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May 3, 1997 - DPC Weekly Report

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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN  
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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

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May 3, 1997

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: BRUCE REED  
ELENA KAGAN

SUBJECT: DPC WEEKLY REPORT

**1. Education Town Hall Meeting:** We are working to arrange an "Education Town Hall Meeting" focused on your national testing initiative. This meeting, currently scheduled for May 22, will provide you with an opportunity to explain what high standards are really all about - perhaps by actually working through a couple of sample questions from the NAEP test. You will take questions from an audience of educators, parents, and students. We are exploring a number of possible locations for this event, with Kentucky the leading contender at the moment.

**2. National Testing Initiative:** Secretary Riley testified last week on your testing initiative before the House Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Youth and Families; in addition, DPC and DoEd representatives met with Frank Riggs and Dale Kildee, the Chair and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee, on the initiative. The meetings and testimony made clear that we have strong support among Democrats on the Subcommittee for your initiative -- particularly from Kildee, George Miller, and Patsy Mink. On the Republican side, Riggs and Mike Castle are also supporters, though Riggs believes that the Administration should seek Congressional authorization before taking steps toward national testing. Unfortunately, Rep. Goodling is now expressing serious concerns about the initiative, mostly on the ground that the tests will lead to ranking individual schools. We will attempt to allay Goodling's concerns, while working closely with Congressional supporters on both sides of the aisle to support our effort to sign up states for the initiative.

**3. Follow-up to Service Summit:** We are preparing for your signature a letter to major nonprofit organizations and religious groups that will explain your new proposal, announced at the Service Summit, to partner with them to expand AmeriCorps. The letter will highlight the success of non-profits, such as the National Council of Churches and the Boys and Girls Clubs of America, in using AmeriCorps scholarships and will urge other non-profits and religious groups to put AmeriCorps members to work in their programs.

**4. Welfare-to-Work:** As you know, you will help launch Eli Segal's Welfare-to-Work Partnership at an event at the White House on May 20. We think that you also will be able to announce at this event Department of Transportation pilot grants to 25 states to develop welfare-to-work transportation plans. This announcement will underscore the importance of

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*Handwritten signature:* J. J. J.

transportation services in making welfare reform work and will promote your proposal (in the NEXTEA bill) to provide \$600 million in grant funds to improve these services. We may be able to announce that some of the businesses represented at the White House event have committed to providing matching funds for such welfare-to-work transportation efforts.

✓ **5. Welfare Reform and College Attendance:** You recently asked about reports that states are telling welfare recipients to drop out of college so that states can meet the welfare law's work requirements. The welfare law, of course, does not require states to take such action, and right now we do not know how many states are doing so. But because there is no broad exemption from the work requirements for college students, states may well insist that these students engage in work activities for the requisite number of hours (now 20 hours per week).

To alleviate this problem, we are working with DoEd and HHS on ways for the Administration to inform colleges of how they can use work study to help students on welfare meet the work requirements and still complete their degrees. Many Americans work their way through college: in 1993, 38% of undergraduates worked at least 35 hours a week, while 16% worked between 21 and 34 hours a week. Colleges can make it easier for welfare recipients to combine work and college by providing work study opportunities that meet the work requirements. Although most colleges limit work study to 10 to 15 hours a week, there is no limit in federal law: colleges can provide as many hours as necessary to meet the student's financial need. Secretaries Riley and Shalala should write a letter to colleges clarifying what colleges can do and encouraging them to take such action.

**6. Volunteer Liability Bill:** The Senate passed 99-1 last week a bill to protect volunteers of nonprofit organizations or governmental entities from liability. The Administration issued a SAP opposing a prior version of the bill, which offered immunity not only to volunteers, but also to the organizations for which they work. The SAP stated: "The overbroad definitions used in the bill -- which might apply to hate groups, street gangs, or violent militias -- make this takeover of state law very troubling." After Senator Leahy dubbed this bill the "Ku Klux Klan Protection Act" and every Democrat voted against it, the Senate narrowed the bill to protect only volunteers themselves. We will continue work on the bill, which because of hasty amendment and passage is now sloppily drafted, to ensure that it is fully consistent with the views you have stated on tort reform generally.

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Good

Also → could encourage  
cos to hire welfare/college  
students (not full time) at \$5/hour

good advice on welfare reform, low ceiling of strict requirements of no displacement for st. substitute → should consider budgeting language in federal law → congress might be able to...