

character does count for our citizens, our communities, and our Nation, and this week we celebrate the importance of character in our individual lives and in the life of our country.

Instilling sound character in our children is essential to maintaining the strength of our Nation into the 21st century. The core ethical values of trustworthiness, fairness, responsibility, caring, respect, and citizenship form the foundation of our democracy, our economy, and our society. These qualities are not innate but learned, and we must ensure that we nurture them—both through our words and our example—in our Nation's young people.

More than any other institution, the family is the cradle of character, giving children their first crucial lessons in attitude and behavior. In today's complex society, where children are subject to pressures and negative influences rarely experienced by earlier generations, parents face great challenges as they strive to impart to their children the values that will help them become caring and responsible members of society.

My Administration has worked hard to give parents new tools to help them fulfill their important responsibilities. We worked to require V-chips on all new televisions to give parents greater control over what their children watch; we collaborated with the television industry to encourage the airing of more educational programming for children; and we negotiated a breakthrough agreement with the entertainment and broadcast industries to create a voluntary ratings system that will help parents identify programs containing material inappropriate for children. Our proposed funding for the Anti-Gang and Youth Violence Strategy will provide for after-school initiatives in communities across the country to help keep young people occupied in wholesome activities, off the streets, and out of trouble while their parents are at work.

Schools also have an important role in educating our young people about the difference between right and wrong. My Administration has recognized this by creating partnerships with the States to help our schools do a better job of teaching character to America's students. Our push for rigorous standards and

our promise to open the doors of college to all students who work hard let students know that good character really does count and will be rewarded with expanded opportunity. We also should encourage and commend the schools across our country that have begun to incorporate volunteer service as a curriculum requirement, teaching students the important life lessons of sharing, compassion, and civic responsibility.

Developing strong values in America's children requires the participation of all our people. As we observe this special week, I ask that all Americans demonstrate in their personal and public lives, and teach actively to our country's children, the high ethical standards that are essential to good character and to the continued success of our Nation.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim October 19 through October 25, 1997, as National Character Counts Week. I call upon the people of the United States, government officials, educators, religious, community, and business leaders, and the States to commemorate this week with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this seventeenth day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-second.

William J. Clinton

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The President's Radio Address

October 18, 1997

Good morning. This week Hillary and I have been visiting our neighbors in South America. Along with the distinguished American delegation of Congressmen, several

Cabinet members, and other members of the administration, we've savored the hospitality and the uniqueness of each country. But as we've traveled from Venezuela to Brazil to Argentina, we've also had the chance to see that much more unites the people of the Americas than separates us.

We cherish the same values: freedom and equality, family and community, peace and democracy. We aspire to prosperity through free enterprise, open markets, a commitment to give everyone who will work for it a chance to succeed, and a dedication to preserving the environment while growing the economy. And we all believe in providing all our children with a world-class education so that they can fulfill their God-given promise in the 21st century.

Last summer's balanced budget agreement, with the largest new investment in education since 1965, will take us a long way toward our sweeping but straightforward agenda. By the year 2000, we want to ensure that every 8-year-old can read, every 12-year-old can log on to the Internet, every 18-year-old can go on to college, and every adult can keep on learning.

On this trip, we worked to establish education partnerships with other countries, especially in bringing the benefits of technology and the Internet to even the very poorest neighborhoods and village schools.

Back home, as the new school year gets really underway, we're hooking up more of our own classrooms to the Internet, kicking off the America Reads program to mobilize a huge number of volunteers, especially college students and young AmeriCorps team leaders, to make sure that all of our children can read independently by the third grade. And we're finally opening the doors of college to anyone who is willing to work for it, with more Pell grants and work-study slots, the \$1,500 a year HOPE scholarship tax credit for the first 2 years of college, and tax cuts and education IRA's to help students pay for the cost of the junior and senior years, graduate school, and other training.

Still, we can't rest. A vital and vigorous debate over how best to improve public education will be waiting for me when I get back to Washington. Everyone knows we need to do more to boost the quality of public

schools; the question is, how? Some people think we should give students vouchers to help pay for private schools if they don't think public schools are good enough. They say the competition will even make the public schools better. It may sound like a good argument, but I think it's wrong. Too many of our public schools are underfunded already, and besides, there are better ways to improve the public schools in a way that doesn't siphon off precious tax dollars to help a few students at the expense of the other 90 percent.

My strategy is to set high standards, measure student performance against them, inject more competition and choice into the public school system, and support local initiatives like school uniforms, after-school and summer-school programs that increase order, safety, and learning.

First, we must set national standards of academic achievement and then have voluntary tests, starting with fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math, to measure them. Second, we must recruit more volunteers to America Reads so that we can have an army of volunteer reading tutors in our schools, helping every child read independently by the end of the third grade. Third, we must also bring more choice and competition into public education. The right way to do this is by empowering more parents and students to choose the public schools they attend and by bringing more charter schools to more communities.

Since I became President, the number of public charter schools in America has grown from one to 700. Parents, educators, and community leaders are creating and operating these new schools within the public school system that are freed from bureaucratic redtape but accountable to parents, students, and communities that support them. And they stay open only if they meet the high standards of performance.

I endorse bipartisan efforts in the House and Senate to help communities open 3,000 more charter schools in the coming years by giving States incentives to issue more charters, more flexibility to try new reforms and strengthen accountability, and funds to help them get started, funds guaranteed in our balanced budget agreement. Now, that's a

good example of what I mean when I say politics should stop at the schoolhouse door.

We also have to strengthen existing schools. I support another bipartisan proposal that will help low-achieving, low-income schools transform themselves through proven reforms, everything from intensive reading instruction to school uniforms to after-school tutoring to mandatory summer school for students who fall behind.

Virtually every problem facing our schools today has been solved by a community somewhere in America. We have to bring these solutions to the schools that need them the most. The good news is we can do it, as the rising performance of our students compared to students in other nations shows.

Our schools are improving, and they can get better, much better. No single magic bullet will improve our schools, but high standards, the voluntary tests to measure them, good teaching, well-run schools with the latest technology, and old-fashioned, safe, orderly environments will make education better. Working together, we can do it. Our children deserve no less, and our Nation's future depends upon it.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 8:15 a.m. on October 17 in Room 2233 of the Sheraton Hotel in Buenos Aires, Argentina, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on October 18.

Remarks at Nahuel Huapi National Park in San Carlos de Bariloche, Argentina

October 18, 1997

President Menem, distinguished members of the Argentine Government, Governor Verani, Mayor Miguel, Dr. Varotta, Director Suarez, and Colonel Cabana, thank you very much.

Mr. President, let me begin by thanking you for your wonderful hospitality to Hillary, to me, to all of our team from the Cabinet and the American administration. We're very grateful to you. We are also grateful for our broad and deep partnership with Argentina. From peacekeeping missions around the globe to our cooperation in the far reaches of outer space, from expanding trade to ex-

tending its benefits to all our people, from the peaceful use of nuclear power to the fight against terrorism, over the last 2 days we have worked hard to deepen our cooperation to benefit all of our people.

For the children in this audience, our partnership to protect the environment of our nations and the entire globe is perhaps the most important part of what we must do together.

Eighty-four years ago this month, two visionaries of the Americas arrived together in this place where nature and civilization meet. One was Theodore Roosevelt. No American President had spent more time thinking about the New World as a community of democracies. No American President had done more to preserve and protect our natural environment. His traveling companion was Perito Moreno, the man who founded this magnificent domain, Nahuel Huapi National Park, a remarkable gift to future generations.

Mr. President, it is up to us now to act with the foresight and in the spirit of Roosevelt and Moreno in dealing with today's great environmental challenges: how to bring the blessings of global growth to all nations and still protect not just our national environments but the planet itself.

One of our severest challenges clearly is climate change. The evidence is compelling that increasing emissions of greenhouse gases are leading to the warming of our planet and that global warming could lead to profound and destructive changes in the way we lead our lives. Among the consequences will be the more rapid spread of diseases, the rising of the oceans, flooding lowlands on various continents and islands in the oceans, and more frequent and severe weather events in all continents, including more severe droughts and floods.

Five years ago, the nations of the world began to address this challenge at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. This December, when more than 150 nations gather in Kyoto, Japan, we can make, and we must make, more progress toward a solution. Our goal must be to set realistic and binding limits on greenhouse gas emissions and then to create a blueprint to guide us for the future.

In meeting the challenge of climate change, clearly the United States and the rest