

nities where they work. He then thanked the President for becoming involved in tough issues.]

The President. It is a tough one. But I want to thank you, Carol, and thank you, Barbara, and thank you, Mindy Statter, and thank you, Chief Rodriguez, and thank all of you for the work you do every day. And I particularly want to thank those of you who have been victimized in some way or another for having the courage to come up here and do this and to continue your interest in this.

I think the American people are ready to move on this. I believe they are. And I think maybe the rest—those of us who can help are getting the message. And your presence here today will certainly help.

Thank you very much. We're adjourned.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:45 a.m. at Wilbur Wright College. In his remarks, he referred to civil rights leader Jesse L. Jackson.

Remarks to Students at Wilbur Wright College in Chicago February 28, 1994

Thank you. Thank you very much, Chairman Rostenkowski, for that fine introduction. Thank you, Mayor Daley. Thank you, President Le Fevour. It's nice to be back here at Wright Community College. I was here in December of 1992, and I asked the president, I said, "Now, how many of these people were here back in '92 when I was here?" And he said, "Not many. We were in the old place, and we only had 200 people in the room." So, I congratulate you on your beautiful new digs here. I like being here in this place.

You know, the city of Chicago and this State have been very good to me, personally, and to our administration. The best thing that Chicago ever did for me was Hillary, who's from here. And yesterday we celebrated our daughter's 14th birthday, the three of us, and we had a wonderful time. I was thinking back over her whole life and looking ahead to what her life might become and to what your life might become and trying to resolve again on that special day to spend every day that I have been given to be your President working on those issues, on the big things that really affect people's lives and their future, not be diverted by the little things that so often swallow up our politics, make us less than we ought to be, and keep us from facing our responsibilities to the future. And that's really what I want to talk to you about today.

I'm honored to be here because I think these community colleges all across our country represent our responsibilities to the future, the chance of people to learn for a lifetime, without

regard to their racial or ethnic or income backgrounds, the chance for people to make the most of their lives. I'm glad to be here because I think your mayor is an extraordinary leader who has taken on the tough issues here and tried to do these things.

And I'm glad to be here in Dan Rostenkowski's congressional district because had it not been for his leadership last year, we would not have done the things which were done which have got this economy on the right course and are moving into the future, and we would not be able to do the things that we have to do to meet our obligations to the future in this coming year in health care, welfare reform, and many other areas. So, I am honored to be here, here in this congressional district and here to tell you what you already know: that last year, when I became President, we had a deficit that had quadrupled the national debt, that had quadrupled in 12 years; we had 4 years of very slow job growth; we had very low economic growth; we had low investment. And I determined that we were going to have to make some tough decisions that would not be popular in the short run, decisions for which we would be attacked and decisions which would be misrepresented to the American people, to get an economic implant in place that would reverse the track we were on, that would begin to bring down the deficit, that would bring down interest rates, keep inflation down, and get investment and jobs and growth up. And I proposed that economic plan to the Congress, and in spite of the fact that there were billions of dollars

of spending cuts in it and the taxes all went to reduce the deficit and only the top 1.2 percent of the American people paid higher income taxes—16.5 percent of the people, as they'll find out on April 15th, got a tax cut, lower income working people who deserve it because they are doing their best to raise their kids and educate them—in spite of that fact, many Members of Congress were quaking in their boots to vote for the bill. They were afraid to vote for it—they knew it was the right thing for America—because they were so terrified of the rhetoric of the last decade.

We were going to be paralyzed with the thought that the American people would not even support us raising taxes on the top 1.2 percent of our people and putting all of the money into deficit reduction to pay our obligations to the future. And that bill passed the United States Congress by one vote in both Houses. And I am telling you, if it hadn't been for the leadership of the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, it would not have happened, and this economy today would not be on the right path it's on if we had not done it. That is a fact. It is not up to me to know or to make judgments about all the things that are of concern to the people of Chicago, the people of this neighborhood. But I can tell you, as your President, I know that for a fact.

I also know that we have a lot of challenges before us. We have just begun to do what we need to do. Even though our economy last year produced nearly 2 million jobs—more than in the previous 4 years, even though most of those jobs were private sector jobs; whereas for the last 10 years or more, more and more of our jobs have been Government jobs, and the private sector has not been producing those new jobs—you know we have a long way to go. There are still too many people in Chicago who want a good job, who don't have it or can't find one. There are still too many people who work harder and harder every year without an increase in their incomes. There are still too many people who get out of high school without the education and training and skills they need. There are still too many people who ought to be at least in a community college, who aren't there.

Let me tell you, we have just done a study of this, and I released it last week. You may have seen it in the news when we were talking about our education program. But here is what

we know: We know that in 1992, high school dropouts had an unemployment rate over 11 percent. High school graduates had an unemployment rate of just over 7 percent. People with 2 years of community college had an unemployment rate of 5 percent. People who had 4-year college degrees had an unemployment rate of 3.5 percent. We live in a world where what you earn depends on what you can learn. And until we fulfill our responsibilities to make those opportunities available to all Americans, not just when they're young but for a lifetime—the average age at this community college is 31 years of age—until we do that, we will not have done our job for the future of this country.

We know that the earnings of high school graduates are, on average, more than \$4,000 higher than the earnings of high school dropouts; that the earnings of people who have at least 2 years of post-high-school education are, on average, more than \$4,000 higher than the earnings of people who graduate from high school. We know these things, and we still have a lot to do.

We know that we cannot restore order and harmony to our cities until we can free our young people of the scourge of crime and the fear of violence. When 160,000 young people stay home from school every day because they are afraid they are going to be shot or cut up or beat up, when even in cities where the crime rate is going down, often the death rate among young people from gunshot wounds is going up, we know that. And we know, as those fine medical professionals that the Mayor and Chairman Rostenkowski and I met with just a few moments ago told us—and they are here in the crowd today with the law enforcement officers and the community leaders—that unless we do something to reclaim our young people and to free them of the scourge of crime and violence, that the explosion in costs of our health care system will continue to drive up the cost of all Americans' health care and make it more and more difficult for people here in the city of Chicago and other places around the country even to keep their trauma units open because of the exploding costs of health care.

And so I say to you, my fellow Americans, we are moving this country in the right direction. You can see it from the passage of the economic program and the results of it. You can see it from the passage of NAFTA and the opening of trade. You can see it from our

making high-tech goods available for international trade. You can see it from the passage of the Brady bill, which becomes law today. Today. You can see it in these actions. We are moving in the right direction. I also want to just announce in connection with that, you know, what the Brady bill does is to make nationwide the requirement of a 5-day waiting period during which time a background check will be done. We now know from actual studies that this will save thousands of lives a year.

Today the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms in Washington is also taking an assault weapon called the "street sweeper" off the open market. This weapon was developed for crowd control in South Africa, not for hunting or sporting purposes. Several years ago we banned its import, but we allowed it to be made in this country. Today the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms is reclassifying the "street sweeper" and another assault weapon as destructive devices, increasing the taxes on manufacturers and dealers, and requiring extraordinary measures before those weapons can be sold. We will make it a safer America if we keep doing these things.

But as we begin a new week of work in the Congress, even though we are pleased by those measures and others that I haven't mentioned, the family and medical leave law, the motor voter bill, which makes it easier for young people to vote, a lot of other good things which were done last year to rebuild a sense of common purpose and community in our country. We know we have a lot still to do. And there are four major pieces of legislation in the Congress today I want to mention to you, because each of them, in a different way, affects you.

The first two which are being considered right now are the crime bill and the education bill. The crime bill will put 100,000 more police officers on the street to help make the mayor's community-policing initiative work, so that people will know their neighbors, know the kids. Police officers will walk the streets, and they won't just catch criminals, they'll work to keep crime from happening in the first place. We know this brings crime down. It is already beginning to work. In Chicago it will work dramatically if we can give the men and women who are working on our streets the support they need. The crime bill will do that—100,000 more police officers on the street—and we need to pass it as soon as possible.

The crime bill will do some other things. It will ban assault weapons, 28 different kinds, if it passes in the form it passed the Senate. It will have a very clearly worded "three strikes and you're out" provision, which basically says if you commit three violent crimes which are seriously damaging to people, you are not eligible for parole anymore. A small percentage of the people commit a high percentage of the crime, and it will give many, many more young people and people who are already incarcerated, who have a chance to put their lives right, something to say "yes" to. There is more in there for drug treatment; there is more in there for community recreational activities; there is more in there for boot camps for first-time nonviolent offenders.

We need to recognize that a lot of the kids that are getting in trouble have grown up in neighborhoods where there is no longer a strong sense of community, where their own families are not able to support them, and where there is not very much work. And when you have neighborhoods in which you lose family, community, and work, you're in a world of hurt. And we have to give those kids something to say "yes" to, and that is also something we're trying to do in the crime bill.

The second legislation now pending in the Congress that is important to all of you, particularly the students here, for your future, are the education bills. Our Goals 2000 bill, which will help mostly our elementary and secondary students because it establishes world-class standards for our schools, encourages grassroots reforms and changes to meet those standards, and gives the support we need to State and to local school districts to do that, including all kinds of experimentation that the Federal Government has never before clearly embraced.

The second bill is called the school-to-work bill, which attempts to create more students like you. It recognizes that the United States is the only major country that does not have a system for taking all the high school graduates who aren't going on to 4-year colleges and at least getting them 2 years of further training. It recognizes that there's an artificial distinction between what is vocational and practical on the one hand and what is academic on the other hand. The average 18-year-old will change work eight times in a lifetime. There is no clear dividing line between learning and work, between the academic and the practical; they are one

and the same. And we have to set up a system so that all high school graduates are given the chance to get further education, even as they work, so that eventually all Americans who need it will be flooding into institutions like this, not just once but as many as three and four and five times in a lifetime, so they will always be employable, always eligible to get better and better and better jobs.

And finally, on the education package, we have to change the unemployment system. I don't know how many people are here who have ever been on unemployment, but employers pay a tax, an unemployment tax, and then when you're on unemployment, you get a check that comes out of the fund where the tax receipts go. And the check is always for less than you were making and hopefully enough for you to just squeak by on. That used to be a system that worked when people were temporarily unemployed and then brought back to their old job. That's what unemployment used to be. But today unemployment is very different. Today unemployment normally means that job is gone forever and you have to go find another job. So we need to scrap the unemployment system and create a reemployment system so that from day one when somebody is unemployed, they can immediately begin, while they're drawing that unemployment check, to undergo retraining, to develop new skills, to look for new jobs, and not wait and not delay.

The next two great challenges we hope to embrace this year are welfare reform and health care reform. Let me say a word about welfare reform. I am sure I have spent more time with people on welfare than anybody who's ever been the President of the United States. I am sure of that, because when I was Governor I made it my business to find out as much as I could about the welfare system. Why do people stay on welfare generation after generation? Why do they do it? I'll tell you one thing: For the overwhelming majority, it's not because they like welfare very much. The people who hate this system the worst are the people who are trapped in it. Why do people stay on welfare? Is it because the checks are generous? No, it's because overwhelmingly the people on welfare are younger women with little children and little education and little employability. And if they take a job, it's a low-wage job. They lose Medicaid for their kids. They have to figure out

how to pay for the child care, so it becomes an economic loser.

What we have to do is to end welfare as we know it, to make it a second chance not a way of life, to give people education and training and support for their kids and medical coverage and then say, after 2 years of this, there will be a job there, and you must take it. You must go to work, but there will be a job there.

Finally, and most importantly, let me tell you that none of the long-term problems of this country can be adequately addressed until we have the courage to reform our health care system. We are the only advanced nation in the world spending 14.5 percent of our income, every dollar, on health care. No other country spends more than 10, that's Canada. Japan and Germany, our major competitors for the future, spend just under 9 cents of every dollar on health care. And yet all of these other countries provide health care to everyone. And yet every year, of our 255 million Americans—every year at some point during the year, 58 million Americans have no health insurance. At any given time, 37 to 39 million will have no health insurance. Small businesses and self-employed people pay 35 to 40 percent more for their health insurance coverage and have less coverage than those of us who work for Government or who are in bigger businesses.

The cost of health care has gone up at 2 and 3 times the rate of inflation. Most Americans have lifetime limits on their health insurance policies, so if anybody in their family really gets sick, they can run out of the limit and not have any insurance at all. An enormous number of Americans, over 80 million, have someone in their family who has what is called a preexisting condition. They've been sick before, which means that either they can't get insurance or their premiums are higher than they ought to be or they're stuck in their job they're in because if they ever try to change jobs, their new employer won't insure them. All this is because—not because we have bad health care providers, we have the best doctors, nurses, health care facilities in the world, it is because of the way we finance health care. It is wrong and we ought to change it.

These trauma units are in hospitals that have to take care of a lot of other people. They have to recover the costs of all these people coming in with gunshot wounds and other wounds into the trauma unit and pass the cost

on to somebody else. And if they can't do it, they run the risk of going broke. This is not a good system. It is the financing that is messed up. It is the unfairness of it. It is the fact that as older people stay in the work force, their insurance premiums get higher, even though older people are the fastest growing group of Americans. It isn't fair for them, just because of their age, to have to pay higher insurance premiums. This system does not work. We have to have the courage to change it. If we don't, let me tell you what's going to happen. By the end of the decade, we'll be spending 19 or 20 percent of our income on health care. None of our competitors will be over 12. How are we going to compete with them? If we don't, by the end of the decade all the new money you pay in taxes will go to health care, and it will go to pay more for the same health care.

This budget I have presented, I've heard all—people have talked for years and years and years about cutting the deficit and cutting spending. Let me tell you something. The budget I have given to Congress cuts defense and cuts discretionary domestic spending, that is, non-Social Security, non-health care payments. We cut that by billions of dollars, not adjusted for inflation, I mean real money for the first time since 1969.

So I don't want to hear people talk to me about cutting spending. But you know what's going up: health care costs, in this budget, at 2 and 3 times the rate of inflation. And it's more money for the same health care. If you don't fix the health care system by the end of the decade, when you come to the Federal Government and you say, "We need another expressway in Chicago, like Congressman Rostenkowski used to get us money for," we'll say, "I'm sorry, there's no money for the expressway. We're spending it all on health care." You'll come and say, "We need money for another environmental technology program, like Congressman Rostenkowski used to get us money for," and we'll say, "Oh, I'm sorry, there's no money for this. It's all going to the same health care."

I'm telling you, we're going to choke this budget off if we don't do something about health care. It is complicated. People have different ideas. If this were easy, it would have been done years ago. For 60 years the National Government has tried to come to grips with the fact that we do not provide health care coverage to all Americans. But I'm telling you

something, my fellow Americans, if you want me to be able to be an effective President so that we can compete in the global economy, so that we can have enough tax money to invest in education and training and new technologies, so that we can bring this deficit down, and so that we can deal with the health care problems of the country, we have got to address this problem, and we must do it now.

Just as I said before, just as it was true that last year, if it hadn't been for the Ways and Means Committee and the leadership of the chairman, there would have been no economic plan and no North American Free Trade Agreement. Remember this: Welfare reform and health care have to come through the Ways and Means Committee and have to go through the kind of terrible rhetorical divide you have been seeing filling your airways with all kinds of misinformation, trying to scare people off of dealing with health care. If we're going to cool down our rhetoric and stiffen our spines and open our minds and heart, we have got to have leadership in the Congress from people who are willing to take the tough stands, make the tough decisions, and make the right kind of future. This whole business is about getting people together and getting things done.

Five years, 10 years, 20 years from now, do you realize that 90 percent of what we are so obsessed with in the moment, no one will ever be able to remember? What this is about is getting people together and getting things done. And this is a city that understands that. That's the kind of mayor you have. That's what this community college is all about, getting things done. And if you want me to get things done, you have to say to the Members of Congress, "act." The one person you don't have to say it to is Dan Rostenkowski. It's in his bones, and he will do it, too. Thank you.

Let me just say one thing in closing. Sometimes I think Chicago works better than some other cities because you are instinctively, I think, maybe better organized. You understand community roots and deep ties and binds. I look around here and I see these health care professionals, I see these fine police officers in their uniforms. You know, there are a lot of things we have to face in this country that the President and the Congress can't fix alone. Teachers still teach kids in classrooms a long way from Washington. Police officers walk beats on streets a long way from Washington. There is nothing

I can do except to try to help you have the opportunity, those of you who are students here, to have a better education and the opportunity to have the jobs if you get the education. You still have to seize it.

So the last thing I wish to say to you is, if we are going to meet our obligations to the future, every one of us has got to ask ourselves, what do we have to do as citizens to keep these kids alive, to give them a better future, to make sure that the education is there, to invest in the areas that we have run off and left, to build a better future? We have serious obligations.

We are coming to the end of a century; we are coming to the end of a millennium; we are going into a whole new era in world history. And we, we have to meet our obligations if we're going to keep the American dream alive in that era. I'm going to do my best, and I hope you will too.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:16 a.m. in the gymnasium. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago and Raymond Le Fevour, president of the college.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at Hillcrest High School in Country Club Hills, Illinois February 28, 1994

The President. Thank you very much. It's wonderful to be here. I thank you for your warm reception, and I do mean warm reception. I'm sorry it's so warm, but they had to put the lights up so that the cameras will put you all on the news tonight. So see, it's not so bad now, is it; what do you think about that? [Laughter]

I want to thank my good friend Congressman Mel Reynolds for arranging for me to come here and to be with you today and for the leadership that he is already displaying in his career in Congress. He is a great credit to all of you here, and I think you would be very proud of the work that he does in Washington. I want to thank your principal, Gwendolyn Lee, for inviting me here and for the comments she made. She told me that her mother made dinner for Martin Luther King, when she was 11 years old. And she said her mother sent me a plate that he had dinner off of, so she sent me into a little room out here to have a snack off the same plate. So you see, even when you grow up you've got to try to do what your mama wants. [Laughter] I've spent most of my life doing that myself.

I want to thank Starr Nelson for being here with us. I thought she was very well-spoken. We knew exactly what she had to say, and she was brief. That makes you very popular if you're a speaker. [Laughter] Also I want to say I've heard good things about your music program

here, so I hope before I leave I get to hear the band play. You guys have got to play a little for me. I also want to thank anybody in this whole student body who was responsible for putting together that statement up there, that letter for me. If every one of you believes that and lives by it, then I don't need to be here, I need to be somewhere else today. It's a very impressive statement and a real credit to your school.

I came here today, as I think all of you know, to talk about the problem of crime and violence in our land and especially as it affects our young people. As the Congress comes back to work this week, it will be considering some very important education bills and some very important crime legislation. We know as a practical matter that we can never really be what we ought to be as a people until we are not only free of the scourge of violent crime but free of the fear of it. For the very fear of crime keeps 160,000 young people just like you home from school every day. Every day that's how many people we estimate don't go to school because they're afraid that if they do go, either at school or going to school or coming from school, they'll be shot or knifed or beat up or hurt in some way.

I know that you understand that because last November two teens were shot and wounded within a week right outside your school. This kind of thing is happening all across the country,