

a big new spending program; I thought they would like that. We can do it with targeted tax cuts, tax cuts that are paid for in the balanced budget that do not spend any of the surplus. I can't think of a better tax cut for our country's future than one that gives our children a modern, safe, adequately equipped place to learn.

This balanced budget should also meet our other educational priorities. It should fully fund the after-school programs to bring discipline and learning into the lives of our young people and to give them a change to keep on learning and not be branded failures because they may be in a system that is failing them. It should bring cutting-edge technology to the classroom. We ought to hook up all the classes of this country to the Internet by the year 2000. It should expand Head Start. It should provide funding for the childhood literacy programs so that every child can learn to read well and independently by the third grade. It should support our new monitoring drive to encourage young people to go to college. And finally, I believe it should move forward with voluntary national standards and voluntary national tests in the basics, administered by a bipartisan group.

We should not retreat from our commitments to our children's future. Unfortunately, that commitment was not reflected when the education bill was finally—finally—brought to the House floor yesterday, 8 days into the new budget year. It met none of these challenges. I have instructed my budget team to return to Capitol Hill to make the strongest possible

case for the educational priorities that all of us standing here before you today share.

Now, what has happened in this Congress? What is the record to date of the majority? They have killed the bill to reform the way we treat tobacco and to protect our children from the dangers of tobacco. They killed campaign finance reform. They killed the minimum wage. Today, as Senator Daschle said, the Senate joined the House in putting an end to the Patients' Bill of Rights; that means no guarantees that people will go to the nearest emergency room when they're hurt, that they can see a specialist when they need to, that they won't lose their coverage in the middle of treatment, that their records will be kept private. They have tried to erode my commitment to saving Social Security first in the House of Representatives.

But still it is not too late for us to go forward together on our children's future. Politics should stop at the classroom door. It is not too late.

We are here not simply to state our strong conviction and our willingness—the willingness of these people who have to run—to defer their campaigns to take care of our children's future but to invite our Republican colleagues to join us and finally try to salvage some shred of positive accomplishment for the American people. I hope they'll do it. There is still time.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:41 p.m. at the South Portico at the White House, following a meeting with congressional leaders.

Statement on Senate Action on Legislation To Promote International Religious Freedom

October 9, 1998

I welcome today's strong bipartisan Senate passage, and the anticipated passage in the House of Representatives, of the "International Religious Freedom Act of 1998."

I have made the promotion of religious freedom a priority of my Presidency and an integral part of our foreign policy through, among other efforts, the creation of the Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad and my appoint-

ment last June of our special representative on international religious freedom.

The "International Religious Freedom Act of 1998" is a welcome and responsible addition to our ongoing efforts. Its principled, measured approach rightly emphasizes effective remedies over broad, symbolic gestures.

I also wish to applaud the bipartisan, cooperative approach that helped achieve this legislation, in particular the leadership of Senators

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Nickles, Lieberman, Hagel, Biden, Feinstein, and Specter and Representative Clement. I'd also like to pay tribute at this time to Representative Frank Wolf, whose longstanding and devoted advocacy for this issue has been an inspiration to those of us so determined to promote religious freedom abroad.

This legislation is not directed against any one country or religious faith. Indeed, this act will serve to promote the religious freedom of people of all backgrounds, whether Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Taoist, or any other faith. I look forward to signing this act.

The President's Radio Address

October 10, 1998

Good morning. In the next few days, as it completes its work on the budget, Congress has the opportunity and the obligation to make enormous progress to renew and strengthen our schools. There is no more critical task before it.

Ten days ago we closed the books on our fiscal year, yet Congress still has not opened the books for the new fiscal year at hand. Last night, for the second time in 2 weeks, I signed stopgap legislation to keep our Government running. But I can't keep granting extensions indefinitely.

This week, unfortunately, we saw partisanship defeat progress, as 51 Republican Senators joined together to kill the HMO Patients' Bill of Rights. Rest assured, I will ask the next Congress to guarantee your right to see a specialist, to receive the nearest emergency care, to keep your doctor throughout your course of treatment, to keep your medical records private, and have other basic health care rights. I hope next year we'll have a Congress that agrees.

But I do not want to see this Congress walk away from America's schoolchildren as it has walked away from America's patients. We should be able to make real, bipartisan progress on education. After all, we've got the first balanced budget and surplus in 29 years; our economy continues to create jobs and broaden prosperity, despite the economic turmoil abroad. We must use this moment of good fortune to make an historic investment in the quality of our public schools, and we've still got a few days to do it.

Our Nation needs 100,000 new, highly qualified teachers to reduce class size in the early grades. All the studies confirm what every parent already knows: smaller classes and better

trained teachers make a big difference—better academic performance, fewer discipline problems, more individualized attention. Of course, basic math tells us that smaller classes plus more teachers demand more classrooms, especially since we already have a record number of children in our schools. All across America, children are being forced to learn in school buildings that are overcrowded or even crumbling, or in temporary housing trailers.

So again today, I call on Congress to help communities build or modernize 5,000 schools with targeted tax credits. I can't think of a better tax cut for our country's future than one that gives our children a modern, safe, adequately equipped place to learn. And these tax credits are fully paid for in the balanced budget.

The budget should also bring cutting-edge technology to the classroom, continuing our efforts to connect all classrooms and libraries to the Internet by 2000, and make sure that the teachers are trained to use such technology. It should fund innovative charter schools so that parents and teachers can bring the benefits of choice and competition to our public schools. It should fully fund after-school programs, so young people learn their lessons in the classroom, not the streets. It should expand Head Start for the early years and insist on high standards in the basics, providing for voluntary national testing with a nonpartisan system to measure progress. It should fund our child literacy programs so that every child will be able to read well and independently by the end of the third grade. It should help bring out-of-school youth back into a learning environment. And it should support our new mentoring initiative to reach out to young people and encourage