

## Remarks on Departure for Bethesda, Maryland

May 12, 2004

### Execution of Nicholas Berg

I want to express my condolences to the family and friends of Nicholas Berg. Nicholas Berg was an innocent civilian who was in Iraq to help build a free Iraq. There is no justification for the brutal execution of Nicholas Berg—no justification whatsoever.

The actions of the terrorists who executed this man remind us of the nature of the few people who want to stop the advance of freedom in Iraq. Their intention is to shake our will. Their intention is to shake our confidence. Yet, by their actions, they remind us of how desperately parts of the world need free societies and peaceful societies, and we will complete our mission. We will complete our task.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to American hostage Nicholas Berg, who was killed in Iraq in early May by senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi.

## Remarks in a Discussion at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland

May 12, 2004

**The President.** Thanks, Reid. Thank you all for coming. What he forgot to tell you is, I've known Reid for a long time. See, when I was the Governor of Texas, I was worried that we weren't using a curriculum, a reading curriculum that would work. So I said to Margaret Spellings, who is my Domestic Policy Adviser here in Washington, I said, "Who's the best in the country about figuring out how to teach children how to read?" And they said, "Reid Lyon." I said, "Okay, get him up here," or "Get him down here," in this case. He was here in Washington. He came down, and we've had a great relationship ever since.

Today we're going to talk about reading and that reading is more of a science than people think. And the reason we're here at the National Institutes of Health is because

this facility uses Federal taxpayers' money to research, to figure out how to solve problems. We've got a problem in America. And the problem is, not every child can read at grade level, so we're here to discuss a strategy to insist that every child does read at grade level. To me, it's a national—we have an obligation nationally to make sure of this.

I'll never forget the reading czarina of Houston Independent School District—and by the way, Secretary of Education Rod Paige was the superintendent of the Houston Independent School District at the time. He had hired this lady to help teach every child to read. She said, "Governor, I want to tell you, reading is the new civil right." That's what I think. I think if you cannot read in the 21st century, you don't have a chance to succeed. And we believe every child can read.

Mr. Secretary, thanks for coming. Rod Paige is a fellow who was on the frontlines of education there as the superintendent in Harris County District. And I asked him to come up and be the Secretary of Education, Reid, because he understands the correct attitude about making sure public schools work. It's really embodied in the No Child Left Behind Act.

Let me go through real quick what that act says. It says, first of all, "We believe every child can learn." In other words, we need to raise the bar and raise the standards. It's what I call challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. It means basically that when you walk into a classroom full of the so-called hard to educate, you don't quit. That's what it means.

Secondly, it says that in return for increased Federal spending—which we've increased Federal spending quite a bit here in Washington, DC—that we expect results. In other words, the cornerstone of making sure every child can learn to read is you've got to measure to determine where they are. And if not, if you're finding children can't read at early ages, correct it early, before it's too late. And we're going to talk about that here.

Thirdly, it says that there must be consequences for schools that won't teach and won't change. In other words, something has to happen other than just posting scores to get parental involvement. What we now have