

So we'll be talking to all the parties, and I'm in more or less constant contact with them. And we'll continue to be hopeful. But for right now, I think we need to give the people of Israel the time to absorb this terrible shock.

Thank you.

Q. Have you had a chance to talk to King Hussein?

The President. No.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:36 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel and King Hussein I of Jordan.

Remarks to a Joint Session of the North Carolina State Legislature in Raleigh

March 13, 1997

Thank you very much. Lieutenant Governor Wicker, Speaker Brubaker, Senator Basnight, the other State elected officials who are here; my good friend Governor Hunt; Mayor Fetzer. I'd like to thank those who came down here with me today. I brought some of the Members of your congressional delegation home. They don't need to hear this speech, they've heard it before, but I was glad to have them here in moral support: Congressman David Price; Congressman Bob Etheridge, your former superintendent of education; Congressman Mike McIntyre; and Congresswoman Eva Clayton. I thank them for coming.

I also want to say I'm glad to be joined today by your neighbor, the Secretary of Education, Richard Riley, former Governor of South Carolina, and by our new Secretary of Defense, Bill Cohen of Maine. We're glad to have him with us today, too. Thank you, Secretary Cohen, for coming.

I was glad that you mentioned my Chief of Staff, Erskine Bowles. He wouldn't come here with me today because he was afraid all of you would think that he was shirking his duties and not at work. But let me tell you, he is doing a magnificent job. I'm very proud of him. I couldn't believe it when he agreed to come back to Washington and take this job, especially because I knew it would cost him a small fortune. And he reminded

me that his father used to tell him, "Once you have the tools, you've got to spend some time to add to the woodpile." So he's up in Washington adding back to the woodpile. And you should all be very proud of him. He is a remarkable man. He's doing a good job.

I'd also like to thank the other North Carolinians on my staff. Two of the three of them are here today. Doug Sosnik, my former political director and senior counselor, is not here, but my Director of Communications, Don Baer, is here, and Charles Duncan, the Associate Director of Presidential Personnel. They both came home with me, and they were glad to have the excuse to come home. And I appreciate their being here and their service.

I was told that this was the first time a sitting President has addressed the North Carolina State Legislature. If it's not true, don't disabuse me now, because I'm about to say something good. *[Laughter]* And I am very honored to be here. Even more important, I've spent a little time here over the years, and I am honored and mildly surprised that you are here, because it's tournament time and you've got four teams, as usual, in the tournament.

You may know that I am something of a basketball fanatic. And you may know that one of my most memorable basketball experiences—I once saw North Carolina and Kentucky play in the Dean Dome, and the car that I came in was towed. *[Laughter]* But I had so much fun at the ballgame, I would have walked all the way back to Arkansas after it was over. *[Laughter]* I make it a point never to take sides in basketball games unless my home team in Arkansas or my alma mater, Georgetown, are playing. But I am looking forward to the day when the great Dean Smith breaks Adolph Rupp's record.

There is much for the rest of the Nation, and especially the rest of the South, to admire in North Carolina, the determined and visionary leadership that has characterized this State for many decades in education and economic development, in bringing harmony among peoples of different backgrounds.

When I was a young man, I followed the work here of then-Governor Terry Sanford, who later became my friend and colleague.

Eighteen years ago, when I first started my career as Governor of Arkansas, my best mentor and friend was Jim Hunt. And he is still my mentor and friend. Dick Riley and I were laughing with Jim Hunt—we were together 18 years ago as the Governors of Arkansas, South Carolina, and North Carolina, and we were laughing that Jim was probably the only one of us who could still get elected Governor in our home States after 18 years. [Laughter] And I applaud him on that.

It was in Chapel Hill that the cornerstone was laid at our Nation's first publicly funded university, in Kitty Hawk where man first took to the skies. And today, North Carolina is an aeronautics and an air travel hub center for millions of people. Your State universities receive the highest level of funding for research and development in the Nation. You have connected more of your communities than any other State in the country to the information superhighway, something I'm trying to do for every classroom and library in America by the year 2000. The Research Triangle has one of the highest per capita concentrations of Ph.D.'s in the world, and you are clearly one of America's most dynamic centers of economic activity.

The most important thing about all this is not for me to brag on you, you know that already, but to emphasize the main point: These things do not happen by accident. They are the product of vision and disciplined, long-term effort.

Now our country faces the challenges of a new century, a whole new economy, a whole new way in which people will work and live and relate to each other here at home and around the world. It is driven by information and by technology. Its best hopes may be undermined by its darkest fears, by the old demons of racial and religious and ethnic hatreds, by terrorism and narcotrafficking and organized crime.

This new time that we're moving into, that coincidentally will be part of a new century and a new millennium, will give more people in this State and this Nation the chance to live out their dreams than at any period in human history, if we take advantage of it to seize our opportunities and deal with our challenges.

There is unprecedented peace and prosperity now, and it has been very rare in our country's history. You can go back and find maybe a couple of other examples when we've had real security, a feeling of prosperity, and yet, a whole lot of challenges before us. Usually when people feel secure and relatively prosperous, one of two things happens—neither of them very laudable, but it's part of human nature—we either get sort of happy and self-satisfied and don't do anything, or because we are not gripped by big differences, we fall out with each other over small things, and petty things make us less than we ought to be.

The point I want to take today is that we cannot afford either to be complacent or to be divided among ourselves about small things. For we have been given an opportunity almost unique in American history to fashion a future that will embrace everybody. And we cannot and dare not blow that opportunity.

If you look at where we are now, you can see the vistas of the future. Our economy produced 12 million jobs in 4 years—never happened before in a 4-year period. We've had constant decline in crimes. We've had the biggest drop in the welfare rolls in American history in the last 4 years. In North Carolina, you've seen the unemployment rate drop to 4.2 percent, 75,000 people off the welfare rolls, 350,000 new jobs. That's going on all over America. But you know that we have more to do.

I have been going around the country, to the Michigan and the Maryland State legislatures—today the Vice President is in California speaking to the State legislature as I am here with you—because I know that to achieve the vision that we share for America, we all have to do our part. I've said many times that the era of big Government is over. Your Federal Government is now 285,000 people smaller than it was the day I took office. It's the smallest it's been since President Kennedy was in office, in real terms. As a percentage of the civilian work force, the Federal Government is now as small as it was when Franklin Roosevelt was sworn into office the first time, before the New Deal.

But the challenges we face are still very big, indeed. If they cannot be solved by gov-

ernment alone, and especially by the Federal Government, obviously, a new partnership is required. And new efforts, new activity, new responsibility is required of people at the State level, at the local level, and in their private lives. The biggest challenge we face today, I believe, is the challenge of creating a world-class education system that embraces every child that lives in this State and in this Nation. And this must not be a political football.

In the cold war, because we knew that communism threatened our existence, it became commonplace that politics would stop at the water's edge, and the Democrats and the Republicans would fight like cats and dogs over whatever it was they were fighting about, but when it came to standing up to the threat of communism, we were together. If the President of one party went abroad on a mission of world peace, he was never criticized back home by members of the other party because politics stopped at the water's edge. I think we understand today, intuitively, that education holds the key to our future in the 21st century. And I believe politics must stop at the schoolhouse door.

When I was Governor, a long time ago now, North Carolina already had the highest percentage of its adults in institutions of higher education of any State in the South. The economy was growing, and it was diversifying, and yet you still had more success in maintaining manufacturing jobs than any State in our region and, indeed, in the country. You know all this. Last year you had the biggest increase in eighth grade math scores, I noticed, in the country. I was in Michigan, and I said that they had the second biggest increase in math scores, and the minute I got in the car, Governor Hunt made sure I knew who was number one. [*Laughter*] So I knew that.

The Governor chose to be sworn in at the Needham Loughton High School, his old school, to make clear that school standards and teaching excellence will be his top priorities. But with all the progress that we have made, you know we've got a lot more to do.

Between 1992 and the year 2000, 89 percent of the new jobs created in this economy will require more than a high school level of literacy and math skills—89 percent.

Today, even though over 80 percent of our children are graduating from high school, more than half—or about half the people entering the work force are not prepared with these skills. We all know that is true.

For 20 years, inequality among working Americans grew. In the last few years it started to shrink—in the last couple of years—as we've gotten—more and more of our new jobs are becoming higher wage jobs and as growth and productivity are permitting wages to rise again.

Many people, just a couple of years ago, were saying, "Well, is the middle class vanishing in America? Will it always be squeezed? Are we going to create a country with a huge number of people that are very well off and an even much larger number of people that are poor, with a smaller middle class?" We've seen in the last few years that that does not have to happen. We can begin to grow the middle class again with productivity and growth and the right kinds of new jobs, but we have to be able to provide the people with the skills to hold those jobs, if we're going to maintain a high-wage, high-growth, high-opportunity society in America in the 21st century. And our schools are still turning out millions of young people who simply cannot do that.

That is why our number one priority has to be to make America's education the best in the world. We have to have a nation in which every 8-year-old can read independently, every 12-year-old can log on to the Internet, every 18-year-old can go on to college, and every adult American can keep on learning throughout an entire lifetime.

In my State of the Union Address, I laid out a 10-point call to action for American education that describes the steps we have to meet. First, we have to make sure that all of our children come to school ready to learn. Our balanced budget will expand Head Start to a million children. But we all must do more, and a lot of that has to be done at the State level. And I hope every State in the country is looking closely at the Smart Start program in North Carolina.

The idea of having all elements of a community in a community nonprofit environment working on not only education but health care and parenting skills and child

care, trying to give our poorest children a coherent early childhood, is terribly important. Scientists have discovered that learning begins in the earliest days of life. And now we have to explore how parents and educators can best use these findings.

On April 17th, the First Lady and I will host the White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning in Washington, and I want Smart Start to be an important part of what is considered there.

Let me just give you one simple example of the scientific findings. Over half of the capacity of the brain to absorb and to learn and to grow—the capacity is developed in the first 4 years of life. In the first 4 years of life, if a child has parents who understand this and who constantly—whether they have a Ph.D. or they were high school dropouts, but who constantly work at nourishing the child's learning capacities, that child will get 700,000 positive contacts. But in the typical experience of a child with a single parent, let's say, with very little education and no self-confidence about parenting and no training and no understanding and a sense that no difference can be made, and the child that's left in front of the television in the first 4 years, that child will get 150,000 positive contacts, a more than four-to-one difference.

Now, you tell me what the future is going to be like for them. Smart Start can change that. And our cooperative efforts can change that. But we have to understand that we have totally underestimated the impact of this whole thing. And the new scientific findings impose upon all of us a heavier responsibility than we have ever had for developing the capacities of our children in their earliest years. So I look forward to that.

I believe we have to do more to give constructive alternatives, creative alternatives for our young children in our public schools. I favor public school choice. I've been a pioneer supporter of the charter school movement. I think that it's important to open schools that stay opened as long as they do a good job, but only as long as they do a good job. And I know that this afternoon, your State board of education has the opportunity to open more charter schools than any State has ever opened at one time, to foster

innovation and competition and renewal. I hope the board will take that step today, and one more time, North Carolina will be in the vanguard of a movement you can be proud of.

We have got to have a commitment to rebuild our schools and give our children the facilities they need to learn in. We have the largest number of children in public schools in history. The Secretary of Education never gets tired of reminding me, since I am the oldest of the baby boomers, that our generation has finally been eclipsed in numbers by the people that are in the public schools today. We also have the physical facilities in many of our schools deteriorating at a rapid rate. So, for the first time in history, I have proposed a program that will enable us at the national level to support local efforts to increase their investment in the physical facilities of the schools by making sure that the interest rates are lower and the costs are lower in the places where the need is most critical.

I'm going to Florida after I leave you, and tomorrow morning, I will be at a school where there are 17, I understand, according to my briefing, 17 trailers for classroom space around the existing school facility in a modest-sized community in Florida. That is not an atypical experience in many of our States.

We have to meet our national goal of connecting every classroom and library to the Internet by the year 2000. We have to open the doors of college to all. North Carolina pioneered, with your network of 4-year and 2-year higher educational institutions, pioneered the idea that education ought to be a lifetime experience and that the doors ought to be open to everyone.

In the last 4 years, we have lowered the cost and improved the reach of the student loan program, added 200,000 slots to work-study, opened up almost 70,000 slots for college through the national service program, AmeriCorps. We have worked very, very hard, but I think we have to do more.

It is clear to me, if you look at the job profile, where 89 percent of the new jobs will require more than a high school education, we have to make 2 years of education after high school, the 13th and 14th grades, just as universal in America by the year 2000

as a high school diploma is today, every bit as universal.

To achieve that, our balanced budget plan proposes a \$1,500 HOPE scholarship, a tax credit that reflects the cost of the typical community college tuition in America, modeled on Governor Zell Miller's HOPE scholarship program in Georgia. We propose to give people a tax deduction of up to \$10,000 a year for the cost of any education after high school, an expanded IRA that you can withdraw from tax-free if the money is used to pay for higher education, and the largest increase in Pell grants in 20 years, along with another 100,000 work-study slots. That will help North Carolina, and it will help America.

Finally, let me say on this subject, we know we have to make sure learning continues throughout a lifetime. We know that we have older and older students going back to community colleges, changing their careers and getting new careers and opening up new vistas. We have a Federal response which I think is totally antiquated. There are at least, conservatively speaking, at least 70 different Federal programs that were developed with the best of intentions, to try to help to pay for various training programs for people who lose their jobs or people who are grossly underemployed.

I have proposed for 4 years, with a Democratic Congress and with the Republican Congress, getting rid of these programs and putting the money in a pot and sending a skills grant to an unemployed person or an underemployed person who has qualified for any of them and let them go to the nearest community college or 4-year college if it's the appropriate one, whatever is nearest and best to get their education. We do not need a lot of Government intermediaries here. People know—people know what they need. They're capable of making a judgment.

In a State like North Carolina and most places in the country, nearly everybody's within driving distance of a community college that works. And that's—I call that my "GI Bill" for America's workers. And if you could prevail upon your legislators to support it, I would appreciate it. I've been trying for 4 years to pass that thing. I would appreciate it.

I think the most important thing we have to do is to make sure that our children have met certain national standards in basic courses. In 1989, when President Bush and the Governors met at the University of Virginia, I had the honor of being the Democratic Governor chosen to try to write the Nation's education goals. And at the time, we always assumed that out of those goals there would come national standards and a system, a nationally recognized system of testing our children to see if they met those standards.

Well, that hasn't happened yet. And as a result, we still don't know. We don't really know whether every child in every classroom knows what he or she needs to know when he or she needs to know it in math and in basic language skills. I have challenged every State in this country to adopt high national academic standards, not just in math and language but in other areas as well, to participate nationally by 1999 in an examination of fourth graders in reading and eighth graders in math, so that we can see how every child is doing in meeting those basic standards.

Now, this is, I know, somewhat controversial. There are people who have actually argued that you couldn't possibly have a national examination reflecting national standards in a country as diverse as America, as if it's some sort of plot, as if math is different in Raleigh than Little Rock or any board of education could rewrite the rules of algebra for Alaska as opposed to Florida. I think that is inherently implausible.

When you compete here in North Carolina for a new high-tech plant, when the Research Triangle finds some new breakthrough, you do it based on an international competition; you have to win based on standards that are imposed. We have to be willing to hold our children to the same standards and to hold ourselves to the same standards.

Governor Hunt told me today that he will endorse our call for national standards and a testing plan. North Carolina, therefore, would be the third State to do so. The Republican Governor of Michigan joined in, along with his legislative leaders, just a few days ago.

But let me say what I think we need to do. A lot of you know a lot about this. We

have some standardized tests in America, but we don't have any test to nationally accepted standards. The closest we have is the so-called NAEP test, the National Assessment of Education Progress. But as all of you know, it only is given to a sample of students in various districts. There is no examination in America which says, here are the standards that everyone should know in language or math, and here is a test which reflects those standards, and it doesn't matter whether you're first or last in your class, it matters whether you get over this bar. If you're first in your class and nobody is over this bar, nobody knows what they need to know. If you're last, but you're over the bar, you're still going to do okay in this old world. I think that is very important. We all need to know that. We all need to know that.

You know—and let me also say that I know it won't be easy, because some of our kids won't do all that well at first. If you saw the State of the Union Address, you know that I introduced two students from 20 school districts in northern Illinois who took the Third International Math and Science Survey, and the 20 school districts up there tied for first in science and second in math in the survey, with Singapore for first. But if they had finished dead last I would have been equally proud of them because they were willing to actually hold themselves to international standards of achievement and measure themselves.

And this is where we need all of your help. I'm convinced that one of the reasons that we've never done this in America is that we were afraid if the news was bad, we wouldn't know what to do about it. And I think that in so doing, we have sold our children short. All the evidence is, all the scientific evidence is, all the anecdotal evidence is that almost all of our children, without regard to their race, their income, and where they live, can learn what they need to know to compete and win in the global economy. And when we do not hold them to high standards because we are afraid that in the beginning they won't meet them, we are selling their futures down the drain and we are insulting them, because they can meet these standards.

What we have to be willing to do is to say, "Okay, we'll have these exams. We'll

hold people to high standards. Some people won't make it at first. We don't want to punish people. We want to lift everybody up, but we can't know how to lift people up unless we know where we start."

When I go around the world, people find it unbelievable that we have no national standard in America to tell our parents and our school leaders whether our children know what they're supposed to know in the basic skills that are necessary to learn all the other more sophisticated things we want people to know.

And I tell you, I believe in the kids of this country. I have been in schools in circumstances where it would be unthinkable that people could learn because of crime in the neighborhoods and because of poverty in the neighborhoods. And I have seen children performing at very high levels, meeting standards that would be acceptable in anyplace in the entire world. And I am tired of people telling me that there is some reason we shouldn't have that opportunity given to every American child. We are not protecting our children by denying them the chance to develop their God-given capacities to measure up to what they need to know and do, to do well in the future. And we ought to stop it and do better.

Now, on a lighter note, you may wonder why the Secretary of Defense is here with me today. [*Laughter*] Before I came down here, Senator Helms asked me to tell you that he is not the guard that Jesse once said I would need to come to North Carolina. [*Laughter*] Ever since I got a Chief of Staff that does not speak with an accent, we've been getting along a lot better, Senator Helms and I. [*Laughter*]

There is another reason that the Secretary of Defense is here today. We want to set an example. We think we ought to start the standards movements with the schools that we run at military bases. At 66 schools across our country and 167 more around the world, our Department of Defense educates 115,000 of our children every year. The Department of Defense runs a school system as big as that of the state of Delaware. And I met some of the children, some of the teachers, and some of the parents out at the airport when I came in today.

Sixteen of those schools are at Camp LeJeune and Fort Bragg, right here in North Carolina, and nearly 8,000 students attend them. It's important that we give these children the best possible education, too, especially these children, because their families sacrifice. They live far from home. They often risk their lives for their country. It's important, too, because these students come from every racial and ethnic background. They move from place to place as their parents are transferred from base to base.

Because of this mobility, no group of students better underscores the need for common national standards and a uniform way of measuring progress than this group. If standards can work in these schools, they can work anywhere.

So I am pleased to announce today that, with the strong support of the Secretary of Defense, the Department of Defense schools have stepped forward to ask that their students be among the first to take the new tests when they become available. The Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Education Riley have both committed their work.

Starting in 1999, students and classrooms, from Wiesbaden Air Force Base in Germany to Kadena Air Force Base in Okinawa, to Camp LeJeune will learn the same rigorous material and take the same national tests as students throughout this State and, I hope, throughout our entire Nation. We can make our public schools just like our military, the best on Earth, if, like our military, we are willing to adhere to high, rigorous standards for all people, regardless of their background. That's what we ought to do. And I thank you, Mr. Secretary, for being here today.

Let me also say that we know we have to do more work to prepare all of our students. And the Department of Defense is being directed today, through its school system, to use every resource to prepare the students for 1999 when the new math and science tests—or math and reading tests are ready.

Let me mention one other thing that I think is very important, and it goes well with a lot of what you are doing here with your preschool years and your early years. It is appalling to me that 40 percent of America's 8-year-olds cannot read a book on their own, but it's true. And the rest of this stuff is just

sort of whistling the breeze, if people can't read. So we have launched the America Reads initiative, through the Department of Education, to mobilize an army of a million reading tutors, properly trained, to help make sure that by the year 2000 every 8-year-old can read independently.

Thirteen North Carolina college presidents have pledged to commit a portion of their work-study students to serve as tutors, and I thank them for that. We're going to have 300,000 new work-study students over a 4-year period. If we can put at least a third of them into reading instruction for our young children, we'll be a long way toward those million volunteers.

We ought to be clear about something else, too, and here's something that I really take my hat off to Governor Hunt for. We cannot expect our children to meet high standards unless we demand that our teachers meet high standards. We have to do whatever is necessary to make sure that they do.

Last year, the report of Governor Hunt's National Commission on Teaching and America's Future laid out a blueprint for the road ahead. And all of you have come together across party lines to develop a comprehensive legislative agenda that implements the report's recommendations. We have to start by recognizing and rewarding our best teachers. We all know what a difference a good teacher can make in the life of a child. I know what a difference my teachers made in mine.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, led by Governor Hunt, has encouraged teachers all over the country to improve their skills and seek certification as master teachers. North Carolina already has more certified national teachers—master teachers—than any other State in the country. And the Governor was kind enough to bring five or six of them out to the airport to meet me, and they were not ashamed of the fact that they had been board-certified master teachers.

Over 20 percent of all the teachers that have been certified are here in North Carolina. That's the good news. The bad news is that only about 500 teachers have been certified. In our balanced budget plan, there's enough money to help 100,000 teach-

ers achieve this important credential. Now the States need to do things like North Carolina has and offer to pay. The Governor's plan would pay master teachers another 12 percent more. You have to encourage people. But we need 100,000 at least, because what we really want is at least a board certified master teacher in every single school building in America. If you get one in every single school building in America, we know from the research that they will change the education environment and help lift the standards that other teachers achieve and help to lift the quality of teaching in all the classrooms.

So that is one of the things that we're trying to do in our budget. But again, I'd say that we are following your lead and especially the years and years and years that Governor Hunt has put into this. In April, Secretary Riley will hold a national forum on attracting and preparing teachers with 50 of our Nation's best teachers and thousands of others. And we are going to have to do more to encourage our brightest young people to become teachers.

Finally, we also have to make sure, as the Governor said, that while good teachers get a raise, the truly bad teachers who can't measure up should get a pink slip. We have to do that in an expeditious and fair way. Today, that is too time consuming and costly. In some States it can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. That same money could be and should be used to reward good teachers and to train those who are trying to improve their skills. We can change this, as they have in Cincinnati where school boards and teachers unions have worked together in partnership to find more efficient and fair ways to remove teachers who should leave the classroom. Encouraging teachers is not easy or cheap, but again, I say, we know what a phenomenal difference it makes.

Finally, to elevate teaching, I think we have to reform the way we spend money in our schools and give parents the tools to demand more accountability. Today the Vice President is discussing that at the State legislature in Sacramento, California. His re-inventing Government initiative has helped us to shrink the National Government to the smallest it's been in three decades and to take

that money and invest it in education, invest it in technology, invest it in transportation, invest it in growing the economy and building a better future. We have to have the same sort of national effort to analyze the way expenditures are made in public education throughout America, so that we can support those who are committed to reducing unnecessary bureaucratic expenditures and increasing expenditures on children and teachers and learning.

Yesterday I did a town hall meeting with 35 children, on drugs. And I asked all these kids—and some of these kids had been on drugs and were off drugs, a couple of these kids were in treatment, some of them had been in families of gang members who had been involved in drugs, and then some of them had never used drugs. It was a whole panoply of kids. But I went through child after child after child, and I asked them to tell me about their circumstances. And they all said, "We need mentors. We need programs we're interested in." And one after another they kept telling me about how their school had had to abandon its music program or its art program, its physical education programs, its intramural athletic programs, all the things that happen after school or on weekend that keep kids involved in positive things.

We have to understand that however much money we have for our schools, we have to make sure we are spending it first and foremost on instruction and, secondly, on ways designed to give the children the best chance to live productive, wholesome, good, constructive lives, and that ought to be a national effort as well.

We have found phenomenal amounts of money that we could redirect in the Federal Government to reducing the deficit or investing in our future simply by slowly, but deliberately, eliminating hundreds of unnecessary programs, thousands of unnecessary regulations, and reducing, without running people off, just slowly reducing the size of Government until we have got it to the point where I mentioned to you earlier.

And we have to work on that in our schools because we cannot afford to waste a single dollar when it comes to these children's future. And it is folly to believe that we're not

paying for it when we take these kids away from a chance to have a full, wholesome experience and to be in those schools after school hours or before school hours and doing things in addition to their academic learning. So I hope you will support that. [Applause] Thank you.

Let me just say one final word in closing about another big job we have to do together. We have to finish the work of welfare reform. In the first 4 years of my Presidency, we gave waivers from Federal rules to 43 States to do all kinds of things to help move people from welfare to work. We now know that partly because of the growing economy, partly because of State welfare reform efforts, and partly because of a 50 percent increase in child support collections nationwide, the welfare rolls went down by 2.6 million in 4 years, a record number.

Then the Congress passed, and I signed, the welfare reform bill, which says there will still be a national guarantee for poor children for food and medicine, but there's a limit to how long an able-bodied person can be on welfare without going to work. And we're going to give it to the States and let the States decide how to design their plans to move people from welfare to work.

Well, what I want to tell you folks is that this is like that old country singer Chet Atkins, who used to say, "You've got to be awful careful what you ask for in this old life, because you might get it." And now you've got it. And here is what you have. In order to meet the demands of the law that was supported by almost every Governor and every State official in the country, we must move about another million people from welfare to work. Now keep in mind when we reduced the welfare rolls by 2.6 million, some of those were children; only about a million of those were people moving from welfare into the work force. So we moved a million people in 4 years when the economy created almost 12 million jobs. We have to move another million in the next 4 years because of what the law says, whether the economy creates the jobs or not. And it is your responsibility to design a plan to get that done.

Now, I want to help. And I have proposed Federal legislation to give a tax credit of 50 percent for up to \$10,000 in salaries for peo-

ple who hire people specifically off welfare. I have proposed to give extra cash to high-impact, high-unemployment areas so people can do public service work, community service work, if necessary.

But there are more things you can do. Your Work First program here in North Carolina is encouraging private employers by subsidizing paychecks and holding job fairs. These are the kinds of things we have to do everywhere. But you really need to look at how your program works. And you need to look at whether you have a system for challenging private employers to look at the incentives that are available. And you need to figure out how many people every county is going to have to move from welfare to work in order for you not to have a train wreck at the end of the next 4 years.

Every State has to do this. And it's going to have to be done county by county, community by community. Because I'm telling you, everybody that ever said people who are able-bodied on welfare ought to have to work, now has a moral obligation to make sure that the people who have been told they have to work, actually have jobs so they can work. We have to do that.

Let me just say, I have been to a lot of States and looked at a lot of programs. In Missouri, they go to employers and say, "We'll give you the welfare check for up to 4 years if you need it, but you have to pay people \$1.75 over the minimum wage, and we'll give you the welfare check as an employment-in-training supplement. And you can have it for a slot, but not for a particular individual, for up to 10 years, if you'll just keep being part of our program." So they've got a lot of employers, small, medium, and large, who are part of that.

You have to do something like that to do something for the employers who are not taxed. Community nonprofits and religious organizations can hire a lot of people from welfare into their ranks and have a lot to do with integrating their families into the mainstream of life in North Carolina. But they have to have some incentive to do so.

The second thing I would urge you to do is to make sure that as you realize savings from people moving from welfare to work, I think you can meet your goals better if you

turn around and invest at least the initial of those savings back into the transition. We did a good job of adding \$4 billion to child care for people moving from welfare to work. But we still may not have enough child care to do the job. And we know that is a huge barrier. You cannot ask people to hurt their kids when they go to work. And a lot of folks entering these entry-level jobs don't make much money. Now, we can carry them over with Medicaid health insurance for their kids for a while. They've got to have the child care.

This bill gives you a lot of flexibility, and now you have to design this program. I would just implore you to really get down to brass tacks, get the facts: How many people does North Carolina have to move from welfare into jobs in 4 years? How many is that per county? How many is that per community? What are the tools we have? Who have we asked to do the job?

I believe that the private sector is anxious to be asked to participate in this. I believe they want to end the permanent under class in America and help people move into the thriving, growing middle class. But we have to do it in an organized, disciplined way, State by State. We're going to do our part, but we need you to do yours.

Finally, let me say that it is obvious from looking at education that we have to have a new partnership in America. Washington can lead the way, but the work has to be done by all Americans. North Carolina has led the way for a long time.

I was smiling today when I got up and I thought about coming down here, and I thought about the first time I was ever in a meeting with Governor Hunt and Governor Riley—18 years ago—we were all much younger then. And we had this idea that all the Southern States would reach the national average in per capita income and have all these great opportunities for our people if only we could have an education system that was as good as anyplace in the country and it would reach everybody, without regard to race or income.

And ironically, the mission that many of us who are southerners have carried for 20 or 30 years in our hearts, is now the mission of America in a global society dominated by

information and technology. And it is within our reach, literally, to give every single child in America the greatest future in human history, if we create the conditions in which we can flourish—that's partly our job, through national defense and meeting the security challenges and providing a good economy—but also having the tools.

We cannot guarantee the future for any child, but we can give every child the tools to make the most of his or her own life. That is now America's mission. It is a mission this State has pursued for a long time. If you will lead the way, America's best days are still ahead.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:09 a.m. in the House of Representatives Chamber. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. James B. Hunt, Jr., and Lt. Gov. Dennis Wicker of North Carolina; Harold Brubaker, speaker, North Carolina House of Delegates; Marc Basnight, president pro tempore, North Carolina State Senate; Mayor Tom Fetzter of Raleigh; and Dean Smith, men's basketball coach, University of North Carolina.

Statement Announcing the White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning

March 13, 1997

Today Hillary and I are pleased to announce that on April 17, 1997, we will host the White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning: What New Research on the Brain Tells Us About Our Youngest Children. The conference, which will take place at the White House, will spotlight exciting new findings about how our children develop, and explore how we can make the most of this information to give our children what they need to thrive.

We hope that this one-day conference will make the latest scientific research, nearly all supported by the Federal Government, more accessible and understandable to America's families. The research clearly indicates the importance of children's first few years to their later success in school and in life. This conference is a continuation of my adminis-