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leaders to move forward promptly with a peaceful process that enjoys broad public support. The United States stands ready to support Indonesia as it engages in democratic reform.

Statement on the Conclusion of the World Trade Organization Meeting
May 20, 1998

I am pleased and proud that the members of the World Trade Organization ("WTO") have accepted my invitation to hold the 1999 WTO Ministerial meeting in the United States. This meeting will enable us to advance the ambitious agenda I laid out earlier this week to shape the world trading system to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Next year's meeting will bring home for Americans the important stake that we all have in the global economy. And I welcome the decision by the WTO to ask United States Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky to chair that meeting.

In Geneva, we made important advances on our proposal to free the potential of electronic commerce. I am particularly pleased that the WTO members joined the United States in a standstill on any tariffs on electronic transmissions sent across national borders. We cannot allow discriminatory barriers to stunt the development of the most promising new economic opportunity in decades. This worldwide proposal builds on far-reaching agreements we reached within the last week with the European Union and Japan.

As we build a trading system for the 21st century that honors our values and expands opportunity, we must do more to ensure that spirited economic competition among nations never becomes a race to the bottom, in environmental protections, consumer protections, or labor standards. Without such a strategy, we cannot build the necessary public support for continued expansion of trade. I will work to ensure that the WTO and other international institutions are more responsive to labor, the environment, consumers, and other interests so that we can build the public confidence we need in our trade expansion initiatives.

I want to thank Ambassador Barshefsky; Secretary Glickman; Ambassador Rita Hayes, our Ambassador to the WTO; and all the representatives of the U.S. business community and other participants in the Ministerial who worked to make this meeting a success.

Message to the Senate Returning Without Approval Legislation on Public Education in the District of Columbia
May 20, 1998

To the Senate of the United States:

I am returning herewith without my approval S. 1502, the "District of Columbia Student Opportunity Scholarship Act of 1998."

If we are to prepare our children for the 21st Century by providing them with the best education in the world, we must strengthen our public schools, not abandon them. My agenda for accomplishing this includes raising academic standards; strengthening accountability; providing more public school choice, including public charter schools; and providing additional help to students who need it through tutors, mentors, and after-school programs. My education agenda also calls for reducing class size, modernizing our schools and linking them to the Internet, making our schools safe by removing guns and drugs, and instilling greater discipline.

This bill would create a program of federally funded vouchers that would divert critical Federal resources to private schools instead of investing in fundamental improvements in public schools. The voucher program established by S. 1502 would pay for a few selected students to attend private schools, with little or no public accountability for how those funds are used, and

would draw resources and attention away from the essential work of reforming the public schools that serve the overwhelming majority of the District's students. In short, S. 1502 would do nothing to improve public education in the District of Columbia. The bill won't hire one new teacher, purchase one more computer, or open one after-school program.

Although I appreciate the interest of the Congress in the educational needs of the children in our Nation's Capital, this bill is fundamentally misguided and a disservice to those children.

The way to improve education for all our children is to increase standards, accountability, and choice within the public schools. I urge the Congress to send me legislation I have proposed to reduce class size, modernize our schools, end social promotions, raise academic standards for all students, and hold school systems, schools, and staff accountable for results.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
May 20, 1998.

Radio Remarks on the Northern Ireland Peace Accord Referendum

May 20, 1998

Tomorrow the people of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland have an opportunity to join hope to history. I know that as you go to the polls and consider the merits of the April 10 accord, you will reflect on the past three decades, so marred by hatred and bloodshed, fighting and fear. I hope you will also reflect on the decades to come and the opportunity you now have in your hands to build a lasting peace for yourselves and your children. This Friday, you can turn the common tragedy of Northern Ireland's past into a shared triumph for the future.

As you face the future, you can count on America. We were blessed with the arrival of your ancestors and relatives who helped to build our Nation. We want to return the favor with trade and investment, with friendship and partnership. But to those of any party or persuasion who would revert to violence, you must know that you will find no friends in America.

To everyone voting tomorrow, let me say, you can do nothing to erase the past, but you can do everything to build the future. The world is with you, but the choice is yours. May you make the right choice for peace, for your children, for your future. And may God bless you all.

NOTE: The remarks were recorded at approximately 11:35 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House on May 20 for later broadcast, and they were released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 21. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on Senate Ratification of the Protocols of Accession to NATO for Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic

May 21, 1998

Thank you very much. I suppose I should begin with an apology for having to dash off and pick up the paper, but I would hate to lose this document after all the effort we put into getting to this point. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Vice President, thank you for your leadership on this issue. Senator Roth, Senator Biden, Secretary Albright, Secretary Cohen, General Ralston, Mr. Berger, to the Ambassadors of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and the other members of the diplomatic corps who are here, to Senators Levin and Lieberman and Lugar, Mikulski, and Smith, I thank all of you so much.

Ladies and gentlemen, before we begin, I would like to make a couple of brief comments.