

In this time of unprecedented success and prosperity throughout our land, I ask that all Americans come together to recognize how fortunate we are to live in freedom and to observe a universal “National Moment of Remembrance” on each Memorial Day. This memorial observance represents a simple and unifying way to commemorate our history and honor the struggle to protect our freedoms.

Accordingly, I hereby direct all executive departments and agencies, in consultation with the White House Program for the National Moment of Remembrance (Program), to promote a “National Moment of Remembrance” to occur at 3 p.m. (local time) on each Memorial Day.

Recognizing that Memorial Day is a Federal holiday, all executive departments and agencies, in coordination with the Program and to the extent possible and permitted by law, shall promote and provide resources to support a National Moment of Remembrance, including:

- Encouraging individual department and agency personnel, and Americans every-

where, to pause for one minute at 3:00 p.m. (local time) on Memorial Day, to remember and reflect on the sacrifices made by so many to provide freedom for all.

- Recognizing, in conjunction with Memorial Day, department and agency personnel whose family members have made the ultimate sacrifice for this Nation.
- Providing such information and assistance as may be necessary for the Program to carry out its functions.

I have asked the Director of the White House Millennium Council to issue additional guidance, pursuant to this Memorandum, to the heads of executive departments and agencies regarding specific activities and events to commemorate the National Moment of Remembrance.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 3.

Remarks at Audubon Elementary School in Owensboro, Kentucky

May 3, 2000

Thank you very much. Thank you. I am delighted to see you all here. I think we should give Karen Cecil another round of applause. She did a great job, didn't she? [Applause] Superintendent Silberman, you might ought to just put her on the road as an advertisement for the district.

I'm delighted to be here with all of you. I want to thank Governor Patton and Judi Patton for, first of all, for many years of friendship and support, and for, Governor, your truly magnificent leadership in this State. I have served—I was a Governor for 12 years, and I have served with over 150 Governors. And since I've been President 8 years, I guess I've known about 100 or so more. So I have some experience in this. He's one of the best I've ever seen, and I thank him very much. Thank you.

I thank your Lieutenant Governor, Steve Henry, for being here. And my longtime friend and also fellow former colleague, John Y. Brown, thank you, Governor, for coming. I'm glad to see you. And Senator Wendell Ford and Jean,

I'm glad to see you. We miss you in Washington. I had to be funny Saturday night; they don't laugh enough since you came home. [Laughter] And we miss you.

I want to thank Attorney General Chandler and Treasurer Miller and Speaker Richards for being here, and the other State legislators who are here. And Mayor Morris, thank you for welcoming me, along with the city council. And I thank the Board of Education for their good work. I want to thank the AmeriCorps volunteers who are here for the work they do in the America Reads program. And thank you, Superintendent Silberman, and thank you, Diane Embry, for the work you do.

I've been in so many schools over the last 20 years, I can be in one for 5 minutes and know whether it's doing well or not. And there are a lot of rules, and you heard some of them today, but one of the things that Diane Embry did not say is that you nearly never have a good school unless you've got a great principal.

And it's obvious that you've got a great principal here.

And I'd like to thank the bands who played. And most of all, I'd like to thank Crystal Davidson for letting me come into her class and read with her students. We read a chapter from "Charlotte's Web," a wonderful book. And Crystal said it was the students' favorite chapter. It's called "The Miracle," and it's about how Charlotte the spider weaves a magic web that says, "some pig." And everybody thinks that it's the pig that's special, not the spider, and as a consequence the pig is not sent off to make bacon. And it's a pretty good story for real life, I think. [Laughter] I may recommend it to the Congress when I get home. [Laughter]

I am told that I'm the first President to come to Owensboro since Harry Truman. He always did have good judgment, Harry. But I have known about Owensboro for a long time, now. The Baptist minister that married Wendell and Jean Ford was my next-door neighbor in 1961. And his daughter graduated from high school with me and became one of my best friends and now is very active in the national adult literacy movement. So there's something in the atmosphere around here that promotes good education. I understand Lieutenant Governor Henry's mother was a 25-year veteran of the school system here in this county. So I'm delighted to be here.

I am on the first stop of a 2-day tour to highlight for the American people the good things that are happening in education in America and the challenges that are before us. I want people all across this country to know that there are places where people, against considerable odds, are bringing educational excellence to all our children. I want people to know this because the great challenge before us is how to get the reforms that worked in Audubon Elementary School into every elementary school in America.

And the first thing that you have to do if you want to achieve that goal is to know what was done and to believe it works. I came to Kentucky to show America how a whole State can identify and turn around its low-performing schools with high standards and accountability, parental involvement, and investments to help the schools and the students and the teachers meet the standards.

After I leave you, I'm going on to Davenport, Iowa, to highlight the importance of having good

school facilities. And this is a big issue, too. The average school building in America is over 40 years old; in many of our cities, the average school building is over 65 years old. We have school buildings in some of our cities that can't be wired for the Internet because the building just can't accommodate it. We have school buildings in New York City still being heated with coal-fired furnaces. We have elementary schools in America with 12 or 13 trailers out back because there are so many kids in the schools. So I'm going to Iowa to try to emphasize that.

And then tomorrow I'm going to St. Paul, Minnesota, to visit the first public charter school in America, which was basically created to give more accountability with less bureaucratic paperwork, and I'm going to talk about that. And then I'm going to Columbus, Ohio, to talk about the importance of teachers and results in the classrooms.

Dick Riley and I have been working on this for over 20 years, since we were young Governors together in 1979. We met in late 1978, when we went to Atlanta—they had a conference to show us how to be Governors. They recognized that there was a difference between winning the election and doing the job. [Laughter] And for over 20 years we've been wrestling with the challenge of how to improve our schools and how especially to give people who live in communities where there are a lot of lower income people the same excellence in education that every American has a right to.

And because he's from South Carolina and I'm from Arkansas, we feel a lot of affinity with Kentucky. I have been here—I came to Kentucky for the first time in 1979. I served with five Kentucky Governors, and I feel like, since Paul has been so close to us these last 7 years, I've served with six. And I wanted to come here because I believe so strongly that we can have the kind of educational excellence we need for every child in the country if people will take the basic things you have done here and do them.

I believe that intelligence is equally distributed throughout the human race, and I think educational opportunity ought to be also equally distributed. And I do want to say just one thing about Dick Riley: I don't think there's any question that even my political opponents would admit that he is the finest Secretary of Education this country has ever had.

Governor Patton talked about a decade of commitment to excellence since you passed your landmark reform bill in 1990. But he was on a committee called the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence back in the 1980's, so he's been at this a long time, too. And I guess the first thing I would say to people all across America who are interested in this: This is not a day's work or a weekend's work or a month's work. You've got to make a long-term disciplined commitment to your children. And I thought one of the best things about what Karen Cecil said was how she charted the improvements in this school through the lives of her children. It was personally very moving to me, but it also made the larger point that if you really want excellence in education, you have to be prepared to pay the price of time and really work at it.

Now, here's what Kentucky did—a lot of you know this, but I think it's worth repeating for the audience across the country interested in this. First, in 1990 you set high standards for what all Kentucky children should know. Second, you identified the schools where year after year students didn't learn enough to meet those standards. Third, you held the schools accountable for turning themselves around, with real consequences for the failure to do so, from dismissing principals and teachers to allowing parents to transfer children into higher performing public schools. And fourth, you provided the investment and other supports necessary, which your principal and your parent have identified here today, to turn the schools around, from more teacher training to high quality preschool, after-school, and summer school programs, to the latest educational technology. You have to do all of these things.

The results have been truly extraordinary. You know, because we're all here today with our friends from the media who will put this story out around the country, I want every American who doubts that we can provide excellence in education to listen to these Kentucky numbers. In 1996, Kentucky identified 175 schools needing major improvement. Two years later—in 2 years, 159 of those schools, 91 percent, had improved beyond the goals you set for them.

Audubon Elementary, where we are today, is a particularly dramatic example. Now listen to this; this is what this school did. This school went from 12 percent of your students meeting or exceeding the State standards on writing tests

to 57 percent, from 5 percent meeting or exceeding the State standards in reading to 70 percent—I saw that today—from zero students meeting or exceeding the State standards in science to 64 percent. This school is now the 18th-best performing elementary school in the State, despite the fact that two-thirds of your students qualify for free and reduced-price school lunches. That is truly amazing.

In fact—this is also very interesting—you can say that—I know that people who don't agree with what we're trying to do will say, "Well, so what? You know, they have Einstein for a principal there or something." [Laughter] And you may. But listen to this. In this entire State, 10 of the 20 best performing elementary schools in science—in science—are schools where half the students are eligible for free and reduced-price schools lunches. Don't tell me all children can't learn. They can learn if they have the opportunity and the system and the support.

Income is not destiny. You have proved that all children can learn, and you have also proved that public schools can succeed. Therefore, in my judgment, the answer to excellence for all our children is not to take money away from our schools through vouchers but to combine money with high standards, accountability, and the tools teachers, children, and parents need to succeed. Because all children can learn, and because both the children and the Nation need for all children to learn in the 21st century information economy, I think turning around low-performance schools is one of the great challenges this country faces in the 21st century.

And I want to go off the script here for a couple minutes to tell you, you know, I'm not running for anything this year, so I can say this, I hope, with some credibility. In times of adversity, people tend to pull together and do what has to be done. You had a terrible tornado here in January. I know it was awful for you. We tried to give the support that we were supposed to give at the national level. But I'm sure you were amazed at the community response. I'm sure you were all inspired by it. At times of adversity, we find the best in ourselves.

Sometimes we are most severely tested in good times, when it's easy for our attention to wander, for our concentration to break, for our vision to fade. Now, this country is in the best economic shape it's ever been in, and all the

social indicators are moving in the right direction. And now is the time to ask ourselves, what's really out there for us to do? How are we going to meet the challenge of the aging of America when all the baby boomers retire? We don't want to bankrupt our kids and their ability to raise our grandkids. Therefore, we should lengthen the life of Social Security and make sure Medicare is all right; I think, add a prescription drug benefit.

How are we going to continue to grow the economy at the end of the longest expansion in history? I think we have to sell more of our stuff overseas, but we also have to—as I said in Hazard, Kentucky, last summer—we've got to bring economic opportunity to the places that have been left behind. It's inflation-free economic growth.

How are we going to lift our children out of poverty and give them all a world-class education? Those are three of the biggest challenges this country has.

When we were worried about unemployment, when we were worried about crime never going down, when we were worried about welfare roles exploding, it was hard to think about these big long-term challenges. Well, things are in hand now. We're going in the right direction. This is the best chance anybody in this gym today will ever have in your lifetime to deal with these big challenges.

And so I—that's another reason I'm here today. We can do this. We can give all our kids a world-class education. And if we're not going to do it now, when in the wide world will we ever get around to doing it? We cannot afford to break our concentration. Now is the time to say, thank you for this good time, to be grateful to God and to our neighbors and to all the good fortune we've had, and then do the right thing by our kids. This is the best time we'll ever have to do this, and so—[*ap- plause*]. Thank you.

I can also tell you, we don't have unlimited time to do it. We've got the biggest school population in our history. It's finally, the last 2 years, been bigger than the baby boom generation. It is far more diverse. The school district just across the river from Washington, DC, in Alexandria, has kids from 180 different racial-ethnic groups, speaking 100 different first languages. And the country will grow more diverse.

Now, in a global society, that's a good thing. Just like you want to have computers way out

in the country, because they're connected to the world, right? This is a good thing, not a bad thing—but only if we have universal excellence in education.

Now, the other thing I'd like to say is, when Dick and I started doing all this—and John Y. was elected the next year—back in the early 1980's and the late seventies, we were struggling to try to figure out what to do. Even when the "Nation At Risk" report was issued in 1983—and a lot of us responded to it; we tried basically to just do what they said. We didn't even have—many States didn't even have basic, adequate graduation requirements for high school.

But we've now had 20 years of serious effort at educational reform. So we not only have good economic times, we have the knowledge that we didn't have even 10 years ago about how to replicate what you have done here. And that's another reason we do not have any excuse for not doing this. We know what works. And what you've done here will work in any community in the country.

Will it have to be modified for the people that live there and the community conditions? Absolutely. But you know, I used to frequently visit an elementary school in Chicago, when the crime rate was really high, in the early nineties, in the neighborhood with the highest murder rate in Illinois. And the principal was an African-American woman from my home State, from the Mississippi Delta. And all the parents were in the school. They had a school dress code. They had no weapons in the school. They never had any violent incidents. They had a zero drop-out rate, and they performed above the State average, just like you are. So we would see this from time to time. We would come across these jewels in the rough. But nobody could really figure out, for a long time, how to make this universal.

We know, now, what the basic things you have done are and how to make them available in every school in the country. We do not have an excuse any longer not to do that. You have to set high standards. You have to have accountability. You have to train and pay decent teachers and principals. You've got to provide the technology, and you have to have the support staff. And you have to have the parental involvement and the community support. And kids have to have the extra help they need to meet the

standards. You shouldn't declare children failures when the system doesn't work. So it's okay to hold the kids accountable, but you've got to give them the help they need to make it.

Now, that works: Invest more, demand more. For 7 years in our administration, the Vice President and I and Secretary Riley and the others, we've worked to give States like Kentucky the tools you need to do the job. When we were cutting spending like crazy to turn deficits into surpluses, we still had nearly doubled the national investment in education and training. We required States to set academic standards, but Secretary Riley got rid of nearly two-thirds of the regulations on States and local school districts, to reduce the unnecessary paperwork and to focus on what was really critical.

And we've also worked to help you reduce class size. I was thrilled that—you know, I didn't think of you as a Clinton teacher, but—[laughter]—I'll take it any day of the week. I think it's wonderful, and I'm honored that you're there.

But when I was in Crystal's class today, and all those kids, every one of those children read to me—every one of them. Now, some of them had a little more trouble than others, partly because of the arcane nature of the book we read and the way they were talking about Desotos and Studebakers and Packards—[laughter]—and not Isuzus and Hondas and other things. But every one of those children was into reading and obviously had received individual attention. Because—I think there were 19 students in that class today, and you can't do that with 40 kids. So this is a big deal.

So we're into our third year now of trying to fund 100,000 new teachers, to help to reduce the class sizes in the early grades so that the young people can learn to read. And I'm also glad that young people like Crystal Davidson want to be teachers and are dedicated to it, because we're going to have a lot teachers retiring in the next few years.

We've also supported the America Reads program. We have these volunteers here from AmeriCorps. There are 1,000 colleges now in America where young people are working in the elementary schools of our country. In addition to that, you have RSVP programs, Retired Senior Volunteers, which I think is a sponsor of the program here in this county, and other groups, church groups, other people all across

this country helping. And I think that's very important.

I said I was going to the charter school in Minnesota. We had one when I became President; there are 1,700 today, and we think we'll have 3,000 when school starts next year. We've really worked on this.

The Vice President fought very hard to get something called the E-rate in the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which enables schools like this to hook the classrooms up to the Internet and to get a discount to do so. It's worth about \$2 billion a year, so that the poorest schools in the country can afford, just as the wealthiest schools can, to hook up their classrooms to the Internet.

When we started in '93, there were only 3 percent of our classrooms with Internet connections. Today, nearly 75 percent have. Only 16 percent of the schools had even one connection; today, 95 percent do, including 90 percent in low income areas in America. So this is making a difference, and it's very important.

Now, across the country math and reading scores are rising. Sixty-seven percent of all the high school graduates are now going to college; that's 10 percent more than in 1993. Part of that is because we tried to open the doors of college financially to all Americans with the creation of the HOPE scholarship, which is a \$1,500 tax credit for the first 2 years of college, which makes community college at least virtually free to most families, and another tax credit for junior and senior years and for graduate school. There are 5 million families taking advantage of it already; it's just been in since '98.

And we've expanded the Pell grants; we've created education IRA's; we've cut the cost of the student loans through the Direct Student Loan Program by \$8 billion. Students have saved \$8 billion on the program and lower interest costs on student loans, in just 6 years. And I'm trying to get the Congress this year to allow the cost of college tuition to be tax-deductible up to \$10,000 a year. And if we do that, we do that one last piece, we will really be able to say that we have opened the doors of college to every American family, and everybody will be able to go, and money should not be an obstacle. So we're trying to get this done.

Okay, that's the good news. Now, what's the bad news? The bad news is that you're here, and we're celebrating, but there are still a whole lot of schools in America, hundreds of them,

that fail to give children the education that you give the children here in Audubon. And in this economy, that is bad for them and bad for the rest of us, because we live in an economy in which it's not only what you know that counts, it's what you're capable of learning.

The whole nature of work is being radically revolutionized by information technology. It's accounted for 30 percent of our economic growth in the last 8 years, even though people working directly in information technology are only 8 percent of the work force. But if you work in a bank, if you work in an insurance company—in my part of the country, if you drive a tractor—your life has been changed by the way computers work. And this means that it's not only necessary to be able to know certain things, you've got to have these learning skills that kids get in grade school to keep on learning for a lifetime. It is profoundly important.

And we do need what the Vice President has called a revolution in education. But it's not a revolution to find something that doesn't exist. It's a revolution to take what works here and put it everywhere. That has always been the great challenge of American education. It's just that we weren't sure what it was we wanted to put everywhere. Today, we are.

And again I tell you, there will never be a better time economically to do it, and we don't have any excuse not to do it, because we know what works. After 20 years, we know what works.

Last year, Dick Riley and I sent Congress an educational accountability act that would fundamentally change the way we spend the \$15 billion we give to our schools, not to take it away from our commitment to helping lower income communities and kids but to say, we're going to invest in what we know works, and we're going to stop investing in what we know doesn't work. It would essentially require States that take Federal money to do what you have done in Kentucky, to identify low-performing schools, to develop a strategy for turning them around, based on a set of standards and an accountability mechanism.

It would require the ending of so-called social promotion but, again, not branding the children failures. It would require that only if you also had after-school, summer school, tutoring, the support services necessary for the children to succeed.

And it would empower parents, by encouraging more parental involvement in schools and guaranteeing report cards to the parents on school performance, not just the students' performance, compared to other schools.

It would provide funds to make sure that all teachers are trained in the subjects they teach—which is going to become a huge problem when all these math and science teachers retire in high school, getting people who are actually certified and trained to teach the courses they're supposed to be teaching—and provide more support for school districts for extra training.

I've asked Congress to double our investment in the education accountability fund to help people turn around low-performing schools or shut them down. And I've asked Congress to double our investment in after-school and summer school programs.

The Federal Government, when I became President, was spending nothing on these programs. Then we—I got an appropriation for \$1 million, and then \$2 million, and then \$40 million, and then \$200 million. Then it's \$400 million this year—\$450 million. And I'm trying to get \$1 billion. If we get \$1 billion, we can provide summer school in this country to every student and every poor, low-performing school in the United States of America. That is very, very important.

So to make this strategy work, we've got to have the courage to do what Kentucky is doing, to identify the schools that aren't performing, not where the students are failing, where the schools are failing the students. The grownups have to take responsibility for this. Then we can help to turn them around. Today I am directing—that's a misnomer, because we agreed in advance, Secretary Riley—to begin to provide an annual report, national report on low-performing schools, to tell us for the first time how many of our Nation's public schools are failing, where they're located, what the States are doing to turn them around.

Second, as we press Congress to pass our accountability legislation, we must ensure that the States do what they're supposed to do under existing laws. Therefore, I'm directing the Secretary to send teams to States to make sure they're meeting their responsibilities on low-performance schools, to work with States to apply the kind of successful strategies that have worked here, to identify Federal resources like

these after-school grants which States can use to turn the schools around.

I never cease to be amazed when I go places that there are people that literally don't know we have this money there for them. I'll bet you there are people that need this teacher money that haven't applied for it. And I nearly know there are people that need this after-school money that haven't applied for it, because we have grown this program very fast in response to a clear national need.

These actions will help us to spread the lesson we have learned during these last 7 years. In education, investment without accountability can be a waste of money. But accountability without investment is a waste of effort. Neither will work without the other.

Ten years ago, when things looked pretty grim for public schools, before a lot of these reforms got underway, the late head of the American Federation of Teachers, Al Shanker, who was a great friend of mine and a very vigorous advocate of high standards and accountability, said something to his fellow teachers that I thought was very moving. He said, we have to be willing to tell the American people the bad news about our public schools so that when the schools

begin to turn around and we have good news to report, they will believe us.

Well, today here in Kentucky and in other places across America, there is good news to report. The American people believe that. But they expect us to keep at it until the good news is the real news in every single school in this country.

Thank you. Thank you for what you have done to help make that happen. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:10 p.m. in the gymnasium. In his remarks, he referred to Karen Cecil, parent, who introduced the President; Stuart Silberman, superintendent of schools, Daviess County; Gov. Paul E. Patton of Kentucky and his wife, Judi; Lt. Gov. Stephen L. Henry and former Gov. John Y. Brown, Jr., of Kentucky; State Attorney General A. B. Chandler III; State Treasurer Jonathan Miller; Kentucky House of Representatives Speaker Jody Richards; Mayor Waymond Morris of Owensboro; Diane Embry, principal, and Crystal Davidson, teacher, Audubon Elementary School; and former Senator Wendell Ford and his wife, Jean. The Executive order on actions to improve low-performing schools is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on World Press Freedom Day *May 3, 2000*

On the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, I want to salute journalists in every country who dedicate their lives—and risk their lives—to increase our understanding of the world and to shine a spotlight in support of truth and accountability.

This past year around the world, from Colombia to Chechnya to Sierra Leone, more than 30 journalists were killed, many more were imprisoned, and more than 100 nations still exert forms of harassment that inhibit press freedom. Right now, Governments in Iran and Serbia are

cracking down on journalists, closing news organizations, and trying to block a public dialog that is so essential to human rights and freedom.

As a nation long blessed with liberty, the United States has a responsibility to stand with those who are upholding the values we cherish, to speak up for press freedom, and to speak out against repression, so that journalists can do their jobs without risk or restraint and citizens have the knowledge they need to exercise the power of self-government.