

are two separate issues here, as I understand it, and if I make a mistake, Herr Schroeder can correct me. The first issue is whether Germany will support NATO issuing the action order to make sure that the plans are in place and authorized if military action should be needed. That is what he has said yes to today.

We all hope this will not happen. The President of Russia sent three high-ranking officials of his government to Mr. Milosevic, and he made a lot of specific commitments to honor the U.N. resolution. Those commitments are not being kept today. He can still keep the commitments that he made to President Yeltsin and keep the commitments inherent in the U.N. resolution, and none of this will happen. But I am convinced that it's important that we authorize NATO to act. So that's where the agreement is.

Now, as I understand it, the German Constitution requires the Bundestag to approve any out-of-Germany military action, and that is something that will have to await the Chancellor

assuming office later this month, and then we will see. I don't think it's appropriate for me to comment on that. It's enough for me right now that we are in agreement on the action order. That's all that matters today.

And I think we—in fairness to him, he's putting together his government. He's working out the understandings of the coalition. He's preparing to assume office. He has to make a wide range of decisions about new domestic policies. I've been exactly where he is, and I don't think we ought to add to his burdens today.

Thank you.

NOTE: The exchange began at 12:30 p.m. in the Colonnade at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; President Boris Yeltsin of Russia; and President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks on Education Legislation

October 9, 1998

Let me begin my thanking Senator Daschle and Congressman Gephardt and all their colleagues who are here for their leadership and their commitment on the issue of education. Let me also ask you to listen to what they said. We are less than 4 weeks away from an election. All public officials would like to go home, but they said that they and their colleagues would put the American people before their political interests and would put progress before partisanship and would stay here until we finally address the issue of our children's education.

We had over 50 Members of Congress here just a few days ago to ask the Republican leadership to give us just one day, one day to pass a budget that honors our values and cares for our children's future in the area of education.

We have the first balanced budget in 29 years. Our economy is prosperous amid global turmoil. We have the confidence that we can solve our problems, and the space—the emotional and the intellectual space—to think about our future. Now, this budget is purely and simply a test

of whether after 9 months of doing nothing, we are going to do the right thing about our children's future. Members of Congress should not go home until they pass a budget that will strengthen our public schools for the 21st century.

I am determined that this budget will make a strong downpayment on our drive to hire 100,000 new highly qualified teachers, to reduce class size in the early grades. Today there are a record number of children in our schools, and studies confirm what everyone knows: smaller classes and better trained teachers make all the difference. We have a duty to provide them.

Smaller classes and more teachers—well, you've got to have some place for the class to meet. All across America, children are being forced to learn in school buildings that are either too crowded or even crumbling or are not wired for the 21st century. I have asked the Republican majority repeatedly to act on an innovative plan to help communities modernize or build 5,000 schools. We can do this without

a big new spending program; I thought they would like that. We can do it with targeted tax cuts, tax cuts that are paid for in the balanced budget that do not spend any of the surplus. I can't think of a better tax cut for our country's future than one that gives our children a modern, safe, adequately equipped place to learn.

This balanced budget should also meet our other educational priorities. It should fully fund the after-school programs to bring discipline and learning into the lives of our young people and to give them a change to keep on learning and not be branded failures because they may be in a system that is failing them. It should bring cutting-edge technology to the classroom. We ought to hook up all the classes of this country to the Internet by the year 2000. It should expand Head Start. It should provide funding for the childhood literacy programs so that every child can learn to read well and independently by the third grade. It should support our new monitoring drive to encourage young people to go to college. And finally, I believe it should move forward with voluntary national standards and voluntary national tests in the basics, administered by a bipartisan group.

We should not retreat from our commitments to our children's future. Unfortunately, that commitment was not reflected when the education bill was finally—finally—brought to the House floor yesterday, 8 days into the new budget year. It met none of these challenges. I have instructed my budget team to return to Capitol Hill to make the strongest possible

case for the educational priorities that all of us standing here before you today share.

Now, what has happened in this Congress? What is the record to date of the majority? They have killed the bill to reform the way we treat tobacco and to protect our children from the dangers of tobacco. They killed campaign finance reform. They killed the minimum wage. Today, as Senator Daschle said, the Senate joined the House in putting an end to the Patients' Bill of Rights; that means no guarantees that people will go to the nearest emergency room when they're hurt, that they can see a specialist when they need to, that they won't lose their coverage in the middle of treatment, that their records will be kept private. They have tried to erode my commitment to saving Social Security first in the House of Representatives.

But still it is not too late for us to go forward together on our children's future. Politics should stop at the classroom door. It is not too late.

We are here not simply to state our strong conviction and our willingness—the willingness of these people who have to run—to defer their campaigns to take care of our children's future but to invite our Republican colleagues to join us and finally try to salvage some shred of positive accomplishment for the American people. I hope they'll do it. There is still time.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:41 p.m. at the South Portico at the White House, following a meeting with congressional leaders.

Statement on Senate Action on Legislation To Promote International Religious Freedom

October 9, 1998

I welcome today's strong bipartisan Senate passage, and the anticipated passage in the House of Representatives, of the "International Religious Freedom Act of 1998."

I have made the promotion of religious freedom a priority of my Presidency and an integral part of our foreign policy through, among other efforts, the creation of the Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad and my appoint-

ment last June of our special representative on international religious freedom.

The "International Religious Freedom Act of 1998" is a welcome and responsible addition to our ongoing efforts. Its principled, measured approach rightly emphasizes effective remedies over broad, symbolic gestures.

I also wish to applaud the bipartisan, cooperative approach that helped achieve this legislation, in particular the leadership of Senators