

these people leaving their homes. It made a profound impact on everyone.

We want to continue to do our part at the national level through all of the Federal agencies. FEMA has already invested \$35 million in response and recovery effort here, and that number will continue to climb. The Small Business Administration, I believe, has already approved about \$11½ million in home and business loans. The Corps of Engineers is here, and the fact that Martin Lancaster and Bill Coleman are both here is very encouraging to me.

To date, the Department of Transportation has allocated \$11 million to help repair roads that were damaged by the floods, and today I am pleased to announce—I talked to Secretary Pena just before coming here—that we will provide another \$10 million for that purpose. That will give you \$21 million to deal with the roads. And FEMA is going to give this city another \$400,000 to repair the damage along Parkin Street to the canal.

But that, I think, is just the beginning. I think the Federal housing assistance to the State, Governor, will run somewhere in the neighborhood of \$10 million for the people who have had their homes damaged. And I'm sure there will be more.

One of the things that you mentioned that I wanted to emphasize is that in 1993, after we dealt with the impacts of the terrible flooding in the Middle West, and the Governor was still in Congress then—you remember, we changed the law to permit, I think, up to 15 percent of the total losses in any given State to be used for the State to develop a mitigation plan to avert such things happening again. And we estimate that you will probably have somewhere in the neighborhood of \$15 million that you can put into mitigation.

And so I would urge you to make maximum use of that, to come up with whatever plans you can to avert this from happening again. And

of course, that would be over and above the work that the Corps of Engineers has now agreed to do. And I think Congressman Kanjorski announced this last night. But I want to emphasize that the Corps has now agreed to move forward with a contract that can be done now that this preliminary agreement has been made, and we can start work on that this year to make sure that the Wyoming Valley will never be subject to a flood like that which came in 1972. And I think that's very important.

And I believe they're prepared to provide some extra protection as well. I know—the Governor and I were talking about the other communities in this area and in the State that were damaged by the flood. I think FEMA has already made available about \$2½ million to local governments and, as you need it, there is more available there to help the local governments try to deal with the problems that they sustained in the flood.

So the main point I want to make to you is, I am grateful to all of you for what you have done, and we will do our part. And the thing that I am determined to do is to see that we stay with you until all the work is done, until you've returned to normal, until you've got everything back the way it ought to be. And we'll stay all the way through.

I've already said more than I meant to. I'd like to spend some time now hearing from the rest of the people around the table if you want to tell me how you think we should do that.

NOTE: The President spoke at noon in the chapel at King's College. In his remarks, he referred to Jim Siracuse, emergency management director, Luzerne County; Gov. Tom Ridge of Pennsylvania; Mayor Thomas McGroarty of Wilkes-Barre; and William Coleman, Deputy Administrator for Federal Procurement Policy, Office of Management and Budget.

Remarks to the Community in Wilkes-Barre

February 16, 1996

The President. Thank you very much.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. Thank you.

Audience member. Hillary, too!

The President. Thank you very much.

I want to begin by saying that Patrick Murphy did not have the easiest job in the world today and that all of his fellow students who stood up and cheered him may have made it a little harder even. [Laughter] But he hung in there, and he did it very well. And he spoke powerfully about this community and his people. I think we ought to give him another hand. [Applause]

Father Lackenmier, I want to congratulate you on the 50th anniversary of King's College. You know the Vice President was in Pennsylvania just a couple of days ago to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first computer, ENIAC, over in Philadelphia. So Pennsylvania now has three 50-year-olds: ENIAC, King's College, and me. When your president said that King's College was 50 and so was I going to be 50 this year, I looked out at all the students, and I thought, it looks a lot better on you than it does on me. [Laughter]

I was delighted to be here today to review the flood damage and hear a progress report with your two United States Senators, with Governor Ridge, with Congressman Holden, who is also here and does a very fine job for his district and Congress, and with Congressman Kanjorski who spoke today so well. I can tell you there aren't very many people in the Congress that are as effective, as persistent, downright nagging—[laughter]—in advancing the interests of the people of their district as Paul Kanjorski. You are very well served. He is always nice, he is always dignified, but he is utterly relentless in your behalf, no matter what the issue is.

And I want to congratulate your young mayor, Mayor McGroarty. It's been a long time since I met a public official with so much energy and enthusiasm. I don't know if he ever sleeps. And if we could bottle whatever it is he has and reproduce it, we wouldn't have to build any power plants in America for 10 years. [Laughter] I think he's got a great future.

I also want to thank all the Federal officials who are here with me and, in particular, the gentleman who is behind me, James Lee Witt, the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, who's been spending more time with you and more time in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho than he has in Washington, DC, in the last several weeks. He is the kind of person, I think, that reflects the very best in our National Government: the true spirit of public service.

And all of the Federal officials here, including the local representatives of all of these agencies, I want to thank them as well. They have enjoyed having the opportunity to work with you in this difficult time.

I'd like to say one more word about Patrick Murphy, because it makes the point I want to make. I'm not going to make fun of him anymore. When this disaster was imminent, he and his brother, J.J., led fellow students to help fill and pile sandbags. A lot of other young people did that as well. Some of the young AmeriCorps volunteers who were introduced, our national service volunteers, also worked on that program. As a lot of you know, the AmeriCorps program is now headed in Washington by your former Senator, Harris Wofford, who also helped to create the Peace Corps. I want to say that we need to find ways to multiply the spirit shown by Patrick Murphy, by the AmeriCorps volunteers, by the students of King's College, if we're going to meet our country's challenges.

A couple of days ago, I was out in Washington State and Oregon viewing the floods there—you may have seen the films—and I went into the home of a 70-year-old man. He and his wife had literally just lost everything they had. He was hard of hearing, and he even lost his hearing aid in the flood; the water washed it away. And I thought to myself, how do you start over when you're 70? I was walking down the street toward this man, and I thought, how will he feel when I come there? And he said to me, "I'm so glad to see you. And I've never met a President before, but maybe it wasn't time. This is the first time I've ever been able to invite a President into a home with an indoor swimming pool." [Laughter]

You know, this is a pretty great country. And the man went on and introduced me to his wife and his two daughters and his granddaughter. And he was raving about how all of his friends and neighbors came to his aid. And they were talking about a man I later met who was a retired utility company employee, a naturalized immigrant from Norway, who had worked 8 hours with a jackhammer—well up in his sixties—with a cracked rib. I don't know if any of you have ever tried to hold a jackhammer in the proper place before, but it isn't easy if you're young, strapping, strong, and you can breathe well.

But I was looking at all these people—we were having this talk, and when I left this man's

home, I said, "I'm really impressed with your sense of humor and the way you and your wife are handling this." He said, "As awful as it is," he said, "it's wonderful. Look at how we're all behaving." He said, "Don't you wish we could be this way all the time?"

So I say to the people of the Wyoming Valley, to all the communities that were hurt so badly, to the people in the rest of Pennsylvania who suffered so greatly, all of the members of the families of people who lost their lives and those who have suffered heartbreaking losses: Our country has been very moved by your spirit and by what you have done. Our country has been very moved by individual examples of courage.

Just a few moments ago, I was meeting in a roundtable with some people who worked in this flood and some of your local officials. I met young Eric Malone, who is behind me, a 19-year-old world champion jet skier who lives just outside Altoona who found out you could run a jet ski in a raging flood and saved a lot of lives as a result and risked his own life. And I thank him for doing that. I asked him if he would give me a ride on his jet ski, but only on a calm lake. [Laughter]

I want to thank Dr. Christopher Breiseth, the president of Wilkes College, who is with us today—[applause]—some of his students are there, I guess—for the difficult work he had to do in evacuating his school. I want to thank Jean Wilde from Mercy Hospital, who evacuated people there. And you know, you always think of a hospital taking people in. Can you imagine the psychological pressure of evacuating a hospital, the one place every community looks to be a pillar of strength and security and hope? I want to thank Jim Siracuse, the Luzerne County Emergency Management Director, who coordinated the evacuation of 100,000 people.

I'll tell you, folks, when something like this happens, because news is instantaneous, I've become just almost like another American. I get most of my information off of breaking television news. And all of America was watching you and pulling for you, and we never knew, I don't think, how serious this was even with all the gushing water we kept seeing until we learned that you had to evacuate 100,000 people. That got America's attention.

There are so many others I would mention if I knew them or if we had the time. I just want to say that I applaud all of you who looked beyond your own needs to help others and to

help people get through this crisis. You have really shown us, as that elderly gentleman in Washington said, that America can rise to its challenges and show its best self. And I thank you for that.

I do want to say something to all the people in Pennsylvania who tried to be good friends and good neighbors to those who suffered losses. Mr. Witt and I worked together for years in Arkansas, where I was the Governor. We saw whole little communities buried in floods. We've rescued people off the roofs of their house. We have a State with the highest per capita incidents of tornadoes in the country. I have seen whole communities decked by tornadoes. I have seen wind blowing so hard that literally thin sheets of paper were going so strong they pierced the bark of trees. I've seen trucks in the tops of trees and houses moved half a block off their foundations with the foundations apparently untouched. And of course, I have seen a lot of people who lost everything. And I would just say this: For all the wonderful things you have done, it's important to remember that the people who really sustained great losses were more or less in shock for the first several days after it occurred. And a lot of the most difficult times will come now and maybe even a week or two or a month from now.

So I ask you to remember that, because this is something the Federal Government can't do, that one-on-one personal commitment it takes to get people all the way through a tragedy. I will say this: I know that the work of rebuilding and repairing this State is not over when the flood waters go down or when the emergencies have passed. And I do want to assure you that we will do everything we can to continue to do our part until this State and all its communities are completely rebuilt. I know that about 32,000 people registered for help through FEMA at the 800 number or one of our disaster centers, that we've had over 19,000 home inspections already, that more than \$23 million in payments have been applied for and dispensed through the disaster housing program.

I want to compliment Denise Ginger, who is also up on the stage with me. She was at our roundtable, and she got her check within 2 days of her home inspection. And there it was, and she wasn't sure what it was for, because there it was 2 days later. And she was such an honorable person she would not cash that Government check until she made abso-

lutely sure what it was for. I told her if we had a million more Americans like her, we wouldn't have any problems in this country. And I thank her. Stand up there. Thank you. [Applause]

We have approved more than 600 small business loans worth about \$10½ million to help small businesses and individual homeowners and renters and nonprofit organizations and some not-so-small businesses as well. The Department of Transportation has now committed over \$20 million. I told the mayor today that we were going to give him \$400,000 to fix that canal along Parkin Street where I was to make sure that it doesn't break again and that it is still protection against the floods.

We are going to keep working with you until this job is finished. That's what we did in working with Florida and California and the States along the Mississippi River. And we want to do what Congressman Kanjorski says; we want to prevent these problems from coming again.

In 1993, in the wake of those horrible floods, those 500-year floods in the Middle West, the Congress passed legislation that I strongly supported to enable us to take up to 15 percent of the value of the disaster payments to the State when something like this happens, to be spent on mitigation to try to protect people against it recurring. I said today I was very encouraged by my conversations with the Governor. When we get a Pennsylvania State plan, we will look forward to putting that money in here, and we want to see people protected from having to go through this again. So far as we can, we will work with you until that job is done as well.

I'd like to close with a few words that refer to some of the things the president of this college talked about in his opening remarks. If you look at what happens in this flood, you know that when our country works together, we never lose. If you ask me what is the lesson that you have learned most clearly in the last 3 years and a few weeks as President, I would have to tell you that that is the lesson I have learned. The era of big Government is fading. We now have the smallest Federal Government we've had in 30 years.

All big organizations are going through changes. We see that everywhere. It's part of the information and technology revolution that's going on. We don't need large, big, centralized bureaucracies to solve grassroots problems or

to perform big, national functions; we know that. But that does not mean that we can go back to a time in America where people were simply left to fend for themselves.

One of the great and enduring contributions of the Catholic Church to this country are the Catholic charities and the mission you see in every Catholic college and university in this country of service, of understanding that we are all stronger when we help each other to live up to our God-given capacities. And that is something every American must remember as we move into this new age.

We are working to balance the budget in Washington. We should do that. We never ran a permanent deficit in this country just all the time until about the early eighties. We've cut the deficit in half in the last 3 years, and we ought to finish the job. But we ought to do it consistent with our values, which include our responsibilities to each other, to our parents, to our children, to families who have disabled children. That's what we ought to do.

If you look at the challenges that I tried to set before our Nation for the future in the State of the Union Address, in every single instance, there is something for everyone to do, including your Government; it should be smaller, but it should not be weak. When the floods come, you don't want FEMA and the Small Business Administration and the Department of Transportation to be weak. When we argue to open markets so our people can get a fair deal in selling their goods and services abroad, you don't want a trade program that is weak.

And when people tell you that Government is inherently no good, just remember this: In the last 30 years, we have spent one-half of your money, one-half of the taxes that you've paid to the Federal Government on three things: national defense, Social Security, and Medicare. What did you get for that? We won the cold war; the poverty rate among elderly people was cut in half; and if you live to be 65 and you start drawing Medicare in America, elderly people have the longest life expectancy of any group of elderly people in the entire world. I think we got our money's worth.

Part of my college education was paid for by a national defense education loan. I was proud to pay it back on time with interest, but I was proud to get it, too. I think America was better off because people in my generation were able to get help to go to college. And

these young people today live in a time when the percentage of a family's income, a middle-class family's income, required to finance a college education is far greater than it was when my generation went to college.

So I say to you, we should invest in scholarships for children who need it. We should invest in the college loan program. We should do that. I have sent a budget to the Congress consistent with the balanced budget plan that will let a million young people engage in work-study programs so they can help to work themselves through college and that would give our families a tax deduction for the cost of college tuition up to \$10,000 a year. I think that's the kind of thing we ought to have.

So I ask you to think about these challenges that we face. How are we going to build stronger families and give every child a childhood? How are we going to guarantee quality education to all Americans? How are we going to declare or develop a system for economic security for working families?

You know, this is an amazing economy we have. We have more new businesses started every year than ever before. The last 3 years, every year broke a record. We have more new self-made millionaires than ever before; not people who gave them anything, people who used the opportunities of this age. But we also have more than half of our wage earners working harder without ever getting a raise. And we have in a lot of big companies people who got downsized in these corporations who now don't know what they're supposed to do, and we have to find things for them to do.

So what we have to do is to find a way consistent with our values to keep the economy going, to keep creating more jobs, but to do it in a way that enables every American working family to benefit from that, consistent with our values. And we know if we grow together that we'll all be better off.

If everybody has a chance, we're all better off. That's the kind of thing I want you to think about. Every single challenge, you have to ask yourself: What should I be doing about that; what should my community be doing about that; can my church, can my synagogue do something about that; should my State do something about that; should my Nation do something about that, whether it's a challenge for more jobs or safer streets or a cleaner environment or working to keep the world more peaceful and secure for

our children and their future? We have to do everything we can to work together. And I'm doing what I can to see that this Government continues on its course of reform and does more every day to earn your trust and respect.

But I just want to say this: Did you ever notice how there are no cynics in a flood, there are no cynics in a tornado, there are never any cynics in a natural disaster? Why? Cynicism is a luxury you cannot afford when you have work to do. One of the things I want to say to you is that these young people and their enthusiasm today, and those four young people doing their service through AmeriCorps, that's what makes this country great, the spirit of people like this young man. He could have said, "I'm 19 years old. I've got 60, 70 years to live. I like riding my jet ski and winning prizes. Why should I risk my neck putting that jet ski in a raging river?" He could have stayed home, and no one would have ever known the difference—no one.

That is the way we ought to live every day. It really bothers me when I hear people say, well, they don't believe in our country, and we can't make progress, and everything's not going to get better, and none of these people we put in office are any good. That's a bunch of bull. And it's a lousy excuse for inaction. It's a lousy excuse for inaction.

Just remember something. I have one opportunity that none of you can ever have unless you get to be President, and it has nothing to do with me. Whenever I leave the borders of the United States of America and I go to other countries and I see people cheering, they are not cheering for Bill Clinton, they are not even cheering for the President, they are cheering for America.

I cannot possibly convey—I don't have the words to tell you what it feels like to represent all of you and to be the country in the eyes of people from other lands. But I can tell you this: They know we're a pretty great place. John Kennedy said once, in the middle of the cold war, that freedom has many difficulties and our country was far from perfect, but we never had to put up a wall to keep our people in. And I want all of you to remember that.

I believe that the young people at this college are facing the greatest future, the greatest age of possibility our country has ever known. But every one of us knows that we have enormous challenges. There are a lot of people fulfilling their dreams, but we have to make the Amer-

ican dream available to everybody willing to work for it. There are a lot of people who are doing well, but there are still things that are dividing our people when we ought to be pulling together and being united.

And when you are tempted to give up on your country or to give up on yourself or to give up on your community or to give up on some problem you're facing in your family, remember this flood. And remember how people just showed up and did what they were supposed to do. Remember how courage seemed

ordinary and how cynicism was a luxury nobody could afford. And if you can recapture that, then your community, your State, and your Nation will have a future that is better than anything that has happened so far.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:30 p.m. in the gymnasium at King's College. In his remarks, he referred to Patrick Murphy, student government president, and Rev. James Lackenmier, president, King's College.

The President's Radio Address

February 17, 1996

Good morning. Today I want to talk about what we need to do in Washington to make our democracy work better for all Americans so that we can meet our challenges together and take advantage of the enormous possibilities of our future.

In my State of the Union Address, I outlined seven challenges we face as we move into the future, challenges we must meet if we are to keep the American dream alive for all our people and unite our country around our shared values.

The first six challenges are challenges we all face together: strengthening our families and giving all children a good childhood; providing better educational opportunities for all Americans; enhancing the economic security of all our working families through greater access to health care, secure pensions, lifetime education, and more good jobs; fighting crime and gangs and drugs so that all Americans can feel safe again, so that crime is the exception, not the rule; protecting our environment; maintaining our world leadership for peace and freedom. These challenges we must meet together as partners. The seventh challenge is really America's challenge to all of us in public service. It is a challenge to continue to reinvent our Government so that it works better and costs less, and to make our democracy work better for the American people by limiting the influence of special interests and expanding the influence of our people.

Today I'm in New Hampshire, where citizens will exercise their responsibility as voters in the first primary of the year on Tuesday. It's no secret that even here in New Hampshire, with its proud tradition of town meetings and studied debate over the issues, people want all of us in politics to clean up our act. The fact is, organized interests have too much power in the halls of Government. These influence groups too often promote their own interest at the expense of the public interest. Too often they operate in secret. Too often they have special privileges ordinary Americans don't even know exist. And elections, where ordinary voters should have the loudest voice, have become so expensive that big money can sometimes drown those voices out.

Yet we have made progress in the last 3 years. Shortly after I took office, I implemented the toughest ethics code on executive officials in our history. Senior appointees are barred from lobbying their own agencies for 5 years after they leave, and they can never lobby for foreign governments. In 1993 we repealed the tax loophole that lets lobbyists deduct the cost of their activities. And early last year, Congress finally passed a law that applies to Congress the laws they impose on the private sector.

Last June I met with Speaker Gingrich in Claremont, New Hampshire, for a town meeting. The very first question we took was from Frank McConnell, a retired steelworker, who wanted us to launch a bipartisan effort to clean up politics and curb the power of special inter-