

times get tough and we still have to take care of it?

So I say to all of you again, I think that's the first thing that we ought to do. We are not against tax cuts. There are tax cuts in this budget, as has already been said, for education, for child care, to help small businesses provide pensions for their employees. There are tax cuts for environmental investments that help to cut energy bills. But we don't take any money out of the surplus. We adopted a disciplined framework for the future in 1997; we ought not to depart from it. We had a bipartisan commitment to that framework in 1997, and we ought not to depart from it.

The second thing we ought to do is to recognize that we have money set aside in the budget to invest in education, and we're still a long way from having the ability to say that every American child can get a world-class education. We ought to fund smaller classes. We ought to fund the initiative to revitalize, repair, or build 5,000 schools, to hook up all our classrooms to the Internet, to give kids in troubled communities mentoring programs, guarantees they can go on to college, after-school programs, summer schools programs, the kind of things that don't treat them as failures just because the system they've been in has failed.

We ought to pass the Patients' Bill of Rights for the 160 million Americans that are in managed care, to put health care first and make sure you're managing for a healthier America, not the other way around. We ought to keep the economy going and maintain our leadership in the global economy by funding our fair share of the International Monetary Fund because, as

Alan Greenspan said the other day, we cannot forever maintain our position as an island of prosperity in a sea of distress.

Now, that's what we ought to be doing. So we're here to celebrate. But this country is here now, after 220 years, still again at the top of its game, having totally debunked all the defeatists who said we were in decline. But let's not forget why it happened. Don't you ever forget that these seven people back here stood up, and a lot like them, and laid their jobs on the line for America's future.

Now, when no one has that kind of risk, nobody is being asked to cut their throat and give up a job they love and work they believe in to do the right thing, no one is being asked to do that, how can we possibly walk away from this session of Congress, when there is no pain in doing the right thing—not the kind of pain they had to endure—without saying we're going to save Social Security first, put education as our first investment priority, pass a Patients' Bill of Rights, and keep America and the world's economy growing? How can we do that? We owe it to the people who made the sacrifice that brought us to this day to build for another day. We should not sit on or celebrate this balanced budget. We should build on it.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:21 a.m. in Room 450 of the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to J. (Kay) McClure, president, Walhonde Tools, Inc., who introduced the President; and former Representative Martin Olav Sabo.

## Remarks on the Legislative Agenda for Education *October 1, 1998*

Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, there really is nothing for me to say. I want to thank the previous speakers, each in their own way, for what they have given and what they will give to the children of our country. I believe that Secretary Riley is not only the longest serving but the most intensely committed and effective Secretary of Education this country has ever had.

I thank the Vice President for the vivid picture he painted for us of what is going on in these school buildings. We have been out there. We have been in these buildings. We have seen them. I believe the largest number of trailers or temporary classrooms, or whatever the politically correct term is, that I have seen at one school is a dozen in Florida. But they're everywhere. And there are a lot of magnificent old

buildings in our cities that any person would be proud to go to school in if only they were fixed.

I'd like to thank Senator Daschle and Congressman Bonior and all the Members of Congress who are here whom they have represented today, for a genuine, consistent, passionate commitment to education that I have seen over my 6 years as President. It has never failed.

Thank you, Kathryn Scruggs, for giving your life to the education of our children. And from the look in your face and the lilt in your voice, I'd say it's been a good gift both ways. Thank you so much. Thank you.

I want to thank all the educators who are here, Arlene Ackerman, our friends from the AFT and the NEA and the other education associations. And I thank the young children for coming here today, for reminding us what this is all about. Welcome; we're glad you're all here from Stevens Elementary.

Let me begin where I meant to end: We can do this—we can do this. This is not an insurmountable problem. We have the resources; what we need is the will and the consensus. We need open minds and open hearts.

Yesterday I was privileged to announce to the American people that our Nation has triumphed over an enormous challenge. The red ink of the Federal budget deficits has been replaced by a surplus. We have brought order to our fiscal house. Now it is time to bring more learning to the schoolhouse.

In the end we needed a bipartisan consensus to pass a Balanced Budget Act that also had the biggest investment in the health care of our children in a generation and opened the doors of college wider than any act since the passage of the GI bill. That's what we need now.

Think of the challenges we have overcome as a people in the last 6 years. The crime rate has gone down to a 25-year low. The welfare rolls are at a 29-year low. It's the first time in 29 years we've had a balanced budget. The unemployment rate is at a 28-year low. The homeownership rate in this country is at an all-time high.

We are capable of overcoming challenges that people used to wring their hands about just a few years ago. But we have to put the progress of our people over partisanship and politics. So we all came here—let me join the chorus and say we came here not to ask for much from

the majority in Congress, just one day—one day for our children and their future; one day between now and the end of this congressional session to strengthen our public schools, to provide those 100,000 teachers for the smaller classes, to build or repair those 5,000 schools, to provide those after-school and summer school programs to help our students meet higher academic standards.

In recent days Congress has given us a glimmer of hope by passing a higher education bill that includes our initiatives on higher education, that will help millions of Americans receive the college education they need to compete in the global economy the Vice President so vividly described. It reduces the cost of student loans and provides for mentors for middle school students who can get a guarantee that they will be able to finance their college education if they stay out of trouble, stay in school, and keep learning.

I applaud the Congress, members of both parties who did this, including many who are here today: Congressmen Goodling and Kildee and Clay; Senator Kennedy and his Republican colleague, Senator Jeffords.

But though we have the finest system of higher education in the world—and this is a good bill because it opened the doors to it even wider—we all know we have to have the finest K through 12 system of education in the world, and it has to be there for all of our kids as we grow increasingly more diverse. We know that nothing else we can do will more profoundly expand the circle of opportunity, more directly enhance our economic competitiveness, more clearly bridge the divisions of our society and bind us together as one nation.

And yet no issue has suffered more from misplaced priorities and partisan pursuits than America's public schools. Eight months ago I sent Congress the education agenda that has been described today. It demands accountability from everyone. It says to students, "We expect you to meet high standards of learning and discipline, but we want to give you the help you need to meet those standards." It should be bipartisan in its appeal.

There was a time when education was completely bipartisan because no one asked you to register by party when you sign up for school, because every American, even Americans that have no children in our schools, have a direct,

immediate, and profound interest in the success of our children's education.

Now, it is not too late. There is still time before the end of this session of Congress to spend that one day so we can cast that one vote to transform public education—to reduce the class sizes by adding 100,000 teachers, goals Senator Patty Murray and Congressman Bill Clay have been fighting for; to build or modernize those 5,000 schools across our country, goals Congressman Charlie Rangel and Senator Carol Moseley-Braun have worked very hard for, for a long time now.

The plan also would connect all of our classrooms in these new or renovated buildings to the Internet by the year 2000 and train teachers to use the Internet properly and to train our children to do the same. Every school in this country should be as modern as the world our children will live in. One day, one vote, could make it happen.

The third thing we want to do on that one day is to help our students meet higher standards; and if they're in troubled neighborhoods or come from difficult families or have school systems that haven't been performing well, we know they could be helped immensely with summer school and after-school programs, programs that Senator Barbara Boxer and Congresswoman Nita Lowey have been spearheading our fight for.

I have seen the benefits of these programs all across America. Last week I visited a school in Chicago where all the students came from the, I think, now famous housing project of Cabrini-Green. Students in Chicago no longer advance to the next grade unless they can pass tests to demonstrate that they know what they were supposed to learn. But if they have trouble passing the tests, they are not branded failures, because the system has failed them. Instead, they are offered academically enriched summer school and after-school programs. Over 40,000 children now get 3 hot meals a day there. The summer school is now the sixth biggest school district in the United States. And guess what? In that school I visited in Cabrini-Green, the reading scores have doubled and the math scores have tripled in 3 years.

We only ask for one day for these initiatives—and, oh, by the way, one day for a decent appropriations bill. That's the job that Congress is supposed to do every year. And we are depending upon the leadership of Senator Tom Harkin

and Congressman David Obey to see that we get that kind of appropriations bill. The one the House has passed does not meet that test.

Let me tell you a little about it. It shortchanges our youngest children in Head Start, our new initiatives in higher education for mentoring children, and preparing quality teachers. It shortchanges these after-school care programs. It shortchanges our major education program to help children learn the basics. It shortchanges my Hispanic education action plan. It shortchanges our efforts for school reform and high standards and our commitment to hook all those classrooms up to the Internet by 2000. It even shortchanges our efforts for safe, disciplined, drug-free schools. It shortchanges our young people in school-to-work efforts. It shortchanges workers who need retraining between jobs. It shortchanges our efforts to help disadvantaged youth get jobs. And in the House, unbelievably, it completely eliminates the summer job program for half a million young people. That is wrong. As your President, I will not stand for it.

The men and women who are up here with me stand ready to work with people in the other party, and they only ask them to do it for just one day, to strengthen our public schools for an entire new century, to affirm the bedrock American value that every child, regardless of race or neighborhood or income, deserves the chance to live up to his or her God-given abilities. Just one day to put in place a plan that will not only help those children but in so doing will make sure that America's greatest days lie ahead. I think it's worth one day, don't you?

Thank you very much, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:40 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Kathryn Scruggs, reading specialist, Ashlawn Elementary School, Arlington, VA, who introduced the President; and Arlene Ackerman, superintendent, District of Columbia Public Schools. The President also referred to the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA). A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.