

term, and do you expect it to be a dominant part of your meeting tomorrow?

The President. Well, I want to hear what he has to say about it, and how we would go about dealing with the problems that we have with the trade arrangement we have now, whether they would be amplified. In general, I think there will be increasing interdependence of the world's economies over the next decade, increasing interdependence in our region.

I think—I believe we should have done more with South America. We've got the Caribbean Basin trade initiative, which I think is good. We've got the relationship with Mexico, which I think has been a net plus for the United States, both economically and politically. We didn't extend our trade agreements to the rest of South America, and I think that the Europeans have benefited at our expense. So I think there will be more interdependence, and the United States has to be a part of that.

But like everything else, the devil is always in the details here, so I want to talk to him about it and see what he has in mind. I would imagine most of this work would have to be done by the next administration.

Yes.

Oil Production

Q. [Inaudible]—U.S. doing to convince OPEC nations to increase output, and will you be discussing this issue with Nigeria when you go?

The President. OPEC nations? I'm sorry. Well, as you know, we have done what we could. I was actually—I was reviewing the situation last night, and yes, I will discuss it with Nigeria. But we have to look at where there is excess capacity.

Part of this is a question of whether the OPEC nations can increase their production.

Part of the problem is coming because there's now renewed economic growth elsewhere in the world. And it seems to me, just looking at all the numbers over the long run, we're going—we'll get some benefit out of that. That is, I expect you'll see a significant increase in American exports over the next 6 months to 2 years because of the increasing growth in other parts of the world, but as a result of that, it's putting more pressure on the oil supplies that are available.

So I'm going to do what I can to keep these prices moderated and to continue to argue to all the OPEC nations that, if the price gets too high, they will cause recession in other countries, and then the purchases will drop dramatically and for a longer period of time. They're much better off with a price that's below where it is now but one that can be sustained. They don't want to go down to \$13 to \$15 a barrel again, but we don't need it—it needs to be, I think, in the low twenties somewhere. I think that's—low to mid twenties is a more sustainable rate. And so I will clearly discuss it with President Obasanjo and with others in the weeks ahead.

Thank you.

Q. Mr. President, how—look for your legal defense fund?

Q. Are you back in the spotlight? [Laughter]

The President. I'm going to New Jersey.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:53 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House prior to departure for Monmouth Junction, NJ. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Gray Davis of California; Democratic Vice Presidential candidate Senator Joseph I. Lieberman; President Andres Pastrana of Colombia; and President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria.

Remarks at Crossroads Middle School in Monmouth Junction, New Jersey August 23, 2000

Thank you. Please be seated, everybody. We all appreciated the standing ovation, but you're about to get tired. [Laughter] I am so glad to be here. Let me say, first of all, I thought Malaika Carpenter gave a terrific talk, didn't you? [Applause] I understand her parents,

Nancy and Lenny, and her brother Jerren are here. Where are they? Stand up there. You did well.

I'd like to thank Dr. Stewart for welcoming us here, and Dr. Warfel, the principal here. I'd also like to say a special word of appreciation

for this terrific band. Weren't they great, this jazz band? [Applause] I mean, they played "Hail To The Chief," and "On Broadway," and "Caravan," and lots of other things, and they did it very, very well. There aren't many middle school bands in America that are that good, I can tell you. And you should be very proud of them. They're really good.

And I'd like to thank the other students that met with me just a few moments ago. And I'd like to say a special word of appreciation to your Representative in Congress, Rush Holt, who is here with me. Since I'm at a school, I can say this. Rush was a university professor for about a decade, an educator, a trained physicist. When he got elected, we all used to kid him that he knew entirely too much to be a politician. We thought it would be a terrible burden. But I can tell you, from my point of view as someone who has worked for 8 years to improve the quality and the availability of opportunity in education, it has been a real joy to have someone like him with the depth of commitment to education that he has demonstrated these last 2 years. It's been wonderful.

Well, we're about to go back to school. And I've always thought of back to school time as sort of a new beginning. It certainly is for the students and the teachers: new students, new books, new school supplies, new faces in the classroom, a time when a lot of parents stop and think again about the role of education in their own children's lives and what they hope will be their children's future. I think it's a good time for our country to do the same. So today I'd like to talk a little bit about what we can do to prepare our schools and our children not just for the new school year but for the new economy of the 21st century.

We are very fortunate in America today to be living in the longest economic expansion in our history, to have 22 million new jobs and the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years and the highest homeownership ever, a 25-year low in the crime rate, a 35-year low in the welfare rolls, with incomes going up and poverty going down. The great debate that I hope our country will have, not only in this election year but in the remaining weeks of this session of Congress, is what are we going to do with this good fortune?

You know, the parents here in the audience can empathize with this. One of the things you learn when you live long enough is that some-

times you make mistakes not because times are so tough but because they're good, and you kind of break your concentration, and you let moments pass by. And anybody that lives over 30 years can think of some time in his or her life when you made a mistake like that.

So this is a very important time for our country. What are we going to do with this good fortune, unprecedented in our whole history? I hope that we will use this time to dream about the future we want for our children and to literally make a list of what we have to do to achieve it. I hope we'll use this time to pay down our debt and get this country out of debt for the first time since 1835 to keep interest rates lower and keep the economy going. I think that's a good thing to do.

I hope we'll use this opportunity to create incentives for people to invest in the poor areas that still aren't participating in our recovery. Here in New Jersey, you might find it hard to believe, but there are several Indian reservations in America where the unemployment rate is still over 50 percent, even though the national rate is 4; and inner-city areas and small rural towns. So I hope we'll do that.

I hope we will take this opportunity when we have some money to lengthen the life of Social Security and Medicare, take it out beyond the baby boom generation so that when those of us who are baby boomers retire, we don't bankrupt our kids and their ability to raise our grandchildren, because they shouldn't be prejudiced by the fact that time has taken us into our later years. I hope we'll use this time to provide some needed health care advances, including prescription drug benefits for seniors on Medicare.

But there is nothing more important for us to do if we want to use this moment to build a future of our dreams for our kids than to make sure all of our children get a 21st century education. And that requires both investment and standards in accountability.

It requires us to invest more and demand more. It requires us to do what Vice President Gore and I have been trying to do for 8 years now. We have doubled our investment in education and training. We've expanded college opportunity by more than any time since the GI bill 50 years ago with the student loan program improvements and saved \$8 billion for our kids with the HOPE scholarship, which gives every family a \$1,500 tax credit on the cost of college

tuition—just about covers community college, makes it free in most States in the country. And we're now trying to get the Congress to allow taxpayers to deduct the cost of college tuition up to \$10,000 from their tax bill, which will be worth \$2,800 a year in lower taxes for families with kids in college.

With the help of the E-rate program, which the Vice President pioneered through Congress, we have worked with schools to connect 95 percent of our schools to the Internet. That's up from only 35 percent 5 years ago when we started. We're also working to help turn around failing schools with after-school and summer school programs and mentoring programs. I was in a school in New York the other day, an elementary school where 2 years ago 80 percent of the kids were reading below grade level and doing math below grade level. Today, 2 years later, 74 percent of the kids are at or above grade level in both reading and math. These schools can be turned around. The teachers can do the job. We've got to give them the support that they need to succeed, and we can do it.

We're working hard to put 100,000 more teachers in the early grades to have smaller classes because of all the research that shows how important that is. And I know that with all these kids coming into this school district, filling these trailers—now you've had to hire a lot of new teachers, and I understand that you've got some of your first-time teachers here, Mr. Superintendent, for their first day of orientation. So I'd like to ask all the new teachers, stand and be recognized. Where are the new teachers in this district? Raise your hands back there. Give them a hand. *[Applause]* Thank you very much.

I want to thank you for choosing a proud and challenging profession. When you made a decision to become a teacher, you knew you would never become wealthy—*[laughter]*—but you will be in the most important way of all because of what you're going to do for the children of this country and this community. And I thank you for that.

Now, that brings me down to what we're here about, what I think is a very important part of our long-term commitment to our children. All over America our facilities are better than our facilities—nice ring, don't you think? *[Laughter]* Why is that? Because we now have the largest student population in history, what's called the baby boom echo—53 million echoes

in our schools—shattering enrollment records for 5 years running. That's right, for the last 5 years, it's the first time since the baby boomers in school that we have a group of kids in our schools bigger than the baby boom generation.

Today I'm releasing a report from the Department of Education showing that New Jersey has its highest enrollment in 20 years. If you had a statewide rollcall, 1.3 million students would answer. That's a 20-percent increase in the last 10 years alone. I understand in this school district the increase has been more like 90 percent in the last 10 years.

Now, what's the problem? The problem is that you've got all these kids who are going into schools that were never built for this many kids. You have them in small towns—I was in a little town called Jupiter, Florida, a couple of years ago where there were 12 trailers out behind the school, a community much smaller than this one. You have the suburban areas that are swollen up. I was in a community in Queens the other day where the same thing was true, where there were 400 more children in a school than the school was built for.

So you've got the problem of the trailers, and then you've got the problem in our cities of so many old school buildings that either can't be or haven't been modernized, so that you've got whole floors in some of these schools that are shut down, even though the schools are filled to the gills, because the schools cannot afford the cost of modernizing these old buildings.

Philadelphia, the average school building is 65 years old; New Orleans, 68 years old. New York City, schools still being heated in the winter by coal-burning furnaces. So you have these two big problems. And I believe the Federal Government has a responsibility to help the States and the local school districts deal with it. And I believe that—this is the important thing, and you all have to think about this, whether you're Democrats, Republicans, or independents, because it is a new thing. This is virtually unprecedented except for a temporary amount of help the Government gave to school districts after World War II for the baby boom generation.

So the leaders of the majority party in the Congress in Washington say that we shouldn't do this because the Federal Government has never been in the business of school building.

In some States the States don't help school building; it's all local. I think we should do it for the following reasons—and I want you talk to your friends and neighbors about it, because you're living with it here.

Number one, education is the constitutional responsibility of the States and the operational responsibility of the localities, but it is a national priority, and it must be.

Number two, we've got some money now, and a lot of States and localities don't, and there's no better way to spend it than by investing in our children's future.

Number three, there are real practical problems with saying that this school district here should solve this whole problem. And you know what they are. Even though we've got the largest number of schoolchildren in our history, the actual percentage of property owners who have kids in the schools is slightly smaller than it has been at its largest time—first. A lot of you nodding your head, you know this. Secondly, there are a lot of States like New Jersey, New York, and many others which already rely very heavily on the property tax to finance their schools, and there's just a limit to how big it can be.

And I don't think we ought to let, in this sense, philosophy get in the way of practicality here. I'm not proposing to take over the schools. I'm not proposing to do anything except to have legislation that will give tax credits to communities to help them build or drastically modernize 6,000 schools, by lowering the property tax burden on you to do what you're going to do anyway. That's what I want to do.

And by the way, our bill would also provide grants and loans to repair another 5,000 schools a year, every year, for 5 years, to help with a lot of these problems with the old school buildings that need to be upgraded.

Now, I hope that you will talk to your friends and neighbors about this. Now, Congressman Holt is already a cosponsor of the legislation by Representative Rangel of New York and Nancy Johnson of Connecticut, a Democrat and a Republican. As I said, we have a bipartisan majority in the House for this, thanks in no small measure to the work of the teachers and the members of the Building and Construction Trades Union who are here today. And I thank them, the teachers and the building and construction people, for what they've done. I think

if we can get the bill up in the Senate, we'd have a bipartisan majority there.

But again, there is this debate: Should the Federal Government be involved in this? Now, the Congress is coming back. We've got almost all the major budget work still to be done. We'll be there a month, maybe 5 weeks, 6 weeks. We debated this for 2 years now. Nobody's in the dark about how it works. It's just a question of whether we can get over this philosophical objection that the Federal Government's never done this before.

And all I can tell you is, I was there looking at these wonderful children behind me, talking to me in their school, and these two young teachers, full of enthusiasm, thinking about all the good they're doing, and all the practical arguments for not putting them in a decent classroom just evaporated. There just are none. So, if people ask you why this is a big deal, first, you can cite what's going on in your school district. And then they say, but the Federal Government's not doing this anymore—is this setting a dangerous example? Remember, all we're proposing to do is spend some of the surplus to provide tax credits to lower the cost to local school districts and to States where they do this, of building these facilities, so that it eases the property tax burden and makes it easier to do that. And we're proposing to give direct loans and grants to repair another 5,000 schools a year for 5 years where there's a building that's not fully usable. And the need is enormous. It is national. And these children's education is a national priority.

Look, all over America today, the schools are working better: Reading scores are up; math scores are up. I was in a school in Kentucky the other day that 4 years ago was one of the worst schools in the State, where—listen to this; this is what they did in 3 years—over half the kids were on student lunches. Three years ago 12 percent of the kids were reading at or above grade level; today, almost 60 percent. Three years ago 5 percent of the kids were doing math at or above grade level; today, 70 percent. Three years ago not a single kid in that elementary school was doing science at or above grade level; today, nearly two-thirds. This is happening all over America. The schools are working better. We actually have learned a lot in the last 15 years about how to increase student performance—the teachers, the principals—it's breathtaking what's going on.

College enrollment's at an all-time high. But sooner or later, we're going to pay price after price after price, just like Malaika said, in describing this in very human terms, if we say our children are the most important things in the world to us, but we don't really care if they've got a decent place to go to school. We really want all these young people, like those enthusiastic young teachers that waved their hands back there, to go into teaching, but we don't care if they have a lousy place to go to work.

Now, sooner or later, we have to deal with this. This is not consistent. If we care about it, we need to put it beyond politics and put

our children first and get this done. So I'd like to ask you for your help. I need your help. Talk to your friends and neighbors who don't live here, who don't live in this congressional district. Tell them it is not a political issue; it's about the children.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:35 p.m. in the school parking lot. In his remarks, he referred to Crossroads Middle School principal Jim Warfel and graduate Malaika Carpenter, who introduced the President; and South Brunswick Schools superintendent Samuel B. Stewart.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on the Proposed Acquisition of Verio by Japanese NTT Communications

August 23, 2000

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Attached is a report on my decision to take no action to suspend or prohibit the proposed acquisition of Verio, Inc., a large U.S.-based Internet Service Provider (ISP), by NTT Communications Corporation (NTT Communications), a wholly owned subsidiary of Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation, (NTT). NTT is a Japanese corporation that is owned and controlled by the Government of Japan (GOJ). I have taken this decision under the authority vested in me as President by section

721 of the Defense Production Act of 1950, also known as the "Exon-Florio" provision, 50 U.S.C. App. 2170. This report is submitted pursuant to subsection (g) of the Exon-Florio provision.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Albert Gore, Jr., President of the Senate.

Remarks at a Reception for Representative Rush D. Holt in Princeton, New Jersey

August 23, 2000

The President. Thank you. You know, if I had any sense of fairness at all, I'd tell them to turn this off. [*Laughter*] But I'm not going to. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank Robert and Lisa Stockman for having us here at this truly beautiful, beautiful home and for getting us all together and for supporting Rush. I want to thank all of you for coming here tonight, the officials, the union

and teacher leaders, and other leaders, and just the citizens who believe in this good man.

I know you've been here a long time, and I won't keep you long, but I want to say two or three things. First of all, I really like Jon Corzine a lot. You know, when he was running in the primary and they kept carping about how much money he was spending, I thought, well, at least he's not spending all this money to give himself a tax cut. [*Laughter*]