

So it is our duty, but it is our good fortune. You ought to go home tonight and thank God that you got a chance to serve the public at this moment in time. It is a rare time. And you ought to wake up tomorrow determined to do it with greater energy and enthusiasm and dedication than ever before.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:36 a.m. in the House of Representatives Chamber at the State Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Speaker

of the House Curtis Hertel, House Majority Leader Ken Sikkema, Senate Minority Leader John Cherry, and Senate Majority Leader Dick Posthumus, Michigan State Legislature; Gov. John Engler, Lt. Gov. Connie Binsfeld, and Attorney General Frank J. Kelley of Michigan; Mayor Dick Hollister of Lansing; Rev. Wendell Anthony, Fellowship Chapel, Detroit, MI, who gave the invocation; William Schmidt, professor, Michigan State University; and James J. Blanchard and William Milliken, former Governors of Michigan.

## Memorandum on Educational Excellence in Math and Science March 6, 1997

*Memorandum for the Secretary of Education,  
the Director of the National Science Foundation*

*Subject: Preparing Students to Meet National Standards of Excellence in Eighth Grade Math and Improving Math and Science Education*

Since the early 1980s, U.S. elementary and secondary school students have begun taking tougher courses, and we are starting to see the results. National Assessment of Educational Progress scores have improved in math and science, with gains in mathematics equal to at least one grade level. On the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), average math scores are at their highest in 25 years, even as the number and diversity of test-takers have increased. However, the eighth-grade results of the 41-Nation Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS), released last fall, show that the United States is below average in math and just above average in science. That isn't acceptable; in this technology-rich information era, our students need to perform much better in both subjects, but especially in math, if they are to excel at higher-level math and science courses that are critical to college admission and success and to citizenship, productive employment, and lifelong learning.

The first step in raising achievement is lifting expectations and setting high standards for what students should know and be able to do. Our National Assessment of Educational Progress, TIMSS, and the standards developed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics give us a solid framework to build on. Last month,

to help parents and teachers learn who needs help, what changes in teaching to make, and which schools need to improve, I asked the Secretary of Education to develop a voluntary national test for individual eighth-grade students based on widely accepted, challenging national standards in mathematics. The national test will be available to States and local school districts to give to their students in the spring of 1999, and will measure whether students have reached a high level of mathematics proficiency.

The primary responsibility for achieving high standards rests with students, teachers, parents, and schools in local communities across America. However, it is imperative that we work to ensure that Federal resources support student success as well. We must ensure that Federal programs, research, and human resources are used as effectively as possible to help improve teaching and learning.

Therefore, I direct the Secretary of Education and the Director of the National Science Foundation to form an interagency working group and to develop an action strategy for using Federal resources to assist States and local school systems to prepare students to meet challenging math standards in eighth grade, and for involving the mathematics, scientific, and technical communities in support of these efforts.

The action strategy should include recommendations for the use of Federal resources to help States, local school districts, and schools to improve teaching, upgrade curriculum, and

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integrate technology and high-quality instructional materials into the classroom, as well as motivate students and help them understand how math concepts are applied in the real world. The strategy should identify significant Federal programs, activities, and partnerships available to improve teaching and learning, ensure that these resources are appropriately focused on helping students reach challenging math standards, and determine how these resources can best support State and local reforms. In developing this strategy, the interagency group should review the current status of improvements in math education and identify and

address critical areas of need, drawing on research and input from educators and professional organizations.

Because teaching and learning in math and science are so integrally related, and because success in both subjects is vitally important in this information era, the working group should also review how Federal resources and partnerships with other organizations can help improve student achievement in science.

The working group should make its recommendations and submit its action strategy to me within 90 days.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

## Statement on the Death of President Cheddi Jagan of Guyana *March 6, 1997*

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death early today of President Cheddi Jagan of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana. President Jagan was a respected statesman in our hemisphere of democracies. He was one of the founders of the People's Progressive Party and for over 45 years played an active role in his country's political life. I remember warmly our

meeting at the Miami Summit of the Americas in December 1994. President Jagan was a champion of the poor who devoted himself to alleviating poverty in his country and throughout the Caribbean.

On behalf of the American people, I extend my deepest sympathies to the Jagan family and the people of Guyana.

## Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on International Agreements *March 6, 1997*

*Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. Chairman:)*

Pursuant to subsection (b) of the Case-Zablocki Act (1 U.S.C. 112b(b)), I hereby transmit a report prepared by the Department of State concerning international agreements.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Jesse Helms, chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.