

What we've got to do is to make sure that every American has access to the best elementary and secondary education in the world. And in order to do that, we have to do a lot of things. If you saw the State of the Union the other night, I talked about it. I want to lower class sizes in the first three grades to 18. I want to help build new classrooms or remodel them in 5,000 schools so we can deal with the problems of overcrowding. I want to help to lift standards in the poorest school districts in America. And I want to make sure we hook up every classroom and library in every school in America to the Internet by the year 2000.

There are two things I want to say about this, and one of them you know I'm accurate about. The first thing is, it's one thing to say we can hook up the schools and the classrooms and another thing for the schools to be able to afford it. So the Federal Communications Commission—and we have some members here from the FCC—have given a \$2 billion education discount to the schools of America so all our schools can afford to be on the Internet by the year 2000.

And the second thing I want to say is that a lot of school teachers are like the President; they're sort of technologically challenged. [Laughter] And there are a lot of classes in America where the kids know a whole lot more about the Internet than their teachers do, right?

So now we can laugh about it and have a lot of fun, but if our objective is to make sure that every single child can tap the full potential of the information age, then every single teacher must be in a position to know all he or she needs to know. So we are also investing to make sure that from now on, every newly certified teacher will be trained to know at least as much, if not more, about those computers and the Internet and communications as the students in the classroom. That is important.

I want to make this last point. Prime Minister Blair complimented you on your school spirit, and we loved it when you cheered when we came in, all of you, and we thank you. But look around this room, look around, look at each other. This is a picture of America in the 21st century. People from all backgrounds, all walks of life, all—[applause]—

and what you have to believe with all your heart and soul is that if you get an education, you can live out your dreams. And if all of you get an education, we can prove that America can accommodate all this diversity and grow stronger by the values we have in common; that we will only grow stronger and more prosperous and give more opportunities to more people to live out their dreams if we can give everybody a good education and then we prove that we can get along, across the lines that divide us, as one America. That's the America I want you to help me build for the new century.

Thank you, and God bless you all. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:50 p.m. in the gymnasium. In his remarks, he referred to Elizabeth O'Brien, student, and Nikole Sara Bender, vice president, student government, Montgomery Blair High School; Gov. Parris N. Glendening of Maryland; Senator Barbara A. Mikulski; and Nancy King, president, Montgomery County board of education. The transcript made available by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Prime Minister Blair.

Statement on Child Care Legislation

February 5, 1998

Earlier this week, I submitted my budget proposal to Congress. I am proud that this budget—the first balanced budget in a generation—includes an ambitious initiative to make child care better, safer, and more affordable. Yesterday we moved closer to achieving meaningful child care legislation because of an important step taken by Senator Chris Dodd and many of his Democratic colleagues in the Senate. Senator Dodd has introduced a comprehensive child care package that, like mine, significantly increases child care subsidies for poor children, provides greater tax relief to help low- and middle-income families pay for child care, creates a tax credit for businesses that provide child care for their employees, increases after-school opportunities for children, promotes early learning, and improves child care quality.

In putting forward this proposal, Senator Dodd and his cosponsors have built on their longstanding commitment to improving child

care for our Nation's children. I was also pleased that last week a group of Republicans introduced a promising child care proposal. I look forward to working with the Congress on a bipartisan basis to enact child care legislation this year that will help Americans fulfill their responsibilities as workers, and even more importantly, as parents.

**Statement on the Fifth Anniversary
of the Family and Medical Leave Act**
February 5, 1998

On this fifth anniversary of the Family and Medical Leave Act, I am happy to report that this law has been good for America's families and good for this country's businesses. Before I signed this bill into law, the United States was the only industrialized nation without a national family and medical leave policy. Workers shouldn't have to choose between their families and their jobs when a child is born or a parent is sick. This law keeps many workers from having to make that choice.

Many American families continue to face a serious shortage—a shortage of time needed to balance work and family obligations. Over a year ago I called upon Congress to expand the Family and Medical Leave Act to allow 24 additional hours of leave each year so that parents can participate in children's activities or so that family members may take children or elderly relatives to medical or dental appointments or for other professional services. This law deserves support and expansion so it can continue to work for American workers, their families, and their employers.

**Message to the Congress
Transmitting a Report of the
National Endowment for the
Humanities**

February 5, 1998

To the Congress of the United States:

I am pleased to present to you the 1996 annual report of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), the Federal agency charged with fostering scholarship and enriching the ideas and wisdom born of

the humanities. The agency supports an impressive range of projects encompassing the worlds of history, literature, philosophy, and culture. Through these projects, Americans of all walks of life are able to explore and share in the uniqueness of our Nation's democratic experience.

The activities of the NEH touch tens of millions of our citizens—from the youngest students to the most veteran professors, to men and women who simply strive for a greater appreciation of our Nation's past, present, and future. The NEH has supported projects as diverse as the widely viewed documentary, *The West*, and research as specialized as that conducted on the Lakota Tribe. Small historical societies have received support, as have some of the Nation's largest cultural institutions.

Throughout our history, the humanities have provided Americans with the knowledge, insights, and perspectives needed to move ourselves and our civilization forward. Today, the NEH remains vitally important to promoting our Nation's culture. Not only does its work continue to add immeasurably to our civic life, it strengthens the democratic spirit so essential to our country and our world on the eve of a new century.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
February 5, 1998.

**Message to the Congress
Transmitting the Extension of the
Poland-United States Fisheries
Agreement and Documentation**

February 5, 1998

To the Congress of the United States:

In accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*), I transmit herewith an Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Poland extending the Agreement of August 1, 1985, Concerning Fisheries Off the Coasts of the United States, with annexes and agreed minutes, as amended and extended (the 1985 Agreement). The Agreement, which was effected