

Week Ending Friday, January 9, 2004

**Statement on Representative
Ralph M. Hall's Joining the
Republican Party**

January 2, 2004

I welcome Congressman Ralph Hall to the Republican Party. Ralph is a close friend of the Bush family. He is a well-respected leader of the highest integrity and a tireless advocate for the people of Texas. We have worked closely together on the important challenges facing our Nation. I strongly support his re-election.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

January 3, 2004

Good morning. Two years ago this month, I signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act, the most important reform of public education in a generation.

In that landmark law, we made our expectations clear: Every child in America will learn to read, write, add, and subtract at grade level. Schools are now required to test children regularly to make sure students are learning and that schools are teaching well.

And when schools do not show progress toward high standards, we're giving parents better options, including tutoring for their children or a transfer to a better public school. Above all, the No Child Left Behind Act required a change in attitude from the educators and public officials responsible for our schools.

We will no longer write off some children as hopeless. We will no longer accept or excuse schools that do not effectively teach the basics. We will insist on high standards and accountability because we believe that every school should teach and every child can learn.

For the past 24 months, schools and State Governments have been putting the new reforms into action. All 50 States, plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, have drawn up plans to hold every public school accountable for student achievement. We're measuring results. We're giving teachers the information they need to improve instruction and giving parents new options to help their children when schools do not measure up.

We have recently received test results that show America's children are making progress. In 2003, math scores for fourth graders nationwide were nine points higher than in 2000. Math scores for eighth graders improved by five points. And a higher percentage of fourth graders tested at or above their grade level in reading.

To mark the anniversary of the No Child Left Behind Act, I will travel this coming week to schools in St. Louis, Missouri, and Knoxville, Tennessee. Children at these schools once struggled, but in recent years, they have risen to meet our new standards. Their example shows that high expectations, a commitment to measuring achievement, and a belief in every child can change lives and turn schools around.

Some critics have objected to these reforms because they believe our expectations are too high or that it is unfair to hold all students to the same standards regardless of background or that we're punishing schools that are not making progress. But the time for excuses has passed. Our reforms insist on high standards because we know every child can learn. Our reforms call for testing because the worst discrimination is to ignore a school's failure to teach every child. And our reforms identify underperforming schools because we need to direct our help to the schools that need it most.

In 2003, we provided \$234 million to assist the lowest performing schools that need the most improvement. In 2004, we plan to more than double that amount. We have increased