

ground working with the government and the people of Florida to prepare for the storm. We are as ready as we can be, and we pray that the human and material costs will be limited. In the coming days, we will work as closely as possible with the State of Florida to provide whatever assistance will do the most good.

Continuing Resolution

A few moments ago I signed stop-gap legislation to keep the Government open and running at the start of the new fiscal year. The legislation is a regrettable sign that the Republican majority in Congress has failed to address the urgent priorities of the American people. There is only one week left in this fiscal year, yet the Congress has passed and sent me only one of the 13 appropriations bills to fund the operation of the United States Government. And the Congress is 5 months past the legal deadline for passing a budget resolution.

By failing to meet its most basic governing responsibility, the Republican majority in Congress has its priorities wrong: partisanship over progress, politics over people. Moreover, on key national goals—improving education, providing affordable child care, expanding health coverage, protecting our environment, stabilizing the international economy—the House of Representatives, in fact, is moving in the wrong direction. For example, at a time when opportunity depends on education more than ever before, neither Chamber has even brought the education funding bill to a vote. And the House is preparing to deny funding for smaller classes, to cut after-school programs, to cut technology in the classroom, to eliminate summer jobs. At the same time, some lawmakers have attached con-

troversial and unrelated provisions guaranteed to mire these bills in unnecessary delay.

For 6 years, our economic strategy of fiscal responsibility, investing in people, expanding America's exports has spurred lower interest rates and created conditions for the strongest economy in a generation. If we hold fast to fiscal discipline, we will enter a new and promising era of budget surpluses. We must keep our economy growing and use this time to meet the challenges facing our people.

I have laid out a concrete plan of how we can continue on that course to make smart investments, to maintain fiscal discipline, and to set aside the surplus until we have saved Social Security first. I have reached out to Members of Congress in both parties to work toward these ends. It isn't too late. But Congress cannot simply keep passing patchwork spending plans, putting off choices about national priorities until next year, or at least until after the election.

It is time now for Congress to buckle down, to send me the measures to keep the Government open and to invest in education, in health care, in other needs of the American people. It is time to put progress over partisanship. We should do the job the people sent us here to do and strengthen America for the new century.

Thank you very much.

Q. How do you think the Democrats are going to do in the election?

The President. I have nothing to add to what I said.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:06 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House, prior to his departure for Chicago, IL. H.J. Res. 128, approved September 25, was assigned Public Law No. 105-240.

Remarks at Jenner Elementary School in Chicago, Illinois *September 25, 1998*

Thank you very much. There aren't all that many sixth graders that could do that and be less nervous than she was. She did a great job, didn't she? Thank you, Gina, thank you.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am so glad to be here today. I thank the mayor for his extraordinary work. And I want to thank Secretary

Daley, too, for being a truly remarkable Secretary of Commerce. My old friend John Stroger, thank you for being here. I'd like to thank the board members of the Chicago School Reform Board, Gery Chico and the other members who are here. I thank Paul Vallas, your CEO. I thank your principal; thank you for your

good work here. It's been my experience that all good schools have a good principal.

I want to thank Gina again. I'm sure the first time she was asked to do this, this was just one step above going to the dentist, you know. [Laughter] And I thought she did a superb job.

I'd like to thank Joanne Alter and all the people who are involved in the WITS program here in Chicago. I believe in this so strongly. Last year we arranged to have students from 1,000 colleges and universities go into our elementary schools to help to tutor, to try to follow the sterling example you have set here.

To all the parents, the teachers, the educators, the tutors, the students, thank you. I'd also like to thank Mary Lou Kearns for being here, for her work in health care, and for presenting herself as a candidate for Lieutenant Governor. And I'd like to thank Glenn Poshard—who wanted to be here, but I wouldn't have him anywhere else—he's back in Washington voting a tough vote so close to an election, voting not to give an election year tax cut before we make sure we've got the budget balanced and we save Social Security for the 21st century. It is the right thing to do, and I thank him for that. And we're glad to have Glenn's wife, Jo Poshard, here with us. Thank you, Jo, for coming. We're glad to see you.

Ladies and gentlemen, I told the mayor on the way in that he ought to put me on the payroll because I've become such a shameless advocate for the Chicago public schools. But I want to tell you why. First of all, I am deeply gratified by the success of our country. Most of the credit belongs to the American people. But I think our policies have had something to do with the fact that we have the lowest unemployment rate in 28 years, almost 17 million new jobs; the lowest crime rate in 25 years; the smallest percentage of people on welfare in 29 years; the lowest African-American poverty rate since statistics have been collected; the lowest inflation in 32 years; the highest real wage growth in more than 20 years; the highest homeownership in history; and in just 6 days, the first balanced budget and surplus in 29 long years.

I have been particularly grateful to the people of Illinois and the city of Chicago, without whom it is doubtful that I could have become President. I brought some of them with me here today, Secretary Daley and Rahm

Emanuel. I was met at the airport by Kevin O'Keefe, who worked in the White House for several years. And I see my good friend Avis Lavelle out there, who was a part of our administration. And of course, the most important person from Chicago to this administration is the First Lady, who asked me to tell all of you hello. She's out on the West Coast today, and I'm going to meet her tonight so we can see our daughter tomorrow. But you've had a lot to do with it.

But I would like to especially thank Senator Carol Moseley-Braun and Congressman Glenn Poshard and the other members of the Democratic delegation in Illinois, without whom—without any one of whom we would not have passed the economic plan in 1993, which led to this big decline in the deficit, big decline in interest rates, big takeoff in the economy.

One of the things that very few people know about that economic plan was that it also doubled something called the earned-income tax credit, the EITC, which lowers taxes to working people on modest incomes with children. Today, for a family of four with an income of under \$30,000, that amounts to about \$1,000 a year going back to families. Last year alone, thanks to Glenn Poshard and Carol Moseley-Braun and these other folks—and remember, if one of them had fallen off, none of it would have passed—last year alone, 4 million working Americans, including 1.1 million African-Americans, were lifted out of poverty because of this tax cut. And that has made a major contribution to broadening economic growth. And the people of Illinois should be very grateful to them for making that historic vote in 1993 when it was hard to do. And I thank them.

Now, the mayor once said when he was talking that not so many years ago people were kind of defeatist about the American economy. There is still a great debate going on in Washington, DC, about public education. Everybody knows—everybody knows that we have the finest system of higher education in the world, and we have now opened the doors of college to everybody who is willing to work for it with the HOPE scholarship, the \$1,500 tax credit for the first 2 years of college; with tax credits for all higher education; the deductibility of student loans; huge increase in Pell grants; 300,000 more work-study positions. We've done that. But all of us know that we can't stop until we can look each other straight in the eye and say with

absolute conviction, every child in this country, without regard to their race, their income, their neighborhood, their family circumstances—every single child—has access to a world-class education. That is our national mission, and we cannot stop until we achieve it.

Now, back to what I was saying before, there really is an honest debate in Washington. Some people who haven't been to places like Jenner School have given up on the public schools. Chicago didn't give up. Chicago said, if we give the schools back to the parents, if we hold the students and teachers accountable, and if we help those who need help, we can make our schools work again.

As I was saying before, I go all over the country, and people's mouths drop open when I say, "They've ended social promotion in Chicago, but everybody gets to go to summer school; they have after-school programs." People's eyes pop out when I say Chicago's summer school is the sixth biggest school district in America; when I say over 40,000 kids are getting three square meals a day here. I say to you, if we can do this here, we can do it anywhere.

If these students—and look at them, their bright eyes and their whole life before them—but you know as well as I do—when I was in this little class beforehand—I want to thank the two young men who were in the tutoring class with me and the tutor who sat around the table and all the other young people that were in there—and by the way, one of the little lessons today was on Washington, DC, and one of the test questions was, "How many words can you make from the letters in 'Washington'?" One of the students got more words than I did. I liked that. [*Laughter*]

But one of the questions in the little forum they had today was, "If you were President, what would you do?" And one of the students said, "Well, if I were President, I'd do something to end the violence." Another said, "If I were President, I wouldn't sell guns to anybody but police officers." Another said, "If I were President, I would have more homes for the homeless and more clothes for them."

So I want these children to know—I know a lot of you have got it pretty tough. I know that life's not so easy for you when you're out of school. I know that you've seen a lot of things in your life already that children should never see. But I want you to know something else: If you make the most of your education, you

can still live out your dreams. You can do what you want to do with your lives. You can be happy. You can be fulfilled. You can succeed. And that's what we owe you, an education that gives you a chance to be fully free to live out your own dreams. And we are determined to do it.

Now, if the principal, the students, the parents, the volunteers, and the students here can double reading scores and triple math scores—and according to what I saw, last year alone, reading scores in percentile terms increased by 50 percent—if you can do that, if you can do it here, then no one else in America has an excuse. They can do it, too. But if you can do it here, then the decisionmakers in Springfield and in Washington, DC, don't have an excuse either. We owe it to you to give you the tools and the support you need so that every child can be a part of a successful school. We don't have an excuse either.

Jenner proves, Chicago proves that the public schools can work. Now the rest of us have to go to work and give you the tools you need to succeed. I have given Congress a plan that would make a big dent in that. And I have worked as hard as I could now for 6 years to make education a bipartisan issue. America cannot be strong unless we give all of our children a world-class education. This should not be a partisan issue. But the fact is that the majority of the Congress is in the hands of the other party. And earlier this year I gave them an education plan that for both partisan and ideological reasons they refused to act on, and we know it could dramatically improve our schools.

Let me tell you what it does. It says, first of all, everybody's got to take responsibility for high standards and learning. But secondly, if there are going to be high standards, we have to give students the opportunity to reach those standards. That's the formula that's worked here, and it's the formula that will work throughout the country.

So I said, let's develop voluntary national standards; let's give exams to our kids to see if they're meeting it; but let's don't designate children failures before they ever have a chance. Give these kind of summer school and after-school opportunities to all the children of the United States, and you'll see what they'll do with them.

I said we ought to have smaller classes in the early grades and gave a budget plan to the Congress that would lower class size to an average of 18 in the first three grades and hire another 100,000 teachers. I said we ought to do even more for the really poor areas of America, and I gave Congress a plan to educate 35,000 bright young people and then let them pay off all their student loans by going into our hardest pressed areas and teaching for a few years. These are good ideas. They'll make America stronger.

I embrace Senator Carol Moseley-Braun's idea that we ought to have more places doing what Chicago's doing and building new schools and repairing old ones. So I gave the Congress a bill that says, let's tear down and rebuild or repair or build 5,000 schools. And here's a plan to do it, paid for in the balanced budget act.

All of these things are in this education bill. I gave them a plan for safer schools through more partnerships with local law enforcement. I gave them a plan to hook up every classroom to the Internet by the year 2000 so that every child can have access to the world of learning now on the Internet, and every child can have access to the wonders of computer technology. So far, Congress has not responded.

I gave them a plan for most charter schools, for better rewards for our more committed teachers, to do more to train teachers, to make sure we have certified master teachers in all the schools of America. Without touching a dime of the surplus, we did all that. So far, Congress has not responded.

So I say to you here in Chicago, you are doing your part, and it's time Washington, DC, did its part to help you succeed. That is our commitment to you.

There are a few days left in the congressional session. It's not too late. It's not too late for Congress to put aside the lure of election year and save Social Security before we spend the surplus; not too late to give all the patients in this country the protection of a Patients' Bill of Rights; not too late to keep our economy growing by protecting us against the troubles in the global economy and doing what we can to turn it back; not too late to reaffirm our commitment to a clean environment; and most important, not too late—not too late—to pass this education agenda so that every child has a chance to be part of the miracle of his or her own learning. That will be the surest way to America's greatest years in the 21st century.

Good luck, young people. Make the most of it.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:05 p.m. in the gymnasium. In his remarks, he referred to sixth grade student Gina Borner, who introduced the President; John Stroger, president, Cook County Board of Commissioners; Gery J. Chico, president, Chicago School Reform Board of Trustees; Paul Vallas, chief executive officer, Chicago Public Schools; Sandra Satinover, school principal; Joanne Alter, chairman of the board, Working in the Schools (WITS); and gubernatorial candidate Representative Glenn Poshard and his wife, Jo.

Remarks at a Luncheon for Gubernatorial Candidate Glenn Poshard in Chicago

September 25, 1998

Thank you. I don't think Glenn can hear us, but I want to say that if I were a school principal today, I would happily give him an excused absence from this lunch—[laughter]—because I, too, wanted him to be in Washington. Finally, after almost 9 months now, 8 months, of virtual complete inaction, some votes are being cast in Congress. And I think this decision that is before the Congress today is terribly important.

We're quite close to an election. In a week we'll have the first balanced budget and surplus we've had in 29 years. And the majority party wants to make everybody happy close to an election by passing a tax cut. And believe me, I'd like to make everybody happy close to an election, too. Even though I'm not running, I've got a lot of friends on the ballot. But it's not the right thing to do.