

Abortion

Q. Mr. President, Republicans right now are going through a wrenching abortion debate. At the same time, pro-choice advocates have created the pro-choice public education project, they're calling it. They say abortion rights are under a very grave danger. Would you agree with that assessment? And what do you think of the Republicans' troubles?

The President. Well, they are only under grave danger if the election results in a change in the occupant of the White House. But what I think about the—I'd like to just compare it with what we did in the Democratic Party. Some of our pro-life members asked for a conscience clause in the Democratic platform. And I thought it was a good idea; I recommended it. The platform committee unanimously embraced it. And the Democratic Party was proud to do it. We believe this is a matter which should be left to private conscience. And we believe that people who have pro-life convictions should be respected.

What you see here in the Republican Party is more of the extremism that we saw manifested in their budget proposals, their environmental proposals, their opposition to sensible crime proposals in the previous 2 years. And it's lamentable. It's not good for the country. And I would just say that in this convention season, we would welcome thoughtful, mod-

erate, concerned Republicans, independents, to join our party this year and to help keep moving America forward and bringing America together.

Q. You do not feel the rights are under grave danger at this point?

The President. Well, right now we have a Supreme Court decision and an administration committed to the pro-choice position and committing to doing whatever we can to keep the Government out of that decision but to take initiatives that would reduce the number of abortions in America, including the recent tax credit for adoption that we strongly supported that will be part of the minimum wage bill when it comes to me for signature. So I'm determined to protect those rights and to keep the Government out of it. But it is fair to say that in this election that is one of the matters at issue. Yes, it is fair to say that.

Thank you.

President's Olympic Tie

Q. Where did you get that tie?

The President. It's an Olympic tie. I got it down at the Olympics. Do you want to trade? [*Laughter*]

Thanks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:15 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House, prior to his departure for San Jose, CA.

Remarks in San Jose, California
August 7, 1996

Thank you. Thank you so much. First of all, I think we ought to give David Aupperle another hand. I thought he did very well, didn't you? [*Applause*] When he said he gave his eighth-grade graduation speech just a few feet from here and the only difference was I wasn't there then, I thought to myself, if I'd known you were this good a speaker, I might have been there. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank Glen Toney for being here today and for his work for Joint Venture Silicon Valley. It's good to see you again, Glen. Larry Kubo, thank you for what you said, for your work as a parent and as a business leader. Carol

Summers, thank you for your remarks today and for devoting your life to teaching.

I'm delighted to be here with so many of my friends from Silicon Valley and throughout California. I thank Lieutenant Governor Gray Davis and Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren for being here, and Mayor Susan Hammer, thank you. I know there are a lot of people here from the school and the school district: your principal, Mike Carr; your superintendent, Linda Murray; Dr. Bill Erlendson; and Victor Freitas, the board president of San Jose Unified School District. Thank you for being here. We also have Joe Simidian, who is from Palo Alto, a Palo Alto City Council member. [*Applause*]

Somebody must be here from Palo Alto besides Joe.

I want to thank the students who spoke in the pre-program, Sarah Sandower and Marianna Dominguez. Thank you for doing that.

I want to tell you, it's wonderful to look out here and see a crowd like this during summer vacation in a school. [Laughter] And I thank the students especially for being here; it shows you really are concerned about your future. And it's a great honor for me as President to be here and to hear a little about this program.

I'd like to explain to you why I'm here at this moment to talk about this issue. First, and maybe most important, I hope that my presence here will give your efforts greater publicity throughout the United States, because I believe this is the sort of thing that school districts all over America should be doing to give our children the kind of opportunities they need.

Secondly, I want to explain why that is so, and I'd like to take just a few minutes—I know it's warm, and I nearly went blind in the sun; I can only imagine how much trouble you're having—but I want to take a few minutes to explain why that is so, what the national significance of efforts like this are at the grassroots level, at local schools throughout our country in terms of what I am trying to achieve for America as your President.

First of all, let me say that I started off today in a very happy way. Hillary and our daughter, Chelsea, and I were able to welcome the United States Olympic team to the White House to congratulate them on their remarkable accomplishments. I think in many ways, at least from my point of view—and I realize I'm prejudiced, being an American and being the President—but these were the greatest games that I have ever seen because of the quality of the competition, because of the numbers of nations involved—people from 197 different countries were there—because so many people were able to watch around the world, and because there were more people who actually came and personally participated in Atlanta. There were 77,000 people watching the women's soccer final, for example, a remarkable thing in the United States.

And I was thinking to myself, why is it that we love the Olympics so much, apart from the thrill of seeing these magnificent athletic achievements. And I think the reason is that they work the way we think the world ought

to work. That is, you have all these people who come from all over the world, from different races and cultures and religions and ethnic and tribal backgrounds, with all kind of differences. Very often their countries are fighting or at least not getting along very well. And they come together in mutual respect, which often grows into genuine admiration and affection because they play by the rules of the game and they honor each other and because nobody gets ahead by breaking somebody else's bones or bad-mouthing someone else in a public forum. You only get ahead by reaching down inside and doing well, individually and as a team. And I think that's the way we think the world ought to work.

I was also terribly impressed by the way the athletes, the coaches, and the fans, all the spectators, responded to the terrible bombing incident. They all showed up the next day and said, "We hate that this happened, but we're going on with our lives. We're not going to be terrorized by fear. We're not going to be covered into walking away from the Olympics because of a terrible act of terror and violence."

And so we feel good about that. But we want the world to work more that way. Keep in mind, one of the reasons it works that way is that all those people really were prepared to do what they did. And they didn't all win medals, but they all won because they sacrificed, they worked, they performed to the best of their ability, they had a fair chance and they were better for the effort. And that's what we want for all Americans.

Really, it applies more to America than any other nation in the world. Your largest county in California, for example, Los Angeles County, has people living in it from over 150 of the 197 groups that were represented at the Olympics. That's a stunning thing. No other country can say that. When Hillary and Chelsea and I went down to meet with the Olympic team before the games started, I looked out in that team and I said, "You know, this is amazing. If you all broke up and just started walking in the Olympic Village, no one would know where you were from. You could be from Scandinavia or Africa, from Latin America or the Middle East, from India or Pakistan or the Asian-Pacific region. No one would have a clue where you're from. You're bound together not because of your race but because you're Americans."

And that is a very important thing to understand at this moment. We're moving into this explosive information age that Silicon Valley has done so much to create, in a global village after the cold war, where no nation on Earth is as well prepared as the United States to reap the rewards of the 21st century, if we will simply determine that we are going to create opportunity for every person who is responsible enough to work for it and that we're going to grow together instead of allow ourselves to be torn apart by the differences in this country. If we decide we're going forward together and everybody is going to have a chance, we're going to do fine.

That's what I want to talk about today in terms of education. I devoted a great deal of time the last 3½ years to trying to get the economy going again. We cut the deficit, increased investment. We've got record numbers of new small businesses and exports, a lot of it coming out of this area. We have a record number of new businesses owned by women and minorities. We have almost 4½ million new homeowners in America, and we've got 10 million Americans who refinanced their homes at lower mortgage rates because we've been able to drive the interest rates down. And the economy has produced 10¼ million new jobs. And that is good news for the United States.

But I think we also have to recognize that not everybody has yet benefited from that economic improvement, and those who have not principally have not either because they live in areas where there's been no new investment or because they themselves do not have the education and skills they need to prosper in a world in which education is rewarded and the lack of it is punished.

It is one thing to say, well, everybody has got an opportunity who wants it, but an opportunity only exists if you're capable of taking advantage of it. The first time I ever heard this expressed was when I was a student myself about David's age, when I read the great French writer Anatole France say that the poor and rich are equally free to sleep under the bridge at night and beg for bread. And it's obvious what he meant. He might have said it another way: The poor and rich are equally free to walk into the nearest Mercedes dealership and buy the most expensive car. That is, there is a difference in saying you have a right to do something and the reality being there. Education

closes the gap in America between opportunity and the reality of being able to access it.

In his book "The Road Ahead," Bill Gates says that the microchip is the greatest advancement in human communications in 500 years, since Gutenberg printed the first Bible in Europe—in 500 years. The young people in this audience today within 10 years will be doing jobs that have not been invented yet. Some of you will be doing jobs that have not been imagined yet.

This morning I had the privilege of making a few comments about the United States space program, which I have strongly supported. And you may have seen the news reports that two of our NASA scientists discovered way back in 1984 a piece of rock which they believe was blasted off Mars by meteors millions of years ago and took 16 million years to find its way to Earth. The rock is about so big. But they have analyzed it and concluded that it is about 4 billion years old. At the time, Earth and Mars were very similar in their composition and makeup, and they believe they have found evidence of a petrified microorganism, or an elemental form of life.

Now, no one knows for sure whether this is so or not, and this finding will have to be subject to rigorous review by their peers in the scientific community. But on the 15th of this month you can read all about it in Science magazine, if you want to get a copy of it. But just think of that. Think what that could mean. We're sending two more robotic missions to Mars later this year as part of a renewed emphasis on our exploration of Mars that we have been working on for about 3 years. One leaves in November; the other leaves in December. I should tell you, for those of you who are interested in life in outer space, that the one that leaves in November will land on July 4th, 1997, Independence Day. [*Laughter*]

Now, we can laugh about this, but what it says is that there is a fair chance that if we can nurture scientific interest and capacity in our young people, that they will be able to do work and discover things that we have not imagined yet. And it means also that we have a heavy responsibility to make sure that no child is denied that opportunity because they happen to be poor or they happen to be born in an area that hasn't had a lot of economic opportunity or they happen to be a member of a racial minority or they happen to be otherwise

left behind, because we don't have a person to waste. This is a highly competitive world and it runs on people power, and we need all the people we can get. The motto of this school district, "All students can learn, all students can succeed," is very important. That's what you're here to celebrate today. Believe it or not, not everyone believes that. A lot of people don't believe that. But everybody should believe that. And this joint venture can prove that motto true.

If I have learned anything in the years I served as a Governor and the years I've been your President, it is that people are capable of extraordinary things if there are high expectations of them and if they have high expectations of themselves. Education begins with high expectations, high standards, high levels of accountability, empowering teachers and principals and parents and students, and then with community involvement. The riches, the vast resources, the intellectual resources of this community are a treasure that you have decided to share with this school district, and it is a very great thing.

We are trying to do more of that everywhere. Just last September the Vice President and I announced that we wanted to challenge California's schools to lead America in hooking our classrooms up to the Internet. And then we came back a few months later, in March, on NetDay, to work with 20,000 California citizens to hook up over 20 percent of the classrooms in the State in one day. This idea is now spreading like wildfire across the country.

We tried to support it, and like all technological change, it outran our capacity to support. They didn't need our support after a while in a lot of places. People saw that it was going on. They wanted to do it, and they copied it. And it's a wonderful thing. Our national goal is to have every classroom and every library in America hooked up to the information superhighway by the year 2000—every single one. And we can do it.

But we also know that if we want to do it right, it's not simply a matter of hooking up to the Internet. You have to have enough hardware. You have to have high-quality software, and you must have very well-trained teachers and people in the community who can understand how to maximize the use of this in the educational process. We have put aside \$2 billion to help States achieve these goals.

The telecommunications law that I signed will create hundreds of thousands of jobs in telecommunications, a lot of them right here in California. It will also guarantee equal access to people to the technology of the future, whether they live in Silicon Valley or the remotest rural areas of the Appalachians, the Ozarks, or the high plains. And that is also very, very important.

I signed an Executive order saying that we were going to do a lot more to get computers no longer needed by the Federal Government out into America's classrooms, and that project is now being supervised by a man who came from Silicon Valley to join the administration, David Barram, the head of the General Services Administration. He's doing a terrific job, and I want all of you to know that.

This summer we've got a group of—a kind of a joint venture, like what you do here—a kind of national parent and teacher and school board and teacher organizations who are mobilizing 100,000 teachers to teach 500,000 more teachers how to use technology for educational purposes. We do not have enough teachers who can even keep up with their students in high technology now in many places to do the job that needs to be done. So training the teachers is a very, very important part of this.

But in the end it all comes down to the magic of what goes on in the classroom and what goes on in the school and what goes on in the community and what goes on in the home. And that's why I wanted to come here. I want every person in the country to understand that we can do all these national initiatives, but unless we have true joint ventures like the one you have here in Silicon Valley, we will never maximize opportunities for our children. And you have assets here a lot of communities don't have, but every community has assets that can be brought to bear for positive educational impact and high technology learning in the classrooms of every community in America. And I hope everybody will follow the lead you have established here.

I want to thank all of your partners, the San Jose State University College of Engineering. I want to thank all those who work in the other school districts in the area. I want to thank IBM for investing \$2 million in the San Jose school district for the development of a new curriculum to help teachers get the training they need.

And I want to tell you, too, that, believe it or not—and I think you do—the truth of your motto “All children can learn” applies everywhere. I’ll tell you about a school district that I visited that’s not in Silicon Valley but in the city of Union City, New Jersey. It’s a community, not a very large community, in New Jersey, one of our most heavily urbanized States. New Jersey has the second highest per capita income in America, but Union City is one of the poorest school districts in New Jersey, with a very, very high immigrant population. Just a couple of years ago they had a dropout rate that was way above the State average and test scores that were way below the State average in a State that has a lot of school districts like the ones in Silicon Valley.

But the teachers and the students and the parents decided that they were not going to let their school district go down. It was so bad that under New Jersey law the State was about to declare it bankrupt and take it over and start running it. But the first-generation immigrant parents knew they could do better. With the help of their joint venture partner, Bell Atlantic, who went in and put computers in the classrooms and even in the homes of a lot of first-generation immigrant parents, who had difficulty speaking English but could learn to use computers, they developed the capacity of parents who were working all day to E-mail their kids’ teachers and their principals and get student reports, get the homework assignments, and get involved in their classrooms.

People that hardly had a high school education were being trained to use computers at least to the point where they could be good parents. And the children were able to access a lot of the science programs and other things that were then available only to the wealthiest school districts. And the good news is, 2½ years later, that immigrant American school district has a dropout rate below and test scores above the average in the second wealthiest State in the United States. We can do this, folks. If more people will follow your lead, we can do this. We can do this.

So I will say again, we all love the Olympics, and we know the American way of life ought

to be more like that every day. Every one of those kids had a chance to prepare to do what they were doing. Every one of them worked hard, they were immensely responsible, but they were also given a chance to live out their dreams.

The 21st century will give more people more chances to live out their dreams than any time in human history. If we use technology wisely it will be able to lift more people out of poverty more quickly than we have ever been able to do. But technology is not inherently good or bad. You can get on the Internet and learn how to make the bomb that blew up the Federal building in Oklahoma City. There are terrible things you can learn with technology, and technology can be abused. A major portion of my time as your President is spent trying to contain the spread of technologically advanced weapons of mass destruction—biological, chemical, and conventional weapons.

I know we have to do these things, but technology can be the greatest force for good we have ever known if it is properly applied. You are doing that here, with people power, with basic human concern, and with a fundamental belief in the capacity of your children to learn and grow and have good lives, and to do it together, across the lines that divide us all too often. That is what we want for America. We must do our part in Washington, but you—you—you make all the difference here. And I want everyone in America to see what you’re doing and to say, if they can do it we can, too.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:40 p.m. at the John Muir Middle School. In his remarks, he referred to David Aupperle, student who introduced the President; Glen Toney, vice president for corporate affairs, Applied Materials; Larry Kubo, director of business development, Xyratex; Carol Summers, a teacher at John Muir Middle School; and William J. Erlendson, director of external programs and community development, San Jose Unified School District. The Executive order on educational technology of April 17, 1996, was published in the *Federal Register* at 61 FR 17227.