

also referred to the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. Prime Minister D'Alema spoke in Italian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

In his remarks, the Prime Minister referred to Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom.

Statement on the Kennedy-Murray Amendments to Proposed Education Flexibility Partnership Legislation *March 5, 1999*

I strongly support the efforts of Senators Murray and Kennedy to offer a class size amendment to the ed-flex bill. We must make a long-term commitment now to hire 100,000 new, well-prepared teachers to reduce class size in the early grades. The Republican leadership

is wrong to try to shut down debate on this bill before a class size amendment can be voted on. I urge them to allow an up-or-down vote on this amendment, and I urge every Senator to vote for it.

Statement on the Death of Billy Jack Gaither *March 5, 1999*

I share with many Americans a sense of grief and outrage at the tragic and violent death of Billy Jack Gaither in Alabama. This heinous and cowardly crime touches the conscience of our country, just as the terrible murders of James Byrd in Texas and Matthew Shepard in Wyoming did last year.

In times like this, the American people pull together and speak with one voice, because the acts of hatred that led to the deaths of such innocent men are also acts of defiance against the values our society holds most dear.

That is why I will continue to work for passage of the "Hate Crimes Prevention Act," which can empower the Federal Government, working with local authorities, to do even more to deter, investigate, and help prosecute crimes of hatred. The legislation would remove needless jurisdictional requirements and give the Depart-

ment of Justice the power to prosecute hate crimes committed because of the victim's sexual orientation, gender, or disability.

Laws represent values that we as a society cherish, and among those values is a belief that intolerance is un-American. And intolerance, left unchallenged, can inspire evil deeds that threaten the very fabric of this great country. All Americans deserve protection from hate. Nothing is more important to our country's future than our standing together against intolerance, prejudice, and violent bigotry. Congress can give power to such shared values by passing the "Hate Crimes Prevention Act." In so doing, all Americans can be made more safe and secure.

Hillary and I offer our prayers for the family and friends of Mr. Gaither, and our hope that their love for him, together with God's grace, will carry them through these trying times.

The President's Radio Address *March 6, 1999*

Good morning. This week we learned the good news that our efforts to raise academic standards for our children are beginning to pay

off. The National Assessment of Education Progress, or NAEP, released State test scores on Thursday that show that our children's

reading scores have risen, with some of the greatest gains in States that once scored below the national average.

Today I want to talk to you about what I think we must do to build on our progress, by putting more teachers in the classroom and reducing class size in schools around our country.

We all agree that to build a stronger nation we must build up our Nation's public schools. I have proposed a comprehensive education agenda to strengthen and improve our schools with more accountability, higher standards, more volunteer reading tutors for young children, and mentors for teenagers, with Internet connections in every classroom, and with more well-trained teachers in smaller classes.

As any parent, teacher, or school principal can tell you, smaller classes make a huge difference in our children's lives. Studies show that teachers in smaller classes spend less time on discipline and more time teaching. Students spend less time competing for attention and more time learning. Students in smaller classes outperform their peers.

For children in struggling communities, from remote rural areas to inner-city neighborhoods, small class size is even more critical. And with school enrollments at record highs and expected to keep rising, we must act now to reduce class size in all our Nation's public schools.

Across the country, more and more communities are recognizing the importance of smaller class size and trying to do something about it. To help them meet this challenge, I called on Congress early last year to pass my initiative to reduce class size by helping school districts hire 100,000 highly trained teachers. I'm pleased that Republican Members of Congress joined with Democrats and did the right thing in making a big downpayment toward meeting our goal.

Today the Department of Education is releasing guidelines that will let every school district in our Nation know how much money they will receive and how best to use the funds to reduce

class size in time for school this fall. But communities deciding now whether to hire and train new teachers for next year need to know whether they can count on the commitment Congress made last year to help them reduce class size for years to come. It is time to finish the job.

Now, this week the Senate and House will vote on a bill that gives States the flexibility they need to improve their public schools in spending Federal aid they receive. I support this bill. But I also strongly support efforts by Senators Murray and Kennedy and Representatives Clay and Wu to add an amendment to it that will fully fund 100,000 well-trained teachers over the next 6 years.

Unfortunately, Republican leaders are trying to shut down debate on the ed-flex bill before this important amendment on more teachers and smaller classes can even be voted on. Now, last October, just before the election, Republicans joined us in promising the American people more teachers and smaller classes. Less than 5 months later, we now have the first big test of whether this Congress is really willing to work together across party lines and with the White House to get things done for the American people, whether the Congress is serious about giving our children the education they need and deserve.

The choice is simple: Are we going to give Americans smaller classes or more partisanship? Are we going to put politics ahead of progress or put 100,000 teachers in our Nation's classrooms? I call on the Senate to allow an up-or-down vote on the Murray-Kennedy class size amendment, and I urge every Senator to vote for it. When it comes to our children's future, politics must stop at the schoolhouse door.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 4:08 p.m. on March 5 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 6. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 5 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.