

issues of concern for him. I suspect one of them might be campaign funding reform. But I'll let you know how the conversation goes. I'm confident it's going to be friendly and productive. John and I are friends. I remember we debated this issue several times. I think you might have been there.

Q. Do you think he has a mandate?

The President. And I think there's a need to discuss good campaign funding reform, and we will.

Legislative Agenda on Education

Q. How much of a sticking point for Democrats do you think your school choice or voucher program is? And are you willing to give ground in order to get a broader deal?

The President. I think that there is consensus on a couple of things: One, accountability is the cornerstone for reform; and secondly, in order for there to be an accountability system that's got merit, there has to be a consequence. And that's what we're going to discuss. Representative Miller from the State of California understands that accountability is crucial for success. And so does Boehner, and I hope the Senators do. I haven't had a chance to speak specifically with Senator Kennedy yet. I'm about to.

But we've got to measure, and there needs to be flexibility at the local level to make sure that local folks can chart the

path of excellence. But in order for an accountability system to work, there has to be consequences. And I believe one of the most important consequences will be, after a period of time, giving schools the time to adjust and districts time to try different things if they're failing, that parents ought to be given different options.

If children are trapped in schools that will not teach and will not change, there has to be a different consequence. None of us at the Federal Government should try to impose a school voucher plan on States and local jurisdictions. That's not the prerogative of the Federal Government, as far as I'm concerned. But to the extent that the Federal Government spends money, we ought to expect good results and good consequences.

Q. Thank you.

The President. I can't tell you what a pleasure it is.

California Electricity Shortages

Q. [*Inaudible*—to do about the California crisis?

The President. You'll hear something today.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:20 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Representative George Miller. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on Submitting the Education Reform Plan to the Congress *January 23, 2001*

Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. I appreciate you being here, and it's good to see a former Secretary of Education here. Lamar, thank you very much for coming, surrounded by two fine Texans, I might add. [*Laughter*] You are in good position. I was going to say a rose between two

thorns, but—[*laughter*]—Diana Natalicio is not a thorn. She's a fabulous educator in the great State of Texas. Miller, on the other hand—[*laughter*]. At any rate, I'm glad you all are here. It's good to see so many faces of friends, welcome you to our new temporary abode.