

that at the end of our days we have done everything we can to make sure no one we ever touched was denied the chance to live their dreams. We know we'll be better off when that's true. We know we'll all get something out.

I look at these young kids that are here tonight, these young people. I'm kind of jealous, actually. If they'd let me be 20, I think I'd let them be President. *[Laughter]* You know? I think about the life that lies before them and all that they might be. I imagine, 30 years from now, some African-American, Hispanic, Asian female standing here as President of the United States, you know?

But I know that as long as there are Native American reservations where young American citizens live in communities where the diabetes rate is 2 and 3 and 4 and 5 times the national average; as long as there are neighborhoods where kids really don't have a chance to get a world-class education; as long as there are places where nobody's taking care of the pollu-

tion, so the health rates are not what they ought to be; as long as there is anyplace where anybody can't live out their dreams, the NAACP will have work to do, and America will have new ground to break. And together, there is no better cause for our energies and our lives.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:07 p.m. in the Great Hall at the National Museum of Women in the Arts. In his remarks, he referred to Julian Bond, chairman of the board, Kweisi Mfume, president and chief executive officer, and Bishop William H. Graves, vice chairman of the board, NAACP; Suzanne DuBose, president, Bell Atlantic Foundation; Gail West, wife of Secretary of Veterans Affairs Togo D. West, Jr.; Judith A. Winston, former Executive Director, President's Initiative on Race; and Gen. Colin Powell, USA (Ret.), chairman, America's Promise—The Alliance For Youth.

## The President's Radio Address *February 20, 1999*

Good morning. This weekend, Governors from all over our country are here in Washington to talk about the long-term challenges facing our Nation as we prepare to enter the 21st century. Of those challenges, none is more important than educating our children—all our children—to world-class standards. Today I want to talk about how we must work together at every level of government and in every community to make sure our Nation's public schools are the best in the world.

For 6 years now, improving education has been one of our highest priorities. Even as we have held fast to fiscal discipline, replacing an age of crippling budget deficits with a new era of budget surpluses, we have nearly doubled our investment in education and training.

The balanced budget I sent to Washington this month strengthens that commitment to our children's education with even more resources to help States improve accountability, to build or modernize 6,000 schools,\* to reduce class

size in the early grades, to start more after-school programs, to connect every classroom and library to the Internet, and to finish the job of hiring 100,000 new highly trained teachers.

This is an education agenda for the 21st century. But with more children entering school than ever before and enrollments continuing to rise, we know we must draw on every resource we possess to strengthen and improve our public schools.

As both a former Governor and a parent, I know the greatest innovations in education do not start in Washington. They start in local schools and school districts, in community councils and parent-teacher groups. They start in States like North Carolina, where Governor Hunt has led the way to improve teacher quality, with performance assessment for new teachers and incentives for veteran teachers to become even more proficient and to become board-certified master teachers.

They start in Michigan, where Governor Engler is supporting greater accountability in

\* White House correction.

schools by requiring school districts to send parent report cards on how well their schools are doing. They start in Delaware, where Governor Carper putting an end to social promotion by insisting that students pass State tests before they move to next grades. They start in Pennsylvania, where Governor Ridge is improving school safety with effective discipline codes. They're starting in States like California, where Governor Davis has called on the State legislature to turn around failing schools with a new accountability plan.

As I have said many times, every problem in education in America has been solved somewhere, by somebody, in America. The trick is helping more communities to put those proven solutions to work in their own public schools. I believe the National Government has an obligation to help them do that.

That's why, in my State of the Union Address, I proposed an ambitious new agenda to invest more of our resources in what we know is working and to stop investing in what doesn't. My plan will help every school district to take five steps that are already working in schools around the country, steps advocated by teachers and principals and parents and students themselves: ending social promotion, but investing more money to help students with summer school and after-school programs, so we don't blame students when the system fails them; adopting and enforcing reasonable discipline codes; giving parents report cards on their children's schools and giving parents and children more choice of schools, with charter schools and more public school choice; turning around or shutting down the worst performing public schools; and ensuring that all new teachers are trained in the subject they'll be teaching.

Now, these steps are all based on proven experience. They're common sense. We have to make them common practice in every school district in America.

All across our Nation, we're seeing a grass-roots revolution in education, a revolution in accountability and rising expectations. This year we have a rare opportunity to use our new prosperity to help this revolution spread to every single school district, every classroom, every child.

Now, some in Congress believe the National Government has no business helping communities to improve their schools in this way. But I think strengthening education is a national priority. So I urge Congress to help reduce class size, to modernize our school buildings, to improve teacher quality, to make accountability for results—ending social promotion, reasonable discipline codes, all these other things that I have advocated—make these things the law of the land. If we do this, we can transform our public schools; we can lift our children up; we can give them the education they need to make the most of their lives in an exciting new century.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:30 p.m. on February 19 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on February 20. In his remarks, the President referred to Governors James B. Hunt, Jr., of North Carolina; John Engler of Michigan; Thomas R. Carper of Delaware; Tom Ridge of Pennsylvania; and Gray Davis of California. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 19 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

## Remarks at the Labor Unification Legislative Conference

*February 21, 1999*

Thank you. I would like to—first of all, thank you for the wonderful, warm welcome—to express my deep respect and support for the IAM president, Tom Buffenbarger, and all of the IAM officers; the UAW executive VP, Ruben Burks—I know Steve Yokich is in Germany now—and all the UAW members here; and the

steel workers' president, George Becker, and all the steel workers here; and of course, everyone up here on the platform with me.

George Becker would give his voice, his heart, and his life for his members. And he nearly gave his voice tonight.