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62294
American Academy of Home

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

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REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY
AT THE AMERICAN ACADEMY IN ROME
ROME, ITALY

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you very much. And I want to thank Adele (phonetic) and Caroline (phonetic) in particular for enabling me to show my support and to have an opportunity to come and visit during this visit that we're making to Rome.

I also want to thank Adele for all these presents that she gave me. At the White House, we received two commemorative medals that were done in recognition of the centennial and two baseball caps. And I have one baseball cap. I've not worn the medal yet. I have worn the baseball cap, but the medal was in a place of honor. And I am very grateful for this.

It strikes me, though, looking at the two-headed god, that that's really a good way to consider this academy. It does honor the past and certainly is a living example of the exceeding vitality of the past and the respect for our fellowship. But by having the fellows program, it is absolutely looking toward the future. And the work and the contributions that have flowed from this academy have certainly enhanced the future.

We are very grateful that this is an outpost of America here in this country. And Mrs. Bartholemew (phonetic), who is with me, and whose husband is serving as the ambassador from our country to Italy, pointed out to me as we were driving around the city on various stops today, she believes the academy is the only national cultural institution that is wholly privately supported.

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Of course, we do see some federal funds coming through NEH and NEA and other ways of trying to supplement and provide some additional support. But it is largely the work over the century of visionaries and those who love the arts and scholarship and saw the relationship between our country and this country. And I'm very pleased to have several trustees, Italian supporters of the academy. That means a great deal to us.

But I also am pleased that I had a chance to visit two of the studios and to meet a number of the fellows, who really are the lifeblood of this academy and have contributed so much. And I was delighted that my visit coincided with the latest exhibition here that so visibly demonstrated a connection between American artists and the experiences that they have both in their own lives and what they have brought in the past to Rome, Italy.

It is a very exciting opportunity for the academy to become full-blown in operation again, with all of its potential. And as Adele and Caroline said, the President and I want very much to support a resurgence of the importance of the arts in our country. And the President recently signed the most sweeping education legislation that our country has seen in more than a generation, an effort to try to create some energy and excitement at the grass roots level among teachers and children and parents so that they can begin to understand what real education is about, by setting standards and then by challenging everyone to meet those standards.

There were only eight goals that were adopted by the Congress at the President's request. One of the eight goals was to guarantee a place for the arts in American education and to really challenge educators at all levels of our educational system to integrate the arts, to revive the arts, and give children more of a chance to know what it means to be involved in the arts and to study them, as well as to do them and perform them.

So we are hopeful that through a combination of efforts, the arts will once again flourish in our country, and scholarship will be given the honor it deserves. And the academy, because it has been a symbol for a century, has a role to play in that, looking both to the past and to the future. And we're very grateful that here in the present, you are being that example.

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Thank you all very much.

(End tape.)

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