

to want to learn. You've still got to be disciplined enough to be willing to work. But if you get your heart and your mind engaged, there should be no barrier to letting you live your dreams tomorrow. And we're going to do our best to take the barriers down.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:35 a.m. in the gymnasium. In his remarks, he referred to Darnell Curley, teacher, and Wilma Durham and Art Bridges, co-principals, Frank W. Ballou Senior High School; Mayor Anthony A. Williams of Washington, DC; Arlene Ackerman, superintendent, District of Columbia Public Schools; Angela Lee, director of government affairs for the District of Columbia, AT&T; and Julie Evans, chief executive officer, NetDay.

### **Statement on the Retirement of Representative Bruce F. Vento**

*February 2, 2000*

I was saddened to learn that Representative Bruce Vento has been diagnosed with lung cancer and will retire from Congress at the end of the year. Since he was first elected to Congress in 1976, Bruce Vento has served the people of his Minnesota district with great distinction. A true champion of the environment, he has steered into law more than 300 bills protecting our natural resources. He has also been a tireless advocate in combating homelessness.

Bruce Vento has made a significant contribution to his country, not only as a United States Congressman but also as a Representative to the Minnesota State House and as a science and social studies teacher for 10 years. He will be greatly missed by his colleagues in the House of Representatives and his constituents in Minnesota. Hillary and I wish he and his family the best as they work to fight this terrible disease. We look forward to his continued public service even after he retires from Congress.

### **Remarks to the National Conference of State Legislatures Dinner**

*February 2, 2000*

Thank you very much. Representative Mannweiler, thank you for that fine introduc-

tion—reminding me of my days as Governor, which, on some days up here, have looked pretty good. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank you for meeting me when I came in, along with your president-elect, Senator Jim Costa; vice president, Senator Steve Saland; my longtime friend Representative Dan Blue, your immediate past president; John Phelps; Bill Pound. I brought with me my Assistant for Relations with State and Local Governments, Mickey Ibarra, Matt Bennett, and others from the White House. And I want to tell you, I'm delighted to be here on your 25th anniversary.

One of the most impressive things that I found out in preparing to come here tonight is that more than 260 Members of the United States Congress are former State legislators and NCSL members. And I see a number of them out here tonight of both parties. I'm almost tempted to finish my State of the Union Address. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank you for two things: first of all, for working with us to try to get the right balance between the Federal Government and State and local governments. And your president talked a lot about that; there's no need in my repeating it. But when I came to Washington, I felt very strongly that the National Government should actually do a lot more in some areas but that we should proceed in a different way, and that because of the size of the deficit, which was then \$290 billion and projected to be over \$400 billion this year, we were going to have to find a way to increase our investment in education and cut the size of the deficit, shrink the size of the Government, and forge more partnerships with State government and with local government.

So we did what your president said, with the unfunded mandates. But we also worked out the partnership in welfare reform, which many people said would never work and result in terrible injustice to children. And as all of you know, it hasn't worked that way. We have about 7 million fewer people on welfare and 2 million fewer children in poverty, the lowest poverty rate among children in more than 20 years. The only thing I would say is, I hope all of you will fully spend all those TANF funds to make sure that we actually are doing right by the kids as we move