

Mexicans. But I think over the long run, our countries will become more interdependent.

If you just look at what's happened in the relationship between the United States and Mexico since NAFTA, President-elect Fox had mentioned—made a reference to the assistance the United States gave to Mexico when they had a serious financial crisis. But I always like to remind the American people that our Mexican neighbors paid their loan back ahead of time and in the best possible way. They were good neighbors. We did the right thing. And everything that has happened there has validated the commitment of every genuine friend of an equal partnership in our country.

I think over time, you will see growing interdependence in our hemisphere. And I think the Canadians will be a part of that, and I very much hope our friends in Central America and South America and the Caribbean will be part of that. It will be the way of the world. And we will all have to deal with the enemies of organized society and the nation-state together, as well as taking advantage of all these opportunities. I regret that I won't be around for a lot of it. But I think it's a good thing.

*Q. [Inaudible]*—an idea to increase the number of legal visas for Mexico, up to a quarter of a million visas, in exchange for more cooperation and enforcement on the Mexican side to

stop illegal immigration from coming to the U.S. How do you see that? Is that doable?

*President Clinton.* Well, I want to talk to him about it. I think if you look at the United States, I believe we have the most generous immigration policy in the world. And as you know, I've been a very strong supporter of that. We were just talking on the way out about the various kinds of people that are in our administration and where they're from, and America has been made a better country because of that. But I want to talk about the details. Look, we just met. We have to go talk.

Do you want to say anything to him?

*Q.* Did you talk about border issues with Vice President Gore, and what did he say, Vice President Gore?

*President-elect Fox.* I will have a press conference later for that meeting.

[At this point, a question was asked and answered in Spanish, and no translation was provided.]

*President Clinton.* Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:34 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

## Statement on Action To Support Firefighters Combating Wildfires August 25, 2000

The wildfire season this year is one of the worst our Nation has ever witnessed. We have marshaled our Federal resources so that the men and women fighting these blazes will have the tools they need to safely and effectively combat the spread of wildfires throughout the United States. Our Federal firefighters and management personnel are working under extremely dangerous conditions to protect the public and our lands from the threat of these wildfires.

Today I am announcing that the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture, in conjunction with the Office of Personnel Management, will take immediate steps to make available as many as 2,000 Federal personnel for vital management and supervisory positions to support our fire-

fighting efforts. Additional managers and supervisors are needed to ensure additional firefighting crews have the proper supervision and management support that they need in the field. This action will immediately authorize individuals working long, stressful hours to be compensated appropriately. Our Nation owes a great debt of gratitude to these firefighters, managers, and their loved ones who sacrifice their energy and risk their lives in service to their country. It is our responsibility, in turn, to do all we can to protect and support them.

## The President's Radio Address

August 26, 2000

Good morning. For millions of American children, this is the last glorious weekend of summer vacation. Ready or not, they're picking out new clothes and packing their school supplies for a promising new school year.

When that first bell rings on Monday, it signals not just the start of a new semester but also the highest enrollment in our Nation's history. This fall a record 53 million students will fill our classrooms. Unfortunately, thousands of school districts are struggling to find enough teachers to fill them.

Today I want to talk about this critical teacher shortage and the steps we're taking to address it. For nearly 8 years now, Vice President Gore and I have pushed to invest more in our schools and demand more from them. We've dramatically increased Federal investment in after-school and summer school. We've raised standards, strengthened accountability, and worked to turn around failing schools. Today, math, reading, and SAT scores all are up, and more students than ever are going on to college.

Because America needs good new teachers more than ever before, we've set out to hire 100,000 of the highest quality, and we're pushing hard toward that goal. Since 1998, we've helped local schools hire a third of that total, and this year we've asked Congress for funding to reach 50,000.

We've also provided housing discounts for teachers moving to distressed communities and the forgiveness of student loans for those who commit to stay. All across our Nation, school districts are looking for a new generation of dedicated teachers. In Cleveland, for example, administrators hired more than 200 teachers over the summer, but they're still looking for another 400. And Cleveland is not alone.

With a strong economy and such a tight labor market, it's hard to find so many qualified professionals, and the challenge is growing. Over the next decade, America will need to hire 2.2 million new teachers both to handle rising enrollment and to replace those teachers set to retire.

By working together as communities and a nation, we can meet the growing need for more teachers in our classrooms. Today I'm announc-

ing the first-ever national online teacher recruitment clearinghouse. By logging on to [www.recruitingteachers.org](http://www.recruitingteachers.org), school districts can find qualified teachers, and teachers can find out where the jobs are.

I'm also directing Secretary Riley to notify every school district about this new tool and to provide them with information about how to make the most of it. This will transform what has been a hit-or-miss process into a more efficient, effective exchange of information. And over time, this site will help us to alleviate the national teacher shortage and to bring down class size.

Studies show what parents already know: Students perform better in smaller classes with more individual attention and greater discipline. In a few short weeks, Congress will return to Washington hot from the campaign trail, but America's families know this isn't just an election year; it's also a school year.

They want Congress to put progress before partisanship and to pass an education budget that reflects our national priorities. I urge Congress to pass my package of proposals to continue cutting class size and boosting teacher quality. These initiatives would provide \$2.75 billion to recruit, train, and hire teachers, to reduce the class size and to invest in teacher quality so we can make real progress toward our goal of having a qualified teacher in every classroom.

I also urge Congress to take prompt action on our proposal to help local school districts tackle the enormous challenge of modernizing old schools and building new ones. The average American public school was built 42 years ago, and decades of use have taken their toll. It is high time we get our children out of trailers and into 21st century classrooms.

At the start of this new school year, parents and teachers everywhere are telling students to do their best. In turn, their families have a right to expect that we, here, will do ours. So let's not make them wait another year for the resources they need.

With more teachers, smaller classes, modern schools, and faith in their future, our children