

I hope that education reform all across America will become more and more a bipartisan issue. In the last four budgets that we had, we had a bipartisan budget. We fought about it. We argued about it. I had to threaten a bunch of vetoes, but in the end we had a bipartisan majority for every single thing that I talked about here today. And we ought to give credit where credit is due. This should not be a partisan issue.

When my wife was growing up in a suburb of Chicago, I'll never forget my father-in-law and my mother-in-law talking about how it was an overwhelmingly Republican place. Goldwater carried it 4 to 1 in '64, and the other 20 percent thought he was too liberal. It was a big Republican place. They never voted down a school bond issue, ever. The difference in the Republicans and the Democrats on education was where the money ought to come from.

And we ought to go back—we need to look at the reality here. Who are the children in our schools? Who are the leaders of our future? What strategies have been proven? It's not like there's no evidence here. All we tried to do was to take what you proved worked. It is not true that we tried to rewrite every local school's education policy. Dick Riley cut Government regulation in the Department of Education by two-thirds. We just took what works.

And I hope that in the future there will continue to be a passion coming out of people in Washington and in every State capital and every community in this country of both parties. But every proposal should be measured against what we now know works, what you have proven works here. And if it works, whoever has got the idea, we ought to put it in.

But it's not like—I remember when I started this, when Hillary and I started going into classes in the late seventies, and we started trying to write new standards for our State in the early eighties, we had hunches. Educators thought they knew. There was a little evidence here and a little evidence there, but we were kind of making it up as we went along. And it was happening all over America. We've now had 15 years of solid evidence. You have given us that in schools like this one.

And so I would just say, I wanted to come here because Chicago has been good to me, and Chicago has been very good to its children these last 6 years. I wanted to come here because, as I leave office, I don't want America to let its concern for education reform and improvement abate; I want it to increase. I want more people to believe that every child can learn, and that in this global economy, every child must learn, not only for himself or herself but for the rest of us, as well.

Of course, there are big challenges that remain. But your school, like so many I visited over the past 8 years, teaches us all the most important lesson: We can do it.

Thank you very much, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:35 p.m. in the auditorium. In his remarks, he referred to Sharon R. Wilcher, principal, James Ward Elementary School; Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago; Illinois State Comptroller Daniel W. Hynes; and Gery Chico, president, board of directors, and Paul Vallas, chief executive officer, Chicago Public School District.

Statement on the Family and Medical Leave Act *January 9, 2001*

The first legislation I signed as President was the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), which allows workers to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave to care for a seriously ill child, spouse, or parent; a newborn, newly adopted, or newly placed child; or for their own serious health problem, without fear of losing their jobs. This law was an important step for-

ward in helping America's working families balance the competing demands of work and family. Since then, I am proud to say that more than 35 million working Americans have taken leave for family and medical reasons since 1993.

In 1996 the bipartisan Commission on Family and Medical Leave issued a report assessing

family and medical leave policies. The Commission found that the FMLA was working well for both workers and employers. Today the U. S. Department of Labor released the results of its new surveys, which updated the Commission's work. Once again, the data show that the Family and Medical Leave Act remains a balanced approach to meeting the needs of workers and employers. We know that when needed most, covered and eligible workers were able to take this benefit—in fact, more than 15 mil-

lion have done so since January 1999, the period covered by this survey.

FMLA has given millions of workers the ability to care for their seriously ill child, spouse, or parent, or stay home with their newborn child, without worrying about whether their job will be there when they return. Our work is not done, however. We must now build on the success of FMLA by giving more workers the protections of the act and finding new ways to provide paid leave to those workers who need to take off but cannot afford to do so.

Remarks to the People of Chicago

January 9, 2001

Thank you. You know, I thought we should come over here to sort of finish the circle of my political history in Illinois, and I didn't know if anybody would show up. *[Laughter]* Apparently, the lobby's full, too. Let me say to all of you how grateful I am to the people of Chicago and Illinois. I thank the mayor for his great leadership and for giving me a chance to be a good President for Chicago; if I didn't have a great mayor, I couldn't have been.

I asked Rich, when Bill was up here talking, I said, "You get your brother to introduce you very often?" He said, "No, but I love it every time he does it." *[Laughter]* I want to thank Bill Daley for his exemplary service as Secretary of Commerce. He was brilliant. I think he did a brilliant job in leading Vice President Gore to victory myself.

Let me just remind you, when he went over there as the chairman of that campaign, we were way behind. And then we had a great convention, and we got ahead a little bit. Then they got ahead again. Daley kept them on track. We started out, they were whizzing—we were way behind when Daley took over. They thought the election was over, the Republicans did. By the time it was over, our candidate had won the popular vote, and the only way they could win the election was to stop the voting in Florida. He did a great job.

I want to thank my great friend Alexis Herman. I did not know until she started talking that her grandfather once worked here. But I appreciate it, and since she said that, in a

minute I'm going to tell a family story. I want to thank Bobby Rush and your great Senator, Dick Durbin. What a great job he's done. Our treasurer, Mr. Hynes; and his daddy, Mr. Hynes, thank you for being here, Tom. Good to see you. And Secretary Riley, our Secretary of Education, and the best Secretary of Education we ever had, thank you. And if I have forgotten anybody, I apologize.

I also bring you greetings from the newest United States Senator from New York, Hillary. I told Dick, ever since Hillary won that election in New York, you should just consider that Illinois has two Democratic Senators again. She told me to tell everybody hello.

You know, this place has a special place in my heart, and I just want to briefly review the history for you. When I ran for President in 1992, I knew I had to do pretty well in New Hampshire. And when I started out, I was running fifth. But it was a small State of tough-minded but fairminded people, and I thought if I could just get up there and stir around, I could do all right. They were good to me, and I love them, and they voted for me twice. So I got out of it alive, anyway. Then I got through all the rest of that stuff.

Then we had Super Tuesday, and I won them, but I was supposed to because it was in the South. But I knew that to be nominated, I had to do well on Saint Patrick's Day in Illinois and Michigan.

And I knew some things about Illinois other people didn't know. First, I had a wife from