

former Gov. Roy Romer of Colorado, former general chair, and Beth Dozoretz, national finance chair, Democratic National Committee; Eric Lander, director, Whitehead Institute/MIT Cen-

ter for Genome Research; and Vinton G. Cerf, senior vice president for Internet architecture and technology, MCI WorldCom, and his wife, Sigrid.

Remarks to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards October 22, 1999

Thank you. Thank you so much. I was thinking how much help I need in trying to get what I say to certain people in the Congress not to go in one ear and out the other. [Laughter] And that maybe I should go through this training program. [Laughter] I believe everything Carole Moyer said, except the part about having been a teacher for 32 years. She looks like she was about 12 when she started. [Laughter]

I want to thank Carole and your chair, Barbara Kelley. Thank you, Jim Kelley and Bob Wehling and Betty Hastert and all the others that are involved with the board. I'm glad to see the president of the National Education Association, Bob Chase, here. Thank you for coming, sir, for your support.

And I have been honored to support this endeavor, since before I was President, as has been said. But the person who deserves all the credit, in my view, without whom none of us would be here today, is Governor Jim Hunt from North Carolina. Thank you. Thank you.

I've told this story before, but I probably wouldn't be here today, either, because in 1979, Jim Hunt, who was a far senior Governor to me then, decided that I should become the vice chair of the Democratic Governors' Association. And then I became the chair. Then I became the youngest former Governor in history, but that wasn't his fault. [Laughter] But it was sort of my board certification in national politics that Jim Hunt gave me. So I might not be here as President today if it weren't for him, either.

This has been a great week for me and for our administration. We celebrated the fifth anniversary of AmeriCorps, our national service program. And we've now had 150,000 young people serve and earn credit for going to college. It took the Peace Corps about 23 years to have that many volunteers. So that's been really great. And we also, I might say, have been able to

get from the Congress the largest expansion in the Peace Corps in a generation, as well. That's been a very good thing.

Today Hillary and I are sponsoring a White House Conference on Philanthropy. And we're going to try to find ways not only to increase the aggregate level of private giving in the aftermath of the vast amounts of wealth that have been generated in our country in the last 7 years but to target it in the right way, in ways that I hope it will help your children and your concern.

I even had a pretty good meeting with the congressional leadership. [Laughter] We're actually working to try to work through our differences on the budget, and I'll have more to say about that in a few moments. A couple of them who weren't there persist in trying to accuse us of doing what they have done on the Social Security surplus. But I'm committed to turn the other cheek until we see if we can work it out together. I guess it's easier when you're not running for anything to do that. [Laughter]

You might find this interesting, as a sort of a prelude to what I want to say. Hillary had this great idea that we should do some special things for the millennium, that we shouldn't build a big building or anything like that; we should try to preserve as many of our big, national treasures as possible, like the Star Spangled Banner and the Bill of Rights and the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, all of which are in danger—and so we have been working to raise the funds to do that—that we should go around the country and help people in every community preserve their own piece of our national heritage; that we should have a big—then we should think about the future we want and make a big effort to increase research dollars, which we have done; and that we should sponsor at the White House

an unusual set of what she called Millennium Evenings, where we would talk about topics that were either important to the last century, the one we're leaving, or important to the next century.

It has been an amazing experience, an amazing educational experience. C-SPAN covers all of these. Sometimes CNN takes a big chunk. But the main way by which we communicate with the rest of the country and the rest of the world is through the Internet, and at the end of our little programs, we take Internet questions. They always come in from all over the world. It's just an amazing experience.

We started out with the great professor of American history and constitutional history Bernard Bailyn, from Harvard, who talked about our past and our institutions and how we got started and how that will be relevant to the 21st century. We've had all kinds of other fascinating topics. We had the three last poet laureates of America come with inner-city kids from Washington and just ordinary citizens, read poetry and talk about what it meant. We had the great Wynton Marsalis, the only living musician from New Orleans—he is the only living musician who is both the best classical and the best jazz musician in his instrument in the world, come and talk about the history of jazz as a uniquely American art form in the 20th century.

We had the great British scientist Stephen Hawking, who has lived longer with Lou Gehrig's disease than anyone else, come and talk about black holes and undiscovered galaxies in space and how our notion of time will alter and our understanding of it will alter in the 21st century. Elie Wiesel came and talked about the price of indifference, from the Holocaust forward, and all the racial and ethnic turmoil we've had. It's been amazing.

But last week we had a man named Vint Cerf there, who was sort of the creator of the architecture of the Internet, who sent the first E-mail, 18 years ago, to his profoundly deaf wife, who had been deaf from early childhood and so deaf that no hearing aids would help her. So the E-mail got started as a way of communicating. He was there, along with a professor from Harvard of genomics, named Lander, who was talking about our efforts to complete the human genome project, to break down all the secrets of the gene.

Now, what they did was, they talked about the interconnection of the computer revolution to the genomics revolution. And both said, "Look, we couldn't be unlocking the mysteries of the gene if it weren't for computer advances, because that's really what enables us to map out the gene, chart it, and see what's going on. And it will also enable us to actually find practical applications for the challenges we find when we look at the human gene structure."

And then Mr. Cerf, who was the Internet fellow who did the E-mail 18 years ago to his wife said, "Now, for example, my wife was profoundly deaf for 50 years. And a very small digital device has now been inserted deep within both her ears, and she can hear after 50 years of total deafness." And he introduced her, and she stood up, and she talked about what it was like. She said, "I went to a James Taylor concert the other night"—[laughter]—some of you are too young to appreciate this. [Laughter] And she said, "I'm quite sure I'm the only person who heard 'Fire and Rain' for the first time in the late nineties." It was an amazing thing. She talked about what it was like to hear the birds sing in the morning.

But the point is, digital technology combined with medical science made this possible. And they speculated that—we've been spending a lot of time in the medical research trying to help people with spinal cord injuries. And last year we had a nerve transplantation in a laboratory animal from the legs to the spine in a way that for the first time ever in the lab with an animal allowed an animal with a severed spine to recover movement in its lower limbs. Stunning! These people were saying, what we may be able to do now is to develop digital technology, key to the genetic breakdowns in the nerves, that we can insert—we can actually insert a device in the spine that will replicate the normal spine and give people movement without having to figure out whether the nerve transplants will take.

What does all that have to do with you? First of all, it means that it's important that all of our children learn and that we develop a level of comfort with basic technology and basic scientific concepts that most people didn't need in times past.

The second point I want to make to you, which will be important to you because you know we have the largest and most diverse student population in history, is the genomist

said—a fascinating thing—he said we’ve got these 100,000 genes and billions of possible permutations, but what you should know is that all human beings, genetically, are literally 99.9 percent the same.

He said the second thing you should know, which he said was to him even more amazing, is if you take any given racial group—let’s say you had a bunch of Hispanics here and a bunch of Asians here, and you had people from the Mediterranean countries and Europe here, and people from an African country over here—he said, if you get 100 people in each of these separate racial groups, the genetic differences of the individuals within the group would be greater than the genetic differences from group to group—very interesting—providing scientific support for what you try to do every day, which is to convince your kids that all children can learn, that there is no reason for us to fight with one another because of our differences, that all these troubles that are gripping the world, all over the world, the racial, the ethnic, the tribal, the religious differences have to be somehow overcome by understanding and teaching people that our common humanity is more important than the differences and that once you accept that, then the differences become interesting and make life more fun. But it is a very important thing, and it shows, again, the importance of learning to our common progress on this Earth.

Now, that’s why I think what all of you have done with the board certification is so important. I remember when you came to the White House with only 177 board-certified teachers. Some of you were there then. Now there’s not enough room to keep you all in the White House, and the next time we might have to use RFK Stadium to have a meeting of all of you, and I would like that very much. [*Laughter*]

I am very grateful for the progress that our country has made economically, socially, and in education. I am grateful that we’ve got the longest peacetime expansion in history and 19½ million new jobs, the lowest unemployment rate in 29 years, the lowest welfare roles in 30 years, the lowest poverty rates in 20 years, the lowest crime rates in 26 years, lowest murder rate in 31 years, first back-to-back budget surpluses in 42 years, and the Government is the same size it was when John Kennedy was here in 1962, 37 years ago. We have worked at this.

But it’s not enough. I am glad that we have virtually opened the doors of college to all people with the HOPE scholarships and the expanded Pell grants. I am glad we probably will succeed in connecting all of our classrooms to the Internet by 2000, except in the places where the school buildings are literally too decrepit to accept the wiring. I am glad that we have dramatically increased our investment in after-school programs. But there is more to do.

I am very proud that the idea of standards is now taking root around the country. In 1996—listen to this—in 1996 there were only 14 States in the country that had measurable standards for student performance. Today there are 50. But there are still only about a dozen that have genuine accountability measures when the standards aren’t met and aggressive strategies to identify failing schools and to turn them around. North Carolina does. That’s one of the reasons they’ve had the best increases in student performance in the country. But all over the country, you see test scores going up even in the poorest inner-city and rural schools.

Now, I say that and I gave you all this introductory information to try to set the proper context for the present budget debate. To most Americans, it’s a lot of numbers and a lot of noise. To most Americans, it’s the Republicans making the absurd claim that the Democrats want to spend the Social Security surplus, which has nothing to do with anything that’s really going on up there.

But there are things going on in the budget debate which are, in some ways, different from the ones we’ve had in the past but still very important. When it comes to education, the debate is not so much about money anymore as it is about values, priorities, and direction, not just about how much we spend but how we spend it. And a big part of this debate is about honoring our obligation to our children and our future. I was glad that you said your classes were smaller but still not small enough. [*Laughter*] There are many, many tens of thousands of teachers who can make that statement because we had the biggest class, biggest student load in history.

So last year, right before the election, when everybody said—you know, there was so much acrimony in Washington; we can never get anything done. We passed this remarkable education budget that provided more funds for after-school programs and a big downpayment

on my commitment for 100,000 more teachers to lower class sizes, first in the early grades and then, when those class size numbers are met, the districts can have the money to use it elsewhere.

And it was wonderful. The money we appropriated was enough for about 30,000 of those 100,000 teachers, which is a lot in one year. It took us, for example, 5 years to get to our goal of 100,000 police officers. So I look forward to coming back this year and taking the second *tranche*. And imagine my surprise when the leadership of the Republican Congress, who had gone home and happily campaigned on this and how it might have been a Republican program because there was no bureaucracy—we just gave the school districts the money, and they hired the teachers—all of a sudden voted to do away with it, not only not to expand it above 30,000 but to take away the requirement that the money that was going to the teachers, go to them.

Now, I don't understand exactly what's going on, but I do intend to stop it if I can because I think that's a mistake. That's bad educational policy. We need to help the school districts hire more teachers. Last year we agreed, and we should do it again. So one of the things the budget debate is all about is whether we will continue our commitment to help our schools hire 100,000 well-qualified teachers. And we have to reject the idea that we can't raise both the numbers of teachers in the classroom and the standards we hold them to.

Our budget invests in improving teacher quality. We know one of the most important factors in a child's educational success is a trained, dedicated, talented teacher. And through your good work, we're adding more and more, and I intend to keep supporting you in every way I can. I wish and I hope that as time goes on we'll get more explicit support from the majority in Congress for this program, because it's so important.

For all the good work you're doing, the fact is, a quarter of all secondary school teachers don't have college majors or even minors in the subjects they teach. Students with the highest minority enrollment have less than a 50–50 chance of having a math or science teacher with a license or degree in the field. Now, we can do better than that. And we have to.

I think we should require States and school districts receiving Federal funds to stop the

practice of allowing children to be taught by uncertified teachers. School districts should do that. So when we reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, one of the things we ought to do is to say, if you want the Federal money, this is one of the things you have to do. I think it's important. That's one of the things that our debate is all about.

But we also have to invest. I've asked Congress to invest in recruiting, training, and supporting high-quality teachers in high-poverty areas. We have offered scholarships to a number of people that go to school and then, in effect, wipe off the cost of their education if they will go into areas where there is a high need. I have asked for an expansion of the troops for teachers initiative, which has already helped 3,000 active duty soldiers, who were planning to leave the military anyway, find rewarding second careers in teaching in our public schools.

The budget bill, even though it has quite a lot of money in it—for reasons I don't understand—underfunds the teacher quality initiatives and doesn't provide a single penny for the troops for teachers programs. We need more and better teachers. The skills that a lot of these career military people have are desperately needed in a lot of the places where there is a significant teacher shortage. So that's what I am fighting for. It's not about money. It is about things that we know will work that will help our kids. That's one of the things this budget debate is all about.

It's also about accountability. Where there is rising accountability to go with rising standards and a strategy to help people meet the standards, not just define them as failures, we have seen progress. Two years ago, North Carolina sent assistance teams to their 15 lowest performing schools. A year later, 14 of them had met their goals and were taken off the list—one year. We have seen the same kind of improvement in Chicago, Dade County, many other places. I was in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Chicago, in the large Robert Taylor Homes project, where they had an elementary school with terrible performance. In 2 years—2 years—they doubled their math scores and tripled their reading scores.

So we can, by the same sort of concentrated effort—remember, if we're 99.9 percent the same genetically, we owe it to these kids to give them their chance at the brass ring of their life.

Our budget has \$200 million to help States and school districts identify, turn around, or shut down the lowest performing schools. For example, districts could send board-certified teachers to help students and teachers get their schools back on track. Unfortunately, this Republican budget bill doesn't put a dime into the strategy of turning around low-performing schools. This is not just about saying, "Well, I put that money up there, and they'll figure out how to spend it." If you know what works, based not on what somebody in Washington thinks works but based on what you proved works at the grassroots level, we have an obligation, in a world of limited resources, to spend the money on what you have told us and what you have demonstrated to us, works. That's what this budget debate is all about.

That's why we've invested in after-school and summer school programs, providing extended learning time so that school districts can say, "Okay, we're ending the practice of social promotion, but we're not branding the kids failures. We're giving them a chance to succeed."

And let me say another thing that I think will be increasingly important as we try to come to grips with the dropout rate and the consequences of it, is to reach young people at an early age to get them excited about academic achievement and to give them the sense that they have a personal possibility in the future.

That's why we have worked hard to establish last year this GEAR UP mentoring initiative which allows college students and others to go into middle schools and show young people that if they do their work and they learn their subjects that they can all go on to college. Explain to them the HOPE scholarship. Explain to them the Pell grant. Show them, let them take home to their families exactly what kind of assistance they'll be able to get, so that they will know it is actual reality. It isn't enough to open the doors of college to all Americans. People have to know they've been opened. They have to be aware of these things.

We do things in Washington; I sign a bill; we just assume everybody knows about it. That is the beginning, not the end. If nobody knows about these things, they might as well have not have been done. So that's a big part of what this budget is all about.

We also have to ensure greater access of all kinds of students to a successful and complete high school education. That's what our Hispanic

education action plan is all about. That's our fastest growing student group. And the Hispanic dropout rate exceeds 30 percent. It's a big problem. Last year, for all practical purposes, the African-American and white majority high school graduation rates were identical. There was a smidgen of a difference for the first time ever in our history. That's very good.

I might say that I don't think either one of them were quite high enough, but they're good. They're up in the high eighties percent. Our national goal that we set 10 years ago was 90 percent on-time graduation. But that's good. But the Hispanic dropout rate—I think largely rooted in the fact that you've got a lot of first generation immigrant families whose first language is not English, compounding the fact that a lot of those kids may think they can get out and work for their families because they all just got here. And all first generation immigrant families, going back 100 years or more, have had a heritage of people of all ages in the family working.

But the point is that long-term economic consequences to these children, and therefore to their families, are far more adverse and far more severe now than they would have been 30 years ago to dropping out. And a 30-percent dropout rate is simply too high.

So one of my problems with this budget bill is that it underfunds the after-school programs, the summer programs. The House bill actually would have shut down the GEAR UP program that they created last year and bragged about in the election, and it's way short on the Hispanic education action priority. So we've got to give people the tools they need to succeed.

Finally, this was mentioned earlier, but I am still fighting for our bill to build or modernize 6,000 schools. There are too many kids in old school buildings that can't be wired, too many kids in house trailers, and too many school districts that can't undertake the costs of the building program all by themselves. So here is where we are. The good news is that we have, I think, an appropriate amount of money that has been set aside for education. The good news is yesterday we had our voucher debate, and the public school side won.

That's the good news. But we do not have anything like having—because at this moment we have this surplus and we're at a moment of prosperity, we were able to agree generally

on what I think is an adequate increase in funding. But there is no commitment yet for more and better teachers, for smaller classes, for increased accountability, for higher standards, for giving the tools out there that we know that you know work.

So the good news is that the debate is not about dollars. But the more important news is it is very much about direction. It is very much about direction. And just as I fought to get a modest amount of Federal money to support your program, because I do believe that when you are certified and you go through this process, it is not only good for you and good for your students; it's good for everybody that you come in contact with in your school.

We were talking about, now you can see on the near horizon 25,000 of them. The reason that I said 100,000—that I want at least 100,000 board-certified teachers is I do believe when you are dense enough, when there is one of you in every school building in America, there will be an exponential increase in your impact, that it will change the whole culture of virtually every school. And your skills and what you learn and how you will impart it to your colleagues will then be exploding, echoing across the country in a way that will embrace all the children in all our schools.

But if you believe in what you've done, then I ask you to also believe in this, and help us say, "Okay"—to the Congress—"thank you very much for not trying to cut out the money anymore. That's a big first step. But it does matter how you spend it."

And we're not trying to micromanage the schools. Dick Riley has gotten rid of two-thirds of the paperwork requirement on States and local school districts. We have scrapped more rules and regulations than all the previous administrations who railed about the Federal Government put together. But what we have not done is to abandon our responsibility to take the research and the reports from the grassroots level and say, if we're going to spend this money, since it's limited, we have to spend it in ways that it will have the highest impact: more teachers, higher standards, the tools that you need to do what you're out there trying to do.

So I ask you to support it and help us, and I think we will prevail.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. in the Yorktown Ballroom at the Hyatt Regency Washington. In his remarks, he referred to Carole D. Moyer, National Board Certified Teacher, Salem Elementary School, Columbus, OH; Barbara B. Kelley, chair, James A. Kelley, founding president, and Robert L. Wehling, vice chair, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards; Betty Hastert, wife of House Speaker J. Dennis Hastert; Vinton G. Cerf, senior vice president for Internet architecture and technology, MCI WorldCom, and his wife, Sigrid; and Eric Lander, director, Whitehead Institute/MIT Center for Genome Research.

Radio Remarks on Signing the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2000

October 22, 1999

Today I am signing into law the agriculture appropriations bill. This legislation provides critical funding for the Department of Agriculture and Food and Drug Administration programs, including basic farm support programs, WIC, food safety efforts, and other measures to protect and support our rural communities.

It also provides emergency funds to assist our Nation's farmers and ranchers who are suffering the second year in a row of plummeting crop

prices and, for many, record livestock losses from severe drought and flooding.

Let me say that I am disappointed that Congress didn't come through with more assistance for farmers and ranchers who suffered this year. This summer's drought and Hurricane Floyd and other natural disasters have inflicted literally billions of dollars in agricultural damage, and we need to do more to help those farmers who