

Remarks Following a Meeting With Congressional Leaders *September 7, 2001*

Thank you all for coming. Today, visiting with the Speaker and the Leader, it's the end of a long week of discussing how to make sure our economy begins to grow again.

I want to appreciate Denny and Trent for coming down again. They've been visiting with their Members, and I've been visiting with them and their Members. I also had a good discussion today with Minority Leader Gephardt and, of course, Senate Majority Leader Daschle the other day, as well, about how we can kind of get away from all the distractions that tend to dominate Washington and focus on a pro-growth agenda for this fall.

The unemployment numbers today are evidence that I've seen firsthand as I travel the country, and that is, too many people are losing their jobs as a result of a slowdown that began when Dick and I were campaigning across our country last summer. This slowdown is real, and it's affecting too many lives, and we're concerned about it.

Any American out of work is too many Americans out of work. And that's why it's absolutely essential that we work together to put a growth plan in place to create jobs for hard-working Americans. It starts with having a responsible budget that meets our Nation's obligations without affecting Social Security or dipping into Social Security.

We made a great step toward economic growth when we worked together to pass

tax relief. One-half of the checks have gone out; more relief is on the way this fall, which should help our economy. Beginning in January 1st, Americans will see lower tax rates, lower withholding from their paychecks, and a larger tax credit.

Tax relief is just now making its way in the economy, and there are some, it seems like, who are beginning to say, "Maybe we ought to raise taxes." But I can assure you, the four of us on this stage are not going to let anybody pick the pockets of the American taxpayer.

To help get our economy moving again, Congress needs to enact an energy plan which will lower energy costs and create jobs. To get the economy moving again, Congress needs to enact trade promotion authority, so we can open up new markets for American products.

We've got a plan to get our economy moving so Americans can find work. And today I want to thank the leadership of the Congress from the Republican side that came and strategized with the Vice President and me as how to get this plan moving. I want the American people to know we're deeply concerned about the unemployment rates, and we intend to do something about it.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The exchange began at 3:07 p.m. on the South Grounds of the White House.

The President's Radio Address *September 8, 2001*

Good morning. This weekend in Washington my wife, Laura, is hosting the first

National Book Festival, continuing a tradition she began as first lady of Texas. With

visiting authors and special events, the Book Festival will highlight the importance of reading and libraries in our national life. A few days later, she and I will host the White House Assembly on Reading at the Library of Congress. We will bring together scholars and educators committed to the cause of teaching every child to read.

As a former teacher, herself, the First Lady is a passionate advocate for reading. She and I and my entire administration believe that teaching every child to read is critical to making sure every child has the opportunity to realize the American Dream.

Reading is, after all, the most basic educational skill, and the most basic obligation of any school is to teach reading. Yet earlier this year, tests showed that almost two-thirds of African American children in the fourth grade cannot read at a basic level and reading performance overall is basically unimproved over the past 10 years.

The ability to read is what turns a child into a student. When this skill is not taught, a child has not failed the system, the system has failed the child. And that child is often put on a path to frustration and broken confidence.

The methods we use to teach reading are critically important. First, we will have diagnostic tests to identify early reading problems in grades K through three. Second, we will correct those problems with intervention to give children the best possible help. Third, we will support reading instruction based on sound research, with a central role for phonics. And we'll make sure that every teacher is well trained in these proven methods.

All of this can serve an important goal I have set for our country: to ensure that every child is able to read by the end of third grade. Meeting this goal requires not

only encouragement to our schools but resources, and my budget provides them. Altogether I have asked Congress to triple the amount of Federal money available for reading programs across America.

We must also bring accountability and high standards to every public school. At the heart of my education reforms is a confident belief that every child can learn if given the chance. When our expectations are high, America's children will rise to meet them.

I have agreed with the Congress that we must increase education spending. But some, for whom the increases this year may not be enough, are threatening to stall these much-needed reforms. That is a tactic of the past in Washington that has neither worked for our country nor, more sadly, for our children. After many years of debate, the American people are counting on us to deliver on our promise of reform for the public schools.

Both the House and the Senate have passed good bills that hold schools accountable and expect results. The hardest work is behind us. We have a chance now to pass education reform based on good principles. When the Congress sends me that bill, I will sign it. And I urge the Congress to send it quickly.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 3:19 p.m. on September 7 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on September 8. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 7 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.