country in the CIA and in the Justice Department. I thank them for their service. I commend them for their sacrifice. Allegations of espionage are a reminder that we live in a dangerous world, a world that sometimes does not share American values.

I thank the men and women who proudly serve our country. But to anyone who would betray its trust, I warn you: We'll find you, and we'll bring you to justice.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:50 p.m. aboard Air Force One en route from Columbus, OH, to St. Louis, MO. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

## Remarks at Moline Elementary School in St. Louis, Missouri

*February 20, 2001*

Sarah, thanks for those kind words. And Chris, thank you very much. Now, what you forgot to say is what I can say, and that is, I believe and know that a school succeeds when there is a dynamic principal in charge of the school. And that's the case here at Moline. I also know it's important to have a superintendent of schools who is willing to push the bounds of excellence, and that's what you have in your superintendent of schools.

We're so honored that you would welcome us here. Laura and I are glad to be traveling to the great State of Missouri. I want to thank your senior Senator Kit Bond. I want to thank Congressman Clay. I want to thank Congressman Akin for your hospitality. And Governor, I'm so pleased you're here as well.

We put out an invitation to all the Governors to join us next Sunday night at the White House for dinner, and the Governor has agreed to come and eat some ribs. I think it is—[*laughter*]—maybe not ribs, but—but I appreciate so very much you taking time to be here today.

Boys and girls, thank you all, as well, for your hospitality. We had a chance to listen to some third graders read. They sound like sixth graders to us.

Let me talk a little policy, if you don't mind. There's a time for politics in our society, and that ended a while ago. Now is the time for good public policy, and it starts with the universal goal of every child being educated in America. That sounds like anybody would say that, but to me, it's an achievable goal.

There are some certain principles to which we need to adhere in order to meet that goal. First, setting the highest of high standards; understanding that all children can learn; not accepting excuses when certain children don't learn; not adhering to a system that shuffles children through because it's so much easier to quit as opposed to focus on a child-by-child basis. Good education starts with high standards, whether it be set by the President, the Governor, or the superintendent or the principal or the teacher in the classroom.

Secondly, I strongly believe in what we call local control of schools. I believe it's critically important for those of us in the Federal Government to align authority and responsibility where it belongs, and that is at the local level. There's the old statement, "One size fits all"—doesn't work when it comes to educating children. I fully subscribe to that.

You've got different issues, Governor, in the State of Missouri, than we had in the State of Texas. We have the same goals, the same objectives, the same heart, but you have a different set of problems. And therefore, it's incumbent upon us in the White House to work with Members of the Congress to pass Federal money back with as much flexibility as possible, to trust local people to set the course for excellence for all the children in the different school districts around the country.

Thirdly, accountability is critically important for—to meet the goal that no child will be left behind. It is incredibly important to measure, because without measuring, how do you know if a child is learning to read and write and add and subtract? How do you know? It seems like it's a fundamentally fair question for those of us in public life to ask. We're spending money; we'd like to know in return whether or not children are learning.

Now, I don't believe the Federal Government ought to design a test, Governor. I think you can design your own. You've certainly done so, at least in this school district;

they've designed their own accountability system. It's an accountability system that's so impressive because it's not just a measurement on an annual basis, it's a frequent measurement to determine whether or not a specific child is learning. And if that child isn't, there's immediate help. When there's a problem diagnosed, help comes. That's what's so important about having accountability; it's the cornerstone for reform.

I'm going to ask Congress to pass legislation that says that any school district which receives Federal money must design a test on an annual basis so that we know. It's the framework for addressing problems early, before it's too late. It says that consequences matter, but more importantly, if we set up the systems right, by disaggregating results, by treating each child as a person, not part of some overall group, we begin to have an education system that says each child matters, and we're going to track each child as he or she goes through the system. It's a critically important part of education reform.

I believe we can do a better job of teaching children to read. One of the reasons we chose this school is not only because of the strong appetite for diagnosing children early and the willingness to cure problems before they become acute, but this is a school that focuses on a reading curriculum that works.

I hope it's said that the Bush administration is willing to ask the question, "What works?" and then helps districts implement programs that do work. Phonics works. It's an important part of a good reading—balanced reading curriculum. The reason I know is because I have asked the question to folks at the National Institute of Health. They're not Republicans; they're not Democrats; they're not—they are scientists, who have spent a lot of time figuring out how to make sure all children have the capacity to learn.

And while there needs to be balanced reading curriculum, it is critically important for us to make sure the curriculum employed around the country is a curriculum that actually will achieve the results that we want, and that is children reading by the third grade.

So I'm sending up to Congress a proposal called Reading First. It is a $5 billion program over 5 years. It will triple the amount of reading money available for local districts to access. It says that inherent in any good program is the need for districts to develop a K-through-two diagnostic tool; that is, a simple tool that will enable K-through-two teachers to determine who needs help early.

There will be money involved in the reading program to help retrain teachers on how to teach a curriculum that works. One of the things that we must recognize in our society, Governor, is that sometimes our teacher colleges do not—are not able to match the hearts of teachers and give them the skills necessary to be effective teachers. There needs to be a lot of retraining, unfortunately. And until the teacher colleges get it right in terms of teaching curriculum that works, it seems like to me, a useful role for Government is to provide funds for teacher retraining. I'm not saying all teacher colleges fail. You would probably argue with me here that Missouri teacher colleges don't fail. But sometimes you find teachers in classrooms who have got all heart but lack the skills necessary to understand the science of reading. And it is incumbent upon us to match the heart and skills together.

We need to make sure that our Head Start Programs not only fulfill the social functions and the health functions that they do today but that Head Start Programs become, first and foremost, a reading program to give the little guys the skills necessary to be able to come to these elementary schools prepared and ready to take advantage of the programs that these fine elementary schools, like this one, have got and offer for children.

And finally, in order to make sure that a reading program works, there needs to be a strong emphasis on curriculum to help districts decide what curriculum to choose, what curriculum will work.

I am absolutely convinced that we can do a better job of teaching all children to read, because I start with the thought that all children can learn to read. I refuse to accept systems, and refuse not to challenge systems, that give up on children early.

I came from a State where there was a lot of children whose parents did not speak English as their first language. It was much easier to say, "Gosh, these little kids are too difficult to educate. Let's just move them

through." Those days are unacceptable. That frame of mind is not right for America, and we can do a better job. It starts with putting trust where it belongs.

Madam Superintendent, I promise you, I know where the great educational entrepreneurship of America lay, and it lay right here, in districts such as this one, and schools such as this one. It's trust in local people—it starts with trusting local people to make the right decisions. It's a system that is—in its framework, encourages reform when reform is needed, and rewards excellence when excellence is found.

And so I'm here, frankly, to call upon the citizens of this important State to help pass legislation that will not only focus on teaching every child to read but legislation that will have at its cornerstone, at its very core, a reform agenda based upon accountability, based upon measuring each child, based upon making sure that no child is left behind.

America is a great land. It will be a greater land when every child is educated. The strength of our country is the public school system. That strength will be even stronger—even stronger—when we insist that every child be measured, every problem corrected, and every child challenged to be the best he or she can be. That can happen, and it is going to happen.

It's an honor to be here. God bless you for what you do, and thank you for your hospitality. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:11 p.m. in Room 2. In his remarks, he referred to Principal Sarah Riss, Moline Elementary School; Superintendent Chris Wright, Riverview Gardens School District; and Gov. Bob Holden of Missouri.

## Remarks at a Tax Family Reunion in St. Louis

*February 20, 2001*

Thank you very much. Before I have a chance to say hello to you all and watch the Mighty Mights skate, I want to talk a little bit—some public policy.

Today I was in St. Louis talking about education. There is no more important subject as far as I'm concerned, to make sure every child gets educated. I know the Yahngs feel the same way. But I also want to talk about the budget, the budget of the United States Government, and the budget of the people of the United States.

I'm going to submit a budget next week to the United States Congress. It is a budget that will set priorities, just like each family does in America—set priorities. My priorities will make sure that we preserve and protect and strengthen Social Security, so that there's a Social Security system available for the Yahngs and their children, and for you, as well. A priority in my budget will be to make sure that the health care system in America is strong for the elderly, for the uninsured, and for all of us concerned about health. A priority will be public education.

Today I talked about a reading initiative which goal is to make sure that children can read by the third grade. I can't think of a better priority. By the way, I also understand that local control of schools is the best way to achieve that priority.

Last week I spent time touring military bases. The defense of our Nation is a priority. And in my budget I will submit, amongst other things, a pay raise for the men and women who wear the uniform. Restoring morale in the military not only means better pay, better housing, better health care; it also means having a Commander in Chief who will clarify the mission, the mission of the United States military to have fighting forces trained and prepared to fight war, and therefore, prevent war from happening in the first place.

A priority of mine, in my budget, will be paying down national debt. And yet after setting priorities, there's still money left over. And so while we're concerned about the Federal budget, I'm also concerned about the budget of people such as the Yahngs, who are here standing next to me.

I think it makes sense to understand who pays the bills. I think it makes sense to understand who fills the coffers of the United States, and it's the working people. And so I'm going to ask Congress to pass a tax relief package, recognizing that we can meet priorities, but also help families meet their own priorities.

I'm deeply concerned about the high cost of energy. American families are paying more