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Too much time has already been lost. The issues on the table at Wye River are very important, and more difficult issues lie ahead in the implementation of any agreement the parties may reach and in the permanent status talks for a just and lasting peace in the region.

Secretary Albright and the Vice President and I and our entire team will do everything we can to make peace possible, at Wye River and beyond. But in the end, it is up to the leaders standing with me today, to their courage, their vision, their determination, and a shared understanding that the future has to be a shared in peace.

I hope you and my fellow Americans and the world will wish them, and all of us, well in these next few days.

Thank you very much.

Q. Mr. President, can a Palestinian state be achieved by 1999?

The President. Let me say—I know there are many questions—we have discussed this. There is so much work to be done, and all three of us have determined that we should not at this moment take questions but that we should get about the business at hand. And as we make progress and if we've got something really good to say to you, then there'll be plenty of time for a lot of questions and answers. But for right now, we think it's time to go to work.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:16 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House, following discussions with Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority.

Remarks at the White House Conference on School Safety

October 15, 1998

The President. Thank you. Your kindness is interfering with my determination to stay on schedule. [*Laughter*] But thank you very much. I want to thank Secretary Riley and Attorney General Reno for their devotion and consistent work on this matter. I thank the Vice President. He and Hillary and I are delighted to have all of you here at the White House today, and the many, many people all across America who are joining us, thanks to the technological revolution.

I thank the Members of Congress who are here. And Governor, thank you for coming, and the mayors and the other members of the administration, and all the distinguished citizens who are here. Our good friend Edward James Olmos, thank you for being here.

I saw a survey, a public opinion survey, a few months ago that asked the American people what they thought the most important story of the first 6 months of 1998 was, and dwarfing everything else was the concern our people had for the children who were killed in their schools. And I think that your presence here and the number of people who are involved all across America, the quality of the panelists and, indeed, the courage of many of them—the mother of one of the children killed at Jonesboro, Arkansas, in my home State, was on the morning panel with Hillary—this is truly a moving thing. And it's a very important thing for our country.

You know, when I leave here—and I hope I don't have to leave before this panel is over, but I think all of you know that we have been able to put together a conference for several days, a meeting between the Prime Minister of Israel and the Chairman of the PLO in our attempts to make the next big step toward peace in the Middle East. And I got to thinking about it on the way over here today, as I was walking over from the Oval Office, and all the things I'm trying to get these people to lay down and get over and give up, so they can go on with their children's future, so that we can stop innocent children from being killed in the place in the world that is the home of the world's three great monotheistic religions.

It's all a part of our attempt not to give up on anybody and not to permit hatred or anger to destroy even one child's life anywhere. And if we're going to do that elsewhere in the world, to try to be a force for good, then we have to be as good as we can here at home. And all of you are trying to help us achieve that, and I'm very, very grateful to you.

Because this is the only chance I'll have to do it today, and because all of you care so much about education, I'd like to just take a moment to talk about where these budget

negotiations are on Capitol Hill. They're about to conclude, I hope. They've certainly gone on long enough. But we're not quite there yet. However, even though there are still points outstanding, I believe we'll succeed. And as the Vice President said, one thing we know already, we know that now this budget will reflect a major commitment to education and to the future of our children.

I am very pleased it will make the first installment on our plan to hire 100,000 new teachers. You heard the Vice President's catalog of the class size issue, but the Secretary of Education tells me that we haven't fully grasped it because, unlike the baby boom, we think that this increase in our children will go on more or less indefinitely, and we've got a lot of very fine teachers in the classroom who will be retiring in the next few years. So this is a huge challenge for us.

The United States has never before done anything like this. And there were a lot of people who honestly thought I was wrong to fight for this or they disagreed with me, but it seems to me that we had enough experience when we put 100,000 police on the street. I was told the United States had never done anything like that before. We didn't have anything to do with telling the cities where the police should go, but the results have been pretty satisfactory. And everywhere I go, someone mentions it to me.

If it worked there and we have crime at a 25-year low, how much more important is it to put the children in the classroom? And this will make a major downpayment toward our goal of an average class size of 18 in the early grades, very different from what has been reported.

And I should also say that when the Attorney General and the Secretary of Education went out across the country in the wake of all of these school shootings and they met with educators and they met with people talking about how we can prevent these things from happening in the first place, one of the things that they were told was, ''Get us small classes in the early grades so that we can get to know these children, find out the ones who obviously have got some serious problems, and try to get them the help they need before their lives and others' are irrevocably changed.'' So this is a very, very good day for the United States.

There were some other very important educational initiatives that will be fully supported: our child literacy drive, to make sure every child can read independently by the end of the third grade; our college mentoring drive, to help lower-income students prepare for college and to be able to tell every one of them what kind of financial aid they'll get if they stay in school and learn their lessons and stay out of trouble. It increases support for Head Start, expands the number of innovative charter schools. There are now a thousand of those schools in America; there was one when I became President, and there will be 3,000 before we're done in 2000. We will provide for half a million summer jobs for our young people, a program that many had sought to eliminate. It will provide for after-school programs for a quarter million young people. And I think we all know how important that is.

I'm very, very grateful for the strong support I have received from the members of my party in the Congress to turn away attempts to actually cut funds from our public schools and instead to renew our historic commitment to them, to more and better-trained teachers, to smaller classes, to hooking up all those classrooms to the Internet by the year 2000, for extra support for children who need it, for accountability and choice. This is what I mean by putting partisanship behind progress, by putting people ahead of politics. And I am grateful to all those in both parties who are responsible for pulling this agreement together.

There's still a lot to be done. A lot of these teachers we'll hire will have to hold class in trailers or hallways or crowded or crumbling classrooms. I proposed in the State of the Union a targeted tax cut for school modernization that was fully paid for, wouldn't take a dime from the surplus, won't create a single new Federal bureaucracy, but it will lower the cost of building these buildings. It could mean as much as 300 new schools in Florida alone next year.

If our children are learning in trailers and schools with broken windows and where the wiring won't even permit them to be hooked up to computers, then we're not getting them

ready for the 21st century. So I do want to say, while I am profoundly grateful for the 100,000 teachers, I am determined to see that we finish the job next year in the next Congress.

Now, I also want to thank the First Lady for her role in this conference. We've been at this a long time. In 1983, when I was Governor of our State, I asked Hillary to chair a commission on school standards, and one of the things that we fought hardest for, that was very controversial at the time, was to have a class size limit of 20 in the early grades. And 15 years ago, it was a hard fight, and we got it. And I haven't checked the numbers yet, but I bet, given the growth in population in our schools, they're being swamped and hard-pressed to meet it. And we really believe that making this a national goal and sticking with it will pay major, major benefits to our children all across the country.

Let me also say what I've already said a little bit of. The American people—if I had been polled, I would have been right there with them. I think that all of us were shocked by the violence we saw in Springfield and Paducah and Jonesboro and Edinboro and Pearl. I think we're still disturbed when we see the sights of metal detectors in school doorways or see gangs of young people who are on the streets when they ought to be in the halls of their schools.

We know that there are still some schools where children are afraid to go to school. And doing something about school violence, therefore, is very important, but also we have to understand the nature, the magnitude of the problem. Why do some teenagers from some troubled backgrounds pick up guns and open fire on their classmates? Why do some teenagers who don't appear to have trouble at home do the same thing? What is at the bottom of this, and what can we really do?

You know, I have to say this—and I'm not blaming anybody because I've done it myself, so I will say I will posit the fact that I have done this—but when people are in elected office and they hear about a problem like this and they know the people they're doing their best to represent are afraid, the first impulse is always to say, ''Well, if we just punish them a little harder and a little faster and kept them a little longer, everything would be all right.'' Now, the truth is that some people are so far gone and what they have done is so heinous that that is the appropriate thing to do. But I have never met a police officer in my life who believed that we could punish our way out of our social problems without other appropriate actions—not one time. And I think we're all here because we believe in a good society we would stop more bad things from happening in the first place.

The report that's being released today tells us that the vast majority of our schools are safe, that the majority of our children are learning in peace and security. But it also tells us that in too many schools students feel unsafe. Even if they're not, if they feel unsafe, it's going to have a huge detrimental impact on their ability to learn and grow and relate to their fellow students in an appropriate way.

In too many schools, there is still too much disrespect for authority and still too much intolerance of other students from different backgrounds. Our schools, all of them, must be sanctuaries of safety and civility and respect. Now, here are some things that I think we can do to help you meet the challenge.

First, in the schools with the biggest violence problems, security has to be the top priority. Today, I am pleased to announce a new $65-million initiative to help schools hire and train 2,000 new community police and school resource officers to work closely with principals and teachers and parents and the students themselves to develop antiviolence and antidrug plans, based on the actual needs of individual schools. Community policing has helped to make our streets safe. It can work for our schools, too.

I'm also very pleased that Congressman Jim Maloney of Connecticut has sponsored a bill to help schools use the funds available for hiring the community police officers to hire officers to work with the schools. This bill was passed by the House and Senate and it will get up here to me in a day or two and I'll look forward to signing it into law.

Second, we have to help schools recognize the early warning signs of violence and to respond to violence when it does strike. Today I want to tell you that soon I will be

sending to Congress a plan to create a School Emergency Response to Violence, the SERV program, that will work just as FEMA does when it responds to natural disasters. Project SERV will travel to where the trouble is and help communities respond quickly to school violence, from helping schools to meet increased security needs, to providing emergency and longer-term mental health crisis counseling for students, faculty, and their families.

Now, let me just say a word here of appreciation to somebody who is not here, to Tipper Gore, who, once she became 50, fell victim to the Vice President and my propensity for leg injuries—[*laughter*]—but, you know, more than any other person in America, since we've been here in the White House, she has tried to elevate the importance of proper mental health care and the fundamental dignity of it. And I think that we have got to, all of us, keep working until we remove any last vestige of stigma that attaches to getting treatment for children who have troubling mental problems. We know that most of them, the vast majority of them, can be treated successfully. And we know that it is not a cause for shame or denial among families. And we have to keep working on that. And all of you, I ask you to join Tipper Gore and others who understand this and try to make that a part of our approach to this issue as well.

Third, we can't stop the prevention efforts at the schoolhouse door. As I said, the budget agreement we reached today will double or more the after-school programs that keep young people safe after the bell rings. But if young people leave the safe school and enter an unsafe community, they're in trouble.

Today we want to announce two new steps to help them met that challenge. Our safe schools/safe communities initiative will help 10 targeted communities develop plans to reduce youth violence and drug use in and out of school—not only more police but after-school programs, mentoring, counseling, conflict resolution, mental health services, and more. We wanted to put together, in at least 10 places that don't have it now, a truly comprehensive approach.

I'm also pleased to announce that in response to constructive criticism and suggestions from many Members of Congress and educators and community leaders across this country, we're going to overhaul our safe and drug-free schools program, which we have dramatically increased in the last few years, to require schools who get the funds to establish tough, but fair discipline rules; to put in place proven drug prevention strategies; to issue yearly school safety and drug use report cards to measure their own progress. These methods have worked so well in cities like Boston; they can work around the country, and it will guarantee that the money that's being spent will actually achieve the results that it's been appropriated to achieve.

Fourth, we have to expect more from young people themselves. Given the facts, the resources, the encouragement, almost all of them will do the right thing. This year we launched a huge media campaign to tell young people that drugs are wrong, illegal, and can kill you. Now we have to tell them they, too, have responsibilities to prevent youth violence, to help their fellow students who are violence prone, to report trouble signs they see, and try to help kids get the help they need.

I am pleased that MTV is going to work with us to launch a new campaign to encourage people to become mentors—young people—to help their peers resolve their conflicts peacefully. And again, I'm very grateful, and I'd like for all of you to join me in thanking MTV for their willingness to invest in this important endeavor. [*Applause*]

Lastly—I've spoken a little longer than I meant to because I want to really hear the panelists, but I return to the theme on which I began and what I will do when I leave here in working for the peace process in the Middle East. We have got to do more to teach our young people to have tolerance and respect for one another, to understand the rich and only superficial dichotomy that the more we appreciate each other's diversity, the more we reaffirm the fundamental core values and existence we have in common.

The recent death of young Matthew Shepard in Wyoming makes it all too clear to us that violence still can be motivated by prejudice and hatred. Yes, we do need a new

hate crimes law. And I have directed the Education Department Civil Rights Office to step up its enforcement to stop discrimination and harassment against students. But again, ultimately, we have to be reconciled to one another. We have to believe in one another's fundamental humanity and equal right to be here and to become whatever they can become.

And I hope that all of us—the young people of this country, because our school population is more diverse than ever before, and because to some extent they are unburdened by some of the problems that their parents and grandparents grew up with, can go either way with this issue. If they become the victims of a kind of a current climate of prejudice and bigotry and a sense of opposition and isolation because of our increasing diversity, it could wreak total havoc in this country in a way that we can't even imagine and even couldn't have imagined in the old days of the civil rights years. But if they do what they will do, left to their own better selves, then the increasing diversity of America is something that will guarantee us renewed strength, unparalleled opportunities in the 21st century world. So I don't think we should forget that, either. In the end, the human heart still counts for quite a great deal, and we ought to bring out the best in all the ones we can.

Now, I would like to start the program, and I'm going to sit down to do it. And I'd like to begin with Mr. Kent, Jamon Kent, who is the superintendent of the Springfield, Oregon, public schools, that I had the honor to visit after the terrible incident there. And because we're running a little late, I'm going to do something a little bit unconventional. I'm going to call on all the panelists to make their remarks and then open for questions, starting with Mr. Kent.

[*At this point, the panel discussion began.*]

The President. I don't want to violate my own rule, so I won't ask a question, but I do want to highlight one thing he said, because if it resonates with your experience, then we need your feedback to the Attorney General and to the Secretary of Education, ultimately, to the Congress.

We now have a national policy of zero tolerance for guns in schools. Last year I believe the number of—the Secretary of Education can correct me if I make a mistake—last year I believe there were 6,000 children who were found—students who were found with guns. Guns were taken, and they were sent home. This actually happened in Oregon to this young man right before he came back the next day and killed the kids.

So the question is, what is—we have to find a constitutional fix here, and then the schools have to have the resources so that you don't just take a gun and expel somebody because there's obviously something going on inside the child that is just as important as the physical manifestation of having the gun. So that was the one thing that they've really done in Springfield, is to sort of spark a nationwide reassessment of what we ought to do with the children besides just send them home.

And they've proposed a period of 72 hours or some sort of period of evaluation, and we're trying to work out the details of it. But if any of you have any thoughts about this, I would ask you to give it to us, because that's a very clear issue that was raised in the Springfield case, that I must confess, until I went and talked to them, had never occurred to me before.

I'd like to now call on Commissioner Paul Evans, the police commissioner from Boston, who led Boston's innovative operation ceasefire. I spent a half a day up there with the mayor and the commissioner and others several months ago. Any many of you know that Boston went for over 2 years without having a single child under 18 killed by a gun. That's an astonishing thing.

And so I would like for Commissioner Evans to make whatever remarks he'd like to make on this subject.

[*The panel discussion continued.*]

The President. I would like to make one brief observation about what the commissioner said, because I have spent a great deal of time in Boston, and I don't want to single them out in derogation of the astonishing efforts that have been made elsewhere, many of which have already been featured. But the thing that strikes me—it struck me when I

spent a day up there and I met with—the mayor's got a nun who represents him, who has this youth council for the city. The city has its own youth council, like others have the city council. But the thing that struck me about Boston is they do things that seem obvious when you hear about them, but a lot of people don't do it. The systematic contact that they have in a personal, one-to-one way, with a huge percentage of the young people in their cities is quite astonishing.

And if somebody asked me, in a sentence, why have they been so successful, I would say they mobilize in a systematic way a consistent contact with a huge percentage of the young people. The idea of, you know, ''Well, we hear we're going to have a gang problem in middle school. Why don't we go interview the customers.'' You know, if you were running a business that's exactly what you'd do. But I think they deserve a lot of appreciation, but also a lot of modeling for that.

[*The panel discussion continued.*]

The President. I have two brief things to say. First of all, don't you feel better knowing that there are people like her in the classrooms of America? [*Applause*]

And second, I want to thank you for what you said about school uniforms. When Secretary Riley and I set out to promote school uniforms around the country, there were some here in Washington who derided this as one of those ''little ideas'' that we were constantly harping on. It may be a little idea, but I have never been to a school that had them that didn't think it made a huge difference in the lives of the children there. And so I thank you for giving a boost to that endeavor.

[*The panel discussion continued.*]

The President. Thank you very much. First of all, I want to apologize to all of you, and in particular to Mayor Corradini, who made a terrific presentation, according to the First Lady. I got a call. We just completed our agreement on the budget and the negotiations. In a half hour or so, for the members of the press, we'll have a statement about that.

But let me say, first, I think about Congressman Etheridge, it is—one of the things that we desperately—that we need so much in Congress—Congress works better when there are people in the Congress who have all kinds of different experiences that are relevant. It's an incredible gift that we have a Member of the House of Representatives that was actually a State superintendent of public instruction. And the influence he can have on other Members and the role he can play in the years ahead I think is virtually limitless just because of the life he lived before he came there. And I'm very grateful for what he said today and for what he's done.

I would also like to thank Mayor Corradini for the report, for the recommendations, and for the ''Best Practices'' booklet. I think that we need—every single challenge we've got in this country, we'd be a lot better off if everybody who was working on it issued a ''Best Practices'' book, because one of my pet theories is that everybody solved every problem somewhere, but we're not very good at playing copycat when we ought to. So I thank her for that.

The only other thing I want to say, and then I want to turn it over to the Vice President and let him ask a question, is that the mayors recommended new youth counselors, and Bob talked about other kinds of support personnel on security issues. One of the things that we had to fight hardest for in 1983, that Hillary convinced me we ought to do 15 years ago, was to require every elementary school to have a counselor. But 15 years later, it looks like a pretty good decision.

And I think we have to—with people who have to pay for these things, with the taxpayers and others who may not deal with it, we need to let them know that a well-trained counselor dealing with the kind of challenges these children face is a terrific investment. And I appreciate the recommendation of the mayors, and I look forward to following up on them.

[*The panel discussion continued.*]

The President. Well, it would depend on whether it was an elementary school or higher grades. If you start with an elementary school, I would have an elementary school that would have classes of between 15 and

20 in the early grades. I would have a maximum number of kids in the school of about 300. I would have—and about 1,000 for the high school. I would have the support personnel. I'd have all the teachers trained, and I'd have a parent coordinator that had huge numbers of the parents coming in and out of the schools all the time.

And then I'd try to figure out how to make young people like Liberty the rule rather than the exception. That is—I was sitting here when she was telling her story—I was thinking about—she got to the Boys and Girls Club, and that's a good thing, but there's a whole bunch of kids that live in the place where she does that didn't get there, and that's not a good thing. And so I think that would mean you'd either have comprehensive before- and after-school programs and summer school programs for the kids on site, or there would be some system by which the school, in effect, connected every child to responsible adult community groups of some kind that Professor Earls says works so well.

I think those are the things that I would—I basically believe you've got to have problemsolving mechanisms, but I think the prevention approach is by far the best approach. And I think almost all—so that's what I would do.

In the high schools, it's more complicated. I'd also have a uniform policy. I think they're very important. I'd be in a community that had a strong antitruancy policy. If I had a violence problem, I'd have a curfew. I'd be interconnected with all of the churches and synagogues and other faith institutions. I would have the school bringing people in in a systematic way, and I would be connected with the police department that would do what the commissioner explained that they try to do in Boston.

But I think—in the high schools, I think that, as I said, I'd make sure that we had programs that would keep every child who needed it, give them all an opportunity to be in the school.

Let me just say one other thing that I think is worth saying. It may have been put on the table while I was out briefly. But twice—if you read what the mayors say here, twice, they say, they talk about the importance of the arts programs, the music programs, the physical education programs, not the kids that are on the athletic teams, the other things. I have seen school after school after school all across this country, because of the financial burdens on the schools, have to abandon these programs. And I think it is terrible.

I think that—basically, all of these people are saying you've got to treat the whole child here, deal with the whole child, deal with the family situation, deal with the community situation. And I just wanted to put in a little plug for that. I think that there are a lot of ways to learn in this life, a lot of ways to communicate in this life, and a lot of ways for people to find greater peace and connection. And I think it's been a terrible setback to American education that so many schools have had to abandon their art programs, their music programs and their physical education programs for the nonteam athletes. Anything we can do to advance that I think would also be positive.

[*The panel discussion continued.*]

The President. Let me say, I wish we could stay here another hour, but we have another panel. We don't want to deprive them of the opportunity to make their contributions and to be heard. Perhaps at the end of that, you could have a more free-flowing question and answer session.

But again, let me thank all of you. And let me ask you to join me in thanking all of our remarkable panelists for their contributions.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:28 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to actor Edward James Olmos; and Paul E. Patton of Kentucky. Participants in the conference were Jamon Kent, public schools superintendent, Springfield, OR; Paul Evans, police commissioner, Boston, MA; Liberty Franklin, Boys and Girls Club Youth of the Year; Joanna Quintana Barraso, teacher, Coral Way Elementary School, Miami, FL; Felton J. (Tony) Earls, professor, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA; Mayor Deedee Corradini of Salt Lake City, UT; and Representative Bob Etheridge.

Remarks on the Budget Agreement and an Exchange With Reporters

October 15, 1998.

The President. Thank you very much. First of all, I would like to echo much of what has been said. I want to thank the members of our negotiating team. Erskine Bowles' swan song turned out to be quite a show, and I thank him for everything he's done, for me and for our country, but especially for these last 8 days. I thank John Podesta and Maria Echaveste, Jack Lew, Sylvia Matthews, the entire economic team that are back here.

I also want to make it clear that none of this could have been done, in my view, not a bit of it, if we hadn't had a strong, united front from the members of our party in both Houses, led by Tom Daschle and Dick Gephardt, who believe passionately in what we were fighting for for the American people.

And finally, let me say I would like to thank the leaders of the Republican Party who made these agreements with us. And I ask you, as I make my remarks about what I think was most important about them, just think—we didn't even start this work until after the whole budget year was over. Just think what we could do for America if we had these priorities all year long instead of just for 8 days. And I just can't tell you how grateful I am for these achievements.

Let me give you my perspective. First of all, in terms of the priorities I set forth in the State of the Union Address last January, we did save the surplus for the hard work of Social Security reform early next year. Secondly, we made major strides in renewing our public schools, especially with the truly historic commitment of 100,000 new teachers to reduce class size in the early grades. And thirdly, we made a profound commitment to strengthening our own economy here by assuming our responsibility to stabilize the global economy on which so much of our prosperity depends. Now without the perseverance of the people behind me and those whom they represent, none of that could have happened.

Let's look at the education issues. One hundred thousand new teachers will enable us to reduce class size in the early grades to an average of 18. Over here at this school violence conference that we sponsored all day, one of the things they kept hammering home, all these educators, was we can find the troubled children; we can prevent a lot of these problems if we can have them in small enough classes in the early grades.

We achieved full funding for other important educational initiatives, from child literacy to college mentoring, from after-school programs to summer jobs. We did meet our obligations to the International Monetary Fund. And we honored our obligations to the next generation by strongly protecting the environment, and I'd just like to mention three things: One, we got rid of the most objectionable environmental riders; two, we had a full funding of our clean water initiative, which is very important—remember, 40 percent of our lakes and rivers are still not clean enough for our people to swim in them—and three, as the Vice President said, we received a substantial increase to meet our responsibilities in the area of global climate change. So that's very important.

But let me say that in many ways I am most proud of the decision that this budget reflects not to squander the surplus until we meet our responsibilities to reform Social Security for the 21st century.

Yes, there were some disappointments. I wished that we had passed the school rehabilitation and construction proposal. We have to have school facilities so that we can have those smaller classes. And yes, I wish we'd passed the Patients Bills of Rights and campaign finance reform and the tobacco reform legislation and the minimum wage. But we can now go out and have a great national debate about that. The important thing that we have to recognize is that these hard-fought battles and major accomplishments represent, finally, in 8 days what we did not have for 8 months.

We were able to put the progress of the country ahead of partisanship. We were able to put people ahead of politics. And today every American can take a great deal of pride in knowing that we are going to save Social Security, that we are going to have 100,000 teachers, that we are going to continue to move forward on the environment, and that now we are free here in this administration