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Federal funding for elementary and high school education from about $25 billion in 2001 to more than $33 billion in 2003, an increase of about 36 percent and the highest level ever.

We've committed $1.8 billion in grants to help train tens of thousands of teachers to use effective reading instruction methods and materials. We expect schools to do their job, and we're helping them to do their job. So there's no excuse for failure. When we set a high standard, we are showing our belief in the capacities of every child. And when we prepare them to meet a high standard, we're giving them a better chance in life. High expectations set children on a path to success. I'm pleased to report that the No Child Left Behind Act is helping put more of America's children on that path, so they succeed in school and in life.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 9:55 a.m. on January 2 at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on January 3. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 2 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on Afghanistan's Adoption of a New Constitution

January 4, 2004

I congratulate the people of Afghanistan on the adoption of their new constitution. This document lays the foundation for democratic institutions and provides a framework for national elections in 2004. A democratic Afghanistan will serve the interests and just aspirations of all of the Afghan people and help ensure that terror finds no further refuge in that proud land. This new constitution marks a historic step forward, and we will continue to assist the Afghan people as they build a free and prosperous future.

Remarks in a Discussion at Pierre Laclede Elementary School in St. Louis, Missouri

January 5, 2004

The President. Well, I'm glad to be here, Madam Principal. [*Laughter*] One of the things you find in a successful school is a strong-willed, smart, capable principal. And that's obviously the case here, and I appreciate your hospitality.

I'm here at Laclede because this is a school that has defied expectations. It's defied expectations by raising the bar and believing that every child can learn. That's not the case in some parts of our country, unfortunately. In some parts of the country, schools just shuffle kids through, and that's not right. That's not the American way.

This school is a school that has performed, you have to say, brilliantly. Since 1999, 7 percent of the kids could read, and now 80 percent can read at grade level in the third grade. That speaks to strong principals; it speaks to really good teachers. It says this school has got teachers that believe in the capability of every child. It says the school has raised standards and is not afraid to measure.

And see, one of the things I'm here to talk about is the No Child Left Behind Act. Laclede has been named a No Child Left—Blue Ribbon No Child Left Behind School. And the—inherent in this No Child Left Behind Act is the desire to spend Federal money and spend it wisely. We've increased budgets. The Title I money is up 43 percent since 2001—41 percent. The teacher training money is up. The reading program money is up by 4 times. But finally, the Federal Government has said, "Why don't you show us whether or not that money is being well-spent. Show us whether or not you believe every child can learn. Show us whether or not objectives are being met."

And this is exactly what's happening here at Laclede. As I was reminded, Laclede was doing this before No Child Left Behind Act was passed. Joyce was quick to point it out.