

through the National Shipbuilding Initiative. We also have helped keep our shipbuilding industry competitive in the global marketplace by providing financing guarantees, granting tax deferrals, and making it easier to operate ships under the U.S. flag.

The United States Merchant Marine has served our Nation boldly and well through challenge and change. As we enter a new century, we must reaffirm our commitment to this proud legacy. We must maintain the strength and vitality of our merchant fleet and the skills and training of the men and women who have made America a great maritime Nation. By doing so, we will ensure that U.S.-flag vessels continue to sail the world's oceans, preserving our leadership of the global economy, strengthening our prosperity, and defending our freedom for generations to come.

In recognition of the importance of the U.S. Merchant Marine, the Congress, by a joint resolution approved May 20, 1933, has designated May 22 of each year as "National Maritime Day" and has authorized and requested the President to issue annually a proclamation calling for its appropriate observance.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 22, 1999, as National Maritime Day. I urge all Americans to observe this day with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities and by displaying the flag of the United States in their homes and in their communities. I also request that all merchant ships sailing under the American flag dress ship on that day.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-first day of May, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-third.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 9:04 a.m., May 25, 1999]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on May 26. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

**Message to the Congress
Transmitting the Proposed
"Educational Excellence for All
Children Act of 1999"**

May 21, 1999

To the Congress of the United States:

I am pleased to transmit for your immediate consideration the "Educational Excellence for All Children Act of 1999," my Administration's proposal for reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) and other elementary and secondary education programs.

My proposal builds on the positive trends achieved under current law. The "Improving America's Schools Act of 1994," which reauthorized the ESEA 5 years ago, and the "Goals 2000: Educate America Act" gave States and school districts a framework for integrating Federal resources in support of State and local reforms based on high academic standards. In response, 48 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have adopted State-level standards. Recent results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show improved performance for the economically disadvantaged and other at-risk students who are the primary focus of ESEA programs. NAEP reading scores for 9-year olds in high-poverty schools have improved significantly since 1992, while mathematics achievement has also increased nationally. Students in high-poverty schools and the lowest-performing students—the specific target populations for the ESEA Title I program—have registered gains in both reading and math achievement.

I am encouraged by these positive trends, but educational results for many children remain far below what they should be. My proposal to reauthorize the ESEA is based on four themes reflecting lessons from research and the experience of implementing the 1994 Act.

First, we would continue to focus on high academic standards for all children. The underlying purpose of every program within the ESEA is to help all children reach challenging State and local academic standards. States have largely completed the first stage of standards-based reform by developing content standards for all children. My bill

would support the next stage of reform by helping States, school districts, schools, and teachers use these standards to guide classroom instruction and assessment.

My proposal for reauthorizing Title I, for example, would require States to hold school districts and schools accountable for student performance against State standards, including helping the lowest-performing students continually to improve. The bill also would continue to target Federal elementary and secondary education resources on those students furthest from meeting State and local standards, with a particular emphasis on narrowing the gap in achievement between disadvantaged students and their more affluent peers. In this regard, my proposal would phase in equal treatment of Puerto Rico in ESEA funding formulas, so that poor children in Puerto Rico are treated similarly to those in the rest of the country for the purpose of formula allocations.

Second, my proposal responds to research showing that while qualified teachers are critical to improving student achievement, far too many teachers are not prepared to teach to high standards. Teacher quality is a particular problem in high-poverty schools, and the problem is often exacerbated by the use of paraprofessionals in instructional roles.

My bill addresses teacher quality by holding States accountable for stronger enforcement of their own certification and licensure requirements, while at the same time providing substantial support for State and local professional development efforts. The Teaching to High Standards initiative in Title II would help move challenging educational standards into every classroom by providing teachers with sustained and intensive high-quality professional development in core academic subjects, supporting new teachers during their first 3 years in the classroom, and ensuring that all teachers are proficient in relevant content knowledge and teaching skills.

The Technology for Education initiative under Title III would expand the availability of educational technology as a tool to help teachers implement high standards in the classroom, particularly in high-poverty schools. My bill also would extend, over the next 7 years, the Class-Size Reduction initia-

tive, which aims to reduce class sizes in the early grades by helping districts to hire and train 100,000 teachers. And the Title VII Bilingual Education proposal would help ensure that all teachers are well trained to teach students with limited English proficiency, who are found in more and more classrooms with each passing year.

Third, my bill would increase support for safe, healthy, disciplined, and drug-free learning environments where all children feel connected, motivated, and challenged to learn and where parents are welcomed and involved. The recent tragedy at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, reminds us that we must be ever vigilant against the risks of violence and other dangerous behaviors in our schools. Our reauthorization bill includes several measures to help mitigate these risks.

We would strengthen the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act by concentrating funds on districts with the greatest need for drug- and violence-prevention programs, and by emphasizing the use of research-based programs of proven effectiveness. Moreover, with respect to students who bring weapons to school, this proposal would require schools to refer such students to a mental health professional for assessment and require counseling for those who pose an imminent threat to themselves or others; allow funding for programs that educate students about the risks associated with guns; expand character education programs; and promote alternative schools and second chance programs. A new School Emergency Response to Violence program would provide rapid assistance to school districts that have experienced violence or other trauma that disrupts the learning environment.

My High School Reform initiative would support innovative reforms to improve student achievement in high schools, such as expanding the connections between adults and students that are necessary for effective learning and healthy personal development. This new initiative would provide resources to help transform 5,000 high schools into places where students receive individual attention, are motivated to learn, are provided with challenging courses, and are encouraged

to develop and pursue long-term educational and career goals.

Fourth, in response to clear evidence that standards-based reforms work best when States have strong accountability systems in place, my proposal would encourage each State to establish a single, rigorous accountability system for all schools. The bill also would require States to end social promotion and traditional retention practices; phase out the use of teachers with emergency certificates and the practice of assigning teachers “out-of-field;” and implement sound discipline policies in every school. Finally, the bill would give parents an important new accountability tool by requiring State, district, and school-level report cards that will help them evaluate the quality of the schools their children attend.

Based on high standards for all students, high-quality professional development for teachers, safe and disciplined learning environments, and accountability to parents and taxpayers, the Educational Excellence for All Children Act of 1999 provides a solid foundation for raising student achievement and narrowing the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and their more advantaged peers. More important, it will help prepare all of our children, and thus the Nation, for the challenges of the 21st century. I urge the Congress to take prompt and favorable action on this proposal.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
May 21, 1999.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President’s Radio Address

May 22, 1999

Good morning. It’s been just over a month since 15 students and a teacher lost their lives at Columbine High School. On Thursday Hillary and I traveled to Littleton, Colorado, to visit with the families of the victims and the students of Columbine. They’re brave, good people, full of faith, determined that the children lost will not be forgotten, dedicated to doing whatever they can to make

our schools and our children safe. All of us in Washington and in every community in America owe them the same dedication.

As if we needed another reminder, on Thursday, as I was going to Littleton, a young man opened fire at his high school in Conyers, Georgia, wounding several of his classmates. No child should have to worry that a classmate is carrying a loaded gun to school. No parent should have to fear sending a child to school. And no American should tolerate this level of violence against our children. There is no task more urgent. Every one of us has a role to play.

First, Government must do more to protect our children from guns. We’re making progress. This week was a turning point in our long efforts. I’m so pleased that the Senate passed key elements of my commonsense plan to address gun violence: mandatory child safety locks with every new handgun; a lifetime ban on gun purchased by violent juveniles; a nationwide ban on the importation of high-capacity ammunition clips and juvenile possession of assault weapons; and finally, after a tie-breaking vote cast by Vice President Gore, mandatory background checks on gun sales at gun shows.

I’m pleased that Speaker Hastert has agreed that we should also close that deadly loophole and also raise the age of handgun ownership to 21. Now I call on the House to take immediate action. I hope the House of Representatives will pass every one of these commonsense efforts that the Senate has passed to protect our children from guns. And I hope they’ll do it before school lets out.

Protecting our children from guns is important, but it’s just one step. The media and entertainment industry have enormous power in our children’s lives and they must take responsibility, too. By the time he or she reaches 18 years old, the average child has watched 40,000 killings over the media. There are now hundreds of studies that show that these viewings actually desensitize our children to the horror and the evil of violence and its consequences and that this has greater impacts on more vulnerable children.

Now here, too, we’ve made some progress—with the TV ratings and the V-chip to enforce them, with video ratings, with new