

Mar. 4 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1999

## Statement on the National Assessment of Education Progress March 4, 1999

Today's release of State-by-State National Assessment of Education Progress scores is evidence that our efforts to raise academic standards have begun to pay off. Many States have shown significant improvement in reading in the last 4 years, and some States that had scores well below the national average have made the greatest gains. But much remains to be done to ensure that every child in America is mastering the basics. That is why I urge the Senate

to vote this week to continue funding for 100,000 new, well-prepared teachers to reduce class size in the early grades. Parents and teachers across the country know that smaller classes lead to improved student performance in reading and other basic skills. We should grasp this opportunity to build on the gains we have made, so that every child in America is prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

## Statement on the Murder of Tourists in Uganda March 4, 1999

I was deeply saddened to learn of the brutal violence that erupted Monday morning in a nature preserve in southwestern Uganda. Hillary and I have extended our profound condolences to the families of the victims.

Eight innocent tourists from the United States, Great Britain, and New Zealand were killed. All of the victims were there because they loved Africa. It was a senseless and cowardly murder, apparently committed by those who perpetrated the Rwandan genocide in 1994. If this attack was intended as a warning to our Nation to stop supporting those in the region seeking reconciliation and justice, those who

committed it should understand that we will not be deterred in any way.

We will not forget these crimes, nor rest until those who committed them are brought to justice. Already, a team of FBI experts is on the ground, working with Ugandan authorities to gather the relevant evidence so indictments of the perpetrators can be made.

Let me also underscore our commitment to breaking the cycle of violence and impunity that has gripped the Great Lakes region, so that all who live in and visit the region can do so without fear.

## Remarks at a Screening of "Dare To Compete: The Struggle of Women in Sports" March 4, 1999

Thank you. I hate to risk spoiling the moment. I'd like to ask you all to join me in thanking Jeff and HBO for this magnificent gift to our country. *[Applause]* Thank you.

As I watched this film I had many thoughts. Hillary and I have been privileged to know some of the athletes that were featured. I missed Flo-Jo again. I knew I would never have a golf swing like Babe Zaharias. *[Laughter]* I knew I would never dunk the ball like you. *[Laughter]*

I remembered how desperately I wanted Billie Jean to win that tennis match—*[laughter]*—for the sake of my mother, my then-girlfriend.

I remembered all the times as a private citizen—when I'm upstairs at the White House now, I can indulge my obsession with sports by watching women athletes as well as men, across a whole range of endeavors—all the joy, all the elation, all because the pioneers in this room and on this film dared to compete. And

we owe all of you who are here and all of those who are featured, all those living and all those gone, a profound debt of gratitude.

I also remembered again, looking at Senator Bayh, the importance of what we do here—to give the American people the right to live out their dreams without regard to whatever particular conditions define them. Where would we be without title IX? There were only 300,000 girls all over America in high school sports then; today, there are well over 2 million. The law makes a difference, too, and we will do our best here to be faithful to it.

But finally, let me say—as the grandson and son of two women who worked and did their best to make their way in life; as the husband of a remarkable woman who has made her way; as the father of a daughter I hope will always be free to make hers—what Billie Jean said about the tennis match is true of this whole subject. This is about more than sports. This is about the fundamental right of every human being to dream and work and strive and the obligation never to quit, never to give in, never

to be limited, never to be defined—and our obligation to see that all those who come behind us have that right to jump and soar in athletics, in music, in every endeavor. Even some day, someone of a different gender will be standing here giving a speech like this, and I hope it won't be too long.

So we thank you for the gifts you have given us. We thank you for the gifts you have given our daughters. We hope our granddaughters will think this is a quaint remembrance, because all of them will have, without question, the right to live their dreams.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 8 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jeffrey L. Bewkes, chairman and chief executive officer, Home Box Office, Inc. (HBO); former tennis star Billie Jean King; and former Senator Birch Bayh, who sponsored legislation which became Title IX—Prohibition of Sex Discrimination, part of Public Law 92–318, the Education Amendments of 1972.

## The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema of Italy

*March 5, 1999*

*The President.* Good afternoon. I very much enjoyed my first meeting with Prime Minister D'Alema. I am proud of our alliance and our friendship with Italy.

I have to begin this press conference by stating again our great sorrow over what occurred at Cavalese. When I called former Prime Minister Prodi immediately after that terrible event, I made it clear that we would take strong measures to assure that something like that would not occur again. We have taken such measures to enhance safety; we will continue to do so.

The Prime Minister and I today agreed that our Secretary of Defense and their Minister of Defense will review these operational and safety measures together to assess their adequacy and to determine whether additional measures should be taken to ensure the highest levels of safety. They will report to the Prime Minister and me as soon as possible.

I know you will understand that I cannot comment on any particular case, in part because legal proceedings are still pending, but let me say that our objective has been, and remains, to determine responsibility and accountability in an open and fair process. As I said when this happened, the United States is responsible for this terrible tragedy. Again I want to say to the people of Italy, on behalf of the American people, we are profoundly regretful and apologetic for what has occurred, to the families and to all the people of Italy.

Now, we must remember that we have been strong partners and good friends, especially in working for our common security. Today we discussed the coming 50th Anniversary NATO Summit. It will be here in April. We will admit new members. We will plan to meet new challenges. We will address our European allies' initiative, which I fully support, to enhance their