

occasionally because they let their party labels get in the way. But they did magnificent work on the floor of the House of Representatives.

And then, of course, some of the folks in Crawford coffee shop will be amazed to hear me say that I like Ted Kennedy. I will tell you this: If you have a legislative battle, you want him on your side; you don't want him against you. [Laughter] He made an enormous difference, as did Judd, in passing a piece of legislation that sets high standards and high expectations, one that provides greater resources, one that understands the role of parents in public education. This a good piece of legislation for which America should be proud.

I want to thank my friend Rod Paige for being here as well. Rod is the Secretary of Education. He was the superintendent at the Houston Independent School District. I figured that anybody that could survive being superintendent of the Houston Independent School District can survive Washington. [Laughter] His job will be to make sure that the piece of legislation that I signed this morning is implemented in the spirit of the legislation, the principles involved remain intact.

And I want to share those principles with you. I wish the bill were here. It's about this tall. [Laughter] I haven't read it all yet. [Laughter] In my line of work, they give you an executive briefing. [Laughter] But I know the principles involved in the bill, and I want to share some of those with you.

One of the key principles in this bill is that we must hold schools accountable for results. And so therefore, if you receive Federal money, in return for Federal money, the States—not the Federal Government—the States must develop a test for third through eighth graders on reading and math. For the first time at the Federal level, we've asked a simple question: Is our money being spent wisely? Are people learning?

I want to quote to you what a young girl said from New York City. She said, "I don't even remember taking exams. They just kept passing me along. I ended up dropping out in the seventh grade. I basically felt that nobody cared." You see, in some schools, it is so much easier to take a look at the classroom and say, "Let's just move them through." In some school districts in some parts of our country, it is so much easier to walk into a classroom full of kids who may not supposed to be able to learn, and say, "We're just going to move you along. We don't really care what you know." That day is going to end in America. Every child matters.

I'm sure there's somebody out there saying, "I don't like to take tests." Tough. [Laughter] We want to know; we need to know. We need to know whether a curriculum is working. We need to know whether the teachers, the methodology that teachers use is working. We need to know whether or not people are learning. And if they are, there will be hallelujahs all over the place. But if not, we intend to do something about it.

Now, we're going to say to failed schools, you've got some time to correct yourselves. You've got some time to take remedial action. Not only will you have time, but there will be incentives and additional resources for you to improve. In other words, when we find failure, we're going to do something about it. We're going to take corrective action in society.

But if a school can't change, if a school can't show the parents and community leaders that they can teach the basics, something else has to take place. In order for there to be accountability, there has to be consequences. And the consequence in this bill is that after a period of time, if a parent is tired of their child being trapped into a failed school, that parent will have different options, public school choice, charter, and private tutoring.