

Week Ending Friday, September 5, 1997

The President's Radio Address

August 30, 1997

Good morning. This week a record number of American children will be heading back to school, reminding us of our greatest obligation, to prepare our children for the 21st century. We can't do that without a commitment to educational excellence for all those children, expecting them to meet high standards and testing to see if they do.

In my State of the Union Address, I challenged every State to adopt high national standards of academic excellence, defining what every child should learn, and by 1999, to join in a national test for all fourth graders in reading and all eighth graders in math, to ensure they have mastered these basics.

We know that challenging our students to achieve excellence works. This week, the College Board announced that SAT math scores continue to rise; and today, the National Assessment for Education Progress, the organization that issues what we call the Nation's report card, announced that in recent years we have improved math and science performance at every age level. Most exciting, more high schoolers are taking challenging courses and college-level courses.

Still, we all know we have more to do to improve our schools and to raise learning levels for all of our students. I've been working to improve education for nearly 20 years now, and I am convinced we can give our children the education they need to thrive in the 21st century only by setting high standards and by challenging students, teachers, parents, and principals to meet them. National standards will help us to upgrade curricula, improve teaching, and target students and schools who need assistance.

I'm pleased that Governors and mayors from all over the country, business leaders and educators from States and cities, big and small, people of both parties, are joining in

this effort. We're working to make sure this doesn't become a partisan issue.

Some people worry that the Federal Government would play too large a role in developing the test. To meet that concern, I have instructed my staff to rewrite our proposal to make sure these tests are developed not by the Department of Education but by an independent, bipartisan board created by Congress many years ago. This will make sure these tests measure what they should, nothing more, nothing less.

Still, there are some in Congress who, even as our children are heading back to school, are working to undermine the very progress in education our children are counting on. They have proposed an amendment that would prevent us from developing a common test for math and reading and, therefore, would prevent your school district or your State or your child from choosing to take the test. That means you won't be able to find out if your child's school is meeting world-class standards.

The arguments they're using are the very same ones we've heard for years now. They amount to a determination to avoid accountability. Some say we shouldn't pay for test development even though it's being done by an independent body. Some say the test will be misused, even though participation is voluntary and is clearly designed to show how students and schools are doing and to show the way toward improving them.

Some say it's unfair to poor kids and kids of immigrant parents, even though many big-city school districts, including those in six of seven of our largest cities, say they want to be a part of the test and the national standards movement even if their States don't.

The fact is high standards are essential to providing our children the best education in the world, and I intend to do whatever is necessary to make sure we move forward.

The 21st century will be a time of remarkable opportunity. With high national edu-

cation standards, we can make sure all our children have the education they need to seize these opportunities. Without them, our children will continue to pay for our own low expectations and our own limited vision for them. Our children, our schools, our future are far too important to be anything less than world class. Let us move forward into the 21st century with high standards, and make sure we meet them.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 6:04 p.m. on August 29 at a private residence at Martha's Vineyard, MA, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on August 30.

**Remarks in a Telephone
Conversation With the WNBA
Champion Houston Comets From
Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts**

August 30, 1997

Coach Van Chancellor. Mr. President?

The President. Coach, congratulations.

Coach Chancellor. Well, thank you very much. You know, we're from neighboring States. I'm a Mississippi boy.

The President. You are?

Coach Chancellor. Yes, I am.

The President. Well, double congratulations.

Coach Chancellor. Well, thank you very much.

The President. I'll tell you what, I've followed the season this year. I've watched several games on television. I've really enjoyed it, and I had a chance to get to know some of the players in the league when I went running with the Women's Olympic Team a couple of years ago, and I think it's just been a great thing. I hope it'll be a success and go forward, and you had a great season and a great team, and you had a good game to-night.

Coach Chancellor. Well, thank you very much. I do appreciate you taking the time to call our locker room. That means a lot to the women of this team and to this coaching staff.

The President. Can you hear me?

Coach Chancellor. Yes, I can hear you.

The President. We're on a cell phone, but I think we're doing all right. I can hear you fine.

Coach Chancellor. Yes. I do appreciate your support of women's athletics in general.

The President. Well, I'm strongly supportive of it, and I hope that—like I said, I want you to stay with it, and I'll be supporting you all the way, and congratulate the players for me.

Coach Chancellor. I will. They're all in the dressing room, and they will be honored that you have called us.

The President. Cynthia had a great game, and any of us who has ever been through a childbirth were awful impressed when Sheryl Swoopes came back to play so quickly.

Coach Chancellor. Yes. I'm amazed that she was able to have a child and come back and play for us. She just had some great games. This has just been a total team effort for us.

The President. Yes. Well, give them my best, and I hope to see you up here someday pretty soon.

Coach Chancellor. Okay. I would love to come up there.

The President. Thank you, Van.

Coach Chancellor. And thank you very much for calling us. I'm very honored.

The President. Bye-bye.

NOTE: The President spoke by satellite at 6:50 p.m. from a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to players Cynthia Cooper, and Sheryl Swoopes, Houston Comets.

**Remarks in a Telephone
Conversation With the WNBA
Second Place New York Liberty
From Martha's Vineyard**

August 30, 1997

The President. Hello?

Ms. Maureen Coyle. We have a couple of people here who want to say hi to you.

The President. Oh, great. Congratulations on your season.

Team members. Thank you!

The President. I can't believe you're all there.

Ms. Coyle. Our head coach, Nancy Darsch, wanted to say hey to you.