

Government regulation in the Department of Education by two-thirds. We just took what works.

And I hope that in the future there will continue to be a passion coming out of people in Washington and in every State capital and every community in this country of both parties. But every proposal should be measured against what we now know works, what you have proven works here. And if it works, whoever has got the idea, we ought to put it in.

But it's not like—I remember when I started this, when Hillary and I started going into classes in the late seventies, and we started trying to write new standards for our State in the early eighties, we had hunches. Educators thought they knew. There was a little evidence here and a little evidence there, but we were kind of making it up as we went along. And it was happening all over America. We've now had 15 years of solid evidence. You have given us that in schools like this one.

And so I would just say, I wanted to come here because Chicago has been good to me, and Chicago has been very good to its children these last 6 years. I wanted to come here because, as I leave office, I don't want America to let its concern for education reform and improvement abate; I want it to increase. I want more people to believe that every child can learn, and that in this global economy, every child must learn, not only for himself or herself but for the rest of us, as well.

Of course, there are big challenges that remain. But your school, like so many I visited over the past 8 years, teaches us all the most important lesson: We can do it.

Thank you very much, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:35 p.m. in the auditorium. In his remarks, he referred to Sharon R. Wilcher, principal, James Ward Elementary School; Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago; Illinois State Comptroller Daniel W. Hynes; and Gery Chico, president, board of directors, and Paul Vallas, chief executive officer, Chicago Public School District.

Statement on the Family and Medical Leave Act

January 9, 2001

The first legislation I signed as President was the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), which allows workers to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave to care for a seriously ill child, spouse, or parent; a newborn, newly adopted, or newly placed child; or for their own serious health problem, without fear of losing their jobs. This law was an important step forward in helping America's working families balance the competing demands of work and family. Since then, I am proud to say that more than 35 million working Americans have taken leave for family and medical reasons since 1993.

In 1996 the bipartisan Commission on Family and Medical Leave issued a report assessing family and medical leave policies. The Commission found that the FMLA was working well for both workers and employers. Today the U. S. Department of Labor released the results of its new surveys, which updated the Commission's work. Once again, the data show that the Family and Medical Leave Act remains a balanced approach to meeting the needs of workers and employers. We know that when needed most, covered and eligible workers were able to take this benefit—in fact, more than 15 million have done so since January 1999, the period covered by this survey.

FMLA has given millions of workers the ability to care for their seriously ill child, spouse, or parent, or stay home with their newborn child, without worrying about whether their job will be there when they return. Our work is not done, however. We must now build on the success of FMLA by giving more workers the protections of the act and finding new ways to provide paid leave to those workers who need to take off but cannot afford to do so.

Remarks to the People of Chicago

January 9, 2001

Thank you. You know, I thought we should come over here to sort of finish the circle