

Remarks at the National Governors' Association Meeting *February 22, 1999*

I know we're beginning a little late, so I will get right into my remarks and try to truncate them a little bit so we can have the maximum amount of time for discussion. Let me begin by saying that Hillary and I were delighted to have you here last night. We had a wonderful time. This room is in a little different condition than it was last evening, but I hope both events will prove to be enjoyable.

Let me say that I have been a participant in one way or the other in every Governors' meeting since 1979, for 20 years. I had the privilege of serving with 150 of my fellow Americans as Governors over a 12-year period. One of the best has passed away in the last few months, Governor Lawton Chiles of Florida. And I wanted to mention him both because he was an important member of the NGA and because he had the good sense to go from Washington back home, instead of the other way around.

I wanted to thank Governor Jeb Bush for his proposal to set aside some of the tobacco settlement money in Florida for the foundation named in Governor Chiles' name, for the benefit of the children of the State. Those of us who knew and cared for Lawton are profoundly grateful for that. And I wanted to mention with the remembrance of him because he gave so much of his life, and the older he got, the more he gave to the future of our children. I know we have a lot of things to do today, but I'd like to spend my few moments talking about the education of our kids.

As I said in my State of the Union Address, the prosperity the Nation now enjoys gives us a rare opportunity and, I believe, a profound obligation to do more to ensure the education of all of our children. At a very important time, we have, as Secretary Riley never tires of saying, the largest school population and the most diverse one we've ever had. We have more overcrowded schools and more old and disrepaired schools than we have ever had. And we have more opportunities to seize the benefits of the well-educated population than we have ever had.

The budget that I sent to Congress this month, after the State of the Union, calls for spending \$1.4 billion to help States and school

districts hire new and better trained teachers. That's a 17 percent increase over the budget I signed last fall, and it moves us considerably closer to our goal of hiring 100,000 new teachers over the next 7 years—now the next 6 years. It calls on Congress to pass our tax proposal to build or modernize 6,000 schools, which is a huge problem in many of your States. It triples our budget for after-school and summer school programs to \$600 million. That's enough to help local schools keep a million children in the schools and off the street during the hours when parents work and juvenile crime soars.

I had an interesting discussion last night with Mrs. Leavitt and Mrs. Kitzhaber about the importance of keeping young people in school, later in the school day. It includes new funds to stay on track to hook all our classrooms up to the Internet and to reach our goal of 3,000 charter schools by the year 2000.

I think it is very important that we invest more money, as we have more children, and as we are going to have to replace a large number of teachers who will be retiring, and make sure that they have been adequately prepared. But I think it's also important that we candidly assess how we invest the money we are now spending. The Federal Government already is investing \$15 billion a year in public schools. This year we have to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. I believe we should change the way we spend the money we are already spending. I don't know how many times I've heard Governors say that over the last 15 or 16 years about State funds.

The idea behind the "Education Accountability Act," which I will send to Congress next month, is to say after, now more than 15 years of education research and efforts since the issuance of the "Nation At Risk" report, and the 10th year after the Governors and President Bush issued the "Goals 2000" report, it is time for the Federal Government to invest in those things which Governors and school districts and principals and teachers and students and parents have proved are critical for raising student achievement, which is the theme of your conference.

It says that school districts accepting Federal money must end social promotion, turn around or shut down failing schools, ensure teachers know the subjects they're teaching, have and enforce reasonable discipline codes, and empower parents with report cards on their schools.

I say again, we did not dream up these ideas in Washington. We learned them from North Carolina, where Governor Hunt has led the way in improving teacher quality with performance assessments, incentives for veteran teachers to become even more proficient, a strategy to turn around or shut down failing schools; in Pennsylvania, where Governor Ridge is improving school safety with effective discipline codes; in Delaware, where Governor Carper is putting an end to social promotion by insisting that students pass State tests before they move to the next grade; in California, where Governor Davis has asked the legislature to turn around failing schools with a new accountability plan; in Michigan, where Governor Engler is supporting greater accountability by requiring school districts to send parents report cards. And I could mention every Governor in this room in some specific or another, because these ideas represent the best practices in education reform today, proven in the laboratories of democracy at the State, city, and school district level.

Many of you have proposed one or more of these ideas in your state of the State addresses. In his state of the State, Governor Engler endorsed all five of them and said he didn't understand how anyone could disagree. I'm with him.

Some people already are trying to frame this debate here in Washington, however, in partisan or ideological terms, and try to force everyone to take sides, when I'd like to use it as an opportunity for us to debate, discuss, and come together.

You'll hear some people say the Federal Government shouldn't be involved at all in public education, just send us the check, and we'll take care of the rest. In 1787 our Founding Fathers declared that all new territories had to set aside land for public schools, establishing at the birth of our Republic the principle that public education, though a State and local responsibility, is a national priority. In 1862 President Lincoln created the land-grant college system. In 1917 Woodrow Wilson mandated vocational training in public high schools. In 1958 President Eisenhower created the new program to help public

school teachers improve math and science instruction in the aftermath of *Sputnik*.

None of these Federal actions undermine the ability of State and local government to run their schools. Each was a necessary response to the challenge the Nation faced at the time. I believe we are at a similar moment of challenge today. And it should lead, I believe, in the direction of all the work that has been done by Governors since 1983 toward what works to raise student achievement.

Some will say the Federal Government should be giving States more flexibility, not demanding more accountability. I think it's a false choice and the Federal Government should be giving you more of both. You know from your own interactions that flexibility and accountability can achieve the right ends working with local governments.

Since I've been here, our administration has cut regulations in elementary and secondary education programs by two-thirds, granted 357 waivers so that States and school districts can have the flexibility to try new approaches. We don't have any business telling you whom to hire, how to teach, how to run schools. I have vigorously supported more school-based management and more flexibility for you. But let's not kid ourselves. We are not doing our children any favors by continuing to subsidize practices that don't work and failing to invest in practices that do.

We shouldn't have a local option for schools to fail, year-in and year-out. Governors have recognized that for years. If you go back and read the "Goals 2000" statement, that—there's still a few of us around this room that were there back then—that the Governors hammered out with President Bush and his Education Department, and the allocation of responsibilities under that statement, it is clear that there has long been a recognition of our joint responsibility to raise student achievement. And I was thrilled when that became the topic of your endeavors this year.

There may be some who say there's now no longer any need for the Federal Government to assist on these accountability measures, because States and school districts are doing it on their own. I have no doubt that these ideas eventually will spread to every State and school district in America. The question is, how long will it take to happen?

Our Federal system, our laboratories of democracy, are great at inventing new ideas and testing them out. At least in the area of education, we're not so good at spreading the best of those ideas around in a comprehensive and timely fashion. It took over 100 years for laws mandating compulsory, free elementary education to spread from few States to the whole Nation. That pace of change might have been all right in the 19th century; it won't do for the 21st. We don't have the luxury of waiting and continuing to subsidize failure.

Now, let me just give one example of that, and then I'll turn it over to your chairman. In 1986, the NGA issued a report called "Time For Results," with task forces chaired by Lamar Alexander, Tom Keane, Dick Riley, and me, urging the Governors to intervene in low-performing schools and school districts and to take over or close down academically bankrupt schools—1986. In 1987, nine States had the authority to do that. In 1990, the NGA issued a report, "Educating America: State Strategies for Achieving National Education Goals." In 1988, 18 States offered assistance or intervention in low-performance schools. In 1998, NGA policy supported State focus on schools and reiterated the 1988 policy that States should have the responsibility for enforcing accountability,

including establishing clear penalties in cases of sustained failures to improve student performance. In 1999, 19 States have procedures for intervening in failing schools, 16 for replacing school staff or closing down the school.

This is tough politics. I don't know that I could have passed this through my legislature. I do know that if we have the reauthorization of the Federal law this year and we're sending this out, and all we do is to say we ought to do what the NGA said we should do 13 years ago, that will accelerate the pace of reform in education, and I think it's a worthy thing.

I hope we can pass it. I want to work with you. And it is not inconsistent with our shared commitment to better flexibility in education.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:05 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Governors Jeb Bush of Florida, James B. Hunt, Jr., of North Carolina, Tom Ridge of Pennsylvania, Gray Davis of California, John Engler of Michigan, and NGA Chairman Thomas R. Carper of Delaware; Jacalyn Leavitt, wife of NGA Vice Chairman Gov. Michael O. Leavitt of Utah; and Sharon Kitzhaber, wife of Gov. John A. Kitzhaber of Oregon.

Statement on Industry and Education Leaders' Recommendations on Technology in the Classroom

February 22, 1999

I am delighted that the CEO Forum on Education and Technology, a group of leaders from industry and education, has developed a strong set of recommendations to ensure that teachers can effectively use technology in the classroom. If technology is to realize its potential as a powerful new tool to help students achieve high academic standards, teachers must be as comfortable with a computer as they are with a chalkboard.

That is why my \$800 million budget for educational technology includes over \$100 million to give both new and current teachers the training they need to integrate technology into the curriculum. I look forward to working with the CEO forum and other leaders in industry and education to give every child and teacher in America access to these high-tech tools for learning.