

Remarks Following a Meeting With Governors and an Exchange With
Reporters
January 26, 2001

The President. Let me—first of all, I want to thank my Governor friends for coming. From all around the country, people came—from Idaho, from the South. The head of the National Governors is here, and of course, the soon-to-be-head of the National Governors. I'm honored you all came. It's good to see you in a new setting—for me, at least. And we had a long discussion about education.

These Governors made education their number one priority in their State, and obviously they're keenly aware of the role of Federal Government. And we've had a really good discussion about how to make their jobs easier. And their job is to make sure every child gets educated, which is the noblest of all calling in America.

So I appreciate your coming. It's always good to be talking to people who know what they're talking about. And when it comes to public education, Governors really understand the subject. So I'm grateful you're here.

I'll be glad to answer a few questions.

Vandalism Reports

Q. Mr. President, are you offended, sir, by the reports of vandal—acts of vandalism by outgoing members of the Clinton administration?

The President. I'm so happy to be here—[laughter]—that I'm looking forward. There might have been a prank or two; maybe somebody put a cartoon on the wall—that's okay. It's time now to move forward. It's time to focus our attention on what's possible and how to get children educated. I'm excited about what this week has brought. I'm excited about my job.

Stem Cell Research

Q. Mr. President, do you believe that Federal money should be used or spent

on fetal tissue or stem cell research derived from induced abortions?

The President. No, I don't.

Q. Will you have an Executive order to that effect?

The President. I believe there's some exciting—I believe there's some wonderful opportunities for adult stem cell research. I believe we can find stem cells from fetuses that died a natural death. But I do not support research from aborted fetuses.

Q. I assume that you'll sign an Executive order to that or make that the law of the land?

The President. I'll let you know when I decide all policy decisions. But I do not—to answer your question, the answer is no.

Russia-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, have you responded to President Putin's letter, and do you plan to review Russian relations with the United States before you go forward in any arms control talks?

The President. I have not responded to the letter yet. I will, of course. I read about it—I might have even read about it before it hit Washington. [Laughter]

What was the second half of your question?

Arms Control Talks

Q. Do you plan to review the U.S. relations with the Russians before you start up on arms control talks?

The President. Well, you may remember in the campaign I talked about two aspects about arms. One was that I am going to go forward with, along with Secretary Rumsfeld, about plans for a missile defense system. But I also said that I think it's important for us, commensurate with our ability to keep the peace, to reduce our

nuclear arsenal on our own. And I'm going to fulfill that campaign promise. That may—we'll see how that affects possible arms talks. My point is, is that I want America to lead the nation—lead the world toward a more safe world when it comes to nuclear weaponry. On the offensive side, we can do so. And we can do so on the defensive side, as well.

First Week in Office

Q. Mr. President, it's the end of your first week.

Assistant Press Secretary Gordon Johndroe. Thank you. Lights.

The President. Wait a minute, this may be this—[laughter]—end of my first week? Yes.

Q. It's the end of your first week. How do you think it's going? How are you settling in? And were there any surprises?

The President. Oh, let's see. Well, first of all, it's been a great week. I'm excited about my job. I really appreciate—I guess the biggest, most pleasant surprise, if you'd call it that, was how receptive Members of Congress are to come here to the White House to talk about how we can work together. I really appreciate both Republicans and Democrats coming. I think we've met with 90 Members of Congress here in the first week. And I think, to a person, that they're interested in figuring out if we can't exceed the expectations that now exist around the country that nothing is going to get done.

I'm honored to be here, and I'm looking forward to welcoming former President Bush back to his old residence. He's just not going to be sleeping in the master suite this time around. [Laughter]

Q. When's he coming? When's he coming?

The President. He's coming today.

Q. How about settling in on a personal basis, on your personal life? Are you settling in—

The President. My personal life, we're great. The dogs—the best news is, the dogs seem to have adjusted. The cat that was howling on the first night is now more comfortable with her territory, and so she's sleeping through the night.

My wife is going to make a great First Lady. She is just as comfortable as she can be with people, no matter if they're with a fancy title or not.

And the White House staff is just remarkably generous people. And we're settling in. And it's a huge honor to live in the people's house. And I understand the honor. And I'm going to uphold the honor.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Parris N. Glendening of Maryland, outgoing chair, and Gov. John Engler of Michigan, incoming chair, National Governors' Association. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the Earthquake in India
January 26, 2001

I am saddened by the news of the tragic earthquake centered in India's Gujarat state this morning. I extend my condolences and those of the American people to the families of the many victims in the cities and villages of Gujarat and elsewhere. Earth-

quakes know no political boundaries: I send condolences to the people affected in neighboring Pakistan as well. We stand ready to assist as needed and as desired by the Governments.