

**President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education
Accountability Systems Task Force
March 13, 2002 // Des Moines, IA**

**Chairman Terry Branstad
Remarks**

THANK YOU, STEVE. I AM VERY PLEASED TO WELCOME OUR COMMISSIONERS AND WITNESSES TO DES MOINES TODAY.

I ALSO WANT TO THANK THE IOWANS IN ATTENDANCE FOR COMING HERE THIS MORNING. FOR THOSE COMMISSIONERS WHO HAVE NOT SPENT TIME IN OUR STATE, LET ME ASSURE YOU: IOWANS WILL GIVE YOU A LOT OF INPUT. ONE OF THE THINGS THAT MAKES IOWA SO SPECIAL IS THE HIGH DEGREE OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN OUR COMMUNITIES, OUR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, AND OUR SCHOOLS.

WE HAVE A VERY BUSY AND IMPORTANT DAY AHEAD OF US. AS STEVE POINTED OUT, THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION AND THIS COMMISSION ARE DEEPLY COMMITTED TO FINDING WAYS TO ENSURE THAT NO CHILD IS LEFT BEHIND. THIS INCLUDES CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES.

IT IS DIFFICULT TO TRAVEL ANYWHERE IN OUR COUNTRY AND NOT HEAR ABOUT SCHOOL REFORM, HIGHER STANDARDS, RIGOROUS ASSESSMENTS, AND NEW INNOVATIONS IN THE CLASSROOM. WE HAVE TO MAKE SURE THAT SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM THESE CHANGES. HOW WE EDUCATE THESE CHILDREN – *OUR CHILDREN* – AND HELP THEM MOVE FORWARD SO THEY CAN BECOME PRODUCTIVE CITIZENS IS ONE OF OUR NATION’S MOST PRESSING EDUCATION ISSUES. I’M SURE OUR HEARING TODAY WILL SHED MUCH NEEDED LIGHT ON THAT ISSUE. AS SECRETARY PAIGE SAYS, HOW WE EDUCATE OUR CHILDREN SAYS A LOT ABOUT OUR CHARACTER AND THE CHARACTER OF OUR NATION. THANK YOU AGAIN, AND WITH THAT, LET’S GET STARTED ...