

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:40 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to University of Tennessee President J. Wade Gilley, Coach Phillip Fulmer, and Volun-

teers team members Tee Martin, Mercedes Hamilton, Travis Henry, and Peerless Price; and University of Arkansas quarterback Clint Stoerner.

Statement on the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse *August 18, 1999*

Today's 1998 national household survey on drug abuse reveals that we have turned an important corner on youth drug use. Last year youth drug use declined significantly, and fewer young people tried marijuana for the first time. This encouraging news shows that more young people are getting the message that drugs are wrong and illegal and can kill you, and today's report contains even more good news: Current cigarette use dropped to the lowest rate ever recorded by the survey.

While these results give us reason to be optimistic, we cannot let up on our efforts. We must continue our unprecedented media campaign to reach our children with powerful anti-drug messages, not cut it back just as it is making an impact. We must expand our partnerships with community antidrug coalitions and work to enact our long-term drug strategy. Together, we can steer our children away from drugs and toward a brighter future.

Remarks on the Baby Boom Echo Education Initiative *August 19, 1999*

Thank you very much, and welcome to the announcement of the administration's program to save the future for Secretary Riley's grandchildren. *[Laughter]*

Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for your passionate dedication and leadership. Thank you, Wendell Greer. I also want to acknowledge here people who will be involved in, I think, briefing later: Dan Galloway, who is the principal of Adlai Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, Illinois; Dr. Daniel Domenech, the superintendent of the Fairfax County schools; and Dr. Iris Metts, the superintendent of the Prince George's County schools, who was here at the White House with us when I signed the ed-flex bill last April.

This is a busy time for educators, and I appreciate them for taking the time to join us. It's a busy time for parents and students, too, thinking about the back-to-school season. In so many ways it represents a new beginning. People get used to new teachers, new classmates, new schoolbooks, new jeans and clothes. It reminds

us of the vital role that education plays in our children's lives and in the life of our Nation.

Today I want to talk about what the previous speakers have said in terms of what it means for America, not just in a new school year but in a new century. In our lifetimes we have never had a better chance to prepare America's children and America's schools for the demands of the 21st century. We can do it because of the longest peacetime expansion in our history, the highest homeownership, over 19 million new jobs, welfare at a 32 year low, crime a 26-year low, teen smoking, teen pregnancy, and as our annual survey showed just yesterday, teen drug abuse all down. We have a record surplus of \$99 billion, and it's projected to grow and to sustain itself over the next 10 years.

Now, there's a great debate in Washington about what we should do with this surplus and, in a larger sense, how to fulfill the promise and the obligation of preparing our schools and our children for the 21st century. How will we seize this chance to shape the future?

The big challenge, as Secretary Riley said, is that we're going to have young people in record numbers. They are also more diverse than ever before, and therefore, educating them represents more interesting and diverse challenges than ever before. But it's also important to recognize that, ironically, as we have young people in record numbers, we will also have senior citizens in record numbers. The number of people over 65 will double in the next 30 years.

So the question is, how are we going to meet the challenge of the aging of America, the challenge of the swelling ranks of our school-children, when education is more important not only to them but to our Nation than ever before, and how are we going to keep this economy going and spread its opportunities to the people who have not yet felt them?

I believe, as all of you know, that we should make a commitment to invest in our future and to do it in a way that enables us to save Social Security, to save and strengthen Medicare, to invest in education, and to pay off the publicly held debt for the first time since Andrew Jackson was President in 1835, which will guarantee us long-term lower interest rates for everything from business investment to home mortgages to college loans to car payments.

We can do all this and still have sensible tax cuts. We cannot do it unless we make the commitments to do first things first. Today we are releasing a report by the Department of Education that makes it clear that any part of a long-term successful strategy for America requires us to do more, not less, to meet our children's growing educational needs. Every year the halls of our schools resound more loudly with what has been called, as Secretary Riley said, the baby boom echo.

The children of the baby boom generation are breaking enrollment records for the fourth year in a row now. This academic year, 53.2 million students will fill our elementary and secondary schools. That's nearly half a million more than last year. All the details are in this report, and they will be released later today. But think about it, over 53 million students, more diverse than ever before, from more backgrounds, giving us a chance to be the best prepared country in the world for the global society of the 21st century if, but only if, we educate them well.

There's another thing I want to emphasize about it that this report said that I just hadn't

thought about until I was briefed on it. The pattern of enrollment is changing. As the children grow older, it is the high schools and colleges, even more than the elementary and middle schools, that will carry the burden. During the next decade, our high schools are projected to swell with the ranks of 1.3 million new students. This report gives our Nation an important assignment, to make the investments necessary to meet the demands of the future and our obligations to these children.

We've worked hard for 6½ years to invest in education and to bring real change to our schools. Secretary Riley's leadership has helped us to make historic investments. We've opened the doors to college to virtually every American with the HOPE scholarship and increased Pell grants and other loans and grants and credits. We have worked hard—and I think we're going to make it—to connect every classroom to the Internet by the year 2000. We have worked to strengthen performance and accountability in our schools and to help them meet the Nation's educational goals.

But Principal Greer described the conditions that exist in an awful lot of our schools, far too many—overcrowded classes held in trailers, the shortage of individual attention by trained teachers. The challenges are going to increase as enrollment rises and a projected 2 million of our teachers retire in the next few years.

The baby boom echo is another reason why I feel so strongly that we have to act now, to build new schools and fix old ones, to hire trained teachers, especially in math and science, especially for our high schools. I have proposed, as part of our balanced budget, to build or renovate up to 6,000 schools nationwide; and to fulfill the commitment I made to Congress to hire 100,000 new teachers for our Nation's schools, to lower class size in the early grades, coincidentally freeing up resources for our schools to hire the other teachers they need in other areas.

Unfortunately, the congressional majority wants to back off from our commitment to more teachers and smaller classes, and the tax plan they have proposed would do further damage to those priorities. It would not do anything approaching what we've proposed to build or modernize schools—about a tenth of what we recommended. It would not allow us to pay off the debt. It would not add a day to the life of the Social Security Trust Fund or the

Medicare Trust Fund. It would also lead, if the present budget discipline holds, to substantial, even drastic cuts in education and other national priorities, like national defense, medical research, and fighting crime and protecting the environment.

Now, I have said that I will veto this plan, and I know that there's a lot of hoopla going on around the country, from town meetings to paid political ads, to try to change the opinion of the American people. But no matter how much advertising is done or how much argument is made—since we're talking about education today, I think one of the central achievements of this administration has been to restore arithmetic to the budgeting of the Government. *[Laughter]* You know, this is not trigonometry. This is not algebra. This is not calculus, and it is not supply side economics. It's basic arithmetic.

We got from a \$290 billion deficit to a \$99 billion surplus while almost doubling our investment in education and training by going back to arithmetic in Washington. And no amount of argument will change the arithmetic of the population of the kids going into our schools. No amount of argument will change the arithmetic of the doubling of our seniors. No amount of argument will change the arithmetic that there are going to be relatively fewer people working while more people draw Social Security and Medicare. No amount of argument will change the arithmetic of the number of teachers who are going to retire. And the truth is that the American people deep down inside sort of sense this.

So yes, I'll veto the tax plan. But let's don't stop with a negative. Let's make something good happen here. This is about something positive. This can be a great thing for America, having all these kids in the schools from all these different backgrounds. They can make us a bigger, stronger, more diverse, richer, more successful country.

But we have to do right by them. We've got to give them a good economy. We've got to make sure that when the baby boomers retire, the parents of these children don't have to spend money that they would otherwise spend educating their children and helping them grow, taking care of their parents because we haven't done right by Social Security and Medicare. And we've got to give them a decent, world-class

education. And if we could just go back to arithmetic, we can figure it out.

Now let me tell you what the alternative is. If this tax bill that's just passed, if I said, "Oh, well, they had all these town meetings, and they had all these ads," and, "Oh, the polls have changed," and, "Oh, I better sign it," and "Oh, we had a big celebration here," within fairly short order, we would find the following: Today, we help 12 million kids in poor communities to make more of their education. If the tax plan passes, over the new few years, we'd have to tell 6 million of them we couldn't do it anymore. Today, we help a million children learn to read independently by the third grade. If the plan passes, we'd have to tell more than half of them we couldn't help them anymore. Today, we're nearing our goal of enrolling a million preschoolers in Head Start. If the plan were to pass, we'd have to turn over 400,000 away.

Compared to our proposal, this tax plan would mean to those already in school—never mind the ones that are coming, already in school—larger classes, fewer teachers, more trailers. That's what it means. Sounds like a country song, doesn't it? *[Laughter]* Larger classes, fewer teachers, more trailers. *[Laughter]* I like country music, but we can do better than that. *[Laughter]*

So again I say, let's put first things first. Let's decide—before we do the tax cut, let's decide what we have to do as a nation to be a great nation. Let's decide what it takes to take care of the aging of America, so the children of the baby boomers don't have to take funds away from raising their grandchildren; to save Social Security and Medicare. Let's decide what it takes, in addition to the surplus generated by Social Security taxes, to just get us out of debt in the next several years, to guarantee a whole generation of lower interest rates and higher economic growth. Let's decide what we have to do to give our children a world-class education.

Then let's put that against the projected surplus—and I emphasize the word "projected"—and string all those numbers out for 10 years, along with whatever we think we have to do for our farmers, who are getting killed out there in this very difficult international market; what we have to do for medical research; what it takes to protect the environment; and subtract from the projected surplus those things, after

which there will be a number. Let's give that number back to the American people in a tax cut. And you know, since it's 10 years and it's projected, maybe there's some little play one way or the other but not a lot.

Now, ironically, the tax cut I proposed gives about the same dollar benefits to the middle class as the one that the Congress passed. People in my income group wouldn't get anything out of it, but people in my income group, by and large, and higher, have done pretty well in this economy, in this stock market, and care far more about keeping interest rates down and economic growth going, because they know they'll do well.

The only other thing that I think is very important is, I think that my new markets tax cuts ought to pass, because I think we ought to give investors the same incentives to invest in poor areas in America we give them to invest in poor areas around the world now, from the Caribbean to Latin America to Africa to Asia, so that we can keep economic growth going by bringing economic opportunity to the communities that haven't had it yet and to the people who haven't had it yet.

We can do this if we go back to priorities and arithmetic. What's the most important

thing? A time like this comes along once in a generation. People my age, to 10 or 15 years older than me, to 20 years younger than me, they've never known anything like this. Never have we had an opportunity like this.

And with our children going back to school, with more of them than ever, with the educational needs crying out there—and, I might add, one thing that Secretary Riley didn't say, to toot his own horn and the horn of these educators back here and all the rest of you, is that we now know what works. The test scores are going up. We're learning how to educate this incredibly diverse group of kids. And if we make the right investments in the right way, we can get the right results.

So again I say, let's have the right priorities. Let's make an "A" in arithmetic. Let's think about the 21st century and all these children. We'll make the right decisions.

Thank you very much

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:10 p.m. in Presidential Hall (formerly Room 450) in the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Wendell Greer, principal, Manual Arts High School in Los Angeles, CA, who introduced the President.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Cyprus August 19, 1999

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. Chairman:)

In accordance with Public Law 95-384 (22 U.S.C. 2373(c)), I submit to you this report on progress toward a negotiated settlement of the Cyprus question covering the period April 1, 1999, to May 31, 1999. The previous submission covered events during February 1999 and March 1999.

NATO's 50th Anniversary Summit in Washington this past April brought an opportunity to engage with Greek and Turkish leaders on the Cyprus problem. I met there with Turkish President Demirel and Greek Prime Minister Simitis to underscore the importance of a just and lasting solution for all Cypriots. Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright delivered a similar message to her Greek and Turkish counter-

parts in discussions on the possibilities for resuming negotiations in the fall. My Administration will continue efforts to bring about a settlement based on a bizonal, bicomunal federation.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Jesse Helms, chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 20.