

May 8 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1998

the job, but the challenge must be met because America can't become what it ought to be if we don't.

We can do this. This is not rocket science. This is an affair of the mind which most of us can comprehend. Fundamentally, it is also an affair of the heart. We know—we know—that the best days of this country are still ahead. You may be the oldest State, but you still want to have the longest future. And the only way we can do it is with this.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:50 p.m. in the Senate Chamber. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Tom Carper and Lt. Gov. Ruth Ann Minner of Delaware; President Pro Tempore Thomas B. Sharp, Delaware State Senate; Speaker Terry R. Spence, Delaware State House of Representatives; Russell W. Peterson and Sherman W. Tribbitt, former Delaware Governors; Mayor James L. Hutchinson of Dover; Philip Bigler, 1998 National Teacher of the Year; and Gov. James B. Hunt, Jr., of North Carolina.

Message to the Congress Transmitting Proposed Legislation on Class-Size Reduction and Teacher Quality

May 8, 1998

To the Congress of the United States:

I am pleased to transmit today for your immediate consideration and enactment the "Class-Size Reduction and Teacher Quality Act of 1998." This legislative proposal would help States and local school districts recruit, train, and hire 100,000 additional well-prepared teachers in order to reduce the average class size to 18 in grades 1 through 3 in our Nation's public schools. It is an essential part of our overall effort to strengthen public schools throughout the Nation.

As schools across the Nation struggle to accommodate a surge in enrollments, educators and parents have become increasingly concerned about the impact of class size on teaching and learning, particularly in the critically important early grades, where students learn reading and other basic skills. This concern is justified: rigorous research confirms what parents and teachers have long believed—that students in smaller classes, especially in the early grades, make greater educational gains and maintain those gains over time. These gains occur because teachers in small classes can provide students with more individualized attention, spend more time on instruction and less time on discipline, and cover more material effectively. Moreover, the benefits of smaller classes are greatest for poor, minority, and inner-city children, the children who often face the greatest challenges in meeting high educational standards.

Smaller classes will have the greatest impact on student learning if the new teachers brought into the classroom are well qualified to teach reading and to take advantage of smaller learning environments. For this reason, my proposal emphasizes not just class-size reduction but also professional development for educators, and it will give school districts adequate time to recruit and train staff while phasing in smaller classes. Furthermore, all new teachers hired under the program would be required to pass a State teacher competency test and would also have to be certified to teach or be making satisfactory progress toward full certification.

We can help all of our students learn to read independently and well by the third grade, get a solid foundation in basic skills, and reach high educational standards if we start them off with small classes and well-prepared teachers in the early grades.

Under my proposal, the Department of Education would provide \$20.8 billion in mandatory appropriations over a 10-year period (beginning with \$1.1 billion in fiscal year 1999) to States. The States would then distribute the funds to local school districts based on their relative class sizes in grades 1 through 3, as well as on their ability and effort to finance class-size reductions with their own resources. The bill would provide States with considerable flexibility in distributing these funds, while ensuring that the most needy school districts receive a fair share.

Moreover, because my proposal would actually appropriate the funds needed to carry out the program, States and local communities could count on these funds without the need for separate congressional appropriations each year. This proposal is fully paid for within my Fiscal Year 1999 Budget, and therefore would not reduce the budget surplus.

School districts would use these funds to reduce class sizes in grades 1 through 3. Just as importantly, these funds would also be available for a variety of activities to ensure that students in the early grades receive sound and effective instruction, such as making sure that teachers know how to teach reading and other subjects effectively in small classes.

This proposal includes strong accountability for results. Participating school districts would produce "report cards" documenting reductions

in class sizes and the achievement of their students in reading, based on rigorous assessments. Schools whose students fail to make gains in reading would be required to undertake corrective actions. In addition, the Department of Education would undertake a comprehensive national evaluation of this program and its impact on reading achievement and teaching.

I urge the Congress to take prompt and favorable action on this proposal. Its enactment would help school districts reduce class sizes in the early grades and improve instruction and achievement in reading, issues that are of major importance to parents and to the Nation.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
May 8, 1998.

Remarks to the Community at Dover Air Force Base *May 8, 1998*

Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for your wonderful remarks and your sterling leadership of the Department of Defense. To Governor Carper and Congressman Castle, Colonel Grieder, Colonel Keitel, Mayor Hutchinson; to the Secretary of Education, Dick Riley, who is here with me today; to all the members of the United States Air Force, their families, their friends, and thank you especially for bringing the children today. And I'd like to say a special word of thanks to the Dover High School Band for their welcome and their music. I don't know if the recruiting officer has been to see them, but they have sufficient enthusiasm to be in our military service. Great job.

I am delighted to be here, back at Dover Air Force Base, home of the 436th Military Airlift Wing and the 512th Reserve Wing, those of you who work around the clock to support and defend our freedom. I've already had a chance to be on the C-5 and speak with some of you individually. I'd like now to say a few words to all of you.

Delaware calls itself "Small Wonder." It's not too small, however, to have two leading United States Senators, Bill Roth and Joe Biden, who

play very important roles in our national security, most recently in leading the struggle in the Senate to make Europe a safer place by guiding NATO and offering membership to Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. The people of Delaware can be very proud that they have two Senators playing a leading role in such an important national security area.

And Delaware is not too small to house these mammoth C-5's to do so much of America's heavy lifting, not too small for a new 60,000-pound Tunner loader moving heavy cargo on and off the giant planes. I know it's hard for the logistics people here to wrestle with those pallets, but hopefully the new loader makes things just a little easier.

Your efforts are essential. We live in a time of enormous promise, but you know from your own work that there is also a tremendous responsibility for the United States out there both to take advantage of the promise and to meet the challenges of the post-cold-war era.

From Guatemala to Mozambique, from Bosnia and now to Ireland, peace is taking hold in countries and regions that have endured terrible violence. Revolutions in technology and