

We have superintendents like David Estrop from Springfield, Ohio. Right here. Dave will be able to focus on improving teaching and learning in his district instead of spending all his time on bureaucratic mandates from Washington that don't actually produce results.

So this isn't just the right thing to do for our kids, it's the right thing to do for our country. We can't afford to wait for an education system that is not doing everything it needs to do for our kids. We can't let another generation of young people fall behind because we didn't have the courage to recognize what doesn't work, admit it, and replace it with something that does. We've got to act now. We've got to act now and harness all the good ideas coming out of our States, out of our schools. We can't be tied up with ideology. We can't be worrying about partisanship. We just have to make sure that we figure out what works and we hold ourselves to those high standards. Because now is the time to give our children the skills that they need to compete in this global economy.

Statement on Elections in Zambia *September 23, 2011*

On behalf of the American people, I congratulate the people of Zambia on the historic September 20 Presidential, parliamentary, and local elections, and I commend you for building on your commitment to multiparty democracy. Zambia's Electoral Commission, political leaders, civil society, and above all its citizens all contributed to this important accomplishment. The United States looks forward to working with President Michael Sata, Members of Parliament, and representatives of all of Zambia's political parties to build on the longstanding partnership between our two nations.

We've got a couple of students up on stage who are doing outstanding work because somebody in their schools is dedicated and committed every single day to making sure that they've got a chance to succeed. But I don't want them to be the exception. I want them to be the rule. Now is the time to make our education system the best in the world, the envy of the world. It used to be. It is going to be again, thanks to the people in this room.

God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:24 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Annie Haslam, daughter of Gov. William E. Haslam of Tennessee; former President George W. Bush; Ricci W. Hall, principal, University Park Campus School; John Becker, teacher, DC Prep Public Charter School; and David C. Estrop, superintendent, Springfield City School District.

I also acknowledge former President Rupiah Banda's contributions to Zambia's democratic development, including his 3 years of distinguished leadership and his admirable acceptance of the will of the Zambian people. The hard work of a living democracy does not end when the votes are tallied and the winners announced. Instead, it offers the chance to reconcile and to advance greater security and prosperity for its people. Today is a day for Zambia to celebrate their democratic achievement. I hope that all Zambians will find common ground as you address the challenges and seize the opportunities facing your country and our world.

The President's Weekly Address September 24, 2011

Over the last few weeks, I've been making the case that we need to act now on the "American Jobs Act," so we can put folks back to work and start building an economy that lasts into the future.

Education is an essential part of this economic agenda. It is an undeniable fact that countries who outeducate us today, will out-compete us tomorrow. Businesses will hire wherever the highly skilled and highly trained workers are located.

But today, our students are sliding against their peers around the globe. Today, our kids trail too many other countries in math and science and reading. As many as a quarter of our students aren't even finishing high school. And we've fallen to 16th in the proportion of our young people with a college degree, even though we know that 60 percent of new jobs in the coming decade will require more than a high school diploma.

What this means is that if we're serious about building an economy that lasts—an economy in which hard work pays off with the opportunity for solid middle class jobs—we had better be serious about education. We have to pick up our game and raise our standards.

As a nation, we have an obligation to make sure that all children have the resources they need to learn: quality schools, good teachers, the latest textbooks, and the right technology. That's why the jobs bill I sent to Congress would put tens of thousands of teachers back to work across the country and modernize at least 35,000 schools. That's why Congress should pass that bill right now.

But money alone won't solve our education problems. We also need reform. We need to make sure that every classroom is a place of high expectations and high performance.

That's been our vision since taking office. And that's why instead of just pouring money into the system that wasn't working, we launched a competition called Race to the Top. To all 50 States, we said, "If you show us the

most innovative plans to improve teacher quality and student achievement, we'll show you the money."

For less than 1 percent of what we spend on education each year, Race to the Top has led States across the country to raise their standards for teaching and learning. These standards were developed not by Washington, but by Republican and Democratic Governors throughout the country. And since then, we have seen what's possible when reform isn't just a top-down mandate, but the work of local teachers and principals, school boards and communities.

That's why in my State of the Union Address this year, I said to Congress, you need to reform the No Child Left Behind law based on the same principles that have guided Race to the Top.

While the goals behind No Child Left Behind were admirable, experience has taught us that the law has some serious flaws that are hurting our children instead of helping them. Teachers are being forced to teach to the test, while subjects like history and science are being squeezed out. And in order to avoid having their schools labeled as failures, some States lowered their standards in a race to the bottom.

These problems have been obvious to parents and educators all over this country for years. But for years, Congress has failed to fix them. So now I will. Our kids only get one shot at a decent education. And they can't afford to wait any longer.

So yesterday I announced that we'll be giving States more flexibility to meet high standards for teaching and learning. It's time for us to let States and schools and teachers come up with innovative ways to give our children the skills they need to compete for the jobs of the future.

This will make a huge difference in the lives of students all across the country. For example, yesterday, I was with Ricci Hall, the principal of a school in Worcester, Massachusetts. Every single student who graduated from Ricci's school in the last 3 years went on to college.