

can make education the number one priority in your neighborhood.

And while we're waging war overseas, we're after illiteracy here at home. One of the most appalling statistics of our great land is the illiteracy rate amongst poor children. It's really high at the fourth grade level, and that's unacceptable. I think Chairman Boehner said about 70 percent of the fourth grade impoverished children can't read. If you can't read in the fourth grade, you're likely not to be able to read in the eighth grade. And if you can't read in the eighth, you're likely not be able to read in high school. And if you can't read in high school, you're likely to fall into a life that—a life of despair and hopelessness. And that's not right in America.

And so therefore, this bill pays attention to reading. It's got a lot of money in it to develop programs that work. I'm tired, and I know these congressional leaders are tired of putting money into programs that don't work. Well, in reading, we know what works. It's time to fund curriculum and teacher training programs and reading programs not based upon what sounds good or some theory but based upon what works, so that children can learn to read in America.

We are focusing on early reading initiatives, so that the country can achieve this goal: Every child be reading at grade level by the third grade. That's an achievable goal. It's one that's going to insist upon making sure we've got accountability standards, flexibility, resource—focusing our resources, and using the things that work, proven curriculum. But we can do that in America. We can achieve this objective. We can meet this goal. And when we do, America will be a much better place.

You know, after 9/11, a lot of us have taken a hard look at how we live our lives, you know, the meaning of life. And that's good for our country. It's been an incredibly positive experience for Americans to sit around their dinner table and moms and dads to take a look at their kids and say, "You know something, being a mom or dad is the most important job I'll ever have." It's been good for our country to—for people to go to their houses of worship and pray for guidance. It's been good for our country for people to say,

"Gosh, I want to fight terror by being kind to somebody else." And it's going to be good for our country, good for our country, when we as a nation focus on education again, focus on making sure our public education is the best school system in the entire world. That's what America is about.

It has been an honor for me to travel and to work with the four men on the stage who've made this bill possible. They have shown the country what can happen when good, honorable people set their minds on getting something done. They have shown that when you work with an administration, that when you set clear goals and you set aside all the bickering and you push aside all those on the fringes trying to tear down the process, that good people from both parties can achieve something strong for America. And that's exactly what we've done.

Thank you all for coming, and God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:20 p.m. in the Lundholm Gymnasium. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire; Joan R. Leitzel, president, University of New Hampshire; and Nancy B. McIver, 2002 State Teacher of the Year for New Hampshire.

Remarks at Boston Latin School in Boston, Massachusetts

January 8, 2002

Thank you all very much. Thank you, please. You know, I told the folks at the coffee shop in Crawford, Texas, that Ted Kennedy was all right. [*Laughter*] They nearly fell out. [*Laughter*] But he is. I've come to admire him. He's a smart, capable Senator. You want him on your side, I can tell you that. And as a result of his hard work, we put together a good piece of legislation that has put Republicans and Democrats on the side of the schoolchildren in America. And Senator, thank you very much for your leadership.

On September the 11th, my wife was heading to—was on Capitol Hill to testify in front of Senator Kennedy. And before she'd go testify in front of his committee, obviously the evildoers hit America. And I want to thank him publicly, in front of his home folks, for providing such comfort to Laura during

an incredibly tough time. Ironically enough, Judd Gregg was there, as well, and both those men went out of their way to put their arm around Laura and let her know all would be right. So, Mr. Senator, not only are you a good Senator; you're a good man.

Speaking about September the 11th, I want the young folks here to know that the mission we are on to rid the world of terror is a noble and just mission. I long for peace. But we learned a terrible lesson, and that lesson is we must rout out terror wherever it exists, in order for you and your children to grow up in a free and peaceful society. This Nation will not tire; we will not rest until we bring those who are willing to harm Americans to justice. And that's exactly what we intend to do.

We have a job to do overseas, and our military is performing brilliantly. For those of you who have got relatives in the military or those of you who are in the military, thank you from the bottom of our Nation's collective heart.

And we've got a job to do here at home, as well, and that's to make sure every child in America—every child—receives a good education.

Senator Kennedy and I, on the way in here, were talking about the Latin School. And I want to thank the headmistress Kelley for having us here. Thank you very much. After he had finished the litany of all the Kennedys that had gone to school here—[laughter]—we talked about the quality of education that the kids receive here. And the truth of the matter is, if you look at this bill that I signed this morning in Ohio, it says this is the way—this is Boston Latin all over again. This is what Boston Latin is about. It's about expecting high standards, understanding every child can learn, demanding the best, insisting upon hard work, rewarding success, solving failure. It is a great school, and I am grateful that I could come and herald the signing of an important piece of legislation here at this school. This is not only a testimony to Senator Ted Kennedy's hard work; it's a testimony to a fine public school. Thank you for having us.

I appreciate the Governor coming, and I know the Governor is committed to quality education, as well. Jane, thank you for being

here. I'm honored that members of the Massachusetts congressional delegation came. Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to come by and say hello. I appreciate so very much the mayor being here. Mr. Mayor, thank you for coming; it's good to see you again. I want to thank all of you for coming. I particularly want to thank the students who are here.

I—you're seeing Government at its best with this piece of legislation. I know there's a lot of folks who look at Washington and say, "Can't they ever get along? All they do is argue. All they do is call each other names." But on this piece of legislation, on this important piece of legislation, we figured out how to put our parties aside and focus on what's right for the American children. We showed the country that, if we so desire, it is possible in Washington to say the Nation matters more than our political parties matter.

That was not as easy as it sounds. [Laughter] It took a lot of hard work, and it took the leadership of four fine Americans who are on this stage with me today. These four people decided they would rather see results than have empty rhetoric dominate the scene. These people said, "Look, we disagree on some issues, but why don't we figure out where we agree and get something done." And it was in that spirit that we crafted a great piece of legislation.

Big George Miller is out of California. He is—he might be considered left in Massachusetts. [Laughter] What do you think, Congressman? [Laughter] That's saying something. [Laughter] Before I went to Washington, I had a group of the gentlemen come down to Austin to talk about education reform, and George and I had a discussion about making sure that the systems did not simply shuffle children through, that we wanted to call a halt to what some call social promotion. I knew right then and there, when I heard his passion about focusing on each child, that there was a potential ally when it came to writing good legislation.

And then Boehner from Ohio showed up. He did a fabulous job, by the way. I signed the bill this morning in his district to really express my gratitude and the Nation's gratitude for his leadership on shepherding this

bill through the House of Representatives. Without John Boehner, without George Miller, this bill never would have made it throughout the House, and I want to thank them both from the bottom of my heart.

And then there's the Kennedy-Gregg alliance. [Laughter] It was amazing that it worked, but it did. And the truth of the matter is, the bill wouldn't have gotten out of the Senate had not Senator Kennedy and Judd Gregg put their minds to it. This bill could have easily have stalled. It was a convenient time for people to say, "Well, we'd better not move anything out of the Senate because there's a war." But Ted Kennedy and Judd Gregg went to their respective caucuses and demanded action. And as a result, the bill came to the Senate floor, passed overwhelmingly, and I had the honor of signing it this morning.

I wish you could have seen the piece of legislation. It's really tall. And I admit, I haven't read it yet. [Laughter] You'll be happy to hear I don't intend to. [Laughter] But I know the principles behind the bill, and I want to describe some of them to you.

First, this bill says that we will hold people accountable for results. It says, in return for receiving Federal money, States must design accountability systems to measure—to determine whether or not children are learning to read and write and add and subtract. In return for Federal money, the State of Massachusetts or the State of Texas or any other State in the Union must develop an accountability system to let us know whether children in grades three-through-eight are meeting standards. It basically says, every child can learn. And if they're not learning, we want to know early, before it is too late.

Now, I've heard them say, "Well, tests—we're testing too much." If you don't like to take a test, too bad, because we need to know. We need to know whether you're learning.

I read a quote from a little girl from New York the other day that touched my heart, and I hope it touches yours. She said, "I don't remember taking exams. They just kept passing me along. I ended up dropping out in the seventh grade. I basically felt no one cared." Well, she was—she's blowing the

whistle on what happens in some of our schools in America.

You see, sometimes it's easy to walk into a classroom and say, "Certain children can't learn. Therefore, let's just move them through. Let's don't test them. Let's just push them out at the end." And that's wrong in America. Every child matters; every child should be diagnosed on whether or not they can read and write and add and subtract. And if they can't, we need to correct their problems early, before it's too late. The cornerstone of reform is strong accountability measures, just like you do here in the State of Massachusetts.

Secondly, in order for reform to mean anything, there must be consequences. Something must happen if there's failure. Now in this bill, it says schools will be given time to correct. After posting the test scores and mailing out the report cards that show mediocrity or failure, schools will still be given a chance to correct the problems. And therefore, we provide incentives and resources to make sure that failing schools have got the opportunity to meet standards.

But if they don't, the consequence is that parents must be empowered to make different choices. We must not trap children in schools that will not teach and will not change. And so, therefore, this bill says parents in failed schools can send their children to another public school or charter school or be able to get tutoring for their children in either the public or private sector. It is important to free families from failure in public education, and that's what this bill does.

The third principle—it says that we trust the local people to make the right decisions for the schools. It says we trust the Governors and the school boards to design the path to excellence for every child. It says Washington has a role of providing money, and now Washington is demanding results. But Washington should not micromanage the process. And so, this bill provides a lot more flexibility for the local folks. In essence, it says the people of Boston care more about the children of Boston than people in Washington, DC.

Rod Paige understands that. The reason I picked Rod to become the Secretary of

Education is because he was the superintendent of schools in the Houston Independent School District. He knows what it means to run a school district. And when we implement this bill, I can assure you, Rod is going to make sure that the spirit of “no child is left behind” is a part of the regulations. But this bill says there—one size doesn’t fit all when it comes to public schools. It fosters change by pushing power to the lowest level, and that is at the local school districts, which should make the teachers in this audience feel good.

First of all, I want to thank all the teachers who are here. Yours is a noble profession, and thank you for taking on this tough job. But a system that devolves power says we’ve got to trust the teachers and principals to make the right decisions in the classrooms. And that’s what this bill says.

This bill also wages a battle against illiteracy. It recognizes that spending money is important, but you need to spend money effectively in order to make a difference. We’ve spent a lot of money in education—a lot. And a lot of it hasn’t made a difference. Well, one area where we’re going to make a difference from this point forward in America is in reading—teaching every child to read.

The numbers for inner-city kids or impoverished—kids from impoverished families—their ability to read, or the illiteracy rate—let me put it to you that way—is astounding. It is pitiful. It is not right for America that over 60 percent of the children in the fourth grade from impoverished families cannot read. If you can’t read in the fourth grade, you’re not going to read in the eighth grade. And if you can’t read in the eighth, you’re not going to read in high school. And if you can’t read, you’ve got a tough life ahead of you.

And we need to do something about it, America, and this bill does. It triples the amount of money for early reading programs, programs based upon the science of reading, not something that sounds good or feels good but something that works. There’s money for teacher training. There’s money for enhanced methodology. There’s money that says we’re going to stay focused until we

teach every child to read by the third grade in America.

So those are the principles of a good bill. The bill is not only good for education, but it’s a good go-by to show what can happen in Washington. And that’s why the five of us—or the six of us, including Rod Paige—have been traveling around the Nation today, heralding the success—the joint success—the success of people from both political parties in both Houses of Congress. It shows what is possible when people say, “I want to get something done.”

I know what’s possible when it comes to educating children. You’ve seen it here in your own State, how the numbers have improved dramatically. It starts with an attitude that says public education is crucial; every child can learn; and we must set high standards. And that’s what we’ve got to do in America, it seems like, all over the country.

After 9/11, a lot of people have asked, “What can I do to help? How can I make a difference in America?” Well, my advice is, first, love your children like you’ve never loved them before. Show them that they’re the most important people in the world. But a way you can help America is to mentor a child, to teach a child to read. You can make sure your kids turn off your TV and read. You can make sure that you support the public school in your neighborhood. You can make sure you thank a teacher. You can help by going into classrooms, to make a difference.

If you’re really interested in how to help fight terrorists, if you want to make sure that the terrorists aren’t able to affect the heart and soul of America, support your public schools. Insist upon the best; demand accountability, because every child in America can learn. And when they do, this country is going to be a heck of a lot better off.

Thank you for letting me come. May God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:17 p.m. in the Roache Gymnasium. In his remarks, he referred to Cornelia A. Kelley, head master, Boston Latin School; Gov. Jane Swift of Massachusetts; and Mayor Thomas M. Menino of Boston.

Remarks on Implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

January 9, 2002

Thank you all so very much for that warm welcome. It's really great to be here with so many men and women who have made education your life's work.

Yesterday I had the high honor of signing H.R. 1—the No Child Left Behind Act—which begins a new and hopeful era for American education. We're bringing new resources and higher standards to struggling schools. We're placing greater emphasis on the basics of reading and math. And we're giving parents better information and more say in how their sons and daughters are educated.

Two decades ago, experts looked at public education and saw "A Nation At Risk." A nation described at risk is now a nation on the road to reform.

I am so proud of what our administration and Members of Congress from both political parties have achieved. We have shown what is possible in Washington, DC. We have shown that if you put the Nation's interests ahead of political party, you can achieve mighty, mighty reform.

The House and the Senate passed education legislation by overwhelming margins. I signed the legislation into law. And now much of the real work begins. Now we must turn our principles into progress and progress into excellence and excellence into the lives of hope and achievement.

I want to thank Secretary Rod Paige and all who work at the Department of Education. America is getting to know that I picked a good man to be the Secretary of Education. The guy is down to Earth. He's got a lot of experience. He ran a huge school district in the State of Texas and brought excellence, the standard of excellence, into classrooms in Houston, Texas.

I want to thank three of the four members of our merry band of travelers. *[Laughter]* Yesterday we went around parts of our country together. It was my honor to travel with Miller and Boehner and Kennedy and Judd Gregg. I figure Judd got tired of hearing us, so he peeled off. *[Laughter]*

But I want to repeat some of the things I said yesterday. First of all, I know the folks in Crawford, Texas, won't believe this, but Ted Kennedy is an able, good man. *[Laughter]* This bill would not have happened had he decided not to work to make it happen. He put his mind to it. I learned this: You want him on your side in a legislative battle.

I also want to thank George Miller from the State of California. George is a proud liberal, but also he's a proud author of this bill. He cares deeply about a system that quits on its kids—he wants to change it. I like him so much, I gave him a nickname: Big George. *[Laughter]*

But I've enjoyed working with these two Democrats. They are a credit to their party but, more importantly, a credit to our country.

Yesterday I signed the bill in Chairman Boehner's district. *[Applause]* I knew Boehner had a big family; I didn't realize it was that big. *[Laughter]* I did so because John was a steady influence in the process; he kept the process moving forward, even in the face of 9/11. He said, "We've got to get a bill," and he worked hard to bring people together to get it done. Mr. Chairman, you did a fabulous job, and I thank you.

I want to thank the other Members of Congress who are here. Mike Castle is here from the State of Delaware; Van Hilleary from Tennessee; Johnny Isakson from Georgia; Tim Roemer from Indiana; Bobby Scott from Virginia; and a delegate from Puerto Rico, Delegate Anibal Acevedo-Vila. Thank you for all coming here today.

And then we're going to pass some of the power—as you know, you'll hear soon—out of Washington, and it's going to be up to the Governors to make things happen. And fortunately, we've got four fine Governors with us today: Roy Barnes of Georgia; Sila Calderon of Puerto Rico; Mark Schweiker of Pennsylvania; and my brother. Thank you all for coming.

Republicans and Democrats share the same basic commitments on education. We believe good public schools should not be islands of excellence. They should be found in every city and in every neighborhood in America. We believe that no child should