

Remarks Following a Meeting on the No Child Left Behind Act
Reauthorization
October 9, 2007

Secretary Spellings and I are so pleased to welcome you all to the Roosevelt Room. With us today are a group of concerned citizens from a variety of groups, here to discuss the No Child Left Behind Act. People around this table care deeply about making sure every child gets a good education. We're deeply concerned about school systems that don't focus on each individual. Some school systems are just moving kids through, and as a result, our education system is letting too many children down, too many families without hope. So we're going to strategize and work together to make sure the No Child Left Behind Act is reauthorized and made stronger.

And so I want to thank you all for coming. I love your passion. I appreciate the fact that you care deeply about the future of this country and that you believe, like I believe, every child can learn, and we have an obligation to teach every child how to read and write and add and subtract.

So thank you for joining us. We'll see you all in the Rose Garden here in a minute.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:06 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In

his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings. Also participating in the meeting were the First Lady; John C. Brittain, chief counsel and senior deputy director, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law; Roslyn McCallister Brock, vice chairman, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People National Board of Directors; Michael Casserly, executive director, Council of the Great City Schools; Wade Henderson, president and chief executive officer, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights; Lawrence Hernandez, founder, chief executive officer, and principal, Cesar Chavez Academy, Pueblo, CO; Marc H. Morial, president and chief executive officer, National Urban League; Janet Murguia, president and chief executive officer, National Council of La Raza; Dianne Pich, executive director, Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights; Sonia Rodriguez, chairperson, Coalition for Access to Educational Resources; Ricki Sabia, associate director, National Down Syndrome Society Policy Center; Amy Wilkins, vice president for government affairs and communications, The Education Trust; and Peter Zamora, cochair, Hispanic Education Coalition.

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Good afternoon. Thank you all for coming. I want to thank Secretary Spellings for joining me here. And I appreciate you all—the leaders of the civil rights community and advocates for minority and disadvantaged students—for joining us as well.

We just had a meaningful discussion about our joint commitment to closing an

achievement gap that exists in America. We discussed why reauthorizing the No Child Left Behind Act is vital in ensuring that we have a hopeful America. We don't necessarily agree on every issue, but we do agree that education is a basic civil right and that a good education is important for America.

We agree that our Nation has reached a defining moment in our struggle to secure a good education for every child. And we've come a long way since the days when children were simply shuffled through the schools, just moved grade to grade, whether or not they were learning. See, we believe every child can learn. We don't accept a system that simply shuffles children through the schools. We believe in setting high standards. And we believe that by setting high standards, we encourage greater results for every child. And now the question is whether or not we will finish the job to ensure that every American child receives a high education—a high-quality education.

Our Nation made an historic commitment nearly 6 years ago when Republicans and Democrats came together to pass the No Child Left Behind Act. The philosophy of the law is this: The Federal Government will invest in education, and in return, we seek results. Instead of just hoping for the best, we've asked States to set clear standards and hold schools accountable for teaching every child to read and do math at grade level. That doesn't seem like too much to ask. In return for taxpayers' money, we expect schools and school districts and States to measure, to show us whether or not a child can read at grade level or do math at a grade level.

And the key to getting good results is measuring. Measuring results helps teachers catch problems early, so children who need help—extra help can get that help. In other words, you can't determine whether a child needs extra help unless you measure. One of the key components of No Child Left Behind, it says, if a child is falling behind, we will provide supplemental services to help that child catch up. Measuring results empowers parents with valuable information about schools, so they can push for change if it's needed. Measuring results means schools are working to close the achievement gap, instead of looking the

other way when a student is struggling or falling behind.

No Child Left Behind is helping replace a culture of low expectations with a commitment to high achievement for all. And the hard work being done by principals, teachers, parents, and students across our country is producing results. Last month, we learned that fourth graders earned the highest math and reading scores in the history of our Nation's Report Card, and that's good news. I'm able to report that because we actually measure now in the schools. We learned that eighth graders set record highs for math scores.

We also learned that scores for minority and poor students and students with disabilities are reaching alltime highs in a number of areas. As a result, the achievement gap is beginning to narrow, and the promise of America is expanding for children of all backgrounds. In short, No Child Left Behind is working for all kinds of children in all kinds of schools in every part of the country.

There is more work to be done. So long as there is an achievement gap, we have work to do. Our goal is to have every child reading and doing math at grade level by 2014. That seems reasonable to me. It seems like a reasonable thing to ask, is to have every child reading at grade level by 2014 or being able to do math at grade level by 2014. So now is the time not to roll back the accountability or water down standards.

It's reasonable to set an important goal such as that because as the global economy becomes more competitive, a good education will become even more important for getting a good job. Unfortunately, nearly half of African American and Hispanic students still do not graduate from high school on time. We need to raise the bar for our high schools as well as for our junior highs and elementary schools. We need to give all our children the skills they need to compete. So I'm going to work with

Congress to reauthorize and strengthen the No Child Left Behind Act this year.

My administration has offered several proposals to strengthen this law. By giving local leaders more flexibility and resources, we can help them turn around troubled schools. By giving families with children stuck in low-performing schools the opportunity to choose someplace better, we can raise student achievement. At the same time, we need to increase access to tutoring programs for students who struggle and make sure these children get the special help they need. We need to reward good teachers who improve student achievement in low-income schools. We need to make sure that our country is more competitive and that our children can take advantage of the best jobs this new century has to offer by expanding access to Advanced Placement courses and strengthening math and science education.

As we move forward, we'll continue to welcome new ideas. And I appreciate the ideas I heard today. Yet there can be no compromise on the basic principle: Every child must learn to read and do math at or above grade level. And there can be no compromise on the need to hold schools accountable to making sure we achieve that goal. I'll call on Members of Congress to come together to pass bipartisan legislation that will help us achieve this goal. By working together, we can raise standards even higher, expand opportunity for all Americans of all backgrounds, and build a future where no child is left behind.

Thank you very much. Thank you all for being here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:13 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Remarks on Intelligence Reform Legislation *October 10, 2007*

Good morning. In August, Congress passed the Protect America Act, a bill to modernize the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978. This new law strengthened our ability to collect foreign intelligence on terrorists overseas, and it closed a dangerous gap in our intelligence. Since this important measure took effect, our intelligence professionals have been able to gather critical information that would have been missed without this authority. And keeping this authority is essential to keeping America safe.

Unfortunately, when Congress passed the Protect America Act, they set its provisions to expire in February. The problem is, the threat to America is not going to expire in February. So Congress must make a choice: Will they keep the intelligence gap closed by making this law permanent, or

will they limit our ability to collect this intelligence and keep us safe, staying a step ahead of the terrorists who want to attack us?

My administration will work with Members of Congress from both sides of the aisle to reach an agreement on a bill that will allow us to protect our country. The final bill must meet certain criteria. It must give our intelligence professionals the tools and flexibility they need to protect our country. It must keep the intelligence gap firmly closed and ensure that protections intended for the American people are not extended to terrorists overseas who are plotting to harm us. And it must grant liability protection to companies who are facing multibillion-dollar lawsuits only because they are believed to have assisted in the