

NLWJC - Kagan

DPC - Box 036 - Folder 010

**POTUS Press Conference -
Q&A 9/23/97**

**Questions and Answers on Minority Opposition to the National Tests
September 23, 1997**

Q: Many in the civil rights community have been critical of the President's national testing proposal, and nearly the entire black and Hispanic caucuses voted against the plan in the House. What is the Administration's response to the charge that these tests will do more harm than good for children of color?

A: The Voluntary National Tests would show that all children -- wherever they live, whatever their color, and whatever their language background -- can and should achieve to the same high standards as students throughout the nation. Delaying these tests would send a terrible signal that we doubt whether our kids can achieve.

The national tests in 4th grade reading and 8th grade math will most benefit the kids in poor urban and rural areas who currently need the most help. For the first time ever, parents, teachers and the public in these communities will know how well students perform compared to national and even international standards in reading and math, making it harder to shortchange any student when it comes to learning.

Educators and parents can use results of the tests to provide valuable help to low performing students, while communities can use the results to hold administrators and teachers accountable.

The national tests can become a rallying point for local efforts to strengthen curriculum, provide training to teachers, increase parental and community involvement, and support the necessary investments at the local, state, and national levels to improve our schools.

4.2 Laura: Please use one format for all these.

Minority Opposition to the National Tests

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A:

The Voluntary National Tests would ^{show} make it clear that all children, wherever they live, whatever their color, and whatever their language background, can and should achieve to the same high standards as students throughout the nation. ^{would} Any delay in these tests ^{ing} sends a terrible signal that we doubt whether our kids can achieve.

~~Over the long run,~~ the national tests in 4th grade reading and 8th grade math will most benefit the kids in poor urban and rural areas who currently need the most help. For the first time ever, parents, teachers and the public in these communities will know how well students perform compared to national and even international standards in reading and math, making it harder to shortchange any student when it comes to learning.

Educators and parents can use results of the tests to provide valuable help to low performing students, while communities can use the results to hold administrators and teachers accountable.

Moreover, the national tests can become a rallying point for local efforts to strengthen curriculum, provide training to teachers, increase parental and community involvement, and support the necessary investments at the local, state, and national levels to improve our schools.

~~One year after instituting higher standards and tough tests, the School District of Philadelphia has demonstrated that raising standards, measuring performance, and working to improve results truly works. On September 3, Philadelphia released results of its 1997 testing program, recording significant gains in reading, math and science at the 4th, 8th and 11th grades. This was accomplished despite a very large increase in the number of students taking the test, over 40% of whom were either special education students or students for whom English is not their first language -- students who many wrongly assume cannot learn to high standards.~~

Questions and Answers on Food Safety
September 23, 1997

Q: Recently, once again, food safety was in the news. Most of us saw reports of Americans becoming ill after eating hamburgers produced by Hudson Meat that were contaminated with the bacteria *E. coli O157:H7*. There were also recent reports of illnesses caused by alfalfa sprouts. Is our food supply becoming less safe?

A: I don't think it is. When my administration took office in 1993, one of the first challenges we faced was an outbreak of *E. coli* in hamburger in the northwest. Many children became ill and several died. Let me tell you what we did about it. The Vice-President has headed up our effort. In 1993, he recommended that we replace our old system of responding to problems only after they occur with a new system to prevent problems before they occur. That system, which we are putting in place for meat, poultry, and seafood, and soon will be expanding to other areas of food production, is greatly increasing our ability to make sure food is safe.

In January, I announced several additional steps to improve the safety of our food. I asked Congress to add \$43 million to our food safety budget to fund a nationwide early-warning system for foodborne illness, increase seafood safety inspections, and expand food-safety research, training, and education. Congress has agreed to provide the funds I requested and beginning next month we will be using that money to further reduce the incidence of foodborne illness.

Let me make one last point. One reason it might seem like we are hearing about more food-related illnesses is because we are doing a more thorough job looking for problems. As a result, we are catching and quickly responding to outbreaks of foodborne illness that we often missed in the past. We have made a great deal of progress since 1993, and I am confident that the steps we have taken will help us do a better job protecting our citizens from foodborne illness than ever before.

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A: I don't think it is. When my administration took office in 1993, ~~some of you might not remember this, but~~ one of the first challenges we faced was an outbreak of *E. coli* O157:H7 in hamburger in the northwest. Many children became ill and several died. Let me tell you what we did about it. The Vice-President has headed up our effort. In 1993, he recommended that we replace our old system of responding to problems only after they occur with a new system ~~that was actually developed for our space program by NASA years ago to ensure that our astronauts did not get food poisoning. It is a science-based system designed to prevent problems before they occur, and it will truly revolutionize the way we ensure our food is safe.~~ *That system, which* We are currently putting it in place for meat, poultry, and seafood, and we will be expanding it to other areas of food production, such as fresh fruit juices in the coming months. ~~soon~~

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Questions and Answers on School Vouchers
September 23, 1997

Q: While integration was the civil rights issue of the 50's and 60's, some African Americans (such as Martin Luther King Jr.'s daughter) see vouchers as the civil rights issue of the 90's. What is the administration's position on vouchers in DC?

A: The Administration strongly opposes any legislation allowing the use of federal taxpayer funds for vouchers, including in D.C.

We need to focus on strengthening the public schools that serve the vast majority of students and expanding choice within the public education system, such as through charter schools.

Vouchers would siphon critical dollars from neighborhood public schools that are already short on resources in order to send a few selected students to private schools, and would distract attention from the hard work of reform needed to change failing schools into good schools and good schools into outstanding schools.

Q: Doesn't the failure of the DC schools to manage so basic a task as opening the schools on time call into question the capacity of the school system here to improve? Shouldn't vouchers be allowed here at least?

A: The delay in opening the DC schools has been very unfortunate. However, vouchers would do nothing to speed the process of repairing DC schools, and would accomplish nothing for the vast majority of students who will continue to attend these schools. In fact, vouchers would divert attention and resources away from the public schools and the hard task of reforming them. We need to confront the real problems that the DC school system has -- by raising standards, putting into place effective reform strategies, and holding students, teachers, and schools accountable for their performance. Establishing vouchers in DC would set a dangerous precedent for using taxpayer funds to support schools that are unaccountable to the public.

Q: A Harvard University study recently found that students participating in Cleveland's school voucher program performed very well. Has this study caused you to reassess your views?

A: No. First, the study is quite limited: it focuses on students in only 2 of the 41 schools participating in the Cleveland voucher program --and these schools are unusually well-funded.

More important, my opposition to vouchers is based more on what happens to students who do not participate in a voucher program as on what may happen to the few who do. The fact is that 90% of our students attend public schools, and our primary responsibility, especially with limited federal resources, is to make sure that the public schools they attend are among the best in the world. This means concentrating our time and money on raising academic standards, improving teaching, providing schools with technology and other up-to-date learning tools, and creating charter schools and other forms of choice within the public school system. Vouchers only drain financial resources and energy away from our most important task -- improving our public schools.

Press Guidance on DC Vouchers
September 22, 1997

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The Administration strongly opposes any legislation allowing the use of ~~F~~ federal taxpayer funds for vouchers, including in D.C.

We need to focus on strengthening the public schools that serve the vast majority of students and expanding choice within the public education system, such as through charter schools ~~that only stay open as long as they do a good job~~

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A: The delay in opening the DC schools has been very unfortunate. However, vouchers would do nothing to speed the process of repairing DC schools, and would accomplish nothing for the vast majority of students who will continue to attend these schools. In fact, vouchers would divert attention and resources away from the public schools and the hard task of reforming them. We need to confront the real problems that the DC school system has -- by raising standards, putting into place effective reform strategies, and holding students, teachers, and schools accountable for their performance. Establishing vouchers in DC would set a dangerous precedent for using taxpayer funds to support schools that are unaccountable to the public, ~~[and that's why the President's senior advisors would recommend that he veto the DC appropriations bill if such a provision were included]~~

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Q. ~~The New York Times recently reported a very favorable evaluation of the Cleveland's school voucher program. Has this study caused you to reassess your views?~~

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First, the ~~New York Times~~ article is misleading. The "evaluation" findings it reports are not from the official, independent state evaluation being conducted by Indiana University, and whose first report is not scheduled to be released for several weeks.

Second, this study actually focuses on students in only 2 of the 41 schools participating in the Cleveland voucher program -- ~~only 15% of the students involved in the voucher program. These two schools are resource-intensive, run by avowed pro-voucher advocates, and are not typical of the other private schools participating in the program, and these two schools are unusually well-funded.~~

Further, the study relies on questionable analysis techniques. For example, it uses questionable testing procedures and fails to take into account the background or prior achievement of the voucher students.

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Third, our opposition to vouchers is based ~~as much~~ ^{more} on what happens to students who do not participate as on what may happen to the few who do. The fact is that 90% of our students attend public schools, and our primary responsibility, especially with limited federal resources, is to make sure that the public schools they attend are among the best in the world. This means concentrating our time and money on raising academic standards, improving teaching, providing schools with technology and other up-to-date learning tools, and creating charter schools and other forms of choice within the public school system. ~~It means holding schools accountable for the results they achieve -- something fundamentally impossible to do with private schools which are, by design, unaccountable to the public. Instead, Vouchers drain financial resources and energy away from our most important task -- improving our public schools.~~

only

in a voucher program

Questions and Answers on Welfare Reform
September 23, 1997

Q: Why are you undermining welfare reform by insisting that participants in workfare programs get the protections of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and other employment laws?

A: I believe that worker protection laws, such as the Fair Labor Standards Act, should apply to workfare participants in the same way they apply to other workers. No one doing real work should be paid a subminimum wage or should be subject to health and safety hazards.

I also believe that paying working welfare recipients the minimum wage and giving them other worker protections will promote the goals of welfare reform, because it will give them the ability to support their families and break the cycle of dependency.

We will work with states to ensure that they can comply with this policy, without undue financial burden, while still meeting the welfare law's work requirements.

Q: Do you have any concerns about your Administration's creation of a national database of all workers -- the so-called National Directory of New Hires -- in order to track deadbeat parents? Some have raised privacy concerns.

A: I believe it is critically important that we do everything we can to ensure that parents pay the child support they owe. With the national directory, we can collect over \$6 billion more support for children by making it easier to withhold child support from the paycheck of a parent living in another state. There was bipartisan agreement to include such a directory in last year's welfare law, which requires the Department of Health and Human Services to establish safeguards to protect privacy.

Background:

The National Directory of New Hires, which will go on-line October 1st, is part of the welfare law's new tools to collect child support from deadbeat parents. The best way to collect child support is to withhold it from parents' paychecks. Before now, it was easy for the 30 percent of deadbeat parents who live in a different state from their children to avoid wage withholding because it was difficult for the state where their children live to find out where they worked. Now, employers must report employee data to state databases, which will become part of a national database. HHS will match this national database against records of parents who owe child support in order to locate and begin collection procedures against them.

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Fair Labor Standards Act and Worker Protections

Question: Why are you undermining welfare reform by insisting that participants in workfare programs get the protections of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and other employment laws?

Answer: ~~We~~ ^I believe that worker protection laws, such as the Fair Labor Standards Act, should apply to workfare participants in the same way they apply to other workers. ~~If a workfare participant counts as an "employee" under these laws, then she should get protection.~~ No one doing real work should be paid a subminimum wage, ~~or receive. Non should be left unprotected from health and safety hazards or discrimination.~~

I also

And we believe that paying working welfare recipients the minimum wage and giving them other worker protections will promote, ~~not undermine~~ the goals of welfare reform, because it will give them the ability to support their families and break the cycle of dependency.

~~We~~ ^{We} will work with states to ensure that they can comply with this policy, without undue financial burden, while still meeting the welfare law's work requirements. ~~Of course, if states place welfare recipients in private jobs, then the minimum wage already applies.~~

Child Support Enforcement -- National New Hire Directory

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Questions and Answers on Health Care
September 23, 1997

Q: What is your response to The New England Journal of Medicine article criticizing AZT studies in Africa?

A: In 1994 a group of international experts convened by the World Health Organization thoroughly reviewed the studies on pregnant women infected with HIV in Africa, Thailand, and other countries and determined that they are scientifically well-founded, ethical and essential to the fight against AIDS. Since then these studies have been reviewed not only by ethical committees of the American and European institutions involved but also by ethical committees from every country in which the studies are occurring. Moreover, the women who participate in the studies are fully informed about their nature.

These studies are being conducted to find a treatment for AIDS that can be extended to poorer nations. Because of poor economic conditions and low standards of public health care, people in these countries cannot afford the expensive protease inhibitors and other AIDS drugs available in the United States. Unless we conduct these much needed studies, we will never develop affordable AIDS treatments that can be extended to all nations.

Q: Does this study Undermine Dr. Satcher's credibility and his candidacy to become Surgeon General?

A: Absolutely not. Most of the international scientific community agrees with Dr. Satcher's view that these studies are the most ethical and best way to advance the fight against AIDS. Moreover, Sidney Wolfe, the author of the New England Journal study that criticized these AZT studies, recently stated that "Dr. Satcher is one of the smartest and most ethical people I have ever met." Dr. Satcher's credibility and ethical judgement have never been questioned.

Background

Last week an article in *The New England Journal of Medicine* came out criticizing clinical trials designed to discover ways to reduce maternal-infant transmission of HIV in developing countries. In 1994, international experts convened by the World Health Organization thoroughly reviewed these studies and determined that they are scientifically well-founded, ethical and essential to advance the fight against AIDS. Dr. Varmus, Dr. Satcher, and Dr. Shapiro, Chair of the National Bioethics Advisory Committee, all agree.

Q: WHAT IS YOUR RESPONSE TO THE NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF MEDICINE ARTICLE CRITICIZING AZT STUDIES IN AFRICA?

A: In 1994 a group of international experts convened by the World Health Organization thoroughly reviewed the studies on pregnant women infected with HIV in Africa, Thailand, and other countries and determined that they are scientifically well-founded, ethical and essential to ^{not only} advance the fight against AIDS. Since then these studies have been reviewed ^{by} by ethical committees of the American and European institutions involved but also ~~an~~ ethical committees from every country in which the studies are occurring. Moreover, the women who participate in the studies are fully informed about their nature.

These studies are being conducted ~~solely~~ ^{of} to find a treatment for AIDS that can be extended to poorer nations. Because poor economic conditions and low standards of public health care ^{people in these countries cannot afford} in participating countries, the women who take part in these studies are not able to afford the expensive protease inhibitors and other AIDS drugs available in the United States. ~~The women who participate in the studies are fully informed about their nature.~~ Unless we conduct these much needed studies, we will never develop affordable AIDS treatments that can be extended to all nations. ~~These studies must include a placebo so that we make a comparable analysis of the effect of these drugs.~~

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BACKGROUND

Last week an article in *The New England Journal of Medicine* came out criticizing ~~the~~ clinical trials ^{of} of medical interventions designed to discover ways to reduce maternal-infant transmission of HIV in developing countries. ~~Dr. Varmus, Director of NIH, Dr. Satcher, Director of CDG, and Dr. Shapiro, Chair of the National Bioethics Advisory Commission, conducted a thorough review to assess the scientific need and the ethics of these studies.~~ In 1994, international experts convened by the World Health Organization thoroughly reviewed the studies and determined that they are scientifically well-founded, ethical and essential to advance the fight against AIDS. Dr. Varmus, Dr. Satcher, and Dr. Shapiro, Chair of The National Bioethics Advisory Committee, all agree.