AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

So I'm going to work as hard as I can with members of both parties to get that done as they come back. I'm looking forward to it, looking forward to talking to the leaders of the Senate and the House in both parties, and going back to work.

President's Vacation and Home Purchase

Q. Mr. President, after all you have done in the last 2 weeks, do you need a vacation? [*Laughter*] And how do you like your new house?

The President. Yes, even by my standards this was a fairly active vacation, you know. Hillary is keeping me busy. And we had a lot of—we also had finalized the house. I love this house. It's a beautiful old house, and the older part of it was built in 1889. The people who lived in it for the last 18 years have taken wonderful care of it. It was obviously a place that has been lovingly tended to. And it will be a good place to wake up in the morning—lots of light. I like the neighbors; they were nice. And so I'm looking forward to it; I know that Hillary is. And I'm very pleased that we were able to find it.

And I'd also like to say, since you asked me the question, a special word of thanks to all the people who opened their homes to Hillary or to Hillary and me, to people on our behalf, as we were looking for a place. As you might imagine, the circumstances for them were somewhat unusual, the publicity for them—most of them—was somewhat—was unprecedented. And I was very touched by the way we were received.

And I had a wonderful vacation. I liked it all. But I had to come up to Camp David to get a little rest this weekend.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt.

Remarks at Coleman Place Elementary School in Norfolk, Virginia

September 6, 1999

Wow! Let's give her a hand. She was great. [*Applause*] Come on, more. [*Applause*] I asked Le'Shia when we went up here, I said, ''Are you going to have a good time?'' She said, ''Yes, I am.'' [*Laughter*] I think she's got a good future in politics if she keeps it up.

Well, good afternoon to all of you and happy Labor Day. I want to thank you for coming out today. I want to thank those who are here—my longtime friend and former colleague as Governor, Senator Chuck Robb; and Congressman Scott and Congressman Sisisky. They are working to pass legislation in Washington which would make what we do today part of a national movement so that all of our children could have what Le'Shia says she wants and the children here deserve. And I think we owe Senator Robb and these Members of Congress our support for their leadership for our children.

I also want to thank our wonderful Secretary of Education, Dick Riley, who, as Chuck Robb said, worked with us nearly 20 years ago—the three of us were working together. He just finished a big bus tour all across the South, celebrating the start of a new school year and the rededication of the American people and our educators and our families to higher standards and better performance for all of our children.

I want to thank your mayor; your superintendent; your board president; our principal here, Jeanne Tomlinson, who showed me around; and the teachers who visited with me; the great labor leaders John Sweeney and Bob Georgine, who are here; and the presidents of the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, Sandra Feldman and Bob Chase; the Norfolk Federation of Teachers president, Marian Flickinger; the Tidewater Central Labor Council president, Jerry Hufton; the Virginia State AFL–CIO leader, Jim

Leaman; Cheri James of the Virginia Education Association; and all the State legislators who are here. Will you raise your hand, all the members of the legislature who are here? We've got a ton of legislators who are here.

I wanted to do that to show you that what we are here about—the education of our children and the modernization of our schools—has broad and deep support, and I am profoundly grateful to all of them.

Tropical Storm Dennis

Before I get into my remarks—most of what needs to be said has probably already been said—but I want to just say a word, if I might, about the harm that Virginia has sustained from Tropical Storm Dennis and from the tornadoes that have devastated parts of your State.

On Saturday in Hampton, which is quite near here, 150 homes were destroyed and 6 people were injured. As we pray for their swift recovery, we are also already working on those who lost their homes and to help them get their homes and their property back. FEMA is on the ground in Hampton, and I want to say a special word of thanks to the State and local officials for their prompt and very able action, which might well have saved lives.

I also want you to know that, as has been requested, I have declared a major disaster for the Commonwealth of Virginia, and have ordered Federal aid to be made available to help the State and local recovery efforts.

School Modernization

Now, this is a remarkable day. This is Labor Day, which is really misnamed. Labor Day really means ''no-labor day.'' [*Laughter*] It's supposed to honor the working men and women by giving them a day off. So all of you had to show up here, and the leaders of American labor and education, the leaders of Virginia labor and education, have shown up here—many of them swinging hammers when they'd rather be swinging in hammocks.

I want to thank the students who have made even a greater sacrifice; they have shown up at school a day early. [*Laughter*] And I see several, like Le'Shia, in their school uniforms, a policy that my family and I and our administration heartily support.

I want to thank those of you who work here at this school and throughout this district. Your superintendent has already spoken eloquently. But there are tremendous gains which Norfolk students have made on your achievement tests, improving at greater than the statewide average, and I applaud you for that.

I want to thank those who have helped this school achieve its improving excellence. I know your principal has gotten the Navy to donate computers and wire the rooms so that they can all be connected to the Internet, which is what we're trying to do for every schoolroom in America by our new millennial year, next year. I thank them. I thank the union electricians who are finishing the job today.

And let me say I'm also very pleased that the Norfolk district has taken advantage of the Federal e-rate program, which was spearheaded and developed by Vice President Gore. It enables districts to purchase network equipment and other services, and where appropriate, to get cheaper rates to hook up to the Internet, because we want there to be no digital divide in our schools. The poorest children in America deserve to be a part of America's high-technology future. And we're determined to see that it will happen.

Let me also say that I'm very pleased that Norfolk has been able to hire 33 new teachers this fall, thanks to funds that we won with the support of all three of these Members of the Congress last fall when Congress agreed to support my plan to hire 100,000 new highly trained teachers around America.

All this shows that when we work together, when we put our children ahead of politics and leave politics at the schoolhouse door, we can make progress. President Kennedy once said that the time to fix the roof is when the Sun is shining. We are here, literally, fixing buildings today at a time when it may be a little overcast, but surely the Sun has been shining on America.

We have the longest peacetime expansion in our history during these last 6½ years I

have been privileged to serve as your President, 19.4 million new jobs, the lowest unemployment rate in 29 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 32 years, the lowest crime rates in 26 years. We had a $290 billion deficit when I took office; it was projected to be $100 billion more than that this year. Instead, we have a $99 billion surplus with more to come, thanks again to Senator Robb, the Members of Congress who are here, and others who supported our program.

I say this because now the big debate in Washington is, what are we going to do with our prosperity. There is a huge debate about this. Well, first of all, I think we ought to ask ourselves whether we've got any roofs in America that need to be fixed while the Sun is shining, before the rain comes again. I believe that we need to look at the great, long-term challenges of America. And I'll just mention three today.

One, how do we keep this economic prosperity going and spread it to the people in the communities that have still not felt the positive effects of these recoveries? That's a big issue. Two, how do we deal with the challenge of the aging of America? The number of people over 65 will double in 30 years as we baby boomers retire. And I can tell you, my generation—and I'm the oldest of the baby boomers—is determined that our retirement will not impose a huge burden on our children and their ability to raise our grandchildren. We don't want that to happen. And third, how can we meet the challenge of giving all of our children, from increasingly diverse backgrounds, a chance at the future that they deserve, beginning with a world-class education? And they, these children, are the first generation of American children to be larger than the baby boom generation.

Now, I think we ought to meet those challenges. I think we ought to use this moment to get America out of debt for the first time since 1835 and guarantee long-term economic prosperity with low interest rates and more investment and higher incomes and more jobs for all our people. I believe we ought to give tax incentives to people to invest in the poorest neighborhoods in America, whether they're on Indian reservations or in the Mississippi Delta, or in the inner cities. We ought to give people the same incentives to invest in markets here in America we give them today to invest overseas in developing countries.

I just finished a tour around America called the new markets tour. And I want to say a special word of thanks to a man who has been in business here many years who flew down with us today, Ron Dozoretz, for his efforts to help me bring economic opportunity to people who haven't had it. But let me tell you something—all of you know this—we may have the lowest unemployment rate in 29 years. We may have the lowest welfare rolls in 32 years. We may have the longest peacetime expansion in history. But you know as well as I do there are still people and places that have not been part of our recovery.

Now, in Washington, all of the experts worry how we can keep this expansion going without inflation. How can we keep creating jobs and raising incomes without inflation? The easiest way is to put people to work who don't have jobs and turn them into consumers and taxpayers. That means no inflation and continued economic growth. And that is what I am committed to.

The second thing we ought to do is recognize that if the baby boomers don't want to be a burden on their children and their grandchildren, then we ought to take this opportunity—the best we will ever have in our lifetime—to fix Social Security and Medicare and add a prescription drug coverage to the Medicare program and strengthen it so it will be there for the baby boom generation.

And the third thing we have to do if we want our children to have a good future is, to have enough investment in defense, in science and technology, in the environment, and especially in their education.

Now, I'm not against cutting taxes, but I think we ought to take care of the big, long-term challenges of America. If you pay the debt off, interest rates will be lower and that'll be worth more to most average people and most wealthy people than a tax cut. If you, on the other hand, return to deficits and have a big tax cut at a time when the economy's going, the interest rates will go up and take the tax cuts away and higher home mortgage rates, higher car payment rates, higher

college long rates, higher credit card rates. But if we say, okay, here's what it takes to get us out of debt, to save Social Security and Medicare, to invest in education, and the other things for our future, then we can give the rest of it back to the American people in a tax cut that they can use for retirement, for education, for child care, for the things that the American people need. But let's take care of first things first.

In my lifetime, the United States has never had an opportunity or an obligation like this to prepare for the retirement of the baby boomers, to prepare for the future of the largest and most diverse generation of children our country has ever produced, to get this country out of debt, and keep a generation of prosperity out there as a beacon of shining hope to children from all backgrounds in America. We ought to take this chance to deal with the long-term challenges of the 21st century for America.

Now, one of the tax cuts that we can afford, that meets more than one objective, is the one I have proposed that would help school districts build, renovate, or expand 6,000 schools. I've already said that Senator Robb is the sponsor of the bill in the Senate to do that. Two representatives here, Bobby Scott and Norm Sisisky, and others are helping us in the House. We now have 222 Members of the House—that's a majority—so we have some Republicans along with the Democrats helping us; there's a bipartisan effort there. But why are we trying to do this?

A lot of you here who are older people remember the end of World War II when, in this school district, so many people came home with so many kids, they had to put up Quonset huts for people to go to school in. Now, there are those who say to me, ''Mr. President''—I've had Members of Congress say—''it's a laudable thing you want to do, but the Federal Government's got no business helping local school districts build schools; most States don't even do that, and it's a State and local responsibility.''

Well, normally, that might be true, but just like World War II, these are not normal times. Harry Truman, in 1950, signed legislation to help school districts that needed it build the necessary facilities to get the kids out of Quonset huts. It happened right here where we are standing, and it ought to happen again because we have a bigger challenge now than we had in 1950.

Your school district has already invested $45 million to expand and modernize schools, but as your superintendent told you today, it's still not enough. The window frames of this building are so old that if you tried to powerwash the windows, the glass would pop out. [*Laughter*] The electric service in the classrooms is so inadequate that if you plugged a new computer into the wall, the circuit breaker might cut off. When the door opens in some of these trailers, and it's raining, the kids sitting near the door get wet. When it's winter and the kids in the trailers need to go to the bathroom, they have to put on their coats and walk across the parking lot through the snow, or the rain and the freezing, to the main building.

Now, folks, we have to fix this. You can say this is a Norfolk problem, but Chuck Robb told me there are 3,000 trailers in Virginia alone. This is a national problem. I was in a grade school in Florida the other day that had a dozen trailers out behind the main building. One little school. I have seen this everywhere. And if we can meet this big, long-term challenge to America, don't we have the obligation to do it? What is more important than the education of our children and their future?

And let me say this. You can say if you want, and it would be true, that buildings don't make an education, that education is not a money problem—that's one of my laws of politics, by the way. When somebody tells you it's not a money problem, they are never talking about one of their problems. [*Laughter*] They are always talking about somebody else's problem. All these legislators are laughing at me when I say that. That's true. Of course, it's the magic with the teachers and the kids and the parents' support. But we now have evidence—there is a serious study which shows that children in adequate and well-furnished classrooms do better on achievement tests than kids from the same socio-economic backgrounds who go to places where the windows are broken and the paint is chipped and the facilities are inadequate and you can't hook them up to the Internet. So I say, let's give all of our kids

a chance to maximize their God-given potential.

Now, here's the problem that we're about to confront in Congress when the Congress comes back. They passed a tax cut that's too big to do this. And in order to fund their tax cut, they have to do one of two things, both of which they said they won't do. They either have to get into the surplus produced by your Social Security taxes, which they promised to save to pay the debt down, or they have to cut what we're already spending on education, on the environment, on health care, on technology and research. That's what the problem is.

So that's why they haven't sent me an education bill. I guess if I had that choice I wouldn't send one to the President either. [*Laughter*] They don't want to cut education when they said they wouldn't. They don't want to eat up the Social Security surplus when they said they wouldn't. And they can't figure out what to do. But I'll tell you this, if their tax cut passes and they respect the Social Security surplus, here's what would happen.

Today, we're helping 12 million kids in poor communities to make more of their education. If their plan passes, 6 million of them wouldn't get help anymore. Today, we help a million kids to learn to read by the third grade. If their plan passes, half of them wouldn't get help anymore. Today, we're almost at our goal of a million kids in Head Start. There were some Head Start teachers out there when I was driving in today—if their plan passes, over 400,000 of them would lose their support. It means larger classes, fewer students, more trailers, and more leaky roofs.

Now, I don't believe the American people want that. We can have a tax cut, but we've got to do first things first. Let's look after the long-term needs of the country, fix the economy long term, deal with Social Security and Medicare, deal with education, figure out what's left and then give it back to the people in a tax cut. Let's deal with our responsibilities to our children and our future first. I have put forward a plan that does that.

Back in 1950, when he sent his school construction program to Congress, President Truman said this—49 years ago; it sounds pretty good still today. "The Nation cannot afford to waste human potentialities, as we are now, by failing to provide adequate elementary and secondary education for millions of children." Equal opportunity in education is America's ticket to the future. It is a bedrock value in this country. It is indispensable to the 21st century for individuals and for our Nation alike. Fifty years ago it was Quonset huts; today it's trailers and broken buildings.

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank all of you who worked to fix this building. I ask you to leave here on this Labor Day committed to fix all the buildings. I thank you for the applause you gave Le'Shia, and I thank all of her fellow students and their families for being here. I ask you to leave here thinking about all the little boys and girls like them all across America. I have been back and forth across this country, and I have seen the conditions that exist here today everywhere, in the largest cities and the smallest towns. There is nothing more important.

Here in Norfolk we honor our military, which has made such a major contribution to this community. I want to thank the Navy Band for being here today, by the way. Thank you very much.

There are those who believe that—and I saw some of their signs outside—that we don't need a strong military today because the cold war is over. I can tell you that's not true either. We still have significant challenges to your security. But I also want you to understand something I know you know, which is, maybe more than anything else, the future security of the United States of America will rest upon our ability to give every single child in this country the ability to do well in a global economy, in a global society, to live up to his or her dreams. That's what we're here on this Labor Day to support.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:28 p.m. on the playground. In his remarks, he referred to student Le'Shia Jamison, who introduced the President; Mayor Paul D. Fraim of Norfolk; John O. Simpson, superintendent, Norfolk Public School District; Anita O. Poston, chairman, Norfolk Public School Board; John J. Sweeney, president, AFL–CIO; Robert A. Georgine, president, Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL–

CIO; James R. Leaman, secretary-treasurer, Virginia State AFL–CIO; Cheri James, president, Virginia Education Association; and Ronald I. Dozoretz, founder, FHC Health Systems.

Remarks at a Labor Day Picnic in Newport News, Virginia

September 6, 1999

Thank you very much. Let me just begin by saying how grateful I am for the wonderful reception you have given me. You know, I can't tell you how much I appreciate the kindness and friendship that you have given to me and my family, my Vice President and his family, and our administration, through two Presidential elections and 6½ years of our 8-year term. I thank you.

I want to thank Congressman Sisisky and Delegate Crittenden here, who gave a pretty good reason for keeping Senator Robb in office, and I hope you'll listen to her.

I want you to know what we were doing before we came here. We were actually working on a school, to highlight one of the things I'm trying to get this Congress to do, which is to pass a bill that would help us to build or modernize 6,000 new schools so our kids, whether they're rich or poor, will have world-class places to go to school in.

So I want to thank the Secretary of Education, the national head of the AFL–CIO, John Sweeney and Secretary Riley, and the leaders of our two great teachers' organizations, the NEA and the AFT, Bob Chase and Sandy Feldman. They're all over here with me. Give them a hand. [*Applause*]

Now, you know, somebody asked me the day before yesterday why I was coming down here. They said, "You're not running for anything anymore; you can't." And I said, "Well, yes, but I haven't lost my memory, and those people gave me two great terms as President. I wanted to go down and thank them."

And these two guys are—I want you to take care of Bobby Scott. He is a great resource for you and for the country. And I want you—you know, every time Senator Robb runs, he has a challenging race. You know why? Because he sticks up for you, that's why. Because he makes the hard decisions for the long run, because he was one of those guys who stood up in 1993. We didn't have a vote to spare. If he had changed his vote, I would have lost that economic plan that's given us 19.4 million jobs and the biggest surplus in history. And they tried to beat him 2 years later because he stood up for you. Because he believes we all ought to go forward together. And I've known him for nearly 20 years now, and he's always standing up. So next time the election comes around, I want you to stand up for him. Will you do it? [*Applause*]

Now, let me say this. This is Labor Day, so I want to make some remarks about labor. There are a lot of big issues in this country today, but when I got elected President, it was after 12 years of people in the other party running the White House saying they were pro-business and good for the economy, and we had the worst recession since the Great Depression and the biggest deficit in history, and we quadrupled the debt in 12 years.

I said I'm pro-business, but I'm pro-labor, too. I don't think you can help the economy if you hurt the working people. Guess what? We beat off all their efforts to weaken unions. We beat back all their efforts to hurt the fundamental interests of working people. We passed the Family and Medical Leave Act. We raised the minimum wage once. We helped people with child care who were working more, and we got 19.4 million jobs, record numbers of new small businesses every year, the lowest minority unemployment rate ever recorded. It works. If you take care of ordinary people, it works.

So on this Labor Day, as we go back to work, I'd like to just mention some things that relate to you. Number one, we ought to raise the minimum wage again. Number two, we ought to do a better job of enforcing the law that says there should be equal pay for equal work between men and women. Number three, we ought to do more to help workers with children at home, working full-time, succeed by helping them with their child care expenses more. Number four, we ought to give investors, people with money, the same tax incentives to invest in poor neighborhoods in America we give them to invest overseas in poor neighborhoods, because we all know that not every neighborhood has been fully benefited by this economic expansion. I've been out there across