

At the Horatio Alger Association, you also understand how much the dream depends on education. And for that, all of us should be grateful. You promote literacy and early reading. You provide millions of dollars in scholarships based upon need and talent. You understand that the hope for a better life often begins in the classroom.

A good education can be the first real break a person gets in life. A young person might have big dreams for the future, but if he or she can't read, then the highest of hopes probably won't carry them very far.

We have a duty to every child in America to give them the best possible start in life, to make every school a place of learning and of discipline and of character. We take this responsibility seriously in our country, as we should.

But lately, we've been falling well short of our professed goals. Just today we learned the latest results from the National Assessment of Education Progress, known as the NAEP, which measures reading skills amongst our fourth graders. Unfortunately, the test reveals no progress at all amongst children in need of help. And it shows a further widening of the gap between the highest and lowest performing students. The highest scores are higher; the lowest scores are lower. Good students are scoring better; struggling students are struggling more. This is not acceptable.

The NAEP provides an important service. It shows us where the need is greatest amongst our students. And these results point out, once again, the need for a strong emphasis on early reading. The budget I submitted to Congress would accomplish this with a Reading First Program and reformed Title I Programs. My budget gives the highest priority to education with an 11.5 percent increase in overall funding. It triples the current spending on reading and early detection of children facing reading difficulties.

The House and Senate are working closely to pass a budget with this kind of focus. I applaud them for their efforts. It's important that we work together, because reading is what really turns children into students. It is the most basic of all basics. That was true in the 19th century, when Horatio Alger lived, and it's just as true for children today.

His stories call to mind an era very distant from ours, and they were just stories, but they had a point, and they showed young readers the way.

Such stories are still being written in America, in every town and city, every day, and in real life. Today we recognize 10 such lives, the example they set and the promise they hold for others to follow. And it is my honor to honor them.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:03 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to H. Wayne Huizenga, member, Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans, who introduced the President; and Ruth Stafford Peale, founder, Guideposts magazine, and widow of Norman Vincent Peale. The President also referred to Title I of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Public Law No. 103-382), which amended Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law No. 89-10).

Statement on Senate Action on Federal Budget Legislation

April 6, 2001

I want to say I've got a little news I'd like to report. I'm really pleased to report that the United States Senate just moments ago passed a budget that funds our Nation's priorities and allows for over \$1.2 trillion on meaningful, real tax relief for the American people.

The House has already passed \$1.6 trillion of tax relief. Now the House and Senate will work to find common ground between these two budget plans, and the result will be the largest tax relief in decades. The fact that both Houses of Congress have committed to provide significant relief is good for the American people, and it's good for the economy.

When the House and Senate complete their work, they will have paved the way so the American people can receive an across-the-board income tax reduction, a doubling of the child credit, relief from the marriage penalty, and the elimination of the death tax. This budget also wisely increases spending on education, funds priorities like Medicare

and Social Security, and pays down a record amount of debt.

I applaud today's action and congratulate the Republicans and Democrats who helped make it happen.

Message on the Observance of Passover

April 6, 2001

I am pleased to send warm greetings to Jews around the world celebrating the Passover holiday, beginning at sundown on April 7. As you gather with family and friends, eat traditional foods, and sing joyous songs, you follow in the footsteps of your forefathers in remembering the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt nearly 3,500 years ago.

During this season of renewal, the Passover holiday commemorates the liberation of the Jewish people from slavery. Through the years, Jewish sages have taught that the lesson of freedom found in the miracle of Passover has two important aspects. The first is the escape from physical bondage and the regaining of dignity and equality by the individual and by a people. Equally important is spiritual liberation from selfish desires and destructive habits.

The flight from slavery led quickly to Mount Sinai and the Holy One's gift of the Commandments to Moses and the Israelites. They were then fully free to follow the Creator's laws in striving to perfect their own lives and the world in which they lived. The connection between freedom from bondage and the gift of the Commandments enhances Passover's abiding influence, not only as a Jewish holiday, but also as an inspiration to all mankind.

Laura joins me in sending best wishes for a joyous and memorable holiday observance.

George W. Bush

Executive Order 13208— Amendment to Executive Order 13202, Preservation of Open Competition and Government Neutrality Towards Government Contractors' Labor Relations on Federal and Federally Funded Construction Projects

April 6, 2001

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act, 40 U.S.C. 471 *et seq.*, and in order to (1) promote and ensure open competition on Federal and federally funded or assisted construction projects; (2) maintain Government neutrality towards Government contractors' labor relations on Federal and federally funded or assisted construction projects; (3) reduce construction costs to the Federal Government and to the tax payers; (4) expand job opportunities, especially for small and disadvantaged businesses; (5) prevent discrimination against Government contractors or their employees based upon labor affiliation or lack thereof; and (6) prevent the inefficiency that may result from the disruption of a previously established contractual relationship in particular cases; thereby promoting the economical, nondiscriminatory, and efficient administration and completion of Federal and federally funded or assisted construction projects, it is hereby ordered that Executive Order 13202 of February 17, 2001, is amended by adding to section 5 of that order the following new subsection:

- (c) The head of an executive agency, upon application of an awarding authority, a recipient of grants or financial assistance, a party to a cooperative agreement, or a construction manager acting on behalf of the foregoing, may exempt a particular project from the requirements of any or all of the provisions of sections 1 and 3 of this order, if the agency head finds: (i) that