let me say—in this old world we’ve got a lot of challenges; I just want to mention two. We need a national consensus to do something on global warming. It is real; it is significant; and what we need is an understanding that we can grow the economy and still preserve the environment. Just with the pressures that—public pressure that has been created in the last few months, look at all the new announcements that Detroit has made about cars that no one had anticipated before. We can do this. But we will pay a terrible price if we do not.

The second issue I’d like to raise is that the wonderful explosion in science and technology and information that allow kids in New York City to get on the Internet and talk to kids in Australia about school projects also mean that crazy people in New York can talk to crazy people somewhere else about how to make chemical weapons or biological weapons. You remember when we had the Oklahoma City bombing trial, the publicity came out that there was a webpage where, if you could hook into it, you could figure out how to make the bomb.

I say that simply to make the point that when you see me on behalf of the United States trying to stand up against the spread of chemical and biological weapons, or trying to devise ways to

stop the spread of disease, or more rigorous standards to preserve the quality of our food supply as we import more food and more food goes across national borders—see that as part of this larger issue. We want all the benefits of globalization, but we have to preserve the integrity and the value of our life and that of people around the world.

And since we’re in New York, I’ll make my last pitch. I need your support for convincing the Congress that they should support and we should pay our way in the United Nations, in the World Bank, in the International Monetary Fund, and all the other international institutions. We live in an era of interdependence, and we have richly benefited from it. We were able to do what we did in Bosnia because others would help us. And I could give you lots of other examples.

Now, why should you be here and why are you doing this? Because we believe that Government is not the enemy, but it has to be an agent of change; because we believe this is an age in which we have to form a more perfect Union by giving people the tools to make the most of their own lives, to serve in their communities, and to build a strong country; and because the evidence is, after 5 years, that this approach is right for America.

You’ve made it possible for it to continue, and I very much appreciate it. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:10 p.m. at a private residence in the Dakota apartment building. In his remarks, he referred to Steve Grossman, national chair, Democratic National Committee; luncheon hosts Craig Hatkoff and Jane Rosenthal; and Judith Hope, chair, New York State Democratic Party.

Statement on National Education Standards

January 8, 1998

This week, an independent report showed that more than half the students in our Nation’s city schools are failing to master the basics in reading, math, and science—the building blocks of all the skills they will need to succeed in the

21st century. And while some city school* systems *are* making progress, all too many are clearly failing our children.

* White House correction.

As a nation, we have a responsibility to *all* of our children and especially to those in our most vulnerable communities. That is why I have fought for high national standards and national tests to help our children reach their highest potential.

Since I called for national standards, I am proud to say that 15 major city school systems have stepped forward to accept my challenge. But we must not rest until *every* school system in the Nation commits to adopting high standards—and helping their students to meet them.

If we are going to go strong into the 21st century, we must continue to expand opportunity for all of our people, and when it comes to our children's education, that means continuing to expect and demand the very best from our schools, our teachers, and above all, from our students. That is why I have fought for excellence, competition, and accountability in our Nation's public schools, with more parental involvement, greater choice, better teaching, and an end to social promotion. We cannot afford to let our children down when they need us the most.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in New York City *January 8, 1998*

The President. First of all, let me say to Alan and Susan, it is wonderful to be back here. I remember very well when I was here in 1992. I also remember an event that they were part of in 1992, about 10 days before the New Hampshire primary, when everybody said I was absolutely dead; I had no chance to win; I was dropping like a rock in the polls. And we showed up in New York City for a fundraiser, and there were 700 people in this room for a dead candidate. So I said, "I am not dead yet." [Laughter]

And that night was memorable for two reasons: One was that we had so many people there, thanks to a lot of you in this room, who didn't believe that it was over and who believed in what I was trying to do. The other was that I had a very—what is now a very famous encounter in the kitchen, walking to the speech, with a Greek immigrant waiter who said that his 10-year-old son had asked him to vote for me because of what he'd heard me say, and he would do it if I would be more concerned about his son's safety. He said he lived across the street from a park, but his kid couldn't play in the park without his being there; he lived down the street from a school, but his child couldn't walk to the school. And he said that where he had lived, he was much poorer but he was free.

It was a very compelling portrait of why crime and physical safety is an important public issue.

And he said, "So if I vote for you like my boy wants me to, I want you to make my boy free." And that man and his son became friends of ours, and they've been to lots of things, and they even went to Ohio once to an anticrime event with us.

So a lot has happened because of my friendship with Alan and Susan. If he had said one more time that he wasn't a Democrat—I thought he was protesting too much. [Laughter] I'm a Baptist; I believe in deathbed conversions. It's not too late. [Laughter]

Let me say what I thought would be helpful tonight. I do have to leave fairly soon, but before—because we've all been here and most of you have heard me give a zillion speeches, I'd like to just talk for 2 minutes and then give you time—if you have any questions or anything you want to talk about, I'd like to just hear from you.

Steve has already said what this investment is about. But let me back up a little bit. In 1992, I ran for President because I thought the country was divided and drifting, and I believed we were on the verge not just of a new century and a new millennium but a profoundly different time in human affairs. We now know that this whole process of globalization and the revolution in information in science and technology is dramatically changing the way we live and work and relate to each other and relate