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Statement on Senate Action on Legislation To Establish a National Drunk Driving Standard

June 15, 2000

Today the Senate took an important step forward to keep drunk drivers off our Nation's streets. I congratulate the Senate for including a lifesaving measure championed by Senators Lautenberg and Shelby to set a national standard for impaired driving at .08 blood alcohol content (BAC) in the Transportation appropriations bill that passed today. This reasonable standard will save hundreds of lives and prevent countless injuries each year—and it should be put in place across the country without further delay. I strongly urge the Congress to pass a final Transportation spending bill that includes this important initiative. Working together, we can help put the brakes on drunk drivers and make our streets safer for Americans across the Nation.

Remarks to United States Dream Academy Participants

June 15, 2000

The President. Thank you. Well, good afternoon.

Audience members. Good afternoon.

The President. First, I want to say, Principal Jones, thank you for having us here. My great friend Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton—there is not a better Member of Congress than Eleanor Holmes Norton; you should be very proud of her. I thank all the representatives of the DC government that are here.

Can you hear me? Is this on?

Audience members. Yes.

The President. No, it's not on, but you can hear me anyway? [*Laughter*] Whoever controls this, turn it up! [*Laughter*] Turn the sound up. That's a little better.

Let me say a special word of appreciation to my long-time friend Wintley Phipps. You heard the story of how I met him. I'm glad his family is here today. And I guess you're all his family, in a way. But when I met him in Alabama a long time ago, he may not have known who I was, but once I heard him sing and I saw the expression on his face, I knew I'd never forget him again for the rest of my life.

I want to thank the U.S. Dream Academy and all of you who are its partners; a special word of appreciation to the staff, the students, the teachers at the Ferebee Hope Community Services Center and Elementary School. I thank you all for helping these children through this wonderful program to realize their dreams and their God-given potential.

Eleanor Roosevelt once said this: "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." We are here today because Wintley Phipps believed in the beauty of his dream, believed that all children, given the right support, could realize their dream. That's why he founded the Dream Academy, to give children who have fallen behind a chance to catch up and soar ahead and to pay special attention to children whose parents were incarcerated.

You know, I used to tell people all the time, when they said to me when I was a Governor, "Why are you for all these education programs in the prisons and all these training programs and all these treatment programs?" And I said, "Well, first of all, 90 percent of those folks are going to get out some day, and we want them to be good citizens. And secondly, if they'd had these things in the first place, a lot of them wouldn't be in there."

And so I want to thank the people associated with this Academy for helping give nearly three-quarters of the students at Ferebee a chance to live their dreams. I want to thank the parents who are involved. I want to thank everybody who give these children the learning environment, the personal attention, the academic tools they need. I want to thank you for teaching

not only academic subjects but character building and the importance of maintaining good health.

I worry about how many kids in our schools in disadvantaged neighborhoods never get a chance just to learn about the basics of good health. I've seen all these physical education programs and music programs and art programs cut out of our schools over the last decade because of financial problems they've seen, and I thank you for giving these kids a whole education and a chance to be whole people.

And of course, I want to say a special word of thanks for having an Internet-based curriculum. These children need to be part of the information society. I have seen the power of the Internet in the poorest villages of Africa and India and Latin America. I have talked to children all over the world on the Internet, and no child in America should be without its blessing.

You know, the entire Encyclopedia Britannica is now on the Internet. In schools in the poorest parts of this country, schools where they have no building as nice as this one, if they have an Internet connection and a printer, they can have textbooks as good as anyone else, thanks to the miracles of modern technology. These children deserve it, and all of the children of America deserve it. And so I thank you.

Now, what I would like to say, especially for the benefit of the members of the press who are here covering this, is that this is not just a feel-good program. It works. In the last year, math and reading scores are up sharply. Suspensions are down. Class attendance is up, which shows that more and more of these young people understand the importance of going to school, staying in school, and doing well in school. This works.

I thank Wintley for pointing out that this program receives funding from the Department of Labor. And I'm happy to report that another $200,000 will be granted over the next 2 years because of what you're doing. I know you've gotten money from energy companies, from the NFL, from other places, and I want to thank all the people who have given you private money, as well.

I think we ought to be thinking about how we can make sure these kinds of opportunities are available to all of our children. I think that means that, as Wintley goes national, the National Government ought to go with him and help him all across the country. But it also means that we have to continue our efforts for smaller classes, for better school buildings, to make sure all our classrooms are hooked up to the Internet, to make sure every child who needs it has access to an after-school or a summer school program, to make sure that all kids have access to preschool programs, to make sure every low-performing school has the resources it needs to turn around. Because I believe that intelligence is evenly distributed throughout the human race, opportunity is not, and we need to give them a chance to do it.

I believe every child from a disadvantaged neighborhood should have access to a mentor who can say to that child, "Look, if you take these courses and do this well, you can go to college. Here's the proof of it. Here's the money. Here's the scholarships. Here's the loan. Here's the aid." We need to make sure that all kids can do it, and then when they're of age, we need to make sure the doors of college are open to all of our people. Money should never keep anybody from going to school.

One of the things that I'm proudest of is that since I've been President, we've had the biggest expansion of college aid since the GI bill 50 years ago. And if we get the provision passed that I've asked this Congress to adopt, we'll allow every family to deduct up to $10,000 of college tuition from their income tax every year, and that will be good.

One other thing I'd like to say: I'm sure you never have it here, but I've noticed in my own home that the children sometimes know more than the adults, even the teachers, about the technology. I'm sure you've never seen that here. [*Laughter*] But we just have provided over $120 million to make sure that nearly 600,000 teachers are properly trained to make the most of this Internet technology, because I think that's important.

What I came here today to say is this: Number one, I am grateful to God that somehow 10 years ago I ran into Wintley Phipps, who didn't know who I was, but I determined I'd never forget who he was. Number two, I am grateful to him and to all of you who have done the U.S. Dream Academy. Number three, I want to support you, but I believe what you do for these children, somebody should do for every child in the United States.

And finally, again, I want to say to the American people through our friends in the press,

this is not just a feel-good program; this works. Every person who ever amounted to anything in life did so with a dream. We need to make all of our kids believe they can dream and that their dreams are just as worthy as anybody else's dreams and that, if they're willing to work at it, their dreams are just as possible as anyone else's dreams.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:15 p.m. in Mitchell Hall Auditorium at Ferebee Hope Elementary School. In his remarks, he referred to Lester Jones, principal, Ferebee Hope Elementary School; and gospel singer Wintley Phipps, founder and director, United States Dream Academy, a pilot program designed to help children of imprisoned parents acquire basic learning skills, incorporating mentoring and on-line academic support. The President also referred to NFL, the National Football League.

Remarks at a Reception for Mayor Anthony A. Williams of the District of Columbia

June 15, 2000

Thank you. You know, when the Mayor said he was going to run for Mayor, he was absolutely terrified about making a political speech. I think he's about got the hang of it, don't you? [*Laughter*] I thought it was great.

I want to thank him and Diane for their willingness to serve. I want to thank Greg and Kathy and the others who put on this event tonight, and Ron and Beth for opening their home once again for an eminently worthy cause. I want to thank Senator Dole or President Dole or Bob—[*laughter*]—for being here and for speaking, and Jack Kemp, who came and left. And Judge Webster, thank you for being here.

I'd like to thank all the Republicans and Democrats and the independents who are here in support of our Nation's Capital tonight. I will be very brief but, I hope, to the point, because I'll be moving out of Washington in a few months. But when I moved here, I had very rich memories because I had gone to school in Washington, and I lived in Washington for 4 years in the mid-sixties. So I was here when the city burned. I was here when the city's main thoroughfares were often full of empty stores. I've seen it at its best, at its worst, and at its in-between.

When I came back here and Hillary and Chelsea and I moved into Blair House in the 3 weeks before I took office, one of the first things I did was to walk down Georgia Avenue and meet with the merchants and talk to them. And I always wanted to have a chance to be a good citizen of Washington, DC.

I worked with Senator Moynihan and others who were rebuilding Pennsylvania Avenue and was proud to be there at the dedication of the Reagan Building, which I think has been a wonderful addition to this great city. I went with Steve Case not very long ago to a high school here to talk about how we could improve the quality of education with technology.

I was just today with Reverend Wintley Phipps, whom a lot of you know, at the U.S. Dream Academy here in Washington, doing wonderful work giving kids from very tough backgrounds a chance to have a better life.

I love this place. And I was honored that we had a bipartisan big block of support for the legislation to revitalize DC. Essentially, what we did was, we took—the Federal Government assumed the functions that the DC government was having to pay for, that no other city in America had to pay for because all the other cities had a State to pay for it. We've also provided big tuition support for DC students to go out of State to school as in-State students and tried to provide some initiatives to encourage more private investment here, as well as to have the Government do more directly. And we've got a lot more to do, and I hope in the next 6 months, working with Speaker Hastert and others, you will see a big bipartisan initiative which will lead to more investment in the District of Columbia. So I hope that will happen.