AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

middle and upper middle class school districts have to use.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. I'd just like to, first of all, thank you and thank the other education reformers in Minnesota for pointing the way on the college credit initiative, which did lead to a huge increase in advanced placement, which is now being mirrored all across the country, and on public school choice and on the charter schools. And I think we were—when I was Governor of my home State, I think we were the second State to adopt a statewide school choice law. And my daughter actually took advantage of it when she was in elementary and junior high school, to the great benefit of our family and our life.

And I just want to emphasize that giving parents all these choices and all this power—the important thing, almost none of them will choose to go outside their neighborhood or assigned district, but knowing that they have the ability to do it changes the attitude of everybody in all the districts and lifts the standards everywhere. That's the key thing here.

And the charter schools, as a practical matter—we have 500 now. We had 300 when I proposed our legislation with Secretary Riley to fund 3,000 more over the next few years. What we really are trying to do is to create a critical mass which will turn every school into a school like the first two we heard about today—first three we heard about. That's what we're trying to do. And eventually we'll hit that critical mass, wherever it is, and when we do, it will be just sort of volcanic positive change in American education. And a lot of it will have started in the State of Minnesota. I'm grateful to you.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. Let me say just very briefly about Secretary Riley, first of all, as you can hear him talk, he's from South Carolina. And the Vice President and I like him because he makes us sound as if we do not have an accent when we speak. [*Laughter*]

Bill Purcell said, ''Sometimes Government should lead the way; sometimes Government should get out of the way.'' I agree with both those. Sometimes Government should support the way, and I believe that Dick Riley has been the best Secretary of Education our country ever had because he's been able to do all three things—all three things.

To go back to what Yvonne said at the beginning, there is no telling how many rules and regulations that Secretary Riley has gotten rid of to give the decisionmaking power back to local school districts and, to some extent, to States and ultimately to local schools. And we feel very strongly we should be doing that even as we give more support for these reform needs. And he has really done a wonderful job, and I'm very grateful to him.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 11:25 a.m. in Langford Auditorium at Vanderbilt University during Family Re-Union VI: Family and Learning. In his remarks, he referred to Susan Gingrich-Cameron, principal, Carson Lane Academy, Murfreesboro, TN; Gov. Don Sundquist of Tennessee; Bill Purcell, director, Child and Family Policy Center, Vanderbilt Institute for Public Policy Studies; John Doerr, partner, Kleiner, Perkins, Caufield and Byers, Menlo Park, CA; and Yvonne Chan, principal, Vaughn Next Century Learning Center, San Fernando, CA.

Remarks to the Family Re-Union VI Conference in Nashville

June 25, 1997

Thank you very much, Mr. Vice President. We built in a little time on the other end of the schedule because I knew that we'd all want to stay here longer. I'm reluctant to say anything; those 12 people were so good.

I'm reminded of the very first time I made a speech as an elected public official, more than 20 years ago now. It was at a Rotary Club in southeast Arkansas, and it was one of these officers banquets, you know, it was one of those things where we start at 6:30, and I was introduced to speak at a quarter to 10. [*Laughter*] There were 500 people there; all but 3 were introduced. They went home mad. [*Laughter*] And the only guy in the audience—in the whole crowd more nervous than me was the fellow that was supposed to introduce me. He didn't know what to say. He was nervous, too. And so I get ready to be introduced, and the guy comes

up, and his opening line is—after all the officers had been inducted, all the awards had been given, everybody had been recognized, his opening line is—in my first speech as an elected public official—is, ''You know, we could have stopped here and had a very nice evening.'' [*Laughter*] Now, I know he didn't mean it that way. [*Laughter*] And I could have said that about myself now. We could stop right here and have had a very nice session.

What I would like to do just very briefly is to try to put this whole—what we've been talking about today in the larger context of what America is trying to do and what our responsibility is at the national level, because when I say over and over and over again, the era of big Government is over, but the era of big challenges is not, I don't mean for people to say, as they sometimes do, that that means the Federal Government can take a powder. I don't agree with that.

What I mean is that we're going to have to do more of what we do together as partners, and we cannot succeed in a lot of these problems, which as you just heard are fundamentally human challenges that have to be dealt with child by child, family by family, street by street, school by school—that simply cannot be done successfully if the whole focus is on what is the Federal Government going to do. On the other hand, I would argue it cannot be done comprehensively and fairly to every child if there is no focus on what is the Federal Government going to do.

Now, for the last 4½ years, Vice President Gore and I and our team have worked on a simple vision for America. We've been trying to prepare our country for the 21st century with some simple goals: We want every child to have the chance to live out his or her dreams. We want every citizen to be responsible for self, for family, for community, for country. And we want a community that is coming together as one America, not being driven apart by its differences. And we think if we do all those things, we'll have what, finally, we want—is for our country to continue to be the world's leading force for peace and freedom and prosperity in the world.

And when you ask yourselves a tough question in the moment, I think it often helps to get the right answer. You say, ''Well, where do I want to go?'' Well, that's where we want to go. And our strategy has been to develop a National Government set of policies that would, in effect, empower citizens and families and communities and schools and workplaces to create the kind of destiny that we know we're capable of creating.

That's why I love these Family Re-Union conferences, because every one of them, fundamentally, when you get right down to it, is about empowerment. You take the two the Vice President mentioned, the television rating system and the V-chip. The Government can advocate for and even mandate, in the case of the V-chip, a law, but all it does is to empower families to be able to raise their children with a little more direction—or that what we did on the family and medical leave and what we hope to do on advancing, expanding family and medical leave, and having the right sort of flex-time proposal.

Nothing is really more important to a society than raising children. But if we have a good economy, it helps people raise children. So the real—what's in the vortex there in the middle is how do you enable people to succeed at home and at work? How many times did you hear these people talking about child care, before-school care, after-school care, bringing in the parents at different times—a parent played in an orchestra concert the night before and taught orchestra the next morning. What does that mean? It means that we have to find new and creative ways to reconcile work and family and in some places to get work for families so that they can succeed as parents of students.

So that's what I like about this, because this family conference basically emphasizes what I think our central strategy ought to be, which is how are we going to give our citizens the power they need, first and foremost, to raise successful children and, secondly, to make America successful?

And let me just very briefly mention two or three things. We have tried to focus on, in addition to the economy, which was our first obsession because we knew if we couldn't get it going, a lot of these other things wouldn't occur. We tried to say, ''Well, what else do families need?'' One is safe streets. So we've worked hard on a grassroots

crime package to empower people to keep the crime rate coming down, and last year we had the biggest drop in 36 years. And if we do it for about 3 more years, people might actually believe it's come down, as it has. And that's good. That is, it might be more than numbers and lives saved; people might actually feel safe. And that's important because if people don't feel safe, they're not fully free.

Then we focused on culture, the V-chip, the TV ratings, the work, the terrific work Secretary Riley did with Attorney General Reno to draw the lines and also amplify the possibilities for dealing with different religious convictions in our schools which are multiplying enormously. We tried to deal with cultural issues in the sensitive way that respected the differences of conviction and opinion of people on religion, on race, on other issues but still bound us together consistent with our Constitution.

The third thing we focused on, as I said, was home and work. And I mentioned that family leave, flex-time, the minimum wage, a tax cut for working families with modest incomes—that's a big part of the new balanced budget plan, too. That has a children's tax cut.

The fourth thing we focused on was public health and the environment. If you think about it, the Safe Drinking Water Act, the new food safety standards, cleaning up toxic waste dumps, these things are very important. If they make children healthier, it makes us stronger.

We've made a lot of strides in that in the last 4½ years, indeed, in the last 25 years. And one of the things that I was doing this morning before I came down here to be with you was to deal with the obligation of the Environmental Protection Agency to issue new regulations, as they're bound to do on a 5-year cycle, to control pollution from soot and smog. That's very important. And I approved some very strong new regulations today that will be somewhat controversial, but I think kids ought to be healthy.

Our approach on the environment, interestingly enough, has been a lot like the approach that you've heard here on the schools. We think if we have high standards for protecting the environment, but we're flexible in how those standards are implemented and we give adequate time and adequate support for technology and creativity, that we can protect the environment and grow the economy. And we know we can never be put in the position of choosing one or the other because in the end, a declining economy has always, always led to an environment that is less clean. Always. So we've got to find a way to do both.

And I want to thank the Vice President for his leadership on this issue. And I know that those who have opposed the higher standards, I want to just tell you: Read the implementation schedule; work with us. We will find a way to do this in a way that grows the American economy. But we have to keep having a clean environment if we want healthy children.

Children with asthma don't do very well in school. Children with gripping allergies that they could have avoided if they hadn't had to breathe dirty air don't do as well in school. So the public health and the environment are important parts of this.

We're trying extraordinary new measures to give cities the means they need to clean up their environment so they can attract the right kind of investment. And we're determined to clean up 500 more toxic waste dumps; that will bear directly on education. And if we do it right, it will cause our economy to grow faster, not slower. So I hope all of you will support that.

And finally, let me say, in education we have focused on empowerment, on things like charter schools, public school choice, more funds for Head Start to get more kids well-prepared, better terms for college loan programs so more young people can borrow money and go to college and never worry about going broke because they couldn't pay their loans back, so they could pay them back as a percentage of their income, a huge expansion in work-study, a big expansion in Pell grants. And then, on top of what we've already done, if a balanced budget plan passes, it will be the biggest increase in funds for education in over a generation. And including funds to support the schools that are trying to set high standards, that are trying to be innovative with things like charter schools, more funds to support putting the right kind

of technology with the right kind of training and software in all of our schools, more funds to support a massive volunteer effort to make sure all of our 8-year-olds have a chance to read well.

We still have some serious challenges in our schools. One of the most interesting things that we finally saw manifested in test scores this year was that the third international math and science test scores came out this year on last year's scores, and they showed that for the first time, American fourth graders scored way above the international average on math and science. And that even though this was just a few thousand of our kids who took this, it's a representative sample by race, by income, and by region, proving that our children can learn even though they are very diverse in incomes and in ethnic backgrounds and in living circumstances—way above the national average. That's the good news.

The bad news is, we were the only nation in the world to score way above the national average on the fourth grade tests and well below the international average on the eighth grade tests. It happened in no other country in the world.

Why is that? Let's be real here. The reason you stood up and clapped for Yvonne is you know that a lot of these kids are living in hellaciously difficult circumstances, right? That's why you did that. And you did it because you want to believe that those kids can make it if we do right by them. And she made you believe they could, and it was thrilling to you. But when a lot of these kids reach adolescence, every single problem that affects every adolescent hits them multiplied by a hundred. And we've got to find a way to keep their parents or other concerned adults involved with them when they reach adolescence.

The fourth grade tests should make you ecstatic. It punctures all the myths that we can't compete globally in educational performance, uniformly, because we have so many poor people, because we have so many immigrants, because we're so diverse. That is our meal ticket to the future if we do it right. That punctures the myth.

The eighth grade tests should sober us up. These kids have a tough time out there. That's one of the reasons that in our budget we're determined to give half of them health insurance for the first time and deal with some of these health problems we're talking about. We shouldn't stop until they all have health care. It's unconscionable.

Let me say, in the moment, the most important thing is that you know we can do it. That's what the fourth grade tests mean. The second most important thing is you know that we can't stop until every child has the kind of parental involvement that 30 years of academic studies have shown is pivotal in the success of children.

And so, one of the things, to go back to Representative Purcell's formulation, plus my little add-on about either leading the way, getting out of the way, or trying to support the way—one of the things that I think is important is that today the Department of Education is publishing a handbook to help parents everywhere understand and live up to their responsibilities and work with the schools. And Dick gave me the first copy here. It's called "A Compact For Learning."

And I would like to explain something to you. We are required under Federal law to have a written compact for the Title I schools, and so we thought we ought to have an outline here that would at least increase the chances that we might be as successful in these other schools as the ones that you've seen featured today.

But what we want to do with this is to challenge every principal, every teacher, every parent to have a written compact that outlines their expectations and their responsibilities for helping every child to learn high standards, with serious, sustained, effective parental involvement. That's how we'll try to support the way. It is very, very important.

I have to tell you, I feel more hopeful today—I've been working on these educational issues for nearly two decades now, and I have never been more hopeful than I am today that what I consider to be the central problem with the system of education in America might be overcome.

The central problem is the following, as you have just heard: Every challenge in America has been met by somebody, somewhere. How can that be a problem? Because

if that is true, we should be able to replicate it everywhere.

You heard the Vice President say 98 percent of us have televisions. Well, once, just a few of us did. We all figured out how everybody could get a television. You heard John Doerr say that 50 percent of the parents—more than 50 percent of the parents with children in school now have personal computers in their homes. Any pretty soon it will be a lot higher than that and go way down in lower income levels.

Why is it—and I mean this as a compliment to our first speakers, our first three speakers who talked about their schools, and the principal of the San Antonio school district—why is it that we want to scream with joy when we hear them talk, when we heard our friend from Chattanooga talking about how they served the parents—and they had no excuses? Why did we want to scream with joy when we heard that? Because they are exception, not the rule.

So, no offense, but I'd like it if 5 years from now they could come back to this stage and give all these talks and receive polite applause and the gratitude of a nation for getting everybody else to follow their lead so they would no longer be the exception and not the rule.

We'll do our part. I hope you'll help us get this handbook out and get it made alive in the work of the school districts and the country and all the schools. You'll do yours. But remember, our kids can do it. The only question is whether we're going to do our part to make sure they get their chance to do it. And that is, in many ways, the central obligation of adult Americans at this moment in our history.

And I think we owe a great debt of gratitude to the Vice President and Mrs. Gore for every year reminding us about what's most important in all our lives and in our country's life.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:40 p.m. in Langford Auditorium at Vanderbilt University.

Statement on the Death of Jacques Cousteau

June 25, 1997

Hillary and I, along with tens of millions around the world, were saddened to learn of the death of a man with rare insight and extraordinary spirit, Jacques Cousteau. While we mourn his death, it is far more appropriate that we celebrate his remarkable life, and the gifts he gave to all of us.

Jacques Cousteau will be remembered for many things. He enabled mankind to truly become part of the sea and the creatures that live there, inventing scuba gear and creating the first one-person submarine. Most appropriately, he will be remembered for his service to us all on the good ship *Calypso*. Through his many documentaries, movies, and television specials, Captain Cousteau showed us both the importance of the world's oceans and the beauty that lies within. We are all far richer, and more caring, for his having shared his time on Earth with the human family.

One of his most important documentaries was titled "The World of Silence." Thanks to a life spent dedicated to serving all of God's creation, his legacy will be not silence. Rather, it will be continuing to inspire people the world over to love, appreciate, and respect the sea.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Cyprus

June 25, 1997

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. Chairman:)

In accordance with Public Law 95–384 (22 U.S.C. 2373(c)), I submit to you this report on progress toward a negotiated settlement of the Cyprus question. The previous submission covered progress through January 31, 1997. The current submission covers the period February 1, 1997, through March 31, 1997.

The highlight of this reporting period was the start of U.N.-sponsored proximity talks on the island. The United States strongly supported efforts by the United Nations to engage the two Cypriot leaders productively