

June 15 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 2000

The President. What I would like to do today is just get on to our business and our conversation and not say very much. If we're going to make peace, we're going to have to deal with the difficult issues, and the less we say now, the better, I think.

Q. Mr. President, President Arafat was reported to be very upset with the way the Israelis are handling the negotiation. What is your assessment now, especially as time is running out before the deadline of September 13th?

The President. I don't think I should characterize what's going on. I can only tell you that I want to finish the job, and I'd like to see it finished on time.

NOTE: The exchange began at 9:44 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks at the White House Strategy Session on Improving Hispanic Student Achievement

June 15, 2000

Thank you very much, and good afternoon. I have received a good report on what you have done so far, and I want to get right into our program, but I would like to make a few remarks first. I'd like to thank Governor Glendening and Senator Bingaman and Congressman Hinojosa and Guillermo Linares and Secretary Riley for joining us, along with our other panel members.

And I'd like to thank Congressman Joe Baca, Carlos Romero-Barceló for being here. I think Congressman Reyes from Texas is on the way. And I want to welcome Mayor Beverly O'Neill from Long Beach, and especially Lieutenant Governor of California Cruz Bustamante, who is here. And I'd like to thank Maria Echaveste and Mickey Ibarra from the White House for the work they have done on this, along with all the others who have worked so hard.

This is very important to me. One of the things that I have learned traveling America is just how diverse Hispanic America is, something that a lot of Americans don't really know yet. I think there is a common core of values around family and community and work and faith, but Hispanic America is growing more diverse every day with different challenges and, unfortunately, still different opportunities. There are still a lot of gaps that we all want to close. Most of them are narrowing, but we've still got a lot of work to do.

Last August the First Lady hosted the first-ever White House Conference on Hispanic Children and Youth. And today we're following up

on that Conference by setting forth specific goals and an agenda for closing the student achievement gap over the next 10 years in ways that we can all be held accountable for.

The first step to closing that gap is to believe, as I do, that high expectations are for all students. I believe intelligence is equally distributed throughout the world, but opportunity is not. And the same is true within our own country.

For over 7 years now, we've pushed hard for higher standards, for more choice, for greater accountability, and for more support for children and teachers and parents and schools who need it. We have hired nearly 30,000 new, highly trained teachers now, on the way to our goal of 100,000 more teachers to lower class sizes in the early grades. We've connected about three-quarters of our classrooms to the Internet; that's up from 3 percent in 1994, when we started in northern California, the Vice President and I did, with our first NetDay.

We've made it possible for over 90 percent of our schools in very low income areas to have at least one Internet connection because of the E-rate program that the Vice President and I fought very hard for in the Telecommunications Act in 1996. And we have more than doubled college aid in the last 7 years, the biggest expansion since the GI bill 50 years ago. In all these areas, I actually believe we have more to do.

We also, as all of you know, put in place a Hispanic Education Action Plan that includes, this year, a \$436 million increase for programs

to improve Latino student outcomes. And I want to double that investment. This strategy of investing more and demanding more is working. Test scores are up across the country; more students than ever are going to college. If we just keep it up, we'll really take this country and all its children where we want to go.

Unfortunately, that progress is threatened by the education bill that the House Committee passed yesterday—or that the House passed yesterday. I think it demands too little accountability, and I know it puts in too few resources. It, in my judgment, underinvests in everything from after-school programs, which we have taken from \$1 million to over \$400 million in just 3½ years. And if that bill were to come to my desk, I would have to veto it. But I hope we can work with Congress on a bipartisan education bill. We've had some success in recent years, and I am confident we will this year.

I'd like to talk just a moment about what many of you already know, which is that Hispanic students are sharing in this academic success, but still too many are lagging behind in ways that I find deeply troubling.

Today I'm releasing a study by my Council of Economic Advisers, which shows that the average educational level of native-born Hispanics has increased substantially over the last several decades, and the gap between Hispanics and whites has declined. Compared to 1993, Hispanic students are scoring higher on math tests; greater percentages are completing high school, graduating from college, and getting advanced degrees.

However, there's some bad news in this report, because the need for education is growing even faster. For example, since 1993, the percentage of Hispanics with 4 or more years of college has increased but only by about 2 percent. Over the next decade, the number of jobs requiring at least 4 years of college will more than double.

The study shows that Hispanics, who represent 11 percent of our work force, hold down just 4 percent of the jobs in information technology, jobs that pay much more than average in the area where jobs are growing most rapidly. Every American should be concerned about that gap. When the fastest growing demographic group in our country is underrepresented in the fastest growing employment sector, it means less opportunity and a violation of the values that we all share. It also means that, sooner or later,

our economy will have a shortage of highly skilled workers where we really need them.

One other finding in the report bears mentioning because it will inform the debate we're going to have today. The problem is not that Hispanics are not choosing careers in key industries like information technology. In fact, according to the report, Hispanics who graduate from college enter the information technology industry at about the same rate as non-Hispanics and earn about as much. The problem, therefore, quite simply, is that not enough Hispanics are getting college degrees. That can be remedied only by raising the educational achievements of Hispanic students in schools, beginning in preschool years, continuing into adulthood, and by making sure that no person is ever denied access to college because of cost.

We know that the achievement levels can be raised. The question is whether we have the will to do what we know works. If we're going to set high expectations of students, we must have high expectations of ourselves to do what it takes to make sure all of our students can make the grade.

We know that we can make college more accessible. That's what the HOPE scholarships do, the Direct Student Loan Program, the lifetime learning tax credit. But I think we ought to do more. I have got a proposal before Congress to give up to \$10,000 of tuition tax-deductible status every year and to do it at a 28 percent income tax rate, even for people in the 15 percent income tax bracket, which is a very, very important proposal. And it could make it possible for even more of our young people to go to college and for more of our families to afford it.

So today, we know what we have to do, and we know we can do it. And what I think is always helpful is to translate what we wish to do into specific goals. So I think we ought to adopt five specific goals to close the Hispanic student achievement gap over the next 10 years.

First, let's make sure that in 10 years, young Latino children are enrolled in quality early childhood programs at the same rate as other Americans. Second, let's make sure that in 10 years, every Hispanic student graduating from high school will have demonstrable proficiency in English. Third, let's make sure that in 10 years, there is no gap in test scores and other assessments between Hispanic students and their peers. Fourth, let's make sure in 10 years,

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90 percent of Latino students complete high school. And fifth, let's make sure that over the next decade, the percentage of Hispanic students who earn college degrees will double what it is today.

Now, these goals are specific and ambitious but clearly achievable. If we are serious, we have to do something about meeting them. This morning the Secretary of Education released the first of what will be annual reports measuring progress in Hispanic student achievement. We also need an entity outside electoral politics to keep a national spotlight on these goals, because they should be the Nation's goals, without regard to party.

Today I'm happy to announce the creation of such an entity: the 2010 Alliance, a partnership among a wide variety of Hispanic organizations, including La Raza and the National Association for Bilingual Education, and corporate and non-profit groups, from the Ford, Irvine, Kellogg, and Hazen Foundations to AT&T, GM, Univision, and State Farm.

The alliance will be, as they say, in your face. [Laughter] It is designed to remind the Nation of these goals and to spur commitments, specific ones, at every level of government and the private sector to help to meet them. I'm happy that a number of organizations have already committed to taking specific steps to help achieve the goals.

The Discovery Channel will publicize the goals in public service announcements to run

on its Discovery and Espanol Network. The educational software firm Lightspan is teaming up with the Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide special software and Internet access for computers in HUD neighborhood centers in Hispanic communities. Many other organizations, from the American Library Association to the Hispanic Radio Network, also are contributing.

Closing this achievement gap is a challenge that may seem daunting now, but it will seem inevitable once we do it. And when we do it, if we work hard, stay together, and stay focused on the goal, America will be a better, stronger place in the 21st century.

Thank you very much.

I'd like now to introduce Governor Parris Glendening of Maryland, who increased his State's investment in education by \$600 million and doubled funds to build and modernize schools in his first term in office. In more ways than I can count right now, since he's been Governor, Maryland has been on the forefront of change in our Nation. And I wish every State would follow Maryland's lead.

Governor.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:48 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Guillermo Linares, Chairman, President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans.

Statement on the Korean Summit

June 15, 2000

The historic summit between President Kim Dae-jung and Chairman Kim Chong-il marks an initial, hopeful step toward peace and reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula. I welcome the agreements the two leaders reached on humanitarian and economic cooperation and on a future summit in Seoul, and hope that both sides will continue down this promising path.

I applaud Kim Dae-jung's persistence and wisdom as he has moved, soberly and realistically, to improve relations with the North. President Kim and I have consulted very closely on this issue, and I look forward to supporting his future initiatives toward lasting peace and full reconciliation.