



THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20202

November 5, 2004

The President  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

This letter comes to advise you of my desire to resign from the position of United States Secretary of Education effective at the end of your first Presidential term. It comes also to express my deepest appreciation to you for the opportunity to serve you and the nation in such an important position.

I am very proud of the many accomplishments achieved by the talented and committed men and women of the United States Department of Education. Because of your strong and clear leadership, our work has been a labor of love. Of the many important accomplishments achieved by the Department during this short and intense four-year period, I believe the following are illustrative:

- The Department's Under Secretary has advised us that by the middle of this month the Department of Education can expect official notification of its third consecutive clean annual audit by an outside "big six" audit firm. Prior to 2001, the Department had achieved only one clean audit in its history, and that audit was one conducted by the Department's Office of Inspector General.
- As evidenced by the President's Management Agenda Scorecard, the Department's management and accountability improvements have been stellar. Consequently, the Department is now much sounder organizationally than before 2001.
- The No Child Left Behind Act's (NCLB) reform initiatives have been well launched. Despite highly financed and organized opposition, a penchant for waiver requests, and other types of delays, all fifty states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have approved accountability plans, and all states are working vigorously to gain and maintain compliance with NCLB law and regulations. This is a sharp contrast with State compliance with the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) of 1994. When you assumed the Presidency in January 2001, only 11 states were in compliance with the IASA's accountability requirements.
- The Department has held the line on Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) compliance issues, and has, for the first time in the Department's history,

exercised its authority to withhold administrative funds from States for clear failure to comply with the substance of the ESEA.

- The national education culture is changing. All across the nation, the educational dialogue is now about results, and less about inputs.
- The Department's web site has been transformed from a confusing, unattractive site, to one of the best in the federal government. In September 2004, the Center for Public Policy at Brown University ranked the ED web site third overall among 60 federal government sites and first among cabinet agencies.
- The Student Financial Aid National Cohort Default Rate is at a historic low.
- The Department's research office, the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) in 2001, has been reformed and reauthorized as the Institute of Education Sciences, which sharpens the Department's research focus to better inform instructional practices.
- The stubborn, and I believe unacceptable, academic achievement gap between minority students and their white peers, essentially stagnant throughout the period between 1992 and 2000, has begun to close.
- Hispanic and African American test scores, especially in the big urban centers of our nation, are beginning to rise. The percentage of African American and Hispanic fourth graders who know their reading and math basics increased substantially more between 2000 and 2003 than in the previous eight years combined.

Although the aforementioned accomplishments represent but a sample of the achievements of the talented and committed members of your U.S. Department of Education, I believe they represent a solid foundation from which to launch new and invigorated leadership for the Department. I believe also that this is an appropriate time for me to return to Texas where I can devote attention to a personal project, which I began planning prior to assuming my present responsibilities.

Although my desire is to leave the office at the completion of your first Presidential term, if my successor has not been confirmed by that time, I would be pleased to continue until such time as my successor is confirmed, if you so wish.

Sincerely,

/s/

Rod Paige