

See, the enemy hit us. They didn't know who they were hitting. Oh, they probably thought we'd file a lawsuit or two. [*Laughter*] But instead, they hit a country which is strong and tough, a country, by remaining strong and tough and always remembers what we love, and that is freedom, that we can achieve peace.

I believe America will lead the world to peace. And at the same time, here at home we can make sure, by following our hearts, by being the compassionate country we are, to make sure this American experience shines brightly for every single citizen who lives in our country.

No, they hit us. But out of the evil is going to come some incredible good, because this is the greatest nation, full of the finest people on the face of the Earth. May God bless you, and may God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:15 p.m. at the Atlanta Marriott Marquis Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Julianne Chambliss, wife of Representative Chambliss; Mary Perdue, wife of candidate Sonny Perdue; Clay Cox, candidate for Georgia's 13th Congressional District; Alec Poitevint, national committeeman, and Fred Cooper, former chairman, Georgia Republican Party; Eric J. Tanenblatt, former Georgia State chairman for the George W. Bush Presidential campaign; and President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks at Read-Pattillo Elementary School in New Smyrna Beach, Florida

October 17, 2002

Thank you all for coming today. I'm—okay, read more than you watch TV. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank everybody for being here. I've spent a lot of my time talking about how to make sure America is a secure and safe country. It's on my mind because so long as we embrace freedom, there are, unfortunately, some people that want to hurt us. As long as we continue to hold dear to our heart the notion that free people should be able to worship the Almighty God any way they see fit, free people should be able to speak their mind, free people ought to be—or free people should be able to have a free press—

all those aspects of freedom which we hold dear and will never relinquish are the reasons why we have to worry about the safety of the American people.

And since we're never going to relent when it comes to our freedom, and since we have a responsibility to defend that which we hold dear for not only ourselves but for our children, we'll be dealing with this for a while. But make no mistake about it, we will prevail.

And as we worry about our safety, though, it's very important for us to always remember that we've got to work to make America a better place, not only a safer place and a stronger place but a better place. And the perfect place to make America a better place is in our classrooms all across the country. And so today I'm here to talk about the importance of making sure that every single child in America gets a quality education, to remind our country that reading is the key to all learning, that we believe that every child can learn to read, not just a few, not just those who might be in the—kind of the super districts, but every single child. Children whose parents may not speak English as a first language can learn to read. People who may come from the toughest of all circumstances, they can read. Everybody can read.

It is the great passion of many in our country, starting right here at Read-Pattillo. And that's why I'm here at this school. I'm here to praise the determination of its principal and the teachers and the parents to make sure not one child who goes to this school is left behind, that every child can learn.

The passion and vision I just described is shared by your Governor. I know. I know him well. [*Laughter*] I know his heart. I know his strength of conviction. I know his vision, and it's clear. It's a clear vision to a better day. So I'm honored to be with Jeb.

I appreciate John Mica, the Congressman, for coming today. I just had a very interesting meeting with some of your community leaders and people involved with reading and how to make it work. One such person was Bill Hall, who is the superintendent of the Volusia County schools, and I want to thank Bill. [*Applause*] I know enough about schools

to know that when they clap for the superintendent, that's a good sign, Bill. *[Laughter]*

I also know from my days as Governor and as a parent that a school is really only as good as the principal. If you have a great principal, you'll have the beginnings of a great school. Obviously, it takes more than a single soul to make sure that excellence is available for every child. But a great school starts with a principal who is dedicated, clear of vision, who sets high expectations, and of course, that principal is Marilyn Travis, right here at this school.

Judy Andersen is the head of the Volusia County school board. She was here—they had a—they call it a roundtable. It was actually square—*[laughter]*—a square roundtable discussion. But I thank Judy for coming.

I told her, I thought being on the school board was one of the—if not the, one of the toughest jobs in America. I know the rest of the school board members are here as well. I want to thank you for understanding that your job is to set high standards, make sure you're wise with the taxpayers' money, and then hire the best and unleash them to achieve excellence for every child. So thank you very much, Judy and the school board, for coming.

I do want to thank the square-table participants—*[laughter]*—Joe Torgesen, who is a professor of education at Florida State. I wish he could talk to you about the fact that reading is not an art but a science, that we're learning what works, and it's the application of what works that's incredibly important to make sure that every single child learns to read.

Then we had professors that were teaching teachers to teach, and we had teachers that were teaching teachers to teach, and we had kindergarten teachers that were teaching kids to read, and it was a very exciting meeting for me and Jeb. So I want to thank you all for coming.

I know we've got some elected officials here. I see the speaker of the house, Speaker Feeney, is here. I appreciate you being here, Speaker. I know other members of the legislature, both Republican and Democrat, are here. I appreciate Jim Vandergriff, the mayor of New Smyrna Beach. *[Applause]* That's a good sign, too, Mr. Mayor. Members

of your city council are here, and thank you all for coming.

The challenges, obviously, vary from district to district, and each school district has got a different problem—different problems in Texas than you have in Florida. When you get in our State or a State like Florida, the problems vary from district to district. But there are some effective schools that adhere to the same principles, and I want to share some of those with you right quick.

First, there is a culture of excellence. A successful school has a culture of excellence. The way I like to phrase it is, a successful school is full of people who are willing to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations, that people understand that if you set low standards, we're going to get lousy results, that if you believe that there are certain children who can't learn, then certain children won't learn.

And so an excellent school like this one where we are has got the highest of high standards, that people throughout the whole school believe that excellence is possible, because they believe every child can learn.

A good school has got a good principal, as I just mentioned. The principal is the person that sets the tone, sets the pace, clarifies the vision. A good school is a school that's got teachers who are not only committed to the noble profession of teaching—and it is a noble profession—but also committed with the knowledge that every child can learn; teachers who work hard and recognize that if there is needed instruction, they're more than willing to learn the latest, that they're not satisfied with the status quo, that they're constantly working hard to make sure that the vision of every child learning is achieved.

Obviously, a good school is a school where parents understand that good education begins at home, where parents have got a deep appreciation of the opportunity and are supportive of the schools. If they find failure, of course, they're willing to blow the whistle on failure, but they're also to work to achieve excellence. They're positive influences, not only at the home but also at the school.

I wasn't kidding when I said our kids ought to be reading more than they watch TV. To

me, that's a parental responsibility, to encourage their children to practice, to encourage their children to read. There's nothing wrong with watching a TV show occasionally. But practicing reading is incredibly important to become a skilled student. So listen to your mothers. [*Laughter*] Governor Bush has listened to his. [*Laughter*]

A good school has a curriculum that emphasizes the basics and is based upon sound science. In other words, a good school is a school that has adopted a curriculum which works. There's a lot of talk about curriculum, the reading curriculum. We've had a great debate about which curriculum to use when it comes to reading programs, and you know it as well as I do: There's a big, deep, ideological divide.

One of the things I tried to do as the Governor of Texas—I know your Governor has called upon those who have actually studied it, who know that the fact that reading is a science, that have been able to work with districts to develop a curriculum that is proven. It doesn't sound good or feel good; it works. And that's the crucial thing to make sure that every child learns to read.

A good school is willing to determine whether or not each child is, in fact, learning to read by measuring. A good school is one that says, "I want to know whether or not standards are being met."

See, if you believe every child can learn to read, then it's logical to ask the question, "You know, are the children succeeding?" It's logical, and you want to know that. You want to know that to determine whether or not your dreams are being met. You want to know that to determine whether or not the curriculum is working. You want to know that to determine which children need additional help.

One of the key components to successful schools is the willingness of people to use an accountability system to reinforce the positive and to address failure before it becomes acute, and that's essential. By all of these standards, this school we're standing in is a highly effective, successful school. It is a school which innovates. It uses computer programs to stimulate the students' imagination. It teaches phonics and grammar, the

basics. It starts with the basics. It gives students incentives.

There's an incentive program in this school. The more you read, the more points you earn. The more difficult the reading assignment, the more points you earn there as well. It recognizes and rewards personal achievement, based upon actual books read. It helps develop writing schools. It's caught my imagination. I told the Governor, I wish they had done this in Sam Houston Elementary School in Midland, Texas. They've got an innovative program called baseball writing. It encourages kids to learn how to write by using baseball as the go-by. And there's a base-by-base approach to writing essays and papers, all aimed at making sure by the fifth grade the student is becoming a more sophisticated writing—writer.

It's an incredibly important part. Writing and reading go hand in hand. Writing is sometimes a lost art, and this school focuses on writing by using an innovative way to encourage young writers to get to be better writers.

They use tests here to determine what students are in danger of falling behind. No child should be left behind. And they use a test to make sure.

And the important thing is—and other school districts can use this model, and other schools around the country should use this model—they use the accountability system as a way to determine who needs extra help after school. And that's incredibly important. It's intensive focus so that every child continues to move forward.

They encourage students to take their books home. They give parents tips on how to be teachers themselves. The instruction follows the child into the home. Some parents need a little help on how to be a better parent when it comes to what's taking place in the school. And so the results are clear.

The Read-Pattillo Elementary School is proving that scientifically based reading instruction works and gets results.

You know, there's kind of an attitude in some places that certain kids just can't get there, the so-called economically disadvantaged just can't achieve. This school flies right in the face of that stereotype. The kids

here are what they call economically disadvantaged, more than half are. And yet when you look at the third grade and the fourth grade and the fifth graders, they all score above district and State averages.

This school increased its rating from a C in 1998 on the Florida testing to an A. And that's important for parents to know. And that's an important fact for teachers to know and your principal to know. It's a fact—important fact for the school board members to know. It's an important fact for the community to know. It must make you feel proud to know you've got a school which has defied the so-called odds, and now you're A. It's important to know you've got an A in your midst.

It's also important to know whether your school is not an A. It gives you a chance to ask the question, "Wait a minute. There's one school in Volusia County I know is an A. How come ours isn't an A?" It's important to be in a position where you're able to say, "It matters how we rank, because no child should be left behind."

There's obviously—I'm a big advocate of local control of schools. I love the idea of a principal feeling confident in the structure to be able to try different things. I really like the idea of a superintendent—of giving them power to create change and innovation at the school level. I think that's really important. I think your—this charter district, for example, is a really interesting innovation that was started at the State level. Freedom was granted. So I'm a big believer in local control of schools.

But I want you to know that there is a role for the Federal Government. The Federal Government has a responsibility as well as the State Government to move forward with educational excellence. The No Child Left Behind Act was a combination—it's interesting—change of attitude in Washington, and that is, we substantially increased money available for States, particularly Title I children as well as this new reading program, which I'm going to describe.

The Federal Government is providing \$50 billion now. It's an increase of more than 18 percent between '01 and today. The Florida schools, for example, received \$2 billion from the Federal Government. We've increased—

we've asked for \$175 million increase for next year for the Florida schools alone.

But the reason—the change is, and it's one thing to focus on education funding, and that's important—but the change is, for the first time, we've asked, in return for money, why don't you show us whether or not you're succeeding. For the first time we said, "Here's an increase in funding now, and it's up to you to spend it, and we'll try to give you more flexibility. We want the Governors to have more flexibility. We want the school districts to have more flexibility. But in return we expect you to set high standards and produce measurable, positive results. In return for the increase of funding, we expect more return on the money." After all, it's your money to begin with.

And so part of that—part of that insistence is a—kind of the kernel of the reform is an accountability system. We expect each State to design accountability system to measure. And you've done that in Florida. And you've done a really good job of that. And frankly—I'm used to the testing debate. I've heard, "You test too much." They say, "You're teaching the test." If you teach a child to read, you're teaching a child a skill, not teaching the test. And the child will then be able to pass the test.

You should allow no excuse, and nobody should allow an excuse, in my judgment, across America, to undermine accountability. It does the children a disservice to undermine the accountability system. Otherwise, you just shuffle kids through, and that's unacceptable in America.

There must be an accountability system that has consequences. Otherwise, we're going to have the old system where we just say, "Well, maybe they'll learn to read." And then we find out when they get out of high school they can't read, and we realize we have failed in our obligations.

No, accountability is a crucial part of educational excellence and educational reform. And it's very important that all States take seriously what we insist upon, and that is, in return for money, we expect you to do what's right by each single child that lives in your State. We're committed to investing in scientific approaches on reading, because

we understand—all of us should understand that if a child can't read, it doesn't matter.

My friend Phyllis Hunter from Houston, Texas, she said when I was there, she said, "Governor, you've got to understand. Your reading initiative is basically saying that you understand reading is the new civil right. If you want every child to realize the American Dream and experience the greatness of this country, then we've got to teach every child to read, and it starts with reading."

And that's why one of the cornerstones of the—of this bill we passed, in Washington, DC—by the way, a bill supported by both Republicans and Democrats. I told them earlier, I said, "We're finally beginning to get some things right in Washington, where teaching every child to read is a heck of a lot more important than promoting any political parties."

And so we've got this focus on reading, because we understand that when each child learns to read, this is going to be a much more hopeful society. One of the things we've done is, we've granted—started granting money to States. Florida was one of the first States to qualify for the Reading First grant, \$46 million, because you've got a Governor who understands and a legislature who understands, you've got principals and teachers who understand.

The money is being used to train teachers. Teacher training is absolutely essential to making sure that a reading—national reading initiative works. Teachers need the skills necessary to implement what their heart tells them to do. Their heart says, "We want to teach every child to read." They need, if need be—now, many teachers don't need to be retrained, but the idea of teaching teachers on a curriculum which works is an incredibly important part of having a successful program.

There's nothing more frustrating, it seems like to me, to have a teacher anxious—so anxious to go into a classroom and impart knowledge, but yet not have the latest—the latest science on reading, the latest skills necessary. And so, one of the key components of a Reading First Initiative in any State is going to be to take the money and apply it to teacher training. And it's going to work; you mark my words.

With this national focus, with accountability standards in place, with the understanding of how to teach children how to read—a much better understanding today than we've really ever had before—and the desire at all levels of government to make sure the most important person involved in teaching a child—the teacher—has the skills necessary, we're going to achieve an objective that a lot of people didn't think we could achieve. Our kids are going to learn to read.

We're going to be the best readers in the world. And when our kids learn to read, you watch what happens. There are going to be great scientists coming out of our schools, great mathematicians. All things, all excellence in education starts with making sure every single child, no matter where he or she lives, can read. And that's what's going to happen in the United States of America.

I mentioned that one of the things we'll stay focused on, and should, is making sure America is a better place. And there's ways Government can help. But one of the ways to make sure America is a—constantly a better place, is to encourage, empower the true strength of the country, which are our citizens. The strengths of America are the citizens of America, the hearts and souls of our fellow countrymen.

The reason I bring that up is, we've got an extraordinary person that met me at the airport today, Fannie Cleland. She tried to convince me she was 91 years old. [*Laughter*] I didn't believe it.

See, Fannie understands what I know, that we can change America one heart, one person at a time, and that, while one person can't do everything to help people in need or to put a light where there's darkness, one person can do something. One person can help be—to change one child's life. In her case, she's changed many children's lives, because she is a tutor, a mentor. She knows that one way to fight some of the evil done to America is to do some good, to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself, to have the willingness to put your arm around a child and say, "Hey, I want to help you. I want to help you learn to read."

My call to America and Americans is, use the example of this fine lady, that if you care

deeply about the future of your country, support your schools, support your teachers. But also, when you find somebody who hurts, somebody who is in need, somebody who needs food or shelter or just somebody who needs love, be that person who is willing to give that love.

There's nothing this country can't achieve. We're going to achieve peace and have a peaceful world. We can also make sure the great hope of America shines brightly in every corner of this country.

Listen, thanks for giving me a chance to come by. May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:27 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Florida Speaker of the House Tom Feeney; and Phyllis Hunter, consultant, Texas Reading Initiative.

Satellite Remarks to the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

October 17, 2002

Thank you all. I appreciate those kind remarks, Rosario. You're a *gran amiga*. *Buenos dias*. I wish I could be with you in person today as the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce salutes Hispanic businesswomen.

The USHCC is one of this country's great business organizations. America's more than 1.2 million Hispanic-owned businesses are transforming our economy and transforming our country. I'm particularly glad that the USHCC is paying tribute to Hispanic businesswomen. After all, the Hispanic businesswomen are emerging leaders of the American economy. Their success is creating jobs, building communities, and making our Nation more open and more inclusive. I am grateful and America is grateful for the accomplishments of these Hispanic businesswomen.

I appreciate so very much the chair of the board of directors of the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. I appreciate so very much the president and CEO. I'm honored that you all would invite me. I want you to know that I'm a strong believer in small business because I know that small businesses are the pathway to advancement and success

for many Americans, especially women and new arrivals to our country and to minorities. I believe in small business because I know that two-thirds of all new jobs created in America every year come from small businesses. More than one million small businesses are owned by Hispanic Americans. And women-owned small businesses are growing twice as fast as all other United States firms. And this is good news for America.

Small businesses are a great equalizer. The only connections you really need to succeed are happy customers. The only credentials you really need are good products. The only values you need are a willingness to work hard and take risks.

Running a business also brings many personal rewards. You enjoy the freedom and pride that comes from being your own boss. You achieve success based upon your own abilities. You're helping others achieve success by providing them with jobs.

Workers and entrepreneurs create the wealth of America, not government. Yet, government does have a responsibility to create an environment where small businesses can grow and prosper. Small businesses grow when taxes are low, when taxes are low for workers and when taxes are low for entrepreneurs. Low taxes mean more money in the pockets of the people who are building America.

Small businesses grow when the Government considers the impact of its regulations, the impact those regulations will have particularly on small employers. We must avoid burdening our entrepreneurs with unnecessary rules and procedures. Small businesses grow when the Government's contracting policies encourage competition and don't unfairly favor large businesses at the expense of smaller firms.

And small businesses grow when entrepreneurs can build their businesses without the fear of falling prey to frivolous lawsuits, all designed to make trial lawyers even wealthier.

Our Nation has a responsibility to create an environment where the talents of men and women of every origin and background are recognized and rewarded.