

So that's my pitch to you. I think accountability-plus is better than accountability-minus in education. And I think arithmetic still works in economics. And I know if we just keep interest rates one percent lower a year over the next decade, which is what I believe the difference will be in paying off the debt and going back to deficit so you can't pay off the debt—let me just tell you what that is. That's \$390 billion in lower home mortgages, \$30 billion in lower car payments, \$15 billion in lower college loan payments, plus lower credit card payments, plus lower business loan costs, which means more new businesses, more employees, higher profits, and a bigger stock market. It's a tax cut for everybody. Getting this country out of debt is a tax cut for everybody.

So that's what—when you go back home in North Carolina and people talk to you about, the next 2 weeks, about how this fits into the decision you have to make in North Carolina, talk to them about arithmetic and economics and talk to them about accountability-plus and tell them that Jim Hunt deserves a worthy successor.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:25 p.m. in the Monticello Room at the Jefferson Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to former Treasury Secretaries Lloyd Bentsen and Robert E. Rubin; Governor Hunt's wife, Carolyn; Republican Presidential candidate Gov. George W. Bush of Texas; and actor Cuba Gooding, Jr.

## Remarks on the Legislative Agenda for School Construction and Education *October 24, 2000*

Well, first, let me thank Glenda Parsons. I thought that she was eloquent, insistent, comprehensive, and enlightening for anybody that hasn't heard about this issue and why it matters. And let me thank Secretary Riley for pointing out that the Federal Government helps States and localities build roads and highways and prisons, and schools are the most important network to the 21st century of all.

Let me thank you, sir, in a larger sense, for nearly 8 years of service now, during which you have reduced the paperwork burden on local school districts and States but mightily increased the level of assistance we are giving them to do the things that work. That's one reason—along with the outstanding work being done at the State level by people like Governor Patton from Kentucky, who is here with us today, and local educators—that the test scores are up, the dropout rate is down, the college-going rate is up. We're moving in the right direction, and Dick Riley deserves his fair share of credit for that, and I thank him very much.

I would like to thank the extraordinary array of Members of Congress who are here, including the Democratic leaders of the Senate and the House, Senator Daschle and Congressman Gephardt. I would like to thank the people from the administration who are here who have

worked with us to help to develop this very important proposal, including Secretary Larry Summers and Jack Lew and Sylvia Mathews from the Office of Management and Budget.

I want to thank the people who are here from the DC City Council and the coalition to Rebuild America's Schools, teachers, administrators, architects, members of the construction trades, and many others. And I also want to thank the people who came out here all morning, building our new schoolhouse. We wanted people to have a little red schoolhouse here to emphasize what this is about. And our special guests from Brent Elementary School, let's welcome them here.

The little red schoolhouse behind me was erected as evidence of the commitment of all of us here to give our children the safest and best schools in the world. In its unfinished state, it's also a symbol of the unfinished work still before the Congress. Nearly 2 months into the new school year, the majority leadership still hasn't given a single dime for school construction and modernization, not even enough to build a one-room schoolhouse.

Week after week now, I've been signing continuing resolutions to give Congress more time to work on this year's budget. But the time

for tardy slips is over. It's time for the leadership to put progress before partisanship and address at last the needs of our schools and our children.

For nearly 8 years now, we've worked hard to turn our economy around. We've replaced record deficits with record surpluses. We now enjoy the longest economic expansion in history. Today we received even more good news about the economy. According to our Treasury Department and the Office of Management and Budget, the surplus for the 2000 fiscal year is the largest in American history, \$237 billion. This is the third surplus in a row, the first time our Nation has done that in 51 years, since 1949, when Harry Truman was President.

It's worth remembering, I think, that when Vice President Gore and I took office in 1993, the deficit was \$290 billion. The debt had quadrupled in 12 years. Economists predicted that this year, instead of a \$237 billion surplus, we would have a \$455 billion deficit. Working together, we turned that around, not by chance but by choice.

Now to the moment at hand. What are we going to do with our prosperity? What are we going to do with our surplus? It is not the Government's surplus. It is the people's surplus. How shall we apply it to our common goals and needs and challenges? I feel very strongly that we ought to first make a commitment to keep the prosperity going by paying the debt down over the next 12 years, to keep interest rates down.

Then I think we ought to take what's left and have a tax cut we can afford, that focuses on sending our kids to college, providing our kinfolks with long-term care who need it, helping working families with child care, and helping all Americans save for retirement, because savings rates are not high enough in our country today. And I think we ought to save some money to invest in education and in health care, in science and technology, in the environment and defense, in the future of America.

So, in other words, there are big opportunities and big challenges out there, but I believe we have to first stay with what got us here: Pay down the debt; strengthen the Social Security and Medicare systems for the aging of America when all people like me, the baby boom generation, become too old to work, and we don't want to be a burden on the rest of you. And we need to then seize this opportunity to take

the money that's left to invest in our future, especially in education.

You've heard what has already been said, but I think it's worth reiterating. We have the largest, most diverse student body in history. They are in overcrowded classrooms, but a lot of things are going right in America. Reading and math scores are up; Hispanic and African-American students are taking advanced placement courses in record numbers—over the last 6 years, a 300 percent increase for Hispanic students, a 500 percent increase for African-American students; the college-going rate at a record high, because we have provided more college assistance increase than any time since the GI bill. So a lot of things are going well. SAT math scores are the highest since 1969, when we went to the Moon. But we have more to do. And I want to focus on this today.

And let me just say one other thing I would like to say, because I really want to thank the Vice President for this. When we started in 1994 with a goal to hook up all of our classrooms and schools to the Internet, only 14 percent of the schools and 3 percent of the classrooms in America were hooked up. Now, 95 percent of the schools and 65 percent of the classrooms are hooked up, thanks in no small measure to an idea Al Gore led our fight for, the E-rate, which gives discounts of up to 90 percent to low-income schools so that all of our schools can afford to hook on.

Now, what's all that got to do with why we're here? The average public school building in America is 42 years old. Decades of use have taken their toll: leaking roofs, broken boilers, crowded trailers. It's hard to educate kids in schools that are falling down. Some of our schools are so old, they literally cannot be wired for Internet access. I have been in schools where, when one room works—that is, if they turn on all the lights, and they're using the lab, and then somebody logs onto the net in one room, it will literally short out everybody else in the school building. You also need to know, there are buildings in New York that are still being heated with coal in coal-fired furnaces. The average school building in Philadelphia is 65 years old, and about the same in New Orleans.

So those of us that have been around the country looking at this know that you've got the problem of the old schools, and then all the places we've been—including the smallest

place I've been with a lot of trailers was the community of Jupiter, Florida, which is not very big, and they had a dozen trailers outside one school.

So this is a national challenge. They're bad for our children's education. I might also say that they can be quite bad for our children's health, especially if they have asthma or if they have other disabilities. And this is something I think that has been underestimated. You know, just the cost in education days of asthma in our children is staggering throughout the United States today. We ought not to be sending the kids into school buildings that make it worse.

Now, I have asked Congress to send me an education bill that does the following: First, give us \$1.3 billion to fix up thousands of schools in desperate need of repair right now. And let's do that over 5 years. We can repair 5,000 schools a year over 5 years. It would be a big thing to do, and it would help a lot.

Second, I have asked Congress to enact the bipartisan—and I emphasize bipartisan—school construction tax proposal, to provide \$25 billion in school construction and modernization bonds. Now, you just heard Glenda explain why Loudoun County couldn't bear this burden alone. Even counties where the average income of the school parents may be above average, there is a limit to how much you can do. They've got to build 23 schools in 6 years? Can you imagine how much construction that is? That's in one school district. That's just one. We estimate the deficit in school repair and school construction in America, given the condition of the buildings, the size of the population, and the projected population over the next 5 years, is somewhere between 110 and 125 billion dollars.

I don't think it's too much to ask the Federal Government, at a time of record surpluses, to provide \$25 billion in school construction and modernization bonds. It will help to build or modernize 6,000 schools. In the process, it will create some good jobs. It will be especially helpful in the poorest areas of our country, like Native American communities and others with greater needs and the total inability to raise the money at the local level.

And third, Congress should follow through on our proposal to help fund 8,000 after-school and summer school programs, to help \$2.5 million kids boost their test scores, stay out of trouble, and get more involved in their communities.

If you think about how overcrowded these schools are, it is more important than ever that we allow them to stay open in the afternoon and to provide summer programs, so that the kids that may not get it during the daytime, when they're being crammed in, pushed around, and can't even sit down for lunch, according to Glenda, at least to have the ability to stay late or come back in the evening or come in on the weekend or be involved in the summer program that will make sure they don't fall behind. So that's also a very important part of this.

Fourth thing I'd like to urge them to do is to provide \$1.75 billion to help pay for almost 50,000 teachers to reduce class sizes in the first grades, the next big step of our 100,000 teacher program to reduce class size in the early grades. We know that new qualified teachers can help children learn.

And finally, I ask Congress to support our initiatives to improve teacher training, increase accountability, and to turn around failing schools or shut them down and open them under new management. We have here—I will say again what I said at lunch: Governor Patton is exhibit A.

I have been working on this for 22 years now. I was there when, under the Reagan administration, Secretary Bell issued the "Nation At Risk" report, a brilliant report. I was there when President Bush invited all the Governors to Charlottesville, Virginia, and we had a summit and established goals for the Nation. And I helped to write that document, and it was a great and moving meeting. But I can tell you something. If somebody asked me what's changed in the years since, I'll tell you what's changed: We actually know now that failing schools can be turned around, and we know how to do it, and we didn't before. And so I want to emphasize this.

I was in a school in western Kentucky with Paul Patton that was one of the worst schools in Kentucky 4 years ago, where only 12 percent of the kids were reading at or above grade level, 5 percent of the kids were doing math at or above grade level, no kids were doing science at or above grade level. And under the system he put in place, that we want for America, in 3 years the numbers went from 12 to 57 percent in reading, from 5 to 70 percent in math, from zero to 63 percent in science. That's one place, one of the best elementary schools in his entire

State. We can do that everywhere, and we should.

I mean, I have very strong feelings about this. These kids deserve a decent place to go to school because they can all learn. I was in Harlem the other day in a school that 2 years ago—listen to this—2 years ago had 80 percent of the kids doing reading or math below grade level. Two years later, a new principal, new morale, school uniforms—something I like—high standards, in 2 years they went from 80 percent doing reading and math below grade level, to 74 percent doing reading and math at or above grade level, a total turnaround. You can do this. We can do this all over America.

But it is illusory to think that we can tell all these kids and their parents they're the most important things in the world to us, "But here, go to school in broken windows and leaky roofs, and sit in this closet somewhere, or go out into a busted trailer, and we'll get around to you when we can." And meanwhile, we've got all the money in the world to spend on roads and airports, because they've got a bigger lobby than little kids do.

Now, this is not complicated here. We have fooled around with this for 2 years, and the problem is just getting bigger. So I say, before Congress goes home, let's do this for the kids in the future.

At the end of World War II when my generation was starting schools, the National Government under President Truman, with Republican as well as Democratic support, did not hesitate to help our children find the space to go to school.

In a world where education is even more important than it was then, where the student body is even bigger, and where it is much more diverse, in a world that is much more interconnected, there can be nothing more important than actually acting like we say we believe that our kids are the most important thing in the world to us. Let's do it with the school construction proposal.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to parent Glenda Parsons of Loudoun County, VA, who introduced the President.

## Statement on Signing the Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention and Treatment Act of 2000

*October 24, 2000*

Today I am extremely pleased to sign the "Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention and Treatment Act of 2000," which invests over \$990 million over 10 years in an important new health option for thousands of low-income, uninsured women with breast or cervical cancer. I was proud to include it in my FY 2001 budget, and I am proud to sign this bipartisan legislation into law.

Women without health insurance are 40 percent more likely to die from breast cancer than those who are insured. Not only are they less likely to be screened, but the course of treatment they elect is often affected by their ability to pay for services. This important legislation will expand the limited treatment options now available to low-income, uninsured women with breast cancer who are in the unique situation

of learning about their condition through federally sponsored screening programs.

The new assistance today's action will provide for thousands of women with breast or cervical cancer continues my administration's long-standing commitment to breast and cervical cancer research, prevention, and treatment. It builds on a record of administration achievements that includes legislation to ensure the quality of mammograms and prevent drive-by mastectomies, increasing access to cancer clinical trials, and increasing funding for breast and cervical cancer research, prevention, and treatment from \$283 million to over \$620 million during my administration.

As important as today's achievement is, we have many health care issues that still must be