

would draw resources and attention away from the essential work of reforming the public schools that serve the overwhelming majority of the District's students. In short, S. 1502 would do nothing to improve public education in the District of Columbia. The bill won't hire one new teacher, purchase one more computer, or open one after-school program.

Although I appreciate the interest of the Congress in the educational needs of the children in our Nation's Capital, this bill is fundamentally misguided and a disservice to those children.

The way to improve education for all our children is to increase standards, accountability, and choice within the public schools. I urge the Congress to send me legislation I have proposed to reduce class size, modernize our schools, end social promotions, raise academic standards for all students, and hold school systems, schools, and staff accountable for results.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,  
May 20, 1998.

## Radio Remarks on the Northern Ireland Peace Accord Referendum *May 20, 1998*

Tomorrow the people of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland have an opportunity to join hope to history. I know that as you go to the polls and consider the merits of the April 10 accord, you will reflect on the past three decades, so marred by hatred and bloodshed, fighting and fear. I hope you will also reflect on the decades to come and the opportunity you now have in your hands to build a lasting peace for yourselves and your children. This Friday, you can turn the common tragedy of Northern Ireland's past into a shared triumph for the future.

As you face the future, you can count on America. We were blessed with the arrival of your ancestors and relatives who helped to build our Nation. We want to return the favor with trade and investment, with friendship and part-

nership. But to those of any party or persuasion who would revert to violence, you must know that you will find no friends in America.

To everyone voting tomorrow, let me say, you can do nothing to erase the past, but you can do everything to build the future. The world is with you, but the choice is yours. May you make the right choice for peace, for your children, for your future. And may God bless you all.

NOTE: The remarks were recorded at approximately 11:35 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House on May 20 for later broadcast, and they were released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 21. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

## Remarks on Senate Ratification of the Protocols of Accession to NATO for Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic *May 21, 1998*

Thank you very much. I suppose I should begin with an apology for having to dash off and pick up the paper, but I would hate to lose this document after all the effort we put into getting to this point. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Vice President, thank you for your leadership on this issue. Senator Roth, Senator Biden, Secretary Albright, Secretary Cohen, General

Ralston, Mr. Berger, to the Ambassadors of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and the other members of the diplomatic corps who are here, to Senators Levin and Lieberman and Lugar, Mikulski, and Smith, I thank all of you so much.

Ladies and gentlemen, before we begin, I would like to make a couple of brief comments.

First of all, let me say I know that all Americans are heartbroken by the terrible shooting at the school in Springfield, Oregon, today. And I would just like to say on behalf of the American people that our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the people who were killed and wounded and with that entire fine community.

Next let me say that I welcome the wise decision made less than 24 hours ago by President Soeharto in Indonesia. It now gives the Indonesian people a chance to come together to build a stable democracy for the 21st century. I hope that the leaders will now move forward promptly, with an open and peaceful transition that enjoys broad public support. Indonesia is a very great nation, populous, wide ranging, diverse, with remarkable accomplishments to its credit in the last few decades. It has a great future. The United States stands ready to work, as we have with other nations in the past, to support Indonesia's leaders and people as they pursue democratic reform.

Finally, by way of introduction, let me say, since we're here to talk about Europe today, I'd like to put in one last plug for the vote in Ireland and Northern Ireland tomorrow. And I suspect all of you agree with me. And I hope that those fine people will lift the burden of the last 30 years from their shoulders and embrace a common future in peace.

Let me say notwithstanding my good friend Senator Biden's overly generous remarks, we are here today because of the efforts of a lot of people who supported this effort: Members of Congress and former Members of Congress, present and former national security officials, present and former military leaders, representatives of our veterans, business unions, religious groups, ethnic communities. I especially thank Senators Lott and Daschle, Senators Helms and Biden, and you, Senator Roth, the chairman of our NATO observer group.

You behaved in the great tradition of Truman and Marshall and Vandenberg, uniting our country across party for common values, common interests, and a common future.

It's really amazing, isn't it, that Bill Roth and Joe Biden come from Delaware. I want you to know there is no truth to the rumor that I agreed to move the NATO headquarters to Wilmington in return for this vote. [Laughter] However, it does say a lot for those small States that these two remarkable men have made such an indispensable contribution to this effort. I

thank the other Senators who are here for their passionate commitments.

I'd also like to mention one other person, my adviser on NATO enlargement who managed the ratification process for the White House, Jeremy Rosner. Thank you, Jeremy. You did a great job, too, and we thank you.

I see so many people here that—and I don't want to get into calling names, but I thank Mr. Brzezinski, Ambassador Kirkpatrick, General Joulwan, and so many others who are here who have been a part of America's effort over the last 50 years to make sure that, after World War II, freedom triumphs.

We learned, at great cost in this century, that, if we wanted America to be secure at home, we had to stand up for our interests, our ideals, and our friends around the world. Because of the alliances we've built and the work that our people have been able to do here, we near the end of this great century at a remarkable pinnacle of peace, with prosperity and declining social problems at home, and for the very first time ever, a majority of the world's people living under governments of their own choosing.

Since World War II, no alliance for freedom has been more important or enduring than NATO. And as we look ahead to the next 50 years, we have to imagine what the world will be like and what it is we expect to do and, in particular, in this case, what about NATO. Today we welcome Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, finally erasing the boundary line the cold war artificially imposed on the continent of Europe, strengthening an alliance that now, clearly, is better preserved to keep the peace and preserve our security into the 21st century.

For the 16 of us already in NATO, enlarging our alliance will create three new allies ready to contribute troops and technology and ingenuity to protecting our territory, defending our security, and pursuing our vital interests. The 60 million people who live in Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic, they now know that what they build in peace, they will be able to keep in security. And America now knows that we have new allies to help us meet the new security challenges of the 21st century, something that our partnership in Bosnia so clearly demonstrates.

I would say also to the nations who have joined with us in the Partnership For Peace, and others who have considered doing so, and those who hope still someday to become NATO

members, we are in the process of adapting this organization to the security challenges of the 21st century, and those who are with us in the Partnership For Peace, those who have been part of our endeavor in Bosnia, we appreciate you as well. We respect your aspirations for security; we share your devotion to your freedom; and we hope this is a day which you can celebrate as well.

We come to this day thanks to many acts of courage: courage that toppled the Berlin Wall, ended the cold war; sacrifice by those who raised freedom's banner in Budapest in 1956, in Prague in 1968, in Gdansk in 1980; people like Lech Walesa, Vaclav Havel, Arpad Goncz, so many others. The selfless investment of blood and treasure the American people made in European freedom in the 20th century is also something we ought to stop and remember here today. There are so many people whose families gave so much in two World Wars and the cold war who should feel a personal sense of satisfaction and triumph because of this day. And I hope they do.

As we look ahead to the 21st century, again I say, we have to see what we're doing in NATO in the larger context of preparing for a different era. Our goal is to help to build a Europe that is undivided, free, democratic, at peace, and secure, a Europe in which Russia, Ukraine, and other states of the former Soviet Union join with us to make common cause; a dynamic new Europe with partnership for commerce and co-operation. Therefore, we have supported the expansion of NATO and the Partnership For Peace. We have also supported all efforts at European integration and the expansion of European institutions to welcome new democracies. And we will continue to do so.

We want to imagine a future in which our children will be much less likely to cross the Atlantic to fight and die in a war, but much more likely to find partners in security, in cultural and commercial and educational endeavors. The expansion of NATO and the Partnership For Peace make the positive outcome much more probable.

This is a day for celebration but also a day for looking ahead. Our work to adapt all our

institutions to the challenges of the new century is far from done. On Monday, I had the opportunity to go to Geneva to lay out a seven-point plan for the changes, I believe, the world trading system must embrace in order to fully and faithfully serve free people in the 21st century.

And just very briefly before I close, let me mention the things that I believe we still have to do with NATO. We have to build closer ties with the Partnership For Peace members. We have to reinforce the practical cooperation between NATO and Russia, and NATO and Ukraine. We have to see through our efforts to secure a lasting peace in the Balkans, and we cannot walk away until the job is done. We must achieve deeper reductions in our nuclear forces and lower the limits on conventional arms across the European continent.

Yes, we have more work to do, but for today, we remind the people of Europe that in the efforts that lie ahead, they can continue to count on the United States. And we remind the world that tomorrow, as yesterday, America will defend its values, protect its interests, and stand by its friends. So that years from now another generation may gather in this place and bask in the warm glow of liberty's light, because in our time we fulfilled America's eternal mission: to deepen the meaning of freedom, to widen the circle of opportunity, to strengthen the bonds of our union among ourselves and with others who believe in the primary importance of liberty and human dignity.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:35 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Ambassador to the U.S. Jerzy Kozminski and former President Lech Walesa of Poland; Ambassador to the U.S. Gyorgy Banlaki and President Arpad Goncz of Hungary; Ambassador to the U.S. Aleksandr Vondra and President Vaclav Havel of the Czech Republic; former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski; former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Jeane J. Kirkpatrick; and Gen. George A. Joulwan, USA (Ret.), former Supreme Allied Commander, Europe.