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We've now taken a significant step forward in this effort. Last week I signed an education bill that supports the high national standards and the development of the first-ever voluntary tests of fourth graders in reading and eighth graders in math. And as I had recommended to Congress, we put control of the tests in the hands of the independent, bipartisan National Assessment Governing Board, often called NAGB. Congress created NAGB a decade ago; it includes Governors and legislators of both parties, business leaders, parents, and teachers.

I'm pleased to be joined in the White House by the NAGB board members, who have just convened for the first time since taking on their new responsibilities, and they've just presented me with their plan for developing the national tests, including a pilot test next fall. Several new members have been appointed to help, including Diane Ravitch, an Assistant Secretary of Education under President Bush; Lynn Marmer, the president of the Cincinnati school board; and Jo Ann Pottorff, a member of the Kansas Legislature. I'm grateful they've agreed to take on this important role.

I'm confident the board will ensure that the new tests measure what they should, the basics—nothing more, nothing less. These tests will be national, not Federal. And as Diane Ravitch has said, they'll be a yardstick, not a harness. They're a vital measuring tool to help parents, teachers, and school officials demand accountability and excellence.

This is a landmark step toward putting high standards in the classroom and keeping politics out. It builds on what is clearly the best year for American education in more than a generation.

This year, we have made great progress on our pledge to ensure that every 8-year-old can read, every 12-year-old can log on to the Internet, every 18-year-old can go on to college. In the bill I signed last week, we helped to build a citizen army of reading tutors, nearly doubling our investment in—nearly doubled our investment in education technology; we expanded public school choice and competition; and we provided the largest increase in Pell grant scholarships in two decades.

As we raise standards for our children, we're also providing them with the tools they need to meet the challenge and seize the opportunities of the 21st century. Working together, we're lifting our children's sights, raising their hopes, and honoring our obligation to improve education today so that they can meet the challenges of tomorrow.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:30 p.m. on November 21 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on November 22.

Remarks on Arrival and an Exchange With Reporters in Denver, Colorado

November 22, 1997

The President. Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to make a few remarks about the conference that I'm about to leave for, of Asia-Pacific leaders in Vancouver. But before I do, I'd like to say a couple of words about a topic the city of Denver is very much focused on now.

Recently, this wonderful city has witnessed several vicious, violent crimes. The Justice Department has opened a civil rights investigation into at least one of those cases; therefore, I cannot comment specifically on it. But I can say this: We must not, and I know the people of Denver will not, tolerate acts of violence that are fed by hate against people of another color. And we must not tolerate violence and hatred targeted against police officers, the people who put their lives on the line for us every day. And finally, we must honor and support the efforts of our fellow Americans, like the courageous woman here in Denver, who act to prevent or mitigate such violence.

These tragic incidents are painful illustrations of why our recent White House Conference on Hate Crimes and our race initiative are so important and why we have to do more to combat acts like this and to prevent them, by removing the poison that breeds them from all our hearts.

Let me also say it is wonderful to be back in Denver. I appreciate Governor Romer and Congressman Skaggs and Congresswoman DeGette for flying out here with me. And

I was glad to be greeted by Mrs. Webb and a number of other officials. I want to thank the people of Denver again for the wonderful job they did in hosting the Summit of the Eight this summer. I'd also like to say a special word of appreciation to Congressman Skaggs, as he leaves his career in Congress, for all that he has done.

Now, as you all know, I'm on my way to Vancouver for a summit of leaders of the Asia-Pacific region to continue our efforts to build a community of Asia-Pacific nations dedicated to working together for security, prosperity, and peace.

America is and must remain a Pacific power as we enter the 21st century. Our security demands it. We fought three wars in Asia in this century; 37,000 American troops still stand guard for freedom in Korea; a profound transition is underway in China, the most populous nation in the world. Our prosperity requires it because Asia buys nearly a third of what we sell abroad, supporting millions of high-paying American jobs. More than ever, America's future and Asia's future are joined.

With such deep stakes in the region, our security and our economic interests must go hand in hand, including strengthening our security alliances in the region with Japan and other nations; building a constructive relationship with China; promoting peace on the Korean Peninsula, where I am very pleased that we have a glimmer of hope in the initiation next month of the first permanent peace talks since the end of the Korean war; and opening the markets to American goods and services. APEC is an important forum for encouraging partnership and progress in these areas.

In 1993, I convened the first meeting ever of Asia-Pacific leaders in Blake Island, where we embraced a common vision of an Asia-Pacific community, of shared strength and prosperity and peace. Since then, we committed to achieve free trade in the area by 2020. We forged a blueprint to achieve our goal. We laid the foundation last year with concrete market opening initiatives, including an information technology agreement that cuts to zero tariffs in computers, semiconductors, and telecommunications. This amounts to a $5 billion cut on the sales of American high-tech products abroad, a cut that will lead, we believe, to hundreds of thousands of new high-paying American jobs.

Now, in Vancouver we'll take the steps to make APEC work for our people. One of our top priorities there will be strengthening and stabilizing Asia's financial markets so that their economies and ours stay on the right track. That's important for America because our economic strength is increasingly tied to theirs.

To lay the groundwork for future growth, I'll also keep pushing to reduce barriers of trade to American products. These international trade and financial flows have helped to drive Asia's strong growth in the past, and if the leaders act aggressively to promote financial stability and to keep opening the markets at the same time, Asia's future growth prospects and, therefore, America's are stronger.

Our approach to financial stability stands on two pillars. First, each country must take responsibility for putting sound economic policies in place, including open and reliable economic information and solid financial deregulation—regulation, excuse me—to bolster investor confidence.

Second, the international community must be prepared to help countries that are taking the right measures themselves, with the International Monetary Fund playing the central role.

Last week in Manila, our Asian-Pacific financial officials created a framework to promote these principles, establishing a process for countries to provide speedy financial support on a case-by-case basis to help a neighbor bolster its reserve with a second line of defense after IMF funding; setting up a regional forum to monitor, identify, and address risks to financial stability before they escalate; and recommending that in our global economy, where capital flows are faster than ever, the IMF create a new window for providing short-term financing. I'll be working closely with the other leaders in Vancouver to advance this framework for action. I'll also be working to keep on tearing down barriers to trade where America's competitiveness is strong.

Already, our exports to Asia are worth $250 billion. Imagine the opportunity for our

workers and businesses as trade barriers are cut further. In all my discussion with Asian and with Latin American leaders, my message is clear: We need to keep working to open these markets; it's the best path for prosperity, for growth, for good jobs, for better lives for people in America and people in all these other nations.

We can build this future of better prosperity, stability, and prosperity we committed ourselves to in Blake Island, Washington, in 1993 if we keep working on it in Vancouver.

Thank you very much.

Situation in Iraq

Q. Mr. President—[*inaudible*]—sanctions on Iraq?

The President. I reiterated my position, and I'll be glad to say it again. The United States is concerned about the welfare of the people of Iraq; we don't want to see them suffer unnecessarily. We took the lead in putting in place a policy in the United Nations that permits us to expand humanitarian assistance there. But the most important thing is that those inspectors need to be back at work, and they need to work without impediment. Mr. Butler gave a report today to the United Nations Security Council which points out that there are still impediments to their work, and he recommends a more robust inspection regime. That is what we need to focus on.

I understand President Yeltsin's position, and I thank him for the work they did to end the crisis, at least temporarily—we hope it's ended permanently, but we're not sure. But keep in mind, it is more difficult for these inspectors to do their work with regard to biological and chemical weapons than it is with regard to missile and nuclear issues under their jurisdiction. And we have to do more.

And again I say, I want to compliment the members of the press. We sometimes have our differences, but I think there has been a real effort to make the public aware of the storage of chemical and biological agents that Iraq admitted having in 1989 and now has no records, cannot produce records proving it destroyed—and then the admitted stores that were there in 1995, just 2 years ago.

So I just want to—what I emphasized to President Yeltsin is we have come a long way by working together, and we have to continue to work together. And the decisions about what to do with the inspections should be made based on the evidence, the facts, and the professional judgment of the inspectors. Neither the political inclinations of the United States nor of our allies should control those decisions.

This is about the future safety not only of the people in Iran and on its borders but indeed of the whole world. It's not hard to carry this stuff around in small amounts once it's developed.

So it was a very good conversation, a very forthright one, and I thought a constructive one, and I believe it will enable us to take the next steps by working together.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:58 a.m. at the Denver International Airport. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Roy Romer of Colorado; Wilma J. Webb, wife of Mayor Wellington E. Webb of Denver; Richard Butler, chairman, United Nations Special Commission; and President Boris Yeltsin of Russia.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Luncheon in Denver

November 22, 1997

Thank you very much. Governor, I'm very grateful for what you said and grateful for what you're doing. It's hard enough to be a Governor; even if you've been doing it as long as Roy has—[*laughter*]—it still requires some effort. And to do that and still be willing to travel around the country and represent the Democratic Party and deal with the challenges we've had to face in this last year takes somebody with a heart of gold, and a steel backside to be on the plane all the time, and a pretty tough skin to take some of the slings and arrows that they fling at you. And I don't think we could have had a better leader for our party than Roy Romer in this last year. And I'm very grateful to you.

Thank you, Mrs. Webb, for being here and for what you said. Wilma and I had a good talk at lunch about the kind of the afterglow of the experience we had in bringing the