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our Nation's classrooms, to reduce class size, decrease discipline problems, and increase student learning. But you don't have to be a math whiz to know that more teachers and smaller classes means we also need more classrooms. Unfortunately, the Republican leadership in Congress failed the simple test to pass my school construction initiative to help communities build, repair, and modernize 5,000 schools around our country.

I'm disappointed that Congress also blocked our efforts to raise academic standards and strengthen accountability in our schools. At a time when our children's education matters more than ever to our children's future and to our Nation's strength in the 21st century, there are still even some Republicans in Congress who would shut down the Department of Education.

Now, in just a few days Americans will go to the polls to elect the next Congress. And there's a lot at stake. Our children don't need another 2 years of partisanship; they need 2 years of progress, of putting people over politics. And we need a Congress that doesn't retreat from our commitment to hire 100,000 teachers; a Congress that makes a commitment to modern schools so those teachers can teach in classrooms, not in trailers; a Congress that puts aside partisanship and puts our children's future first.

The American people have the power to elect that kind of Congress. Our children are counting on us to do it. So this Tuesday let me urge all of you, without regard to your party, please, go out and vote for a Congress that will strengthen education and strengthen our Nation for the 21st century.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from Glen Forest Elementary School, Falls Church, VA.

Remarks to the Community at Glen Forest Elementary School in Falls Church, Virginia

October 31, 1998

Thank you. Good morning. First, I would like to thank Susan Fitz, Fran Jackson; teachers, Lori Kuzniewski—I was in her class; Ms. Kristen Mullen's class; Alan Leis; Paula Johnson, your superintendent; John Butterfield, from the education association; Jim and Molly Cameron, from the PTA—all the people who made me feel so welcome at this school today.

This is the best of our country's future. I look around this crowd today, and I see people whose roots are all over the world, whose languages are very different, whose cultures are different, whose religions are different, who have come together on this school ground in a common endeavor of learning with a promise that our country opens to all people who are willing to work hard and be good citizens and do their part. It is thrilling for me to be here and look at you. I have a much better view than you do today.

And I loved being with the children in the classroom. The best part of this morning so far, for me, has been answering the children's questions. They ask very good questions; some of them I didn't want to answer even, they were so good. [*Laughter*] And it gave me a great deal of hope for the future.

You just heard my weekly radio address, so you know that I am very concerned about the overcrowding in our Nation's classrooms. We have, almost suddenly, the largest group of schoolchildren in our Nation's history. I was part of the last large group, the baby boom generation; all of us are now between the ages of 34 and 52. This group in school today is the first group that is larger.

We have two huge problems: One is represented here, all the house trailers; the other is represented by the dilemma in our largest cities, where we have huge numbers of students and wonderful old school buildings that were unoccupied for many years. They deteriorated. Many of them now can't even be hooked up to the Internet. And we must, as a nation, face this challenge.

In the last Congress, we were able to get a big downpayment on my plan for 100,000 more teachers in the early grades to take the average size of the classes down to 18 across America in the first 3 grades. But we have to have the school buildings, as well. And I did present a plan to the Congress, that I will present again early next year, that would enable us to build or modernize 5,000 schools. If you want the smaller classes, the

teachers have to have some place to meet with the students.

And I ask all of you, based on your personal experience here and without regard to any political differences you may otherwise have, to please, please help me convince the Congress that it is the right thing for America's children to have the smaller classes, to have more teachers, and to have modern schools. Every single child in America deserves them, and the United States ought to be in the forefront of helping achieve that. And I thank you for that.

Let me also say to all of you, I learned when I came here today, because I received a little card from one of the students, that next week is the week you have student elections at the school here. Now, all the students are going to vote. And what I'd like to say is, I hope that all the parents will be just as good citizens as the students are. Because Tuesday is election day in America, as well.

For nearly 6 years I have worked hard to bring our country together across all the lines that divide us, so that America would work the way this school works, so that we could all feel the way I think all of you feel today, coming from your different walks of life to this common ground. America ought to be a place of common ground, where we move forward together.

I am grateful for the fact that after 6 years we have nearly 17 million new jobs and the lowest unemployment in 28 years; the highest homeownership in history, over two-thirds of Americans in their own homes for the first time ever; the smallest percentage of our people on public assistance, welfare, in 29 years; lowest crime rate in 25 years. I am proud of that. I am also determined that we take this moment of prosperity, which has given us the first balanced budget since 1969 and a surplus, to meet the long-term challenges of America.

We talked about education today. There are other long-term challenges. Those of you who come from the rest of the world and have come here as immigrants, who have relatives in other countries, know that there is a lot of financial turmoil in the rest of the world. I have done my best to try to help stabilize the global economy because America depends upon the success of other people in other countries and their being able to have good jobs and raise their children and do better.

I have done my best to see America stand on the forefront of world peace. A week ago yesterday we announced the latest agreement between the Palestinians and the Israelis, and we hope it will be fully and faithfully implemented. And we will continue the work toward peace in the Middle East.

We have to look ahead to what happens when this huge generation of baby boomers retires, which is why I have said we should not spend this surplus on anything until we have reformed the Social Security system and reformed the Medicare system, to make sure that it can be preserved for the people who need it, especially when all the baby boomers retire.

We have to continue to work on the fact that many of our people, literally over half of our people, are in HMO's or other managed care plans. And this can be a good thing, because we have to save all the money we can. But it is wrong if a person is in a health care plan and the doctor says, ''You need to see a specialist,'' and the plan says, no. It is wrong if someone is in a car accident and they have to pass three hospitals that are closer on the way to an emergency room that happens to be covered by the plan. It is wrong if someone is pregnant and during the pregnancy, or someone is sick with cancer and has had chemotherapy and during that treatment an employer changes health care providers and the person has to change doctors.

All of that is wrong. That's why we want a Patients' Bill of Rights basically to say: Okay, let's manage the system, but let's put the health care of our people first and let medical decisions be made by medical professionals, not accountants. I think that is very important. All these issues are out there, issues that will affect the long-term stability and strength of the United States and our ability to do what should be done in the world.

So let me say that I've been very concerned periodically over the last 6 years, and I was especially concerned last year that in Washington, DC, in National Government,

there are not only different parties with different philosophies and different views—that is a good thing; we should have different parties, different philosophies, different views, different opinions—but there is a great deal of difference in constructive debate and extreme partisanship which keeps thing from being done.

In the last year, for 8 months we had extreme partisanship, which kept things from being done. And what we need to do is to put the progress of all of our people over the partisanship; we need to put people over politics; we need to celebrate our differences, but work together. That is what I am hoping will come out of this coming election. I hope that a Congress will be elected on Tuesday that will put the education of our children first and build or modernize these 5,000 schools.

I hope the election will produce a Congress that will not spend that surplus until we fix Social Security first, to stabilize our country, to stabilize our economy and to avoid a situation where when we retire we will have to either lower our standard of living or lower the standard of living of our children because we refused to take this moment to fix the Social Security system. I hope the next Congress will provide the American people with a Patients' Bill of Rights. I hope the next Congress will provide the American people with a bill to protect our children from the dangers of tobacco, the number one public health problem in America today. It is wrong that 3,000 children start smoking every day; 1,000 will die sooner because of this.

I hope the next Congress will reach across partisan lines and raise the minimum wage for 12 million Americans. The unemployment rate is low; the inflation rate is low. You cannot support a family on $5.15 an hour. We can afford to do it, and we should do it, and we ought to do it as Americans, across partisan lines.

I hope the next Congress will produce a genuine and bipartisan system of campaign finance reform, so that honest debate, instead of big money, controls elections.

All of these things are within your hands. So I say to all the adults who are here: Look at these children; look at how fortunate we are that they can come together and learn from each other and have the right kind of disagreements and go have an election next week in which they campaign and make their case and everybody votes. We should set a good example. This country is still around after 220 years, having undergone unbelievable changes in the makeup of our citizenry because more than half the time, more than half the people have been right on the big issues.

This is no ordinary time. The world is changing very fast. It is, therefore, no ordinary election. The future of these children, the future of our country in the 21st century, is riding on it. So I implore all of you, if the education of our children is important to you, if the stability of our country and the stability and cause of peace in the world is important to you, please set a good example, show up on Tuesday, vote, make your voice heard, and go home and talk to your children about what you did and how it is at the core of everything that makes our country worth living and fighting for.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:45 a.m. on the athletic field. In his remarks, he referred to Susan Fitz, principal, and teachers Fran Jackson, Lori Kuzniewski, and Kristen Mullen, Glen Forest Elementary School; Alan Leis, deputy superintendent of schools, and Paula Johnson, area superintendent, Fairfax County, VA; John Butterfield, president, Fairfax Education Association; and Jim and Molly Cameron, co-presidents, Parent Teacher Association.

Statement on Signing the Utah Schools and Land Exchange Act of 1998

October 31, 1998

Today I am very pleased to sign into law H.R. 3830, the "Utah Schools and Land Exchange Act of 1998."

This legislation is an occasion for celebration for the people of Utah and, indeed, all Americans who care about environmental protection and public land management.

This exchange of land, mineral rights, commercial properties, and natural treasures between the United States and the State of