

Charter school funding part of Clinton grants

EDGARTOWN, Mass. (AP) — President Clinton took another opportunity Saturday to denounce the Republicans' \$792 billion tax-cut package as unacceptably risky, this time calling it a threat to the future of public education.

In his weekly radio address, Clinton also announced \$95 million in aid for charter schools and endorsed the education idea as "freer of red tape and top-down management" than traditional public schools.

Clinton contrasted the tax-cut plan with what he called the education successes of his administration.

"Charter schools are living proof of what parents and teachers can do to

reinvigorate public education. Investing in them means investing in accountability and excellence and a much better future for our children," Clinton said.

"But just as our children are returning to class, the Republicans' risky tax-cut plan would undermine these investments by forcing deep and irresponsible cuts to education and other national priorities," he said.

The grants include \$41 million for 19 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico to fund the first of three-year grants for new charter schools. Another \$54 million will go to existing programs.

Charter schools are often created by concerned parents

or teachers and operate with a charter from a public agency. Supporters say such schools offer solutions to problems weighing on public classrooms.

Just one charter school existed nationally when Clinton took office in 1993, he said. Now there are more than 1,700, and the administration hopes to help foster 3,000 by 2001, Clinton said.

"Charter schools offer parents and students more choice in the kinds of public education available to them, coupled with public accountability," Education Secretary Richard Riley said in a statement.

Republicans, meanwhile, accused Clinton of playing

politics with Americans' money by threatening to veto the tax cuts that congressional Republicans passed earlier this month.

Joining a list of Republican governors and members of Congress who have touted the proposed reductions in the GOP's weekly radio address, Arizona Gov. Jane Hull questioned Clinton's plan to veto the bill.

"He either has a deep-seated desire to increase government spending, or he just does not want to give the money back to the people who earned it in the first place," she said. "President Clinton

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Second dragging death trial begins

BRYAN, Texas (AP)—Jury selection began Tuesday in the murder trial of a second white man accused of dragging a black man to his death in Jasper last year.

Twenty prospective jurors for the case against Lawrence Russell Brewer, 32, were dismissed for legal or health reasons. Those who remained were given a three-page questionnaire to fill out. Individual questioning was to begin Wednesday.

Brewer is the second of three alleged white supremacists accused of abducting and beating James Byrd Jr., chaining him to a pickup truck and dragging him to pieces. Prosecutors believe he was killed as a way to recruit members to a new white supremacist organization.

Brewer could get the death penalty. John William King, the first to be tried, was convicted in Jasper last February and sentenced to death. The case against Brewer was moved to Bryan, 150 miles away, after the defense argued that the people of Jasper would be inclined to convict Brewer to redeem their town's reputation.

Blacks eat more fruits, vegetables

Gary D. Robertson
Special to Sentinel-Voice
RALEIGH, N.C. (AP)—Sunday dinners in the South, where chicken is skillet-fried and collards and green beans are seasoned with ham hocks and fatback, are getting healthier through another institution — the black church.

A church-based nutrition program got parishioners to eat better—an extra fruit and vegetable serving every day, says a two-year, federally funded study released Tuesday.

It might not sound like a huge improvement, but cancer specialists say any increase in fruit and vegetable consumption is important in cutting Americans' risk of cancer.

"To get a whole serving increase through a program like this is just fabulous," said Colleen Doyle, a nutrition program coordinator with the American Cancer Society. "It's very encouraging."

The study was published in September's edition of the *American Journal of Public Health*. Older parishioners and frequent churchgoers showed the most improvement in their eating habits.

The National Cancer Institute, which funded the study, says eating five servings of fruits and vegetables a day helps prevent cancer and other diseases.

A serving is just half a cup of fruit or cooked vegetables, a cup of salad or a 6-ounce glass of fruit juice — 100-percent juice, not sugared "juice drinks."

But fewer than a third of Americans follow that dietary advice. And black Americans have significantly higher rates of some cancers than whites.

So North Carolina researchers, citing the high percentage of blacks who attend church, decided to study whether church-related activities could change parishioners' eating habits.

Congregations involved in Black Churches United for Better Health planted gardens outside their sanctuaries, serving the vegetables at after-church suppers. Some pastors even preached a pro-health message from the Bible, which says the body "is a temple of the Holy Ghost."

Cooking classes, lessons on canning and freezing fresh produce and brochures on good eating were offered, as well as cookbooks and help in modifying favorite family recipes to be more healthy. Participating churches received money to help buy fruits and vegetables.

The 2,519 parishioners surveyed at the start of the study in 1994 ate an average of only 3.7 servings of fruits and vegetables a day. At the end of the 20-month program, those in churches chosen to participate in the program ate 0.85 more servings.

Those who attended church more than once a week ate 1.3 more servings compared to those attending church less than once a month, who ate only 0.1 serving more.

Researchers from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, N.C. State University, Duke University

and the state Health Department selected the churches from 10 rural eastern North Carolina counties with minority populations of at least 30 percent.

Researchers are working on two similar programs designed to encourage church members to eat more fiber, exercise and receive cancer screenings.

Lay leaders such as Patricia Pratt of Friendship Baptist Church in Rose Hill helped encourage congregations to serve tomatoes, squash and other items from the church gardens.

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COMMUNITY PRIDE

Irene Sanchez, left, of the Family to Family Program, explains her program to Regina Green, right, and her daughter, Crystal Pope during a recent community gathering. The event, organized by Karen Sewell of the newly formed Community Unity With Pride group, was held at Marion Cahlan Elementary School.

Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

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