

tion of IIRIRA and prevent harsh and avoidable results.

I urge the Congress to give this legislative proposal prompt and favorable consideration.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
July 24, 1997.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 25.

**Remarks to the National Association
of Elementary School Principals in
Arlington, Virginia**

July 25, 1997

Thank you very much, Superintendent Paz, President Allen, my longtime friend Sam Sava. Thank you, Secretary Riley. I believe the record will reflect when your tenure is over that you have done more for the children of America than any Secretary of Education who ever served, and I thank you.

I want to say, we are joined today by a number of other distinguished education leaders, other superintendents from cities around our country, along with Bob Chase, the president of the NEA; Sandra Feldman, the president of the AFT; Michael Casserley, the executive director of the Council of Great City Schools; and Anne Bryant, the executive director of the National School Board Association; and my good friend Mayor Beverly O'Neill from Long Beach, California. And a lot of superintendents are here. I thank you for joining the elementary school principals and for your support for better education for our children.

I want to begin by thanking the elementary principals for what they do for America's children. Like every parent, I remember very well the first time I sent my child off to school, putting her in the hands of a principal I did not know but whom I came to know and like very well. *[Laughter]* Every year hundreds of thousands of children arrive on your doorstep, entrusted to you by their parents. And every year you prove their trust is well-placed.

When I was the Governor of Arkansas, I had the opportunity to cochair a national task force on school leadership for the education

commission of the States. And we found about a decade ago what you have always known, that when it comes to the quality of education in the school it is the principal who makes all the difference.

As school enrollments reach record levels—up to 54 million by the year 2006—and as we move into the 21st century's knowledge economy where learning for a lifetime will be essential to success, your leadership will be more important than ever. And your ability to inspire people and to make them believe that we can achieve educational excellence will be more important than ever. Beginning with our Nation's elementary schools, we have to demand excellence from every school, every teacher, every student. We have to repair and rebuild our schools. We have to make sure they take advantage of the newest technologies. We have to make sure that they are safe and drug free. We have to make sure that we are supporting promising reforms like charter schools and other initiatives under way in many of your districts. But I believe the single most important thing we can do to give our children world-class education is to insist on high national standards, so that we make sure that we've done everything we can to see that every single child learns what he or she knows to succeed in the exciting world of the 21st century. For too long we've been unwilling to insist on that as a Nation, perhaps for fear that some of our children could not reach those standards, perhaps out of a misguided notion that such standards would lead to too much Federal Government involvement or too much loss of local control.

I believe a lot of Americans have always feared that children from disadvantaged backgrounds and struggling communities just might not be able to hold their own. I believe that too many Americans have thought that with so much diversity and poverty and family difficulties among our young students, American children would simply always lag behind other countries that had more homogenous, less disruptive cultures, and perhaps longer school years. Still, for more than a decade now, at least since the issuance of "A Nation At Risk" report in 1983 and, indeed, going back some years before, Americans have been working hard, led by their

educators and reform-minded public servants, to improve our schools, and it is making a difference.

As Secretary Riley said, last month we learned that our fears were wrong when America's fourth graders finished second only to Korea in science in the international math and science tests. They scored well above the average on the annual math tests. Six years earlier, our fourth graders had scored well below the international average. These tests, of course, are not of all of our fourth graders, but they are of a rather large and representative sample of them. And they tested enough of them to prove that we don't have to settle for second-class expectations or second-class goals for any of our children.

They also show, frankly, that by the time our students reach the eighth grade, the high test scores drop back below the international average. I think we all know that the problems our children face are aggravated in those middle school years when they move into adolescence, and that in many of our communities the structure and organization of the middle school was more adequate to a previous time when a lot of those problems did not exist.

Nonetheless, the fourth grade test proved, number one, that you're doing a good job and, number two, that our kids can do it. And that is, after all, the most important thing. Therefore, I believe it is imperative now to take action and to begin the movement to high national standards for all of our children. When we don't expect or encourage our children to learn we indirectly encourage them to fail. When we set high standards and when we insist on them, there's no end to what our kids can do. You see that every day; you know that better than anyone.

In my State of the Union Address I challenged every State and every school to adopt high national standards and by 1999 to actually test all our fourth graders in reading and all our eighth graders in math to make sure the standards are being met. Not Federal standards but national ones—standards that every child can meet in every city and State in America, and standards that every child must meet if we want every child to be able to live out his or her dreams. After all, national standards are defensible because read-

ing is reading and math is math in Appalachia and in Alaska and all points in between.

Since I issued that call, education leaders or Governors or both in seven States—California, North Carolina, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Kentucky, and West Virginia—along with our Department of Defense schools all over the world have announced their support for national standards and their desire to participate in the testing program as soon as it becomes available in 1999.

Today I am pleased to make an announcement that would have been literally unthinkable just a couple of years ago. Fifteen of our largest school districts, including schools in six of the seven largest cities in the United States, have committed to meet these standards and to participate in the tests to measure the progress of their students against them.

Now, I don't know how much news this will be tonight on the news or tomorrow in the papers, but every one of us who has been involved in education—if I had told you 5 years ago that the leaders of the school districts in New York; Philadelphia; Atlanta; Broward County, Florida; Cincinnati; Detroit; Chicago; Houston; San Antonio; El Paso; Omaha; Los Angeles; Long Beach; Fresno; and Seattle—that the leaders of these school districts have asked that their students be held to and measured against the same standards in reading and math that we expect our children to meet to have a world-class education, no one would have believed that. Educators know this is an historic, astonishing, wonderful moment in American education. And I thank them for doing that.

This commitment means that 3½ million more children, one out of every 14 public school children in America, will be held to these world-class education standards in the basics. And it means after the test is given all of them will get better education because we'll all learn from the test results and keep working until we get the results we want in every one of those districts.

I would like to ask the representatives of those 15 school districts who are here to stand up and be recognized: the superintendents, the teachers, the principals. Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

And let me say, the Secretary of Education and I are about to leave to go out to Las Vegas to meet with the Governors. Now, if this event had gone on in 1979 or 1980 or 1983 or 1984, the Governors would have been the first group out there. And they've been dragging their feet, and don't you believe for a moment that Dick Riley and I aren't going to tell them what we saw at the elementary school principals convention.

When we get these results, they ought to be incorporated into school and school district report cards, so that parents and taxpayers can see how our kids are doing but can also measure their progress. Keep in mind—you all know this, and we have to explain this to the citizens and the parents—these tests are not graded on the curve. If you make the highest grade in the class and it's not high enough, you don't know enough. If you make the lowest grade in the class and you're over the bar, you're at least qualified to do well in the world you will live in. It is very important that we get that message across to our people: We are measuring what is required to succeed in the world our children will live in.

We in the National Government will continue to do our part. The balanced budget agreement we reached with Congress, that was voted for overwhelmingly in both Houses, by Members of both parties, takes Head Start the next step toward our goal of a million children. It will fund the Technology Literacy Challenge to help us participate with the private sector in hooking up every classroom and library to the Internet by the year 2000. It will help to fund America Reads, our program to get a million trained reading tutors available to give extra help to children who need it most, to make sure that all of our 8-year-olds can read independently. I urge Congress to act to implement this program. All told, you should know that if this balanced budget agreement passes, the increase in education funding, Federal support for education, will be the largest since 1965.

I also want to emphasize that we know that one of the challenges especially that a lot of our big-city schools will face is a looming teacher shortage, that we're going to have more students coming in and more teachers retiring. Just last week I offered a new initia-

tive to provide extra scholarship money modeled on the Federal Health Service Corps, where we pay for medical school costs for doctors who will go out to underserved areas, to pay for the education costs of young people who will agree to teach for 3 years in areas that are especially challenging. And I hope Congress will pass that as well.

Finally, let me mention in regard to the budget that in addition to the support for education from Head Start through high school graduation, this budget takes another huge step toward opening the doors of college education to all Americans. The agreement provided for a tax credit for the first 2 years of college that would be sufficient to virtually guarantee universal access at least to community college for every high school graduate in the United States and for every adult who needs to go back to school. In addition, it provides tax relief for the 3d and 4th years of college and for graduate school. And that's what we're working on now in these budget negotiations. The agreement provided for that. The tax plan that the Republicans released a couple of days ago falls far short of the commitment in the agreement.

Now, let me say again, I believe we should have a tax cut. We can afford it and still balance the budget, because the budget is now going to finish this year over 80 percent below what it was when I took office. We've already done over 80 percent of the work in balancing the budget. But the tax cut has to, first of all, put middle class families who need the relief most at the heart of its objectives. It should help families to pay for all 4 years of college and for graduate education. It should help working people get training throughout a lifetime. It should help middle class parents to raise their children. And equally important, it should keep us within the limits of balancing this budget and keeping it balanced and not having it explode in the out-years.

We have been handicapped severely for years and years and years because we went on a binge of deficit spending in the early eighties that we couldn't break. Now we have done it. You see the results in our economy: When we have fiscal discipline you have lower interest rates, you have more invest-

ment, you have a growing economy. And it's required us to show some restraint here over the last few years, but it's also helped to swell the coffers of State and local government, which fund our schools, primarily because we have a healthy economy. So all of this has to be observed.

I have to tell you that even though there are differences which are clearly and publicly stated between the White House and the Republican leaders and, to some extent, also clearly stated between the Democrats in Congress and others, I think we're going to get this agreement. The negotiators are working even as we speak. And I think we all know that this is a remarkable moment in American history, and we have an obligation to balance the budget for the first time since 1969, to keep this economic growth going, and to do it in a way that gives us the biggest investment in education in over 30 years, and I might add also, the biggest investment in expanding health coverage to our children since 1965. And this is important. That will also help you do your jobs better. And I want to emphasize that if we pass college benefit provisions as contemplated by the budget agreement, it will be the biggest increase in access to college, federally supported access to college, since the GI bill passed in 1945. This is a very good agreement.

So this is a day that we celebrate these 15 school districts stepping forward, representing so many of our children, putting the lie to the notion that our children can't meet the high standards because they're from immigrant families or because they're from poor families or because they live in difficult circumstances. We can all make excuses until the cows come home, but in the end, these kids have to get up and live their lives. And we've got to give them a chance to live their lives in the best way possible. And we have done that. We celebrate that. We live in the expectation of a successful conclusion of these budget negotiations.

But the thing I want to close with is that when you go back to your school, I want you to know that I know that you are leading the fight for the future of our children. More than anybody else, you have to have the con-

viction that every child can learn to high standards. You have to have the conviction that your teachers can do what they have to do. You have to have the convictions that you can establish the alliances with your parents and your communities that you have to establish. You have to believe that if you demand high standards and have high expectations that our kids can meet them. You have to believe that we actually can succeed in giving our children the tools they need to make the most of their own lives and to keep our country the great beacon of hope and freedom and opportunity in the 21st century.

Pearl Buck once said that if our American way of life fails the child, it fails us all. It follows that if our American way of life supports, ennobles, lifts up our children, it does that for all of us. That is what you do, and I am very grateful.

Thank you, and God bless you.

[At this point, Samuel G. Sava, executive director, National Association of Elementary School Principals, presented the President with a gift.]

The President. Well, I may use this in unconventional ways. Thank you very much, Sam. This means more to me than you know.

The young man you mentioned, Michael Morrison, is a wheelchair-bound young man, raised by a single mother, who became my friend. On that cold November Tuesday in 1992, when it was really cold in New Hampshire, Michael Morrison got up to go to the polls to work for me, and his car was broken down, his family car. His mother couldn't take him. And so he wheeled his wheelchair alongside an icy highway for more than 2 miles to reach the polling place. He is now a college honor student. Don't ever forget what you do makes a difference.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:19 a.m. at the Crystal Gateway Marriott Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Stanley Paz, superintendent, El Paso Independent School District; and Yvonne Allen, president, National Association of Elementary School Principals.

**Proclamation 7014—National
Korean War Veterans Armistice Day,
1997**

July 25, 1997

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

On July 27, 1953, a negotiated cease-fire brought an end to the Korean War and to some of the most savage fighting in the history of America's Armed Forces. More than 54,000 Americans lost their lives, more than 103,000 were wounded, and thousands more were listed as missing in action. To a nation still recovering from the terrors and hardships of World War II, this conflict was a harsh reminder that freedom still had enemies at large in the world.

But the Korean War taught us that free nations could work together in partnership through the United Nations, standing firm against tyranny and in defense of liberty. We were reminded once again of the skill, courage, and indomitable spirit of our men and women in uniform. We learned that the American people were tough enough and determined enough to prevail in the long struggle of the Cold War.

Our victory in that struggle had its roots in the Korean War, and we owe our veterans of that conflict a profound debt of gratitude. Many of them were still scarred from the battles of World War II when they answered the call to duty in Korea. They fought a different kind of war in an unfamiliar land, facing a new and fiercely determined enemy. There they proved to all the enemies of freedom, and to the world, that America's commitment to liberty, democracy, and human rights was not only one of words, but also one of deeds.

Etched into the eastern wall of the Korean War Veterans Memorial in our Nation's Capital is the simple sentence, "Freedom Is Not Free." On this day we honor those who recognized the truth of that inscription and were willing to pay freedom's price with their own lives. We salute our men and women in uniform who served so valiantly in the Korean War, and we remember with sorrow and with pride all those who never came home.

The Congress, by Public Law 104-19 (36 U.S.C. 169m), has designated July 27, 1997, as "National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day" and has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this day.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim July 27, 1997, as National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day. I call upon all Americans to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities that honor and give thanks to our Nation's distinguished Korean War veterans. I also ask Federal departments and agencies, interested groups, organizations, and individuals to fly the American flag at half-staff on July 27, 1997, in memory of the Americans who died as a result of their service in Korea.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fifth day of July, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-second.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:30 a.m., July 28, 1997]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on July 29.

**Proclamation 7015—Parents' Day,
1997**

July 25, 1997

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

There are few experiences in life more challenging or more rewarding than being a parent. Holding their child for the first time, parents suddenly realize that they are totally responsible for this small person entrusted to their care. On Parents' Day, we pay tribute to these quiet heroes among us—the mothers and fathers who make a lifetime commitment to their children.

Parents work hard to meet their children's need for food, shelter, clothing, and protection; but more important, they give their