

The President's Radio Address *September 1, 2001*

Good morning. On Monday, Americans will celebrate Labor Day. It's a day to salute the most productive person on Earth, the American worker.

Whether you work on a farm, in an office, or on a factory floor, whether you design computer chips, build houses, or teach school, whether you're just starting out or whether you built your own company from nothing, your Nation thanks you for your labor.

American productivity has risen so high because Americans work hard and because they work smart. When Congress recognized the Labor Day holiday in 1894, most of this country's jobs demanded only a strong back and willing hands. Today, good jobs demand math skills, technical knowledge, and fluent reading.

The progress of our economy and the future of our children starts in the classroom. And that's why education must be our Nation's highest priority.

At this time of year, many of our children have already returned to school, and others are about to return. Congress, too, is returning from its summer recess, and it left behind some unfinished business, my education reform plan. Different versions of this plan have passed the House and the Senate. Congress should now produce a single bill that incorporates the strong reforms I have proposed.

It is vital that this bill uphold clear standards, require regular testing, and provide real accountability. Our children need the help my education plan will provide, a new commitment to reading and early intervention to catch those who fall behind.

Our educators need to get ready for the new accountability era that's coming to our schools. The more swiftly Congress acts, the more time educators will have to prepare. If Congress delays to play political

games, they put another generation of students at risk.

The education reform bill I support offers new resources to schools. In return, it calls for improvements in math and reading, proven by testing, from every school in America. Higher standards will lead to higher quality education; yet, meeting those standards will require careful planning in local districts. Every day counts, and the sooner we start, the better. We want to start adopting reforms this school year so they can be up and running by the beginning of next school year. We've made good progress. Now we must finish the job.

There is always something exciting about the new school year, the eager faces, the new books and shoes, scrubbed hallways. It's a new start and a new opportunity. That's true for students; it's true for teachers; and it's true for Congress.

I'm looking forward to welcoming Congress back to Washington and back to work. Together we can make this a year of accomplishment. I challenge the Congress: Send me a good education reform bill to sign, and send it quickly, so that our children will return next year to schools that prepare them for good jobs through many Labor Days to come.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 1:40 p.m. on August 31 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on September 1. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 31 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.