

The President's Radio Address
February 17, 2001

Good morning. As you listen to me today, I'm in Texas after a visit to Mexico, where I had a very good meeting with President Vicente Fox. Members of Congress this holiday weekend are in their States and districts. Soon, we'll all head back to Washington with a lot of work ahead of us.

The work begins with a responsible budget. In Washington, people deal with trillions of dollars and sometimes can forget that every bit of it is someone's earnings. My job is to make sure no one forgets. We must be good stewards of your tax dollars.

My budget will fund our priorities from education to defense to protecting Social Security and Medicare. It will pay down our national debt. And when we have done all that, we will still have some money left over. I strongly believe we should return that money, the leftover money, to you, the American people, in the form of tax relief. It is, after all, your money.

My tax relief plan is a fair one, lowering the rate for all taxpayers. The typical family of four with two children will get \$1,600 in tax relief. And the greatest benefits, the largest percentage reductions, will go to those who need them most. My plan is pro-growth. It gives our economy a jump-start by leaving more money in the hands of those who have earned it.

My proposal to cut income taxes across the board is now in the hands of Congress. Amid growing concern over the economy and high energy costs, we're seeing a good deal of bipartisan agreement that now is the time to reduce the tax burden and slow the growth of Government spending. In 10 days I'll be taking this case in person to a joint session of Congress.

In addition to debt reduction and tax relief, we have some other important priorities, including a bold proposal to reform

American education. Money isn't the whole answer. High standards and accountability matter most. But if we're serious about reforms, like early reading and teacher training, testing on reading and math in every school, the Federal budget must reflect these commitments.

School districts don't need more vague mandates from Washington. They do need clear goals and real support. So my budget for the Department of Education will have a higher percentage increase than any other Federal department. We'll pay for new testing programs and new reading and intervention programs and new choices for parents with children in failing schools. We will spend more on our public schools, but we're going to expect more in return, and this will improve the lives of countless children.

Not long ago, agreement on debt reduction, tax relief, and education reform seemed impossible. But today, people in both parties are impatient with the status quo—with high debt, high tax bills, high energy bills, and falling education standards. This is our chance to act, and we cannot let it pass.

If you happen to see your Congressman or Senator home in your neighborhood this holiday weekend, I hope you'll take time to thank him for working with me to reform public schools and to give tax relief to everyone who pays taxes.

Thank you very much for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 5:50 p.m. on February 15 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on February 17. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 16 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.