

The great opportunity the Russian people have is to define themselves in terms of the future, not the past, to forge a new relationship with NATO as enlargement moves forward. The United States has suggested that Russia and NATO work out a formal agreement on cooperation. We should set up a regular mechanism for NATO-Russia meetings at all levels. We should consult on European security issues so that whenever possible NATO and Russia can act jointly to meet the challenges of the new era, just as we have acted jointly in Bosnia.

Just think about it. In Bosnia, Russia and NATO are already partners for peace. We should set our sights on becoming full partners and bringing all of Europe together. Together we can help to turn the main battleground for the bloodiest century in history into a continent whose people remain secure and prosperous, free and at peace.

These past 4 years it's been one of the greatest privileges of my life to represent America around the world, from the halls of Kremlin to the hillsides of Port-au-Prince, from the deserts of Jordan to the Tokyo Harbor, from the Charles Bridge in Prague and Riga's Freedom Square to the DMZ in Korea. I have heard the voices and shaken the hands of presidents and prime ministers and, just as important, citizens on the streets of distant lands. Wherever I go, whomever I talk with, the message to me is the same: We believe in America. We

trust America. We want America to lead. And America must lead.

I wish every American could see our country as much of the world sees us. Our friends rely upon our engagement. Our adversaries respect our strength. When our family went to open the Olympics in Atlanta, I was so moved by the statements of young people from around the world about the efforts the United States had made to foster peace in Bosnia, peace in Northern Ireland, peace in the Middle East, things these young athletes felt personally because it was their lives, their future, and the children they still hope to have on the line.

As we enter the 21st century, we must make a commitment to remain true to the legacy of America's leadership, to make sure America remains the indispensable nation, not only for ourselves but for what we believe in and for all the people of the world. That is our burden. That is our opportunity. And it must be our future.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:52 a.m. at Fisher Theater. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Dennis W. Archer of Detroit and his wife, Trudy; James J. Blanchard, former Governor of Michigan, and his wife, Janet; Mayor Woodrow Stanley of Flint, MI; Bishop P.A. Brooks, Church of God in Christ, Detroit; and Mayor Robert Kozaren of Hamtramck, MI.

Remarks at Miami-Dade Community College in Miami, Florida October 22, 1996

The President. Thank you. Thank you very much. Let me, first of all, say I have had a lot of introductions in my life—[laughter]—I have had a lot of real good introductions in my life, but I have never been introduced better than Jerry Sawyer did it just then. And he was up here, you know, talking, and he got a real head of steam up, and he started talking about how the other side said my economic program would fail and they all voted against it and they said the sky would fall, and then all the good things that happened. I thought to myself when he was up here really wound up, I thought, now, where were you when I was preparing

for that debate last week? I could have used you, Jerry Sawyer.

President Eduardo Padron, thank you for having us here at this wonderful place. Governor Chiles, thank you for your leadership for Florida and your friendship and advice to me. And the same for you, Lieutenant Governor MacKay. Congresswoman Carrie Meek was up here. She told me that she started out here at Miami-Dade Community College. And I could tell that you are still her people, and she is still yours, and you should be very proud of her—very proud of her.

I'd also like to thank some other folks who are up here with us today: Attorney General Bob Butterworth; our insurance commissioner, Bill Nelson; Congressman Peter Deutsch; and of course, the chairman of your board of trustees, Martin Fine. Thank you all for being here. Thank you, gentlemen, for coming. Thank you.

I have wanted to come here for a long time to the largest community college in the entire United States of America. I am grateful to you for many things. But some of you may not know it—I actually have a member of my Cabinet who went to school here, whose parents taught here, and whose mother, I believe, is still in the audience. Carol Browner went here and then on to the University of Florida and wound up being head of the Environmental Protection Agency, where she is helping us to save the Florida Everglades. Thank you, Miami-Dade. And I'd like to thank her mother if she's here in the audience.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is college day for us. The First Lady is at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. The Vice President is at the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology. I got to come here to America's largest community college because I believe that community colleges work the way America has to work in the 21st century. If you just think about it, this is not a bureaucratic organization; it's a flexible, creative organization. You change from year to year the programs you offer. And you have to meet a high standard of excellence; otherwise you'll be punished for what you don't know in the marketplace. It is a purely democratic organization—that's small "d" democratic—in the sense that it's open to all. Nobody asks you what your race, your religion, your ethnic background is. All you've got to do is be willing to work hard, learn what you're supposed to learn, take the exams, make the most of your own lives. If you show up, you're a part of the community college, and you ought to be a part of the American community as well. This is the way America ought to work, the way these community colleges work.

Today I came here to talk about expanding opportunity to colleges. But I want to say something about what Jerry mentioned. Today we got some more evidence that America's economy is on the right track with low unemployment, low inflation, and low mortgage rates. We now have 4½ million new homeowners in the last 4 years, and lower interest rates have helped

10 million more Americans to refinance their old mortgages at lower rates, saving huge amounts of money for those families. Homeownership is an idea that ought to be available to every working American. We now have the highest rate in 15 years. And by the 21st century, if you'll give us 4 more, Secretary Cisneros and the rest of us who are working on this will have an all-time high of homeownership. By the year 2000, more than two-thirds of the American people will be living in their own homes if you will work with us and help us to build that bridge to the future.

My fellow Americans, you've got a big decision to make on November 5th. Are we going to build a bridge to the future or a bridge to the past? Are we going to build a bridge wide enough and strong enough for everybody to walk across together, or will we say, "There's the future out there. I hope you can make it"?

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. Are we going to tell the American people, "You're on your own," or are we going to say that, yes, it does take a village to raise and educate our children and build our country and go forward together? [*Applause*]

You heard Jerry say it, and you know we're in better shape than we were 4 years ago: 10½ million more jobs, the deficit cut by 60 percent, nearly 2 million fewer people on welfare, the lowest violent crime rate in 10 years. We are moving in the right direction. But your vote will decide what bridge we take to the future and whether we build one wide enough for everyone to walk across.

I want to ask every one of you who's here tonight—this afternoon, this beautiful Florida afternoon, to do something tonight when you go home. I want you to do this, not for me but for you. Just take a few minutes and see if you can say to yourself the answer to this question: What do I want my country to be like when we start that new century? What do I want my country to be like when my children are my age, when my grandchildren are my age? What is my dream for America?

For 4 years I've been working on that dream for America, mine. It's simple and straightforward. I want the American dream alive and well for every single person who is responsible enough to work for it. I think everybody should have the chance to live out their dreams and to live up to their God-given capacities. I want this country to be the world's strongest force

for peace and freedom and prosperity. And I want us to go forward together, where families can succeed at home and at work, where we're living in harmony with our environment, and most important, where we're living in harmony with each other. That is my vision.

And so I have worked to create more opportunity for all, to reinforce the principles of responsibility from all, and to create an American community where every person, without regard to race, color, creed, gender, you name it, believe they have a place at the American table and in the American future. That is what I have worked for.

But now you will decide. You will decide by how you vote. You will decide by whether you vote. You have to decide. You will decide whether we balance the budget and protect Medicare, Medicaid, education, the environment, and research; whether we have targeted tax cuts to help people educate their children and themselves, raise their kids, buy a home, deal with medical costs; or whether we adopt that big, risky tax scheme that would blow a big hole in the deficit, weaken our economy, and force even bigger cuts in education, in the environment, in Medicare and Medicaid than those I vetoed a year ago. You will decide.

You will decide by how you vote. You will decide by whether you vote. You will decide whether we can help more people to succeed at home and at work. Twelve million families have taken a little time off from work without being fired when a baby was born or a parent was sick. It's helped the American economy, and I want to keep it and do more. I want to say that parents ought to get a little time off to go to those regular conferences with their children's teachers or to take a family member to the doctor, to a regular appointment. You will decide whether we do it and whether we build that bridge.

We have started to protect our children from the dangers of guns and gangs and drugs and tobacco. Over the intense partisan opposition, we passed the Brady bill and the assault weapons ban. We extended the Brady bill to say if you beat up your spouse or your child you should not be able to buy a handgun; you're a danger to society. We said to the tobacco companies, "You may sell your products to adults, but it's illegal for children to smoke, so stop marketing, advertising, and delivering cigarettes to our children."

We passed tough new laws against drug dealers, including the death penalty for drug kingpins. We dramatically increased funds to help our schools keep our kids out of trouble in the first place with safe and drug-free schools programs. We said to the States, "We want you to start drug testing parolees." If people want to be out on the streets, they ought to stay off of drugs. If they're going to get back in trouble, they ought to lose their rights to walk the streets. Don't get any more kids in trouble. Your vote will decide whether we finish this work with tobacco and drugs and guns and gangs or whether we walk back on it.

We passed the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill, which says to 25 million Americans we can't take your health insurance away from you anymore just because you changed jobs or somebody in your family's been sick. We stopped—we passed a law that said insurance companies cannot force hospitals to kick new mothers and their newborn babies out of the hospital after one day anymore. But your vote will decide whether we keep on doing that, whether we provide health insurance to another million children, whether we help families who lose their jobs keep their health insurance when they're between jobs, whether we continue to work with States like Florida to help offer affordable health insurance to working people with limited incomes. Your vote will decide, and whether you vote will decide.

We passed a historic welfare reform bill. And I want to applaud Governor Chiles on being one of the first three States in the country to submit a plan to actually move people from welfare to work, not to abandon poor families and poor children. Thank you, Governor.

Now, we moved 2 million people from welfare to work. The new law says every State and every community has 2 years for every able-bodied family to turn that welfare check into a paycheck. Meanwhile, we'll guarantee health care; we'll guarantee food on the table; we'll spend more for child care if you go to work. But if you can work, within 2 years, you've got to turn the paycheck—the welfare check into a paycheck. That sounds good. But to do it, there has to be a paycheck. I've got a plan to create a million more jobs for people on welfare in partnership with the private sector. Your vote will decide whether we walk away from those people or create those jobs so they, too, can be part of the American dream.

We have made our streets safer with 100,000 more police on the books but not all on the streets. We've only funded about half of them. And our friends on the other side—just as Jerry said with the budget—they fought us every step of the way with the crime bill. But we have saved that, and that's why the crime rate's gone down for 4 years in a row.

But it's still not safe enough on Florida's streets. And we don't want to just catch criminals, we also want to prevent crime in the first place. That means you need people out there working with the kids, being strong role models, and preventing things from happening in the neighborhoods and on the streets. You need to help us finish the job of putting the rest of those police officers on the street. And your vote will decide whether we do that or go back. It is up to you. Will you help us do that? [*Applause*]

We have taken more chemical pollutants out of the air. We have made our drinking water safer. We have raised the standards for food. We have done more to protect national parks and to expand national parks. We have begun the work, but not finished the work, of protecting the Everglades. You will decide. You will decide whether we will keep up this work and finish the job on the Everglades. You will decide whether we will clean up 500 more toxic waste dumps because there are still 10 million American children growing up within 4 miles of a toxic waste site. That is wrong. I want them growing up next to parks, not poison. You will decide. Will you help us do that? [*Applause*]

But most important of all, you will decide whether we build an America in which we have a world-class education system open to all Americans. I have worked hard, from expanding opportunities for Head Start, to giving our schools more tools for the kids to meet higher standards, to creating the national service program, AmeriCorps—some of the people are here—that have allowed people to work in their communities and earn their way to college, to the biggest increase in Pell grants in 20 years, to the direct student loan program.

And thank you, President Padron and others, for supporting that. We are saving the average college student on the direct loan program about \$200 a year. But more important, we're saying to every student who borrows money in that way, you don't have to worry about your college loans anymore because you can pay it back as

a percentage of your income. No one can ever make you go bankrupt because you borrowed the money to go to college. That is a good thing.

Every step along the way, we had to fight our opponents on the other side. They tried to kill the student loan program improvements. They tried to cut back on Head Start. They tried to kill the national service program. Now they even have promised to eliminate the Department of Education.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Your vote will decide, and whether you vote will decide. That's their program: go into the 21st century with not a single soul in the President's Cabinet speaking for the education of our children. Is that the future you want?

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. Well, you have another alternative. Jerry talked about it, but I want to say again, I want to emphasize four things to you that I want to do in education, all important to Florida.

Number one, 40 percent of the 8-year-olds in America cannot read a book on their own today. Part of that is because we're a nation of immigrants, we have a lot of young kids whose first language is not English. But everyone needs to be able to read in order to keep learning. I want to mobilize 30,000 people, the AmeriCorps volunteers, trained reading tutors, and others, to get a million volunteers across America to go into the schools, to work with the parents so that in 4 years we can say every 8-year-old in America can pick up a book and say, "I can read this all by myself."

I was in Tampa the other day at a school which was so crowded they had folks meeting in trailers next to the school, a beautiful old school. We have the largest number of school-children in America today ever in history, almost 52 million. The United States Government has never helped schools with their building problems. But children cannot learn if they're in impossible, rundown, beat-up, substandard conditions without adequate equipment. So I have a program to lower the interest rates and therefore cut the costs to the taxpayers in the school districts of building those facilities or repairing them. If local people are willing to make an extra effort to help their schools, the Federal Government should be a partner and lower the

cost of doing it. And I want you to help me do that.

The third thing I want to do—now, when Jerry said this, all the young people clapped, and I couldn't tell whether those of us who are older were or not. Let me tell you what it means to hook up every classroom and every library to the information superhighway by the year 2000. It means for the first time in the history of America, children in the poorest school districts, children in the richest school districts, and children in all the school districts in between for the very first time will all have access to the same information in the same way at the same time. Will you help me do that? [Applause]

Folks, this is a big deal. We can't turn our backs on learning. Learning is generating more jobs for us. More than half of these new jobs are high-wage jobs. That's the good news. The challenging news is if you want them, you have to know something and you have to be able to keep learning.

Just in the last 4 years, learning has done the following things: We have more than doubled the life expectancy for people with HIV. We have discovered two genes that cause breast cancer, giving us hope that we can not only cure it earlier but actually someday prevent it. In the last 4 years, we have developed the first real treatment for people who have strokes—never any real medical treatment before. These are things that are happening.

A lot of you heard Christopher Reeve talk at the Democratic Convention, and he talked about medical research, sitting there so bravely in his wheelchair. About the time he spoke, for the first time ever, a laboratory animal with its spine completely severed had movement in its lower limbs because of a nerve transfer to the spine from another part of the body. Learning is the answer to so many of our problems and the key to our future and to our prosperity and to our quality of life.

We are working to build a supercomputer with IBM that will do more calculations in one second than you can do on your own calculator in 30,000 years. That's how much learning is going forward.

So I say to you, the last thing we have to do is open the doors of college education to every American of every age at any time who

needs to go. And I want you to help me do it. I want you to be able to save in an IRA and withdraw from that IRA without any tax penalty at all if you use the money on a college education. I want you to be able to do just what Jerry says: I want every community college student in America to know that we have to make at least 2 years of education after high school as universal by the year 2000 as a high school education is today, and we're going to do it by letting you just take off your tax bill dollar for dollar the cost of a tuition at any community college in the country. That's what I want you to do. And I want you to help us do it. And finally, for people that go on to college, I think you ought to be able to deduct up to \$10,000 a year for the cost of any college tuition, anywhere, at any level. And I want you to help me do that.

Now, I say again, your vote will decide, and whether you vote will decide. This is not a small election. The world is changing too much. The best days of this country are ahead. You will have more opportunity than any generation of Americans before if you make the right decision. But you have to decide.

And the last thing I leave you with is this: We will never be what we ought to be unless we prove that our diversity is a great asset, not a liability, unless we reject the religious, the racial, the tribal, the ethnic hatreds that are consuming people all around the world. Pick up the newspaper any day and you can see it. In America, that is not for us. We stand for freedom. We stand for equal opportunity. We stand for the responsibility of every citizen and the right of every citizen to be treated equally under the law. Will you help us build that bridge to the 21st century? [Applause] Will you be there on November 5th? [Applause] I need you.

Thank you. God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:45 p.m. at the North Campus. In his remarks, he referred to Jerry Sawyer, student body president, and Eduardo Padron, president, Miami-Dade Community College; and Gov. Lawton Chiles and Lt. Gov. Buddy MacKay of Florida.