

Set 1: school, teacher, parent, educ, public, children, choic, student

Set 2: busi, small, rate, percent, credit, tax, high, lawyer

Set 3: congress, night, littl, control, program, industri, interest, run

Set 4: spend, billion, defens, propos, dollar, budget, prioriti, cut

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ROSS PEROT Yes, Ive got scars to show for being around education reform. And the first word you need to say in every city and state, and just draw a line in the sand, is public schools exist for the benefit of the children. Youre going to see a lot of people fall over it, because any time youre spending \$199 billion dollars a year, somebodys getting it. And the children get lost in the process. So thats step one. Keep in mind in 1960, when our schools were the envy of the world, we were spending \$16 billion on them; now we spend more than any other nation in the world — 199 billion a year — and rank at the bottom of the industrialized world in terms of education achievement. One more time youve bought a front-row box seat and got a third- rate performance. This is a government that is not serving you. By and large it should be local — the more local, the better. Interesting phenomenon; small towns have good schools, big cities have terrible schools. The best people in a small town will serve on the school board; you get into big cities, its political patronage, stepping stones — you get the job, give your relatives a janitors job at \$57, 000 a year, more than the teachers make, and with luck they clean the cafeteria once a week. Now, youre paying for that. Those schools belong to you. And we put up with that. Now, as long as we put up with that, thats what youre going to get. And these folks are just dividing up 199 billion bucks and the children get lost. If I could wish for one thing for great public schools, it would be a strong family unit in every home — nothing will ever replace that. You say, well, gee, what are you going to do about that? Well, the White House is a bully pulpit, and I think we ought to be pounding on the table every day. Theres nothing — the most efficient unit of government the world will ever know is a strong loving family unit. Next thing. You need small schools, not big schools. In a little school everybody is somebody; individualism is very important. These big factories? Everybody told me they were cost- effective. I did a study on it; theyre cost- ineffective. 5000 students — why is a high school that big? One reason. Sooner or later you get 11 more boys that can run like the devil that weigh 250 pounds and they might win district. Now, that has nothing to do with learning. Secondly, across Texas, typically half of the school day was non- academic pursuits — in one place it was 35%. In Texas you could have unlimited absences to go to livestock shows. Found a boy — excuse me, but this gives the flavor — a boy in Houston kept a chicken in the bathtub in downtown Houston and missed 65 days going to livestock shows. Finally had to come back to school, the chicken lost its feathers. Thats the only way we got him back. (Laughter) Now, thats your tax money being wasted. Now, neighborhood schools. It is terrible to bus tiny little children across town. And it is particularly terrible to take poor tiny little children and wait until the first grade and bus them across town to Mars, where the children know their numbers, know their letters, have had every advantage. At the end of the first day, that little child wants out. Ill close on this. Youve got to have world class teachers, world class books. If you ever got close to how textbooks were selected, you wouldnt want to go back the second day. I dont have time to tell you the stories.

MODERATOR No, you dont.

ROSS PEROT Finally, if we dont fix this, youre right. We cant have the industries of tomorrow unless we have the best educated workforce. And here youve got, for the disadvantaged children, youve got to have early childhood development. Cheapest money youll ever spend. First contact should be with the money when shes pregnant. That little child needs to be loved and hugged and nurtured and made to feel special, like your children were. They learn to think well or poorly of themselves in the first 18 months.

MODERATOR Thank you. AUDIENCE

AUDIENCE Thank you, Mr. Perot.

ROSS PEROT And in the first few years they either learn how to learn or dont learn how to learn. And if they dont, they wind up in prison.

MODERATOR Thank you, Mr. Perot.

ROSS PEROT And it costs more to keep them in prison than it does to send them to Harvard. I rest my case.

MODERATOR Thank you. President Bush, you wanted to answer.