

as President, we have worked hard to give 26 States, including Michigan, the opportunity to put employers and educators together to build a seamless web of people moving from school to work in the high-wage, high-skilled jobs that can earn them good incomes.

This is school-to-work week in America. And today, there are 500,000 students and 105,000 employers and 1,800 schools, including both John Glenn and William Ford schools, that have embraced the school-to-work opportunities our Nation now offers. We have to keep going until every school system in America and every student in America has the opportunities I saw your people having today. They deserve it, and it will build our economy.

Brian Duka has a bright future today because of the education he received here and because of the work he's doing now. And we have to blend education and work for a lifetime. One of the most important proposals I had that I regret this Congress didn't pass that I hope the next one will is to take all these little training programs the Government has and take all the money and put it in a big block, and when someone is unemployed or underemployed, if they're qualified for Federal training help, send them a check for \$2,500 and say, "You know where the nearest good training program is. Take your money there, get the training, find yourself a job so that if you lose your job, you can get a better one instead of a worse one."

If we do that for everybody—give everybody a "GI bill," a skills grant that will give them a chance to move from job to job by going up, not going down—we will strengthen America's families and strengthen America's economy. Education is for everyone of every age who needs it, and we have to give them that.

My friends, in 7 weeks from today, you'll get to make a decision about whether to build a bridge to the future or a bridge to the past, about whether you believe we're all in this together or to use my wife's term, it takes a village, or whether you think we're on our own. This country always, always, always wins when we put down the things that divide us, when we stop fighting, when we stop being small and we think big and we work together.

We have got to build a bridge to the 21st century that every single American can walk across. There is no nation as well-positioned for that century as we are. And all of our diversity—I look out in this crowd today, there are people here today from—I can see at least seven different ethnic groups just looking out here and I'll bet many more. That is a strength for the United States. There is no country as well-positioned as we are for this global economy if we will lay the foundation, and it starts with building that bridge on the finest educational system in the world.

Thank you, and God bless you all. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:36 p.m. on the athletic field at John Glenn High School. In his remarks, he referred to Brian Duka, former student, and Bill Richardson, principal, William D. Ford Career Technical Center; former Representative William D. Ford; Dwayne H. Moore, superintendent, and Gregory J. Baracy, assistant superintendent for general administration, Wayne-Westland Community Schools; Neil Thomas, principal, John Glenn High School; Edward H. McNamara, Wayne County executive; Mayor Robert J. Thomas of Westland; and State Representatives Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick and Eileen DeHart.

Remarks in Flossmoor, Illinois September 17, 1996

The President. I don't know how we could arrange it with the school's schedule, but I'd like to take the band and the cheerleaders with me for the rest of the campaign. Sort of rev up the crowd.

Superintendent Murray, Dr. Moriarty, Board of Education President Blackstone, to the other

distinguished school officials and teachers who are here. Let me say when I got off the airplane today at the Air National Guard terminal in Chicago, I was met by the colonel there, who said, "It's a really wonderful school that you're going to visit." And he said, "I want you to have this flag pin and these bubble gum cards

that those kids made for children in Bosnia. I want you to know what kind of a special place H-F is." So you've got a lot of fans out there that you don't even know about, and I wanted to thank you for doing that. I'm honored to be here.

I want to thank Congressman Dick Durbin for being here with me today. I want to thank Sandy Jackson, the wife of your Congressman, Jesse Jackson, Jr., for being here with me today. He's back in Washington.

I want to thank the students from this school who came to the White House in 1993 and '94 to help with our Presidential correspondence and volunteered to help me answer letters in a better way to children all across America. I thank you for doing that. And I want to say again, congratulations on winning that Blue Ribbon school award for the second time. That's a very special honor.

Thank you for bringing out all these signs, and thank you for showing up in such large numbers. There are even people back there over the hill behind the tent. And I hope you can hear me back there, but I'm glad you're here anyway.

You can't imagine how beautiful it was to sit down in the helicopter and to fly down, and we were all guessing how many of you were down here and wondering whether you just really wanted to go take a swim.

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. Maybe it's a little cool for a swim. I cannot tell you—what? It's a biopond? [Laughter] Now, that's a clever thing for me to say.

Let me say to all of you, just a few days ago Hillary and our families, our friends, and our fellow Democrats were here in Chicago for our Democratic Convention. It was—I want to thank the city, the people of the surrounding communities, and the people of the State of Illinois for making us feel so very welcome there. It was a wonderful experience we will never forget. Hillary was home, and by the time it was over, I felt like I was home, too. And I thank you for that.

I want to say to all of you again what I said that night. If I do get 4 more years, I'm going to try to build a bridge to the 21st century that every young person in this audience can walk across together, to live out their dreams and live up to their God-given potential and

make this country what it ought to be for another 100 years.

And I might say two things about that. If you give me 4 more years, I hope you'll send Dick Durbin up there to help me in the United States Senate. And if you follow Brendan Cumisky's advice about the pictures, it wouldn't surprise me to see him with his picture up there running for President someday, based on that introduction.

Folks, I have followed a very simple strategy that I believe is profoundly important for this country. I want us in the next 4 years to set foot in a new century and a new millennium in which we can say that the American dream is alive and well for every person willing to work for it, in which we can say that the United States is still the world's strongest force for peace and freedom and prosperity in the world, and in which we can say, looking around this audience, that we have built an American community that is stronger for our diversity, not being torn apart by it. We're going forward together. We respect each other. And anybody who is willing to work hard and play by the rules has a role in our America, a part in our community, and a place on that bridge we're walking into the future over.

For 4 years we have followed that strategy. And the results are now clear for all to see. Compared to 4 years ago, we have 10½ million new jobs and the lowest unemployment rate in 7 years. We have 4½ million new homeowners. Our massive Government deficit of 4 years ago has been cut by 60 percent, and it's gone down in each of the last 4 years, the first time that has happened in a Presidential administration since the 1840's, before the Civil War. I'm proud of that, and our country is stronger because of it.

On October 1st 10 million hard-working Americans will get an increase in their pay when the minimum wage goes up. I'm proud of that. Twenty-five million Americans have been made more secure in their health care because we passed a law that says you cannot lose your health insurance just because somebody in your family has been sick or just because you have to change jobs. You still have a right to keep it, and people have to offer you insurance coverage. And that's very important in this country.

We made every small business in this country eligible for a tax cut for their health insurance or if they invest more in their business to hire

more people, to become more productive, to grow the economy more. And that is very important because most new jobs and most of the jobs the young people have here today will come in small businesses.

The crime rate has gone down for 4 years in a row, and today we learned that violent crime is down 9 percent this year over last. That means there are one million fewer crime victims this year than there were a year ago. And that's good news for America.

Compared to 4 years ago, there are 1.8 million fewer people on welfare, and child support collections are up 40 percent. Compared to 4 years ago, we have safer drinking water, cleaner air, food protected by better standards, more toxic waste dumps have been cleaned up. Our environment is also moving on the right track to the 21st century.

Now, I have to tell you that in this election season one thing I hope all of you will do as Americans, whether you're Democrats, Republicans, or independents, is to recognize that the progress that has been made is not the progress of the President alone. Just as it takes a community to build a school, it takes a community and a country to move all of us forward. But we did change one important thing in Washington. We changed it from hot air to heavy-duty action, from asking who's to blame to asking what are we going to do about it, to moving away from insults to new ideas about America's future. And that's what I want to do for the next 7 weeks. I want you to help me build a bridge to the future by debating the real course before us in positive, affirmative, energetic terms.

That bridge I want to build to the 21st century has a lot of parts to it. We need to build a bridge that keeps this economy growing. That means we need to go on and balance the budget. It means we need to have the right kind of tax cuts, targeted tax cuts we can afford to help families pay for childrearing and education and buying their first home and dealing with medical costs and selling their homes. People shouldn't have to pay taxes when they sell their homes. We can afford that sort of tax cut and still balance the budget.

We dare not have tax cuts that we can't pay for. I will not promise you in the heat of an election to cut a tax unless I know we can still balance the budget without hurting our investments in education, the environment, tech-

nology, research, Medicare, and Medicaid. We've got to protect all the American people and go forward together.

We have to build a bridge to the future in which we make it easier for people to deal with the demands that come from raising children and working. I don't know how many people I have talked to in the last 5 years, all across our country, who told me one story or another about the conflict their families have faced between keeping the family together, taking care of the kids, and doing what's required at work. That's why I fought for the family and medical leave law. Twelve million American families have been able to take a little time off from work when a baby is born or a parent is sick without losing their jobs, and our country is stronger because of that law.

And here at H-F high school, let me say that I'd like to see that law amended just a little bit to say you can also take a little time off to go to a regular doctor's appointment with your child or a regular parent-teacher conference without losing your job, because that's important to building strong families and building a brighter future for America.

I'm going to work in the next 4 years to make some more progress on health care, to help people keep their health care when they're between jobs. I want to help to make more progress on retirement. We have worked hard for people in small businesses to be able to take out retirement plans and keep them when they move from job to job. And I made another announcement about that today. I think that's terribly important. It's part of helping people succeed at home and at work.

I want to do whatever I can to help us build a bridge to the 21st century where everybody has a chance to be a responsible citizen. We've moved 1.8 million people off welfare, but there are still a lot of able-bodied people on welfare who would like to go to work. I signed a welfare reform bill that says we'll keep giving poor families medical care and food and child care if they go to work, but now, if we can find a job, they have to take it. I'm going to challenge every city, every community in this country to give those people the jobs. You don't want to put the children in the street; you want to put the parents to work. This should be a positive, good thing to create a million jobs in America.

I want to build a bridge to the 21st century where we bring the crime rate down not for

4 years in a row but for 8 years in a row. That means we have to finish the job of putting 100,000 police on the street. It means that we were right to pass the Brady bill, which has kept 60,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers from getting handguns. And I believe we ought to expand the Brady bill to say that someone who beats up their spouse or their child should not get a handgun either. I don't think that's right.

I believe we ought to ban cop-killer bullets. I don't understand why we have not done that. I can tell you, I grew up in the woods. I've seen people hunting, and I've hunted nearly all my life. I have never seen a deer in a bullet-proof vest. We ought to ban those cop-killer bullets. The police put their lives on the line for us; we ought to protect them.

I want to build a bridge to the 21st century where we take care of our environment. And there are so many things I could mention, but since I made my little faux pas here, let me just give you one. Ten million—I want you to listen to this—10 million American children—10 million still live within 4 miles of a toxic waste site. Now, in the last 3 years, we have cleaned up more of those sites than were cleaned up by our country in the previous 12 years before I took office. But there are still hundreds of them out there. One of the things I want to do to build that bridge is to take the 500 worst, the two-thirds of those that are left, and clean up 500 in the next 4 years so that we can say our children are growing up next to parks, not poison. That's a part of our bridge to the 21st century as well.

But most important of all, we have to build a bridge to the 21st century with the best education system in the world for every single American person, every child. And I believe there are three or four very important things we have to do. Do you know that 40 percent of the 8-year-olds in this country can still not read independently? I want to mobilize an army of reading tutors and specialists to work with our teachers and work at home with parents so that over the next 4 years any 8-year-old in America will be able to pick up a book and smile and say, "I can read this all by myself." That is a worthy goal, and we can achieve it if we work for it.

I want to make sure that every classroom in America not only has computers and teachers trained to work with the students in how to use them but is also hooked up to the informa-

tion superhighway, to the Internet, to the World Wide Web. Now, if you don't know a lot about computers—and I don't—if you're like me, that may not mean much to you. So let me tell you what it means in plain language. If we hook up every classroom in America to the information superhighway, what it means is that for the first time in the history of the United States, for the first time in our entire history, every student in every school, rich or poor, urban, rural, or suburban, of whatever background, will have access to the same knowledge in the same time at the same level of quality in the same way as every other student. It has never happened in the history of the country. We can do that for America if we do it.

And the last thing I want to say, as you heard Congressman Durbin say that he and I worked our way through schools, and we had student loans. And we were proud to get them and proud to pay them back. And I'm grateful that my country gave me a chance to borrow the money to go to school, to become a more productive student, and to pay it back. One of the first things that I worked to do when I became President was to improve the student loan program so that we could lower the cost and tell our young people, "You will always have the option of paying that loan as a percentage of your income. We're going to change the repayment so that you will not go bankrupt even if you have a huge debt, because you can't be charged more in any year than a certain percentage of your income." Over a million students in Illinois alone are eligible for that loan program today, and I'm proud of that.

Fifty thousand young Americans can now work their way through college by serving in their communities because of the AmeriCorps program, and I'm proud of that. But I want to do more. I want to do some things that literally will revolutionize opportunity in America. And let me just mention three of them.

Number one, I want us to make at least 2 years of college just as universal as the high school diploma is now by the year 2000. Will you help me do that? [Applause] That is not hard to do.

Here's how we can do that. If we give American families a tax credit, a dollar-for-dollar reduction of their taxes, for the cost of tuition at the typical community college in America, then we can literally say, "If you'll go, make good grades, work hard, you can take the money

for the tuition off your taxes, and everybody can get at least 2 years of education after high school.” Will you help me build that kind of bridge to the 21st century? [Applause]

The second thing I want to do is to say that we ought to have a deduction for the cost of college tuition up to \$10,000 a year for any college cost—4 years of undergraduate, graduate, you name it—for kids or adults no matter what age. That will help us build a stronger country. Will you help me build that bridge to the 21st century? [Applause]

And finally, we propose to make more Americans—American families with family incomes of up to \$100,000 eligible to save through IRA’s, and then let families withdraw from those IRA’s to pay the cost of college or a health emergency or for a first-time home downpayment without any tax penalty, so that people can do more to save for their own college. If you save the money without tax payments and you can get a deduction for investing it, we will literally never tax the money people save for their own college education or their children’s college education. It would be the best investment this country ever made. And we can do it and still balance the budget in the right way. Will you help me do that? [Applause]

Folks, I look at this community, I look at this school, I remember everything I’ve read about it. I saw that Air Force colonel bragging on you. I know you sent student volunteers to work in the White House. I think of all the things you have done and built here, and it looks to me like a pretty good picture of what America ought to be like as we start the 21st century.

And I say to you that 7 weeks from today the American people will elect the last President of the 20th century and the first President of the 21st century. But far more important, the American people will decide whether we’re going to be a country that says, “It takes a village to raise a child and a community to build a school,” or “You’re on your own,” whether we’re going to be a country that says, “We should try to build a bridge to a distant past,” or “No, thank you, we’re going to build a bridge to a bright new future.”

If you want to build a bridge to that bright new future, if you want us all to go over it together, if you believe we have an obligation to help one another make the most of our own lives and you like where we’ve come from compared to where we were, I hope that you will stand fast for education, for opportunity for every single American, and for working to build that bridge that we can all walk across together because our best days are still ahead.

Thank you, and God bless you all. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:56 p.m. at Homewood-Flossmoor High School. In his remarks, he referred to Laura Murray, superintendent, Homewood-Flossmoor Community School District; Anthony Moriarty, principal, and Brendan Cumisky, student body president, Homewood-Flossmoor High School; Ronald Blackstone, president, Homewood-Flossmoor Community Board of Education; and Col. Robert E. Bailey, USAF, Vice Commander, 928th Airlift Wing.

Letter to Speaker of the House of Representatives Newt Gingrich on Legislation To Prohibit Possession of Firearms by Domestic Violence Offenders

September 17, 1996

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I am pleased that you have now joined me in supporting legislation to prohibit domestic violence offenders from obtaining firearms. No one who has committed an act of domestic violence against a spouse or child should be able to possess a firearm.

As you know, Senator Lautenberg and Representative Torricelli have introduced legislation that would achieve this objective. The Senate passed the Lautenberg bill for the second time last week by an overwhelming and bipartisan vote of 97–2. It is now time for the House