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Sincerely,

GEORGE BUSH

Note: Identical letters were sent to Thomas S. Foley, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Dan Quayle, President of the Senate. The Executive order is listed in Appendix E at the end of this volume.

Remarks to the Lehigh Valley 2000 Community in Allentown, Pennsylvania

April 16, 1992

My fellow president, thank you very, very much. [*Laughter*] This is a nonpolitical appearance, if there is any such thing in a strange political year. But let me just say this: I'm very glad that Hilda is not running for President this year. [*Laughter*] And thank you for your introduction.

And may I congratulate all six of these guys that spelled out the six educational goals, reminding us of what our national goals are. And I asked one of them if he was nervous. He shook me off, said no. I don't believe him, but—[*laughter*]—they did a first-class job, all of them, every one of them.

And may I pay my respects to our very able Secretary of Education, Lamar Alexander, former Governor, now challenging this country with America 2000 and doing a superb job for all the American people; and at my side in the United States Congress, caring deeply about education, telling me over and over again about the changes and the wonder that's taking place right here in the valley, Don Ritter, your Congressman. He's doing a first-class job in Washington.

May I salute Mayors Daddona and Smith, the Mayor of Allentown and the Mayor of Bethlehem, and of course, pay my respect to Ed Donley, a driving force behind Lehigh Valley 2000 and cochair of Pennsylvania 2000. And my respect also to she who led us in the pledge, Ann Snyder, the valedictorian of the class of '92. Ann, thank you; our guests who did such a great job with the goals; Mike Meilinger, the principal, and I thank him for calling this special assembly today and getting a lot of you out of class. You ought to be grateful to him. My special thanks to the parents and the teachers and the staff. Thanks also to all the folks here from Allentown and Easton and Bethlehem, the leading lights of Lehigh Valley. Last but not least, let me say hello to the students of Dieruff High, with special thanks to the band. It was first-class music. Thank you all very, very much.

I don't know who is in charge of signs around this place, but they did a first-class job, all through the building and everyplace else. And it's astonishing to be here with the class of '92 as a graduate of the class of '42. I realize the world I thought of as new, for you, well, it's history. But look now at the world you'll soon call your own, at the pace of change that we've come to expect. Each day we see history played out in the headlines, literally. Old empires expire; new worlds are born. In the past 6 months alone, 6 months, we've seen the birth of 18 new nations. Who knows how many there will be by the time you take your big geography final a few weeks from now.

But the challenges we face, the sheer complexity of our world, cannot obscure the basic values that guide this Nation. Times change; but truths, fundamental truths, endure. I'm talking about the big issues that shape our world, about the values close to home. Everything I've tried to do and done to preserve and advance three precious legacies: strong families, good jobs, and a world at peace. These are my goals. They should be all of ours. Securing those legacies has been my mission as President, and it's going to be my mission today and every day as long as I am President of the United States.

You know, right now here in Allentown and across America, the number one concern is the economy. Turning this economy around, creating jobs is the mission that

matters most. Listen to what people say about the economy. Get beneath the cold statistics; get down to the real heart of this issue. People want to know whether they can keep the job they've got and whether they're on track for a better one. For their kids, for each one of the students here today, parents have got grander visions, great hopes: Not just a job, a career; work that means more than simply making ends meet; work that gives real meaning to your life.

People have a right to ask, "What is Government's role in all of this?" No, we can't legislate the American dream. But Government can serve as a catalyst for change, clearing away the obstacles to economic growth and the unnecessary costs of doing business, expanding the opportunities for aggressive businesses, for enterprising individuals to create new jobs, training and educating our children, giving you the tools of thought you'll need to compete in this new, exciting world economy.

The fate of America's economic future rests on five key reforms:

Free and fair trade, our ability to break down barriers, open new markets to American goods;

Our future rests on legal reform, on ending the explosion of litigation that strains our patience and saps our economy. We're suing each other too much. We ought to be helping each other more;

On health care reform, opening up access to all Americans, controlling the runaway cost of health care without sacrificing choice and without sacrificing the best quality health care in the entire world;

And then on Government reform, because only if we reverse a generation of creeping bureaucracy and only if we restore limits to Government can we restore public trust;

Finally, the reason I've come here to the valley today: Our future depends on education reform, on our ability to revolutionize, literally reinvent our schools, to take that revolution beyond the four walls of the classroom, transform our attitudes and ideas, the way we think about education.

And I wish every adult and every kid could have been with me a few minutes ago as some of the leaders, business and education leaders assembled, civic leaders, to tell me about this exciting change taking place right here in Lehigh Valley.

Education, it represents a perfect community of interest between the individual and society, between one generation and the next, between the proud history we must pass on and the path-breaking future we must create. And in terms of America's economic future, education is nothing less than a matter of economic survival. It's just this simple: Better schools mean better jobs.

You've seen the news stories. You've heard the statistics. Anyone who worries about slack productivity or a bad balance of trade ought to be alarmed about the test scores. Millions of students work hard; millions of dedicated teachers, doing their very best; and still, in one test after another, America's children score at or near the bottom ranks of international achievement. We don't need another test to tell us something is wrong with the state of American education. For the sake of every student here today, we've got to shake off any sense of complacency; we've got to shake up the status quo.

Now, in a sense, I'm preaching to the choir because here in Lehigh Valley that's a lesson you learned long ago, years ago. But you didn't wait for word from Washington, DC. You didn't stand back and watch another generation of kids get less education than they deserved. This community took a direct interest in what was going on in the classroom. This community came together. This community took action.

I took office determined to put the power of the Presidency behind change. More than 2 years ago, we took a strong first step. Working together with the Nation's Governors, Democrat and Republican alike, we set six ambitious goals for the year 2000. It never had been done before. Every American child must start school ready to learn. We must raise the high school graduation rate to 90 percent. We must put in place a system of world-class standards and tests to measure students' progress. We must be first in the world in math and science. By the year 2000, every American adult must be literate, and every American school must be free of drugs, free from the violence that

today too often follows our kids into the classroom. Let me sum up the six goals this way: Together, by the year 2000, we must create the best schools in the world for our children.

Let me share a story that our Secretary, Lamar, told me about a little girl, a fourth grader named Ariane Williams. At the kick-off for New Orleans 2000 down in Louisiana, she stood up, and here's what she said, "These goals are not just the President's goals. They're not just the Governor's goals. They are the Nation's goals." That little girl got the message, and so do you here in this valley. Goals define the mission. They tell us where we want to go, not how to get there.

That's why, as I was reminded at this meeting I told you about, nearly one year ago today, I mapped out a strategy I call America 2000, a plan to revolutionize American education. Then I heard the progress that had been made before that even began, to break the mold and, for the sake of our children, put an end to business-as-usual. Two days from now, we're going to mark the first anniversary of America 2000. Let me share with you today a kind of report card, if you will, on what we've accomplished. In one year's time, we've seen America 2000 literally catch fire all across this country. Already, 43 States and more than 1,000 communities, from Grand Junction, Colorado, to Lewiston, Maine, have joined the America 2000 crusade. Everywhere, people like you are working to break down the barriers between the classroom and the community, to spark a grassroots revolution to reinvent, not just rework but to literally reinvent the American school. But you know that story because, once again, Lehigh Valley has led the way.

I want to share with you an old African proverb that's the motto of Minnesota 2000, "It takes an entire village to educate one child." And that is what it takes because education doesn't just happen in the classroom. It doesn't start at 8:20 each morning and end at 5 of 3. All of us lead busy lives, but we must never be too busy to read to our kids. And if I might ad lib something in here, I am very, very proud of Barbara Bush for setting an example about how families ought to stay together and how families ought to read to their kids. Parents ought to read to their kids.

And we must never be too busy to teach them right from wrong, to take an interest in the things that they worry about and wonder at, and to listen, really listen to what they say. We owe it to our children and to ourselves to see that we live in communities that care about education, communities where learning can happen.

You've got every right to ask, "What can Washington do to help?" Well, here's one way we can. Today, I want to announce a new legislative initiative that I call the "lifetime education and training account," a package of grants and line of credit worth $25,000 to every eligible American to further their education or acquire new job skills to make the most of their abilities. I've said before if we want to compete in the 21st century, we've got to become a Nation of students. To do that, we've got to take a new approach to the old notions of student aid. Think of the working mother, balancing her responsibility for her family and her job against her own hopes for the future. She'd take one college course at a time, but she doesn't qualify right now for the grant or loan that would help pay tuition. Our "lifetime education and training account" would help her get back into the classroom. Here's the message for the students here today and for their parents: Education doesn't end with graduation; learning has got to be a lifelong pursuit.

I came to Lehigh, to one of the first communities to join the America 2000 crusade, to set the agenda for the second year of America 2000. Our next step forward depends on our success in building a consensus for change around four core ideas, four ways to build on what we've begun, to transform the Federal Government into a catalyst for real education reform. First, if we're serious about reaching our goals, we must set world-class standards in five core subjects and establish a series of voluntary American achievement tests to measure our children's progress.

Second, we've got to grant States and local school districts relief from Federal rules and regulations that limit their ability to improve educational achievement and do

nothing to help us meet our national education goals. And parenthetically, I'm told by the leaders I met with today that the Governor of this State has granted such regulatory flexibility and regulatory relief to this community effort here. Our teachers and our principals deserve flexibility, freedom to use their frontline experience on what works best in their schools to meet these national goals. Has anyone asked the teachers here today, "How can we ask you to teach and then tie your hands?"

Third, we've got to launch a wide-open effort to create thousands of new American schools, starting with at least one in every congressional district all across the United States. Right here in Lehigh Valley, you're hard at work on your plan to make this community home to its own new American school. I heard the exciting proposals on that today. These break-the-mold schools won't conform to any one blueprint. Some may make a quantum leap forward into tomorrow's technologies. Others might seek to reach the future by restoring older traditions, the discipline and disciplines of an earlier era. Each one of these schools would be a living example of how we can reinvent American education. All we need now from Congress is the seed money to help people like you translate ideas into action.

Fourth, we must create an incentive to improve education by promoting school choice. For far too long, we've shielded our schools from competition, allowed the system a damaging monopoly power over students. Well, just as monopolies are bad for the economy, they're bad for our kids. Every parent should have the power to choose which school is best for his child, public, private, or religious.

Look at our colleges; look at America's colleges; look at the students. Our university system is the envy of the world. Each year, we make over $20 billion in Federal grants and loans directly to students, one of every two students enrolled in college right now, to use at the university of their choice. No one asks whether they enroll at Penn State or Pennsylvania University or Villanova or Lehigh or Lafayette. It's time we make the same choice available to all parents from the moment their children go to school. Whether it's the public school on your street or the one across town, whether it's private, parochial, yeshiva, or Bible school, let parents, not the Government, make that choice.

And let's be clear. If we deny parents school choice, if we deny that choice, let's recognize who's hurt worst by the status quo. It's not the well-to-do. It's not the rich guy. It's not the upper-middle class. It's not any one of us who ever went house-hunting with a map of the good school districts. Deny people school choice, and the ones you hurt most are the middle class and lower and especially the poor.

That's why choice is catching on in some of the hardest hit neighborhoods in this Nation. Talk to parents that are spearheading the school choice crusade, people like now-famous Polly Williams in Milwaukee. They'll tell you how the lack of choice left them powerless to force change and how a public school bureaucracy turned students into statistics and parents into pawns. Look at Milwaukee today, pioneering school choice, giving poor parents control and poor children a sense of pride. Look at the schools closer to home, East Harlem, where teachers put their names on waiting lists to get a chance to teach in a choice school. They can't wait to stand in front of a classroom of children who want to be there, who want to learn.

Choice works, and here's why. When our students are a captive audience, our schools have no incentive to improve. Say what you want about reforming our schools, if you're for change, you are for school choice. These four ideas are generating interest and enthusiasm among Governors and mayors, Democrats, Republicans, liberals, conservatives; among business leaders, Ed Donley right here and the Allentown-Lehigh County Chamber of Commerce to the Fortune 500; among teachers and students and parents and principals, everyone at every level who understands the need for change.

Everyone, that is, except the leaders of the United States Congress. At a moment when the consensus for change seems to be reaching critical mass, on Capitol Hill you can watch the last stand of the status quo. Forces there are waging a last-ditch effort to put the brakes on change, to preserve

the business-as-usual approach that brought us the present crisis in education. The mindset up on Capitol Hill reminds me of a letter I got the other day from an elementary school student, a little girl named Haruka Abe. "I like," she says, "when my teacher reads my class some books because everybody gets sleepy." [*Laughter*] Well, it reminds me of Capitol Hill and the way they're approaching change. Take a look at the bill that's now winding its way through the Congress, the tired old ideas, tried and failed, that it wants to substitute for the four path-breaking ideas I mentioned a moment ago.

As part of America 2000, we asked Congress for authority to help develop world-class standards and American achievement tests, tools that would help us measure our students' progress, help families understand where their kids might stand, and assess the return we're getting for our education dollars. And the status quo crowd up there on Capitol Hill said "slow down" to testing and standards. I asked Congress for funds for this new American schools. Congress said no, no to even funding one percent, 535 of 50,000 new American schools that this Nation needs. They want to funnel more Federal dollars into these existing mandated business-as-usual State bureaucracies, the very same bureaucracies that put us where we are today. And we asked the Congress for flexibility for teachers, flexibility for principals. And Congress said, "No, let's stick to the status quo." And finally, we asked the Congress to fund pilot programs to promote school choice, programs to help poor families in six American cities. And Congress said no to school choice.

So today, let me just serve notice on the lobby, on the education lobby and their friends back on Capitol Hill: One year ago, I asked you to join with me in a revolution, a revolution to be part of America 2000. The time has come to get on board or get out of the way and stay behind. No more business as usual. Congress can drag its feet, but it cannot stop change.

Lehigh Valley is living proof of the words of the great Abraham Lincoln, "Revolutions do not go backward." There's a time early in every revolution when the status quo looks steady and strong and the forces that challenge it weak and without effect. And there's the moment when the forces of change carry the day; the bankruptcy of the status quo stands revealed, and the whole hollow house of cards collapses.

The revolution in American education is already underway. In Lehigh Valley and in communities all across America, the old ways are being pushed aside. They're being abandoned; new ideas, advanced. This revolution will triumph for the simplest and the strongest of reasons, because American parents want the best for their children and also because there isn't a single child anywhere in the United States of America who doesn't deserve the best education possible.

From our schools to our courts, from our hospitals to the halls of Government, from the neighborhoods outside our door to the realities of the new world economy, the need for reform won't wait. The only acceptable response is the American response. We must rekindle a revolution, a revolution to bring change to the country that's changed the world. The American people have made their choice. The American people want change. And you here in Lehigh Valley can proudly say, "We are out front for fundamental, constructive change."

Thank you all for this wonderful day of learning, this warm welcome. Any may God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much.

Note: The President spoke at 12:35 p.m. at Dieruff High School. In his remarks, he referred to Hilda Rivas, the school's senior class president.