

us all along as a very strong partner, strong supporter of our membership in NATO. A country that, whenever things have been tough for us, has stood with us, and it's one reason why Estonia is a strong ally of the United States.

I'm grateful for President Bush's position, which I did push him hard on, on the visa issue. It is something of concern in Estonia, but I think all the other new members of NATO, the ones who are—who have been very good allies in Iraq and in Afghanistan, and our people don't always understand why it is that those people—that—those countries that have been the strongest supporters of the United States find it often the most difficult to come for vacation. But that—I think that is an issue which is more in the hands of Congress, and we hope that Congress will resolve this.

We did, in fact, suffer a series of attacks on our computer infrastructure. It is a serious issue if your most important computer systems go down in a country like mine, where 97 percent of bank transactions are done on the Internet. When you are a highly Internetted country like we are, then these kinds of attacks can do very serious

damage. And I do think it's the wave of the future; not that it's a good wave, but it is something that we have to deal with more and more.

We know that the United States and Israel and Denmark have come under cyber attack before, and I think that it's an issue that will require much more attention in the future. And I'm very happy that two countries that are very vast in terms of information technology can work together on these issues.

So I think that—well, it's a—for me, it's been—it's a very good visit. And I know that President Bush has a busy schedule, but I do hope that when his term in office is up, that you will come to my ranch, which is a lot smaller than yours. [*Laughter*]

President Bush. Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:49 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq; Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; and U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan C. Crocker.

Remarks to the 2007 Presidential Scholars

June 25, 2007

Thank you all. Please be seated. Welcome to the White House. It's a neat occasion to be able to welcome the 2007 Presidential Scholars. We're glad you're here. I congratulate you on the fine honor, and, of course, we wish you all the very best.

The Presidential Scholars program started in 1964. I was a senior in high school; I didn't make it. [*Laughter*] I know all of you worked hard to reach this day. Your families are proud of your effort, and we welcome your family members here. Your teachers are proud of your effort, and we

welcome your teachers. And our entire Nation is proud to call you Presidential Scholar.

I'm sorry Laura is not here. She would have loved to have welcomed you. She is off to Africa. And she's there to make sure that the people on that continent understand that ours is a Nation with a good heart. After all, we're leading the fight against HIV/AIDS and malaria on that continent. And so she is spreading the good will of the American taxpayer by representing our country. In my judgment,

there's no finer representative than Laura Bush.

Madam Secretary, thank you for joining us. We're proud you're here—the Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings. I thank the Members of Congress who have joined us: Senator Lieberman, Congressman Buck McKeon, Congressman Dale Kildee, and Congressman Mike Castle. I'm honored you took time, and so are the Presidential Scholars; they're proud you're here.

I want to thank the members of the Presidential Scholars commission for picking such a fine group of people, and the Presidential Scholars probably want to thank you as well for—[*laughter*]. This is a program that honors high school seniors for exceptional academic and artistic achievements. Past winners have gone on to win the Pulitzer Prize, succeed at the highest levels of business, work here at the White House.

This afternoon we honor a new class of promising young men and women. Your fellow scholars have pursued groundbreaking research, written scholarly papers, and performed at Carnegie Hall. Many of you have also reached out to those in need and have given your time for causes greater than any individual need, and, for that, we thank you.

Caterina Yuan shared her passion for service with her classmates at Palo Alto High School in California. She's run food drives, raised thousands of dollars for humanitarian efforts in Africa, and helped organize a schoolwide day of service. She's a scholar, but she's also a humanitarian.

Erin Jaeger, from Keene, New Hampshire, helped bring hope and comfort to those living in poverty and hardship. She made three trips to El Salvador to build houses and visit orphanages.

Charlie Bridge from Belmont, Massachusetts, has given back to his community through teaching. He's tutored disadvantaged middle school students, and he plans to continue this important work this summer.

One person not here today is Max Weaver. He's busy preparing for an engagement at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. In a few days, he's going to begin an intensive basic training regime that cadets like to call "the Beast." We wish him luck, and we thank him and all the other brave men and women who have volunteered to serve in the United States Armed Forces.

The reason I bring these examples up is that no matter what you do later in life, I can encourage you to use your talents to help other people. The true strength of America is the fact that we've got people of good heart and good soul reaching out to people in need. And I thank you for being leaders and setting a good example.

As we celebrate your accomplishments, we also need to honor those who helped you reach this day. You know, I always say that the first teacher of a child is a mom or a dad. For the moms and dads here, congratulations on doing your job. And I thank the teachers who are here as well. There's no more noble a profession than being a teacher. And I suspect the reason we're honoring Presidential Scholars—or these Presidential Scholars—is because you and their parents set high standards, set a high bar of expectations.

You know, part of the problem we've had in our school system is, for too often and too long that bar wasn't set high enough; that we had too many students who were victims of low expectations. I used to call it "the soft bigotry of low expectations." Schools just shuffled kids from grade to grade, as if the child couldn't learn to read and write and add and subtract. We never measured; we never had any idea how the child was doing until it was too late. And that was unsatisfactory for the United States of America; it's unsatisfactory for the President; it's unsatisfactory for the future.

And that's why when we came to Washington, we worked with Democrats and Republicans to pass what's called the No

Child Left Behind Act. The philosophy behind the law is straightforward. It says the Federal Government should expect results in return for the money it spends. That's not too much to ask, I don't think. If you believe a child can learn to read, then you ought to expect a child to read; that's what you ought to expect. And the only way to determine that is to measure.

And I'm sure some of your classmates would say you don't like to take a test. Well, I didn't either. [Laughter] But that's too bad because the only way to determine whether a child is reading at grade level is to have accountability in our school systems. And that's the basic strategy of No Child Left Behind. It says, here's some money. We expect you to teach. We want to measure to determine if you are teaching. We look forward to patting you on the back, but if you're not teaching a child the basics, then we expect you to change, before it is too late.

Measuring results helps teachers spot problems. In other words, you can't solve a problem until you diagnose it. It gives teachers tools and schools tools, the key tool necessary to determine whether or not a curriculum needs to change or whether or not a child needs to get special attention.

Measuring results gives parents key information about how their child's school is doing. You know, it's amazing how many parents will say, "The school my child goes to is doing just fine." That's what everybody hopes, and that's what everybody assumes, until scores get posted. It's amazing what happens when you hold people to account. It certainly gets a parent's attention when they find out that their child's school isn't doing as good as the neighborhood's school is, for example, or school next door.

No Child Left Behind is working; in other words, we're making good progress. During the most recent 5-year period on record, 9-year-olds made more progress in reading than in the previous 28 years combined. You can't say that unless you measure. You can't stand up in front of the

taxpayers and say, your money is being well spent because we're measuring—we know; we're measuring. Before, it was just—you were just guessing. Now, thanks to No Child Left Behind, there is accountability that's important to be able to report progress to the American people.

Speaking about progress, the nonpartisan Center on Education Policy found that many States have seen reading and math test scores increase since we've passed No Child Left Behind. The study found that minority and low-income students are making some of the biggest gains. And that's positive and important news for the American people.

We had an achievement gap in our country, and it's not right to have an achievement gap in America. And this achievement gap is becoming closed, thanks to hard work by teachers, but also thanks to the fact that we're measuring and correcting problems early, before they're too late.

The No Child Left Behind Act is working, and Congress needs to reauthorize this good piece of legislation. Reauthorizing No Child is one of the top priorities of my administration, and I know it's a top priority of Members of Congress. Buck McKeon is going to be handling the reauthorization on the Republican side in the House of Representatives, and he is determined to work with people in both sides of the aisle, Dale, to help to get this job done. We made a historic commitment, and I believe we have a moral obligation to keep it.

Our ability to compete in the 21st century depends upon educating children just like the ones standing behind me. Whether we like it or not, we're in a global world. And if the world needs engineers and/or scientists, and those scientists are being educated in China and India and not being educated in the United States, the jobs of the 21st century are likely to go there. And so we better make sure that we have a strategy aimed at making sure that we have high expectations and good results for every

child in the United States, if we expect to remain competitive.

Presidential Scholars, you leave your high school with confidence in your ability, and you've got a great foundation for success. We want to make sure that same confidence is instilled in every single child that's getting out of high school. And so what can we do? First, we can make sure No Child Left Behind gets reauthorized. You cannot compete in a global world unless you're certain that we're achieving certain standards. We want every child reading at grade level by the third grade. And the only way you know whether that's the case is, you measure.

And by the way, inherent in No Child Left Behind is a novel idea that said, if a child needs extra help, there's going to be money available to help that child. That's how you make sure that you use the accountability system to achieve results, achieve expectations.

But we need to do more. Our high schools need to have accountability. We want to make sure that same rigor that we've applied in the elementary and middle schools are applied to our high schools. If we want to be competitive, the high school diploma has to mean something. We want to make sure that we expand Advance Placement. I bet most kids here took AP courses, and AP is a great way to raise standards and raise expectations. And we've got to help teachers learn how to teach AP courses as part of our strategy.

We want to make sure that we have a rigorous course of study available for all our kids. We want to make sure we strengthen math and science. And that's why I proposed a program to encourage 30,000 math and science professionals to become part-time teachers. I remember we went to a school in Maryland, Margaret, and there was two guys there that were making science look cool. I can't do that. Most parents aren't able to do that. [Laughter] But it's amazing what a scientist can do.

And why do we need that? Why do we need 30,000 math and science professionals to go into classrooms to stimulate interest? Because we can't be a competitive nation without more scientists and more mathematicians. Because in order for us to make sure the best jobs here are in America requires us having mathematicians and scientists and engineers and physicists. And the best way to stimulate that interest is from people who actually know what they're talking about.

We want to make sure that we work with Congress to have extra funding for underperforming schools. I told you if you measure, we got extra money for the children; we also got extra money for underperforming schools. And those schools need flexibility. In other words, we've got to have—trust local folks to make the right decisions for local schools. So Margaret is going to work with the school districts and with the Congress to make sure they've got flexibility to use the resources where they're most needed, to tailor reforms to the specific needs of individual schools.

In other words, people say: "Well, you can't be for No Child Left Behind; it's the Federal Government telling you what to do." Quite the opposite. The Federal Government has said, "We believe in local control of schools; you reform them; you fix them." We're just going to insist that you measure, in return for the billions we spend on your behalf.

Now, I proposed an interesting idea that I hope Congress passes, and that is creating a teacher incentive fund of nearly \$200 million for the next year as the beginning—as a downpayment to encourage teachers to teach in districts where they need a little extra help; reward teachers who will go into these school districts that need high expectations. We need people to walk in and say, the status quo is unacceptable; people who are going to show that educational entrepreneurship necessary to make sure every single child gets a good education.

And I hope Congress works on that with us.

When schools fail to make progress, No Child Left Behind needs to give parents different options. In other words, you cannot tolerate a system where a child is stuck in a school which will not teach and will not change. There has to be a consequence. We've got remedies in the bill that say, we're going to help schools affect their programs, but, ultimately, a parent must be given the ability to transfer their child out to another public school or free tutoring for their children. In other words, there has to be a consequence in order to make sure that there's effectiveness when it comes to reform—schools that need to be reformed. I strongly believe that parents are the frontlines of the decisionmaking and should be empowered—empowered through information and empowered through different options available through the public school system.

We did something else interesting, and I look forward to working with Congress on this—and I must confess, it's slightly controversial—and that is, is that we promoted the first federally funded opportunity scholarship program here in Washington, DC. It basically said to low-income parents that, here's some money to help you send your child to a private school or a parochial school, your choice. In other words, it said, if you're tired of being in a system that simply hasn't met expectations, that there ought to be something different, and that I believe that—I think it's the role of government to help low-income parents have different options.

The program is working. It's over-subscribed. I mean, there are thousands of families that have been helped through this Washington, DC, program, which ought to say to policymakers, there's a huge demand for something better. People are sick of mediocrity in the status quo. Obviously, it hasn't happened with these kids, for which we're grateful. But there's still too many schools that just aren't meeting expecta-

tions. And so I look forward to working to see if we can't expand this kind of program.

The reason I've asked to speak to you is because I want people to understand how important this No Child Left Behind Act is to America and its future. And we will talk about ways to make the law better. I know some Members and Senators have got concerns about the law, and we're more than willing to talk about flexibility. But there is no compromise when it comes to setting high standards and measurement. You cannot compromise away the principle of saying, we expect good results, and we're going to measure to determine whether or not we've achieved those results. And when you've achieved the results that we, a society, expect, we'll give you the big embrace. But if not, for the sake of the country, for the sake of kids who deserve better, we expect you to change. That's what we're going to say, loud and clear and often. And it's working; the program is working.

I want to thank Margaret for working hard with Members of Congress. She's engaged, as you know—she's probably wearing you out, Buck—[laughter]—and Dale. But that's good. She's up there working. Laura is all involved too. She's met with a lot of Members of Congress, and she'll stay involved, as will I. This is a very important piece of legislation. We want every child in America to be a Presidential Scholar. We want every child in this country to realize the great potential of America by starting them off with a good, sound education that lets them realize their dreams.

Ours is a fabulous country. We've got kids standing up here who not only are scholars but have volunteered to help a neighbor in need. We've got people who're volunteering to help protect this country. And the thing we've got to do as policymakers is to make sure that we continue to advance America by giving people the tools necessary to realize the great promise of America.

Thanks for coming. God bless you all, and God bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:13 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Statement on the Approval of Robert B. Zoellick as President of the World Bank

June 25, 2007

I welcome the action by the Executive Board of the World Bank to unanimously approve Robert Zoellick as President of the World Bank. Bob Zoellick is a dynamic leader who is deeply committed to the mission of the World Bank in helping struggling nations to defeat poverty, grow their

economies, strengthen transparency and accountability in governance, and offer their people the prospect of a better life. The United States looks forward to continuing our close partnership with the World Bank to achieve these shared goals.

Statement on the Supreme Court Decision on the Faith-Based and Community Initiative

June 25, 2007

Today's Supreme Court decision marks a substantial victory for efforts by Americans to more effectively aid our neighbors in need of help. The Faith-Based and Community Initiative can remain focused on strengthening America's armies of compassion and expanding their good works. Similar efforts by Governors and mayors in States and cities all across the country can also continue to advance.

From the first days of my administration, we've championed the idea that those in need are better served when government draws on the strengths of every willing community partner—secular and faith-based, large and small. My administration has eliminated regulatory and policy barriers in the Federal Agencies, delivered

training and development to more than 50,000 social service entrepreneurs, and competitively awarded tens of thousands of Federal grants to faith-based and community organizations for service to others at home and abroad. These efforts fortify America's safety net and expand our Nation's supply of compassion.

This ruling is a win for the thousands of community and faith-based nonprofits all across the country that have partnered with government at all levels to serve their neighbors. Most importantly, it is a win for the many whose lives have been lifted by the caring touch and compassionate hearts of these organizations.