

Remarks Following a Meeting With Governors and an Exchange With Reporters  
January 26, 2001

*The President.* Let me—first of all, I want to thank my Governor friends for coming. From all around the country, people came—from Idaho, from the South. The head of the National Governors is here, and of course, the soon-to-be-head of the National Governors. I'm honored you all came. It's good to see you in a new setting—for me, at least. And we had a long discussion about education.

These Governors made education their number one priority in their State, and obviously they're keenly aware of the role of Federal Government. And we've had a really good discussion about how to make their jobs easier. And their job is to make sure every child gets educated, which is the noblest of all calling in America.

So I appreciate your coming. It's always good to be talking to people who know what they're talking about. And when it comes to public education, Governors really understand the subject. So I'm grateful you're here.

I'll be glad to answer a few questions.

*Vandalism Reports*

*Q.* Mr. President, are you offended, sir, by the reports of vandal—acts of vandalism by outgoing members of the Clinton administration?

*The President.* I'm so happy to be here—[laughter]—that I'm looking forward. There might have been a prank or two; maybe somebody put a cartoon on the wall—that's okay. It's time now to move forward. It's time to focus our attention on what's possible and how to get children educated. I'm excited about what this week has brought. I'm excited about my job.

*Stem Cell Research*

*Q.* Mr. President, do you believe that Federal money should be used or spent

on fetal tissue or stem cell research derived from induced abortions?

*The President.* No, I don't.

*Q.* Will you have an Executive order to that effect?

*The President.* I believe there's some exciting—I believe there's some wonderful opportunities for adult stem cell research. I believe we can find stem cells from fetuses that died a natural death. But I do not support research from aborted fetuses.

*Q.* I assume that you'll sign an Executive order to that or make that the law of the land?

*The President.* I'll let you know when I decide all policy decisions. But I do not—to answer your question, the answer is no.

*Russia-U.S. Relations*

*Q.* Mr. President, have you responded to President Putin's letter, and do you plan to review Russian relations with the United States before you go forward in any arms control talks?

*The President.* I have not responded to the letter yet. I will, of course. I read about it—I might have even read about it before it hit Washington. [Laughter]

What was the second half of your question?

*Arms Control Talks*

*Q.* Do you plan to review the U.S. relations with the Russians before you start up on arms control talks?

*The President.* Well, you may remember in the campaign I talked about two aspects about arms. One was that I am going to go forward with, along with Secretary Rumsfeld, about plans for a missile defense system. But I also said that I think it's important for us, commensurate with our ability to keep the peace, to reduce our