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SUBJECT: AFT Final

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Final 07/17/98 6:00pm
Jeff Shesol

PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
REMARKS TO THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA
July 20, 1998

Acknowledgments: Sec. Herman; Mayor Mark Morial; Members of Congress TK;
AFT President Sandy Feldman; Secretary-Treasurer Ed McElroy; newly elected
Executive VP Nat LaCour (also a member of WH Commission on Presidential
Scholars)

I want to say a word about someone who is not here today, but who is very much with us in spirit, and that is my old friend Al Shanker. I know he would be proud of you on your 75th anniversary, proud that you are continuing the lifelong fight he waged for excellence in education: for high standards of achievement, high expectations for our children, and high-quality teaching. We are all grateful for the legacy he has left us, and energized by the ideals he expressed so forcefully.

This is a remarkable time in our nation's history: a time of growth, of confidence, of prosperity. The American economy is the strongest in a generation. Communities are coming together, strengthened by a common bond of values and a renewed ethic of responsibility. In a powerful way, this respect for law and order and for one another is making itself felt at almost every level of our society, sending crime rates spiraling downward and making families, again, feel more secure. Today, I want to talk to you about the ways we can instill this ethic of responsibility and respect in every one of our nation's public schools, and in the lives of every one of our children.

This is a tremendous moment of possibility for our nation's children. America's prosperity presents us with a remarkable opportunity -- and, therefore, an obligation -- to conquer many of the challenges we have long faced as a nation. To meet that obligation, we must give our children the tools they will need to succeed in new and changing times. And by doing so, we will ensure that our own time, our age of opportunity, is not remembered for the opportunities we missed.

I know, as teachers, you believe in this possibility. Your unflinching faith in it drives you every day to broaden young minds, unlock their potential, sharpen their skills. It is a faith that sustains you during long days in front of the chalkboard or over the keyboard, during long nights grading papers and crafting lesson plans.

For more than five years, our administration has worked to be a strong, active partner in your efforts -- making schools safer, raising standards in the basics for students and teachers, extending the opportunities only a quality education can bring to every child. In an age of information and ideas, education must be America's first priority. That is why we have made the greatest investment in education in our nation's history. That is why we're working to modernize our schools and connect every classroom to the Internet. And that's why we're working to end social promotion and reduce class size -- so teachers can regain control and maintain discipline in their classrooms.

If we are to expect more of our students, then we must also ask more of our teachers. Every effort, every reform, depends on high-quality, highly-trained teachers. We must insist that teachers pass competency tests before they set foot in our schools. Those who fail should not be licensed, and should not be hired. Those who make the grade should have more support -- for example, the guidance of a master teacher. Teachers can and must take responsibility for their own -- mentoring, counseling, and reviewing one another. This lesson of responsibility is not lost on the AFT. I salute President Feldman's plan to improve teacher quality and know your efforts will make a difference.

Just as teachers are stepping up to their responsibility, Congress must do the same, and put progress above partisanship. That is how we have helped more children learn to read, more teachers to be trained, and more young people to go to college. I am pleased that the Congress is moving forward with my proposals to help prepare teachers for the classroom. It is with this same spirit of progress we must move forward today.

I am confident we will maintain our momentum. But you know and I know that all our progress will come to naught if our schools are not safe places, orderly places, where teachers can teach and children can learn. We also know that in too many American schools, there is lawlessness where there should be learning. There is chaos where there should be calm.

There is disorder where there should be discipline. Make no mistake: this is a threat not only to your classrooms, but to the strength and vitality of America's public school system and, indeed, to the strength and vitality of our nation.

It is a sobering fact that, in a recent study, 81 percent of teachers said it was the worst-behaved students who absorbed the most attention in schools. Not the struggling students, not the striving students, but the worst-behaved. It is a dismaying fact that 71 percent of all high school students said there were too many disruptive students in their classes -- and only 13 percent of public school students said their classmates were "very respectful" of teachers. You know that teachers can't teach if they have to fight for respect or fear for their safety; that students can't study if there is disorder in the classroom; and that disruptive students won't change if there are no clear, strict standards for behavior.

We will have discipline in the classroom, or we will have disorder -- and danger. Hard experience has taught us this lesson, taught us well. The problem is clear. The stakes could not be higher and the demand for action could not be more profound. As a nation, we must recognize that a return to order is central to the renewal of education in America.

There is another lesson to be learned -- as teachers, I know you have a fondness for lessons -- in this case, it's from the overall decline in violent crime. Crime is dropping in this country because we are getting serious about punishment, and getting serious about prevention. Crime is dropping because entire communities are taking responsibility for their own streets and neighborhoods, and because the government is giving them the support they need. That is the idea behind community policing -- the 100,000 police we are putting on the streets. And when we assume responsibility, when we set tough new standards for behavior, something remarkable happens: people behave.

That is why our administration is serious about school safety. We have seen, tragically and repeatedly, the damage done by troubled adolescents with a firearm in hand and violence in mind. So we have worked hard to tighten school security, to strengthen prevention, and to toughen penalties. We will continue to show zero tolerance toward guns in schools. During the 1996-1997 school year, our policy led to the expulsion of nearly 6,100 law-breaking students and the prevention of countless acts of violence. And this fall, as I am announcing today, I will host the first-ever White House Conference on School Safety -- bringing together not only experts and law enforcement officers, but also families whose lives have been touched by school violence. Together, we will continue the fight to find new solutions to this constant challenge.

Congress, too, has an opportunity to protect America's children by passing the juvenile crime bill I have proposed. It will ban violent juveniles from buying guns for life and take other important steps. Congress can also give communities much-needed support: I have proposed that in our balanced budget, \$95 million be allocated to the prevention of juvenile crime. I urge Congress to step up to its responsibility, invest in prevention -- like the summer jobs program some are trying to eliminate -- and stop violent outbursts before they start.

We have learned another lesson from the drop in violent crime. And that is: the small stuff matters. In most schools, it is not the sensational acts of violence but the smaller acts of aggression -- the threats, the scuffles, the back-talk -- that take a terrible toll. That

is why setting strict standards for behavior can and will make a difference, as they are doing, all across America, in powerful and inventive ways.

Our first effort, of course, must be to get children inside the schoolhouse doors. Truancy, as I have said, is more than a warning sign of trouble -- it is trouble, and a gateway to drugs, alcohol, gangs and violence. Kids can either sit in class, or stand on the streets. They can either learn from teachers, or learn from thugs. It used to be that truancy laws were enforced, that local police knew the kids and brought them back to the schoolrooms, but that has long ceased to be the case. But communities are again turning their attention to truancy. In Milwaukee, officers can now stop students on the street during school hours. And in Boston, where more than one quarter of public school students were absent three weeks or more this past school year, they have a strict new promotion policy: if you don't attend, you won't advance. Other cities are forming truancy task forces -- a united front of schools, social services and community police to keep children in school and out of trouble.

A teacher's day must sometimes seem very long. But we know that the school day lasts a precious few hours and there is no time to waste. So once kids are inside the schoolhouse door they must be free of fear and free of distraction. That is one of the ideas behind school uniforms. When I spoke of school uniforms in my 1996 State of the Union Address, it was an old idea without much new credence. But in the years since, I have been heartened to see an inundation of interest. From New York City to Houston, from Dade County to Chicago, school districts are adopting school uniform policies and making sure that kids no longer kill other kids for a pair of sneakers or a designer jacket; making sure students are focused not on appearances but on learning. As a result, crime is going down in these schools, and attendance is on the rise.

But our responsibility cannot end with the words "class dismissed." After school, children can find their way into crime and drugs or fall prey to it. Youth crime, it is no wonder, is at its peak during those unsupervised hours, 3:00 to 6:00. That is why I have called on schools to remain open -- to become community learning centers where children are not only safe but can continue to learn and grow. I have proposed, in my 1999 budget, a significant expansion in grants to schools to create before- and after-school programs. And for the later hours, when the streets become darker and more dangerous, I have long urged that communities follow the example of New Orleans, and put in place community-based curfews. It's no wonder that youth crime is dropping dramatically during curfew hours, or that cities from Denver to Chicago to North Little Rock are adopting curfews -- keeping children off the streets and out of trouble, and giving parents a tool to impart respect and responsibility.

Anti-truancy efforts. School uniforms. Character education. Curfews. These are not isolated initiatives. Instead, they add up to a new approach to restoring discipline in our schools and order in our children's lives. Working together, learning from one another, America can end an era of unruliness and install an ethic of responsibility in our schools. We can make them places where students again learn not only the three R's but also respect, not only the great books but also good behavior. It's as simple as the AFT's slogan: "Responsibility. Respect. Results." That's a good formula for success, and a good "Lesson for Life."

I am struck that just about every challenge we face is being met somewhere in some way by someone. And that is the way it should be. Today I call on every community -- parents, teachers, and local school officials -- to adopt a set of standards for school discipline. The federal government will not make decisions for you, but will help you to make your decisions work. Government, as I have said, is not the solution. Nor is it the problem. At its best, government is a catalyst; a clearing house for new ideas; a partner in empowering citizens to make the most of their lives.

Of course, as teachers, you understand as well as anyone that discipline begins not in the classroom, but at home. That is where the first and most fundamental lessons for life are taught -- the difference between right and wrong, the values of responsibility and respect. I know you will continue to do everything in your power to reinforce those values, and to teach our children new lessons -- about the wonders of the natural world, the riches of the human imagination. And by teaching our children well, by doing what you do every day from the first bell's ring, you are building a better future for your students, and for our nation.

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Promoting Discipline and Safety in Schools
July 17, 1998

In his speech to the AFT today, the President will discuss the importance of school discipline and safety to the nation. He will announce a White House Conference on School Safety and highlight some of the school safety policies promoted by the Administration -- school uniforms, tough truancy laws, community-based curfews, and zero tolerance for guns.

White House Conference on School Safety

- **National School Safety Day.** The President will proclaim October 15, 1998, National School Safety Day and host a White House meeting that will be linked by satellite to schools across the country and specifically include the communities impacted by the recent wave of school shootings.
- **First Annual Report on School Safety.** The President will also issue the first Annual Report on School Safety, which will include: an analysis of all existing national school crime data and an overview of state and local crime reporting; examples of schools and strategies that are successfully reducing school violence, drug use, and class disruption; actions that parents can take locally to combat school crime, including a local safety checklist; and resources available to schools and communities to help create safe, disciplined, and drug-free schools.

Promoting School Discipline

- **Spreading school uniform policies across the country.** Since President Clinton highlighted school uniforms in 1996, a large number of schools have adopted uniform policies. This includes some of the nation's largest school districts -- New York City, Dade County, San Antonio, Houston, Chicago and Boston. In New York City alone, more than half a million elementary school students will be wearing uniforms by fall of 1999.
- **Improving school attendance and safety in Long Beach, CA:** In the 1995-96 school year -- the third year school uniforms were required -- attendance at the Long Beach Unified School District K-8 schools reached the highest point ever recorded during the 17 years the district compiled these statistics. With excused absences for illness added in, attendance exceeded 99%. And between the 1993-94 school year (before uniforms were required) and the 1996-97 school year, total school crime drop 76%.
- **Keeping kids off the street and in school.** Community curfews are designed to help keep children out of harm's way, enhance community safety, and give parents an important tool to impart discipline, respect, and rules. A recent survey by the U.S. Conference of Mayors showed that 276 of 347 cities surveyed -- or 80% -- had youth curfew laws, up from 70% in 1995. And in New Orleans, a community-supported curfew -- combined with summer jobs and recreational programs for youth -- helped cut juvenile crime during curfew hours the year after it was implemented.

- **Taking on Truancy.** In 1996, at the President's direction, the Education Department issued a guidebook to the 15,000 school districts nationwide, outlining the core components of a comprehensive truancy prevention policy and highlighting model initiatives. Since then, the Department has also provided grants to local school districts to develop innovative truancy prevention programs.
- ***Enforcing Zero Tolerance for Guns in Schools.*** In October 1994, President Clinton signed into law the Gun-Free Schools Act, and issued a Presidential Directive later that month to enforce "zero tolerance" for guns in schools -- if a student brings a gun to school, that student will be expelled for a year. In school year 1996-97, the U.S. Department of Education estimates that, under zero tolerance policies, 6,093 students were expelled from public schools for bringing a firearm to school.

Challenging Congress to Strengthen Public Schools

President Clinton will call on Congress again to support his efforts to improve and reform K-12 education by raising standards for students and teachers, strengthening accountability, and expanding public school choice. The President has proposed the strategic investments necessary to ensure that our children are prepared for the 21st century, by reducing class size, modernizing our schools, investing in technology, expanding after-school learning opportunities, raising standards and ending social promotions. The President will criticize the Congress for the steps it has recently taken that short-change our schools and sell our students short, by cutting \$2 billion from his request for education investments, and in the process scaling backing needed initiatives on education reform, on raising educational achievement for our children, and on providing focused help for students who need it most. He will also call on Congress to support efforts to

**Speech to American Federation of Teachers
Questions and Answers
July 20, 1998**

School Discipline

Q. Do you know how many schools have school uniform policies in place?

A. While we do not have comprehensive data on the number of schools that have adopted uniform policies, we know that there has been a recent push by schools and school districts nationwide to adopt school uniform policies to improve student discipline, attendance, and school climate. Since President Clinton called on the Education Department to send out a guide on school uniform policies to every school district in the country in 1996, a growing number of schools and school districts have adopted uniform policies:

- The Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics estimates that of the 3% of all public schools have mandatory uniform policies, 34% initiated their policy in the 1996-97 school year.
- The 1998 National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) survey of principals in 10 states shows that 11% of elementary schools require uniforms, and 15% are considering a policy. Almost two-thirds of schools with policies adopted them in the last two years.

Moreover, some of the nation's largest school districts have adopted school uniform policies, including: New York City, Dade County, San Antonio, Houston, Chicago and Boston. In New York City alone, this will mean 560,000 elementary school students in the nation's largest school system will have school uniforms by fall of 1999.

Q. How do you know if school uniforms are having an impact on school crime?

A. School uniforms have been identified as promising strategy to help make students safer while promoting discipline and respect in schools. Because of this, the Clinton Administration has encouraged schools to consider adopting school uniform policies.

Since the trend is recent, there have not been any large-scale documented research results into the effectiveness of school uniforms. Perhaps the best and most publicized study comes from the Long Beach, CA School District's four-year school uniform policy -- the first large school district to require uniform system-wide in elementary and middle schools. Total crime -- including assault, fighting, robbery, and vandalism -- fell 76% between 1993 and 1997. More specifically, weapons offenses dropped 83% and vandalism was cut in half. In addition, in the 1995-96 school year, attendance hit an

all-time high (94.7%). While the district does not attribute these impressive results solely to their school uniform policy, they believe that it has contributed to safer, better schools.

Q. Is there any evidence to show youth curfews are having an impact on crime?

- A. Last December, the U.S. Conference of Mayors released a 347-city survey of youth curfews. In the survey, 93% of cities reported that enforcing a curfew is a useful tool for police; more specifically, cities reported that curfews were a proactive way to combat youth violence as well as prevent juveniles from becoming crime victims. 88% of cities reported that curfews help to curb gang violence. All of the 72 cities that had a daytime curfew reported that it cut down on truancy.

In May 1996, the Justice Department released a report by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) on 7 jurisdictions with youth curfews in place. The report showed that when curfews backed by a community of support, and are part of a larger plan to help fight juvenile crime, they can play an important role in keeping our children safe. For instance, in New Orleans, a community-supported curfew -- combined with summer jobs and recreational programs for youth -- helped cut juvenile crime during curfew hours the year after it was implemented.

Q. Wasn't a study released earlier this year showing that they don't reduce crime?

- A. In June, the Justice Policy Institute released a study which looked at curfews in California. The study, which argues that curfew enforcement has not reduced youth crime in the state, has largely been criticized by California law enforcement officials, including the State Attorney General's office. Law enforcement officials across the State have stated that they have seen a very positive correlation between curfews, truancy laws and lower crime rates.

President Clinton believes that useful tools such as curfews, school uniforms, and anti-truancy policies, can help schools and communities enhance youth discipline and reduce crime as part of a comprehensive plan to combat juvenile violence and crime.

White House Conference on School Safety

Q. What can you tell us about the White House conference on school safety?

- A. In his speech today, the President will announce a White House Conference on School Safety, and proclaim October 15, 1998, National School Safety Day. The White House Conference will be linked by satellite to schools across the country and will specifically include the communities impacted by the recent wave of school shootings. We are still

in the planning stages and will make details known as they are available.

Recent School Shootings

Q. What are you doing about all of these school shootings?

- A. This spring, the President sat down with youth violence experts -- from principals to parents to prosecutors -- to discuss what we can do at all levels to keep these tragedies from occurring in the first place. There was broad agreement that we should be focused on tackling the larger problem of youth violence. This is why the President continues to challenge the Congress to pass his strategy on youth violence to take on youth access to guns, tough punishment for violent youths and gangs, and provide additional adult supervision in the after school hours when violent juvenile crime is most likely to occur.

Today's announcement of a White House Conference on School Safety will be an important step to focus on making schools safer for our kids. The President has already taken a number of actions to address the troubling series of school shootings, including:

Early warning guide. Last month, the President directed the Secretary of Education and the Attorney General to develop a guide to help teachers and principals identify and respond to the early warning signs of troubled youth that can lead to school violence. The guide will be made available to schools nationwide when classes begin in the fall.

First Annual Report on School Safety. In December, the President called for the development of an Annual Report on School Safety, which will be released on School Safety Day, October 15. The report will include: an analysis of all existing national school crime data and an overview of state and local crime reporting; examples of schools and strategies that are successfully reducing school violence, drug use, and class disruption; actions that parents can take locally to combat school crime, including a local safety checklist; and resources available to schools and communities to help create safe, disciplined, and drug-free schools.

More Police in Schools. In March, the President announced funding for a new community policing program through the Justice Department's COPS Office focused on reducing violence on or near school grounds. The President later called on the Attorney General and Education Secretary to report back by the start of the school year on ways to provide even more police for our schools.

Promoting Gun Safety and Responsibility. Earlier this month, President Clinton called on states to promote gun safety and responsibility by passing Child Access Prevention (CAP) laws that hold adults responsible if they allow children easy access to loaded firearms. Fifteen states have already enacted such CAP laws. A recent study published by the Journal of the American Medical Association found that CAP laws reduced fatal unintentional shootings by an average of 23%.

RECORD TYPE: FEDERAL (NOTES MAIL)

CREATOR: Amy W. Tobe (CN=Amy W. Tobe/OU=WHO/O=EOP [UNKNOWN])

CREATION DATE/TIME: 6-OCT-1998 11:42:19.00

SUBJECT: wither Joe guidance? Amy..

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TEXT: