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The President's Radio Address

October 22, 1994

Good morning. As the autumn leaves begin to reach the height of their color, students all across our country are hard at work preparing for math tests and spelling bees, history papers and midterm exams. Their knowledge and skills are being tested. Their report cards will be a measure of their success.

Well, just like those students, America is also being tested. We're facing difficult questions about how we should guide our children in today's world and whether we'll prepare them for the challenges they'll meet. It's not an easy test, perhaps one of the most difficult we have ever undertaken. But the right answers are before us, and our children will be the measure of our success. We've found a number of right answers already. Our national report card shows some exciting progress.

When I became President, I knew the only way we could continue to lead the world would be if we developed the learning capacities of as many of our citizens as possible. That's why the progress we've made on our lifelong learning agenda is so vital to the long-term strength of the United States.

In all our education proposals, we've tried to make a fundamental change in the way the Federal Government helps students to meet their goals. Instead of prescribing detailed rules and regulations that schools have to follow, as the Federal Government has done in the past, we've tried to show that it's the responsibility of individual teachers and students and communities, with the help of our National Government, to work hard to make good lives for themselves.

In everything from an expanded Head Start program to new youth apprenticeships for young people who don't go to college, we've worked to build on those principles. In our Goals 2000 law, which I signed last spring, we set tough world-class standards in the basic subjects for students and schools, but we made it clear that students and teachers at the school level have to decide how to meet those standards. We made it clear that we have to keep guns and drugs out of our schools, that we have to encourage our parents to stay involved with our children's education.

Now this past week, I had the opportunity to sign into law the elementary and secondary education act. That bill says that, while the National Government will set the standards and help to develop the measurements of whether schools are meeting them, it is fundamentally the responsibility of people at the grassroots to make sure those standards are met. We are encouraging what we know is the true magic of education, that which occurs between teacher and student, with the help of parents and principals and communities.

This new law does another thing. It supports programs that teach our young people that character does count, that helps them to learn the difference between right and wrong, based on standards developed in our local communities.

We also have to work to make sure more Americans have the higher education they need to compete and win in the global economy. One of the biggest obstacles has been soaring college costs and an inadequate national system of college loans. We've started two new programs to help fix those problems. Our national service program, AmeriCorps, is already giving 20,000 people the chance to serve their country and earn money for higher education. Within 3 years, 100,000 people will be participating in this domestic Peace Corps. To give you some idea of how many that is, the largest number of young people who ever participated in the Peace Corps in a single year was 16,000.

Over and above the national service program, this week I announced that Americans will be able to open what we call individual education accounts. We already have individual retirement accounts that help people direct the growth of their own retirement benefits, and now all Americans will be able to have individual education accounts, so that they can pay back college loans over time in ways that meet their own needs and the requirements of their own working lives. This program will save the Government money, reduce defaults, lower fees for everyone. With these reforms, we're helping to make sure that America can embrace the chal-

lenges we face in the world economy as we look to the next century.

But you should know that there are those who would take us in a very different direction, back to the policies of the past which have failed. Our political opponents have signed what they call a contract that tells us what they would do if they control Congress. They'd give a $200 billion tax cut to the wealthiest Americans. They would explode the deficit. That would mean cutting many of the education reforms we've worked so hard to pass, along with Medicare and other programs. Our opponents have even made a specific proposal to cut college aid for 3 million American student borrowers each year to pay for their trillion dollar package of promises in tax cuts, defense spending increases, revitalization of Star Wars, and an allegation that they can balance the budget. Well, we tried that before, and it didn't work out very well.

My contract with America is for our future and for the future of our children. I don't want us to go back. To guarantee that we keep moving forward, we have to be willing to meet the tests of our time, to keep doing everything we can for young Americans who are looking to us for help in meeting the world's demands. We can't give in to easy promises. We have to embrace the challenges of the future. And if we do, we'll be rewarded. The world places many demands on us, but I'm sure you believe, as I do, that that's a test we can pass with flying colors.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 5:55 p.m. on October 21 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on October 22.

Remarks to the Students at Carlmont High School in Belmont, California

October 22, 1994

It's nice to be back in California. It's nice to be here in Belmont. It's nice to be here at Carlmont High School. I'm honored to be the first President to come here. And it's only fair that I came here to see your principal, since he didn't get to come and see me. Now that should not be interpreted as a sign of dissatisfaction with the lady who got to be principal of the year, but he would have made an awful good one. [*Laughter*] And he sounds to me like the principal of the year here.

I want to say how very honored I am to be here with all of you. I thank Mayor Rianda for her welcome, Mayor Davids for what he said. I thank them for their leadership and their devotion to public service at the grassroots level, where so many of our problems and challenges have to be met. I thank Congressman Lantos and Congresswoman Eshoo for not only being my friends but for their extraordinary service in Washington. I can tell you that there is this popular feeling, I think, that nearly everybody who goes off to Washington has something bad happen to them and forgets about the folks back home; they do not. And they represent you well, and you should be very proud of them. I'm also very pleased to be joined today by your State treasurer, Kathleen Brown, and your State insurance commissioner, John Garamendi. Thank you, John. I'd like to introduce one other person, too, who is my partner in these education endeavors, a former colleague of mine and former Governor of Vermont and now the Deputy Secretary of Education, come all the way from Washington with me today, Governor Madeleine Kunin. Please make her feel welcome. I want to say a little more about Senator Feinstein in a moment, in connection with this work, but I appreciate what she said today.

But let me begin by saying that, as all of you know, I had the opportunity to spend a great deal of time in this magnificent State of yours a couple of years ago. And since I have been President, I think I've been back here a dozen times. I've worked on the emergencies for California, like the earthquake and the fires. I've worked on trying to get the economy of this State going again, to sell computers overseas, to sell the farmers' rice to Japan for the first time, to start the ship building industry in the southern part of the State, to help the defense conversion momentum really get going here so we could build a lot of jobs out of this defense downsizing and not just lose them. I've tried to do things that would help you deal with the crime and the immigration problems,