

Apr. 2 / Administration of George W. Bush, 2001

One of the things that I know the chairman knows is that I respect the Hispanic culture a lot. When I was a Governor for the State of Texas, I used to remind my fellow Texans that our State was richer as a result of the Hispanic culture. And I look forward to working with the members here on a variety of issues, not the least of which is to make sure the world is more peaceful, more educated, and more prosperous.

So, thank you all for coming. Thank you for being here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:24 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Representative Silvestre Reyes, chairman, Congressional Hispanic Caucus. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Message on the Observance of National Library Week *April 2, 2001*

I am pleased to join my fellow Americans in observing National Library Week.

An educated citizenry provides the foundation for a free and democratic society. Libraries promote the sharing of knowledge, connecting people of all ages with valuable information resources. These dynamic and modern institutions, and the librarians who staff them, add immeasurably to our quality of life.

Libraries serve as important centers for collecting, storing, and organizing information. Each year, more than 100,000 books are published in the United States alone, and the U.S. government publishes as many documents. Even beyond these numbers are incredible volumes of newspapers, magazines, and other copyrighted material.

In public, government, professional, or academic facilities, librarians help individ-

uals use numerous resources to complete the simplest or most complex of research-related tasks. This ability to search for information from the oldest manuscripts to the latest references available demonstrates the enduring versatility of libraries.

During this special observance, I commend librarians for their contributions to education and learning throughout our Nation. I also encourage all Americans to visit their neighborhood library. Laura and I send our best wishes to the staff, volunteers, and patrons of libraries across America.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: April 1–7, 2001, was designated National Library Week.

Remarks at a Leadership Forum in Wilmington, Delaware *April 3, 2001*

The President. Thank you, Mr. Jones. I'm honored to be here. Thank you all.

Claven Jones. Before we all get started here, can I ask you a question?

The President. You can do anything you—it's your building, you can do anything you want. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Jones. What did you think about those Power Hour kids upstairs? Weren't they great?

The President. I loved seeing the Power Hour kids. I know societies can change one person at a time. And while those of us in Government are trying to do the best we can with budgets and taxes, what we can't do is make people love one another. But what we can do is encourage loving people to help. And so I saw the Power Hour as an opportunity for children to improve themselves, but I also saw it as an opportunity for people to give something back in our society.

And so I want to thank you for giving me the chance to come. I want to say a couple of things. First, I'm honored to be traveling with the Delaware delegation, the two United States Senators, Senator Biden and Senator Carper. These are smart, capable people. I just hope they do it the way I think they ought to be doing it. [Laughter]

We will find—I will assure you this—we'll find areas where we can agree. I noticed Senator Carper dropped a strong charter school bill—and I was at Maurice's school earlier in the year. And Tom and I come from the Governors ranks; we worked a lot together; there's a lot of areas where we know we can work together to improve public education. And there's going to be some times we don't agree, but my pledge to the American people and the people of Delaware is, when we disagree, it will be done in a way that's respectful, where we can treat each other with respect, where we don't have to have this needless name-calling and finger-pointing to get ahead.

And I respect these two Senators. I may not like every vote; of course, they may not like every proposal. But I can assure you that we're working hard to change the attitude of Washington, DC, so there is a more respectful attitude and so there can be a more civil debate about where this country ought to go.

And then, of course, I was pleased to see that I got 100 percent support on one of my proposals from the Delaware delegate, and that is Mike Castle. And one thing I love about Mike is that he is a very thoughtful Member who stays focused. And his focus is education, amongst a lot of other things, but his main drive right now is to make sure we get the education bill right.

And the education bill that we're trying to get out of the House, and eventually the Senate, mirrors much of what you've done here in Delaware under the leadership of then-Governor Carper. And I see members of the legislature here as well. It really says, every child can learn; it's important to trust local people to run the schools; and we must have accountability to determine whether or not every child is learning. And if children are learning, we'll praise the teachers and principals and superintendents. But if not, instead of just moving children through the system as if they don't matter, we address the problems early, before it's too late.

Strong accountability systems lead to reforms. Senator Carper, then-Governor Carper, recognized that. I think I got some credit for recognizing that in the State of Texas. And the whole cornerstone of the reform movement that we're trying to get out of the Senate and the House says that if you receive Federal aid, you, the State, must devise an accountability system to let the folks know whether or not children are learning.

And oh, by the way, let's also have a reading—national reading program that starts teaching children to read early. Let's have after-school programs called 21st Century Programs that not only are run by public school institutions, if that's what the local community wants, but also says programs—community programs or faith-based programs are just as capable about running programs as anybody else is. And so all the Federal money, as far as I'm concerned, for after-school programs ought to

be opened up to every program in the State of Delaware.

And so I'm here to say thanks for what you do. It's good to see—I was going to say old friends, Maurice—friends I've known for a while—not all that old. Maurice runs a great charter school here, as you all know, and he's done a fantastic job.

Mr. Jones—I told him earlier that I wrote a bestseller—actually, I didn't write it; they say—they claimed I wrote it—called "A Charge To Keep," and it's actually about me. So if you're having trouble sleeping at night, you may want to pick it up. [Laughter] At any rate—but all the proceeds are going to the Big Brothers and Big Sisters programs and Boys and Girls Clubs of America, because I believe so profoundly—I believe so strongly in mentoring, and I believe so strongly in helping children understand somebody loves them. And Government can't do that, but what Government can do is facilitate programs and allow faith-based programs to access Federal monies so that they can help change hearts.

I don't believe we ought to fund religion, but I do think we ought to fund a person, and that person should be able to choose whether or not to find help at a faith-based program or a secular program.

I view the Boys and Girls Clubs as faith-based programs, by the way, programs based upon the universal concept of loving a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself. And for that, I'm grateful. I want to congratulate the board of directors of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Delaware for having such a profound impact. One in seven children in this State are members of the Boys and Girls Clubs, for which I know you all are most proud.

Rather than falling into the legislative tradition of filibustering, I will now end my remarks by thanking you all for your hospitality, and I look forward to hearing from you.

[At this point, the discussion proceeded.]

The President. How old is your charter school?

John Taylor. Our charter school is in its first year.

The President. Great. How's it going?

Mr. Taylor. It is going well. It is going very well.

The President. Did you have many applicants for your charter school?

Mr. Taylor. Yes, we did have quite a few applicants.

The President. And what grades?

Mr. Taylor. We are currently servicing children between kindergarten and fifth grade.

The President. Oh, great. Big jump. Thanks for teaching.

[The discussion continued.]

The President. Thank you for encouraging mentoring. You know, the great strength of the country takes place when somebody walks across the street or raises their hand and says, "What can I do to help? What can I do to help somebody in need?" And it's the cumulative kindness of America that really makes our country so different from everyplace else. And it's really important for all of us to understand the power of mentoring and what it means, because really what it means is recognizing that America will be changed one soul at a time.

And I want to thank you for encouraging the Kiwanis to become mentors. And pass the word that the President and the Senators and the Congressmen really do recognize the limitation of Government and recognize the power of love and faith and hope.

[The discussion continued.]

The President. One of the things we've all got to do in our society is to encourage and herald the education entrepreneurs all across the country. And the idea of change and recognizing each student—an accountability system recognizing the talents and needs of each student is an incredible part

of reform. And that's what the legislation we're working on in the Senate and the House is going to foster.

And what triggered my thinking is, there's a lot of times where public schools don't change; their systems are inert; they just won't move. And yet, we've got three schools that are new—four—four new ideas, which shows that the State of Delaware has got a system that encourages change when change is needed. And that's the message we're trying to get to Members of the Senate and Congress who don't want change.

One thing—we're going to spend more money, and that's important, but as well there needs to be a systemic change to not only encourage parental involvement but to recognize that the systems have got to be geared on a child-by-child basis. And good accountability measures do that.

We were at a—I saw a computer—I'm sorry to get going here, but we saw a computer upstairs that was able to take a child, figure out its level of learning, and the program adjusts immediately to that child, and then another child gets on, the program adjusts to the learning capacities of that particular child. That's what education systems need to evolve toward, individualized learning, as opposed to lumping kids into groups and just kind of shuffling through the system.

And I appreciate what you're doing.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. Thanks. Let me say one thing—Lucretia talked about partnerships. Senator Biden reminded me that some of the money in the program here came from Microsoft and AOL—the point being that corporate Delaware or corporate Texas or corporate America can play a major role

in making sure that we match assets with needs, particularly in programs that focus on our youth.

And I want to thank corporate Delaware and your company, as well as others who have heard the call that part of making sure that capitalism runs the full gamut is not only to be able to make a good bottom line, which we all hope for, but also to put something back into the system. So if you're calling for people to put more back in the system, I'm calling right with you.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. Yes, I want you all to hear—it's an interesting thing he just said. He said the tutorials take place in the church. That doesn't mean that—let me start over. It means that we need to focus on the child and not on the process.

How sad would it be if our system said, "You can't have tutorials in churches because of the legal process"? And it's important for our society to keep in mind, every child matters. And we ought to be heralding the Reverend Johnsons of the world, as opposed to trying to thwart the Reverend Johnsons of the world. That's what the whole Faith-Based Initiative in Congress is about.

I appreciate what you do. Keep doing it, like I know you will.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:20 a.m. in the Bears Den Gymnasium at the H. Fletcher Brown Boys and Girls Club. In his remarks, he referred to Claven Jones, director, H. Fletcher Brown Boys and Girls Club; Maurice Pritchett, principal, Bancroft Elementary School; John Taylor, principal, and Rev. Clifford I. Johnson, founder, Marion T. Academy Charter School; and Lucretia Young, director, Warner Street YMCA.