

has, of course, Thurgood Marshall here in Washington, DC.

The students here and students all across our country witnessed a terrible tragedy. It is a terrible moment in our country, and it's got to have affected a lot of our students in a way where they ask the question, "Why would this have happened to America? Why would somebody do this to our country?" And I want to assure the boys and girls, these attacks didn't come from a nation or a religion. These attacks are from some people who just are so evil it's hard for me to describe why. It's hard for us to comprehend why somebody would think the way they think and devalue life they way they devalue and to harm innocent people the way they harmed innocent people. It's just hard for all of us adults to explain.

But what we can do is, we can find common ground with others who wonder about America. We can prove them wrong by acting in a way that's good. We can show the world what a great, compassionate, and decent nation America is. I can do that through diplomacy. I can do that through our actions, through the alliances we form. But children all across America can do it, as well—can do it through letters and e-mails and pictures and drawings, and reaching out to boys and girls.

I thought it was really interesting, the letters that I heard today. Every letter said, "Would you write me back? Would you share with me your experiences so I can understand you better?" And that's exactly the spirit of the program and the initiative we're announcing, and it makes a lot of sense.

It is very important for us to combat evil with understanding. It's very important for us reinforce our message in all ways possible to the people in the Islamic world that we don't hold you accountable for what took place. As a matter of fact, we want to be friends. The average citizen in America harbors no ill will toward you. As a matter of fact, the average citizen in America would like to do everything we can to explain what our country is about, to explain what our future is about. And this is a great way to do this, in my judgment.

And so we're going to work hard to encourage other schools, other principals to sign up,

other boys and girls to write letters. And one way that people who are interested in participating can do, they can call up on a Web site to find out how to participate. And I'd like to give the address of the Web site: It is www.friendshipthrougheducation.org; it is www.friendshipthrougheducation.org. And that's a way for other principals and parents and concerned citizens to participate in this outreach.

Rod Paige mentioned the fact that we've got a—we've asked boys and girls all across America to contribute a dollar to help feed and provide medicine for Afghan children who are suffering. The response has been great, and I can't thank the boys and girls of America enough. That's one initiative. The initiative we're announcing today is a second initiative, all to send a message about the goodness and decency of our great country.

I want the boys and girls to know that the action that we're taking in our Government is all aimed to make sure that you can grow up in a free country. The military action, the diplomatic action, the intelligence-gathering, what you read and hear on the TV and newspapers has got one goal, and that's to make sure you can live in freedom in our great land.

And so thank you for giving me a chance to come by to thank you for your hard work. May God bless you all, and may God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:12 a.m. in the auditorium of the school. In his remarks, he referred to Eugene Pair and Eileen Wilson, principals, Thurgood Marshal Extended Elementary School; Paul L. Vance, superintendent, District of Columbia Public Schools; and Issa Al-Nashit, cultural attache, and Crown Prince Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa of Bahrain.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives on the Proposed "Secure Transportation for America Act"

October 25, 2001

Dear Mr. Speaker:

The quickest, most effective way to increase aviation security is to pass H.R. 3150, the Secure Transportation for America Act.

Time is of the essence. I urge your support for H.R. 3150. Making American air travel as safe and secure as possible is one of our Nation's top priorities. Last month, I proposed dramatic changes to our aviation security system: full Federal control of airport security and screening services; major expansion of the Federal Air Marshal program; and substantial new funding for aircraft security modifications. H.R. 3150 would accomplish these important initiatives and improve security quickly and effectively.

Both my proposal and H.R. 3150 give the Federal Government immediate and comprehensive control of aviation security. A new Transportation Security Agency, housed at the Department of Transportation, will hire Federal employees to supervise, manage, and train all passenger and baggage screeners. The new Security Agency would also establish and enforce new qualification standards for screeners, perform background checks on all screeners and other persons with access to secure areas at airports, and provide a uniformed Federal law enforcement presence at commercial airports.

Significantly, H.R. 3150 leaves the Federal Government the flexibility to build the best workforce to perform the actual screening function—another key element of my proposal. This model of Federal control plus flexibility mirrors the well-regarded airline security systems in place in many European countries, which involve public/private partnerships. Many adopted this model of strong government oversight over high-quality private security companies after finding other models of airline security to be less effective.

Other legislative proposals would mandate that all passenger and baggage screeners *must* be Federal workers in all circumstances. Such an inflexible, one-size-fits-all requirement fails to permit security tailored to the very different circumstances that exist at airports across the country. I am pleased that Chairman Young and the co-sponsors of H.R. 3150 have chosen not to limit the Administration's options in choosing the strongest possible means to protect Americans who travel by air. Giving the Government the flexibility to use private contractors will facilitate transition to the new system, promote better screening services

through competition, and ensure that security managers can move swiftly to discipline or remove employees who fail to live up to the rigorous new standards.

The American people deserve a quick and smooth transition to a better aviation security system. I urge the House to pass H.R. 3150 as soon as possible; and my Administration looks forward to continuing to work with the Congress on any refinements that may be necessary to ensure that the Nation's aviation security needs are addressed in the most effective manner possible.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

Remarks on Signing the USA PATRIOT ACT of 2001

October 26, 2001

Good morning and welcome to the White House. Today we take an essential step in defeating terrorism, while protecting the constitutional rights of all Americans. With my signature, this law will give intelligence and law enforcement officials important new tools to fight a present danger.

I commend the House and Senate for the hard work they put into this legislation. Members of Congress and their staffs spent long nights and weekends to get this important bill to my desk. I appreciate their efforts and bipartisanship in passing this new law.

I want to thank the Vice President and his staff for working hard to make sure this law was passed. I want to thank the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Treasury for being here, both of whom lead important parts of our war against terrorism. I want to thank Attorney General John Ashcroft for spending a lot of time on the Hill to make the case for a balanced piece of legislation. I want to thank the Director of the FBI and the Director of the CIA for waging an incredibly important part on the two-front war, one overseas and a front here at home.

I want to thank Governor Tom Ridge for his leadership. I want to thank the Members of Congress who are here on the stage, the leaders, on this impressive effort: Senator