Statement on Selection of the Director of the Vaccine Research Center at
the National Institutes of Health
March 11, 1999

I am very pleased to join Secretary of Health
and Human Services Donna Shalala, National
Institutes of Health Director Harold Varmus,
and my AIDS policy office director, Sandra
Thurman, in welcoming Dr. Gary Nabel as the
first Director of the new Vaccine Research Cen-
ter at the NIH. Dr. Nabel’s long and distin-
guished career as a research scientist will be
an incredible asset in our efforts to find prevent-
avative vaccines.

The first order of business for Dr. Nabel will
be the effort to develop a vaccine for HIV.
This is a top priority of our AIDS research ef-
forts. Here in the United States, over 40,000
people are newly infected with HIV every year.
Across the world, the rate is nearly 6 million
people per year. These are lives in jeopardy.
Though we have made remarkable progress in
treating HIV and AIDS, there is still no cure.
So our best hope of bringing an end to the
AIDS pandemic is to find a safe and effective
vaccine.

I have issued a challenge to the scientific
community to find an AIDS vaccine within the
decade. We are making important strides to-
wards that critical goal and the leadership of
Dr. Nabel will help us progress even more. Dr.
Varmus and his team of expert researchers at
the NIH, working in collaboration with scientists
from across the globe, have produced remark-
able results in reducing AIDS mortality here
and in many other developed nations. Their im-
proved understanding of how HIV works will
be invaluable in the effort to find a vaccine
to prevent infection in the first place.

The human tragedy of AIDS throughout the
world must move all of us to action. The search
for a vaccine for HIV must continue to be a
global priority because millions of precious lives
hang in the balance.

Statement on Senate Action on the Kennedy-Murray Amendment to
Proposed Education Flexibility Partnership Legislation
March 11, 1999

I have long supported the ed-flex concept,
and I was pleased when the congressional lead-
ership decided to take up this bill as one of
its first matters of business. Today, however,
the Senate used this bill to undermine one of
our most important educational achievements—
an initiative to hire 100,000 well-prepared teach-
ers to reduce class size in the early grades to
a national average of 18. The Senate not only
voted down an amendment to ensure long-term
funding for this initiative but passed an amend-
ment that would allow local school districts to
completely opt out of class size reduction. I
will work hard for the elimination of this amend-
ment in conference. We should be working to-
gether to make continued progress on obvious
national needs such as reducing class size—not
attempting to tear down the bipartisan work we
did last year to address this problem.