

That's what this election is about. That's why he should be President. You will never get a chance in your lifetime to vote for someone as well-qualified again. I certainly wasn't when I ran. You will never get a chance in your lifetime to ratify a direction and to accelerate the pace of change that is clearly working.

If you really think about it, you are not ever going to have any clearer choices. But when you think it doesn't matter, when you get tired, when you wish somebody wouldn't call you again between now and November, you remember the story I told you about the last longest economic expansion in American history, and

take a deep breath and bear down, because the best is still ahead of us.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 10:15 p.m. on the terrace at Historic Greystone Mansion. In his remarks, he referred to "Tonight Show" host Jay Leno; actor Kevin Spacey; founders Steven Spielberg, Jeffrey Katzenberg, and David Geffen, and Chief of Corporate Affairs Andy Spahn, DreamWorks SKG Studios; Mr. Katzenberg's wife, Marilyn; and musician Sarah McLachlan. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Gore.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With the Community in East Palo Alto, California April 17, 2000

The President. Good morning. I want to thank Mayor Wilson for making us welcome today. And thank you, Magda Escobar, for all you have done. I also want to recognize some other people who are here with us today. Reverend Jackson, thank you for coming. Carly Fiorina, the president of Hewlett-Packard; and Robert Knowing, the president of Covad, thank you for being here. Rebecca Lobo, thank you for being here. We're glad to see you.

I'd like to also acknowledge the presence in the audience of Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Andrew Cuomo; the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, Bill Kennard; and many Members of Congress—Representative Zoe Lofgren, Representative John Conyers, Representative Bill Jefferson, Representative Barbara Lee, Representative Silvestre Reyes, Representative Stephanie Tubbs Jones, Representative Anna Eshoo—I think that's all the Members of Congress who are here.

I'd like to thank Gene Sperling and Maria Echaveste. And I want to recognize especially the man who helped us avoid the Y2K problem, a distinguished Republican Senator from Utah, Bob Bennett. Thank you for coming, Senator Bennett. We're glad to see you.

I'd also like to thank all the civil rights leaders who are here, the high-tech CEO's, the founda-

tion directors. And I'd like to thank Julian Lacey, who is here, for helping us kick off our national call to action for digital opportunity. I know that all of you know Julian. Thank you.

I want to thank AOL for webcasting today's event live. And I'd like to say a special word of appreciation to one person who is not here who helped us to develop our entire approach to closing the digital divide, Vice President Al Gore. I thank him as well.

Now, I will be brief because I want to get on to the questions. But I want to tell you why we're here. This is a very fortunate time for our country. We have the strongest economy in history. We have the lowest African-American and Hispanic unemployment rates our country has ever recorded and the lowest female unemployment rate in 40 years. But we all know there are people and places that have not fully participated in this new economy.

I have been to a lot of those places on my digital divide tour—I mean, my new markets tours—because I see these places as places of opportunity, places of new markets. If we can create new employees, new businesses, new jobs, new opportunities, we can keep the American economy going. This is one of those fortunate times when, by doing the thing that is morally right, we actually help to keep America's economic expansion churning forward. It's going

to take the efforts of government, business, and the community sector to succeed.

This is our third new markets tour. When I leave you, I'm going to northern New Mexico, to the Shiprock Navajo Reservation. And tomorrow I'll be in Chicago, meeting with representatives of every aspect of the high-tech industry in America. I wanted to begin here in East Palo Alto, because even here in Silicon Valley there are many people who could be left behind, and because you're doing so much to make sure you're not left behind. And we ought to be giving a helping hand.

I don't think there is a better place in America to show what can be done to reach out to our children who are at risk of falling behind. We can see that here at Plugged In, at the Silicon Valley Project, at the new Cisco Sun Academy where graduates are virtually assured of good jobs that pay up to \$70,000 a year. In a few minutes, I will announce some other things that corporate leaders here today are prepared to do to help this city on the move, move even faster.

Let me just briefly ask you to remember the history of this community. A hundred and fifty years ago, East Palo Alto got its start as a community called Ravenswood. Ravenswood was a good candidate to become the last stop on the transcontinental railway, something that was very important in the industrial age. Unfortunately, plans changed, the railroad bypassed Ravenswood altogether, and it was a decision that had repercussions for the people who lived in this community for a century or more.

Today, we're in another time of fundamental economic transformation, but we can do it very differently because, unlike the railroads of the industrial age, the trade routes of the information age can run through every city, every town, every community. And in fact, the more communities they run through, the better it works.

No one has to be bypassed this time around. The choice is in our hands. We can use new technology to extend opportunity to more Americans than ever before; we can truly move more people out of poverty more rapidly than ever before; or we can allow access to new technology to heighten economic inequality and sharpen social division.

Again I say, the choice is ours. But I want to reiterate a point I made earlier. The truth is that doing the right thing will accelerate the strength of this powerful economic engine.

Every economist knows that new technologies will continue to drive rapid economic growth only if they continue to spread to all sectors of our economy.

I have made closing this digital divide a big priority. It is a big priority in our budget and a big priority for trying to enlist the energies of our fellow citizens. That's why I issued a national call to action, to enlist the support of businesses, State and local governments, community groups, foundations, schools, and volunteers. Already, more than 400 organizations have signed on to our call.

To reach these broad national goals, all of us are going to have to do our part. In addition to our \$2.25 billion E-rate initiative, which allows us to hook up every school and library in the country to the Internet, including those who can't afford it on their own, and our new \$450 million Technology Literacy Challenge, which helps to provide to poor areas the computers, the software, the teacher training, and the Internet access that's so important, I'm asking Congress for \$100 million for community technology centers like Plugged In, \$150 million to help train all new teachers to use the technology and the Internet in the classroom, and \$2 billion in new tax incentives for computer donations and contributions to our schools, our libraries, and community technology centers.

But the important announcement is the one I want to make today. Corporations in this area have committed over \$100 million to help you do what you do best. Gateway will provide technology training to 75,000 teachers, including every single teacher here in East Palo Alto. Novell will donate \$20 million in software for nonprofit organizations devoted to helping underserved Hispanic organizations. Hewlett-Packard will invest \$15 million in a new digital village initiative to help three underserved communities, starting here in East Palo Alto.

Qualcomm is giving back to the city where it's based, San Diego, with a \$25 million commitment, including \$7 million—this is important—to improve math and science education among all of our young people. PowerUP, a partnership of AOL, Gateway, and several other companies that brings technology to young people in schools and community centers, is going to expand from 19 to 250 sites nationwide. AmeriCorps, a strong partner of PowerUP, will assign 400 of our young volunteers to work at these sites. AOL is going to provide 100,000

accounts for use at these sites, a commitment worth \$26 million every year.

Applied Materials has pledged a million dollars for projects such as a new high-tech job training center for the people of East Palo Alto. And they are going to be in partnership with the city and with Reverend Jackson's Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, which has an office right around the corner here. I promised Jesse I would promote his job site, too, you see, around the corner.

AT&T is committing \$1.2 million to support the Academy of Information Technology, which is dedicated to helping high school students prepare for high-paying jobs in the high-tech industry. Cisco will invest \$1.4 million to expand its Cisco Network Academy program to 10 more underserved communities. People PC has agreed to donate 300 new multimedia computers to the East Palo Alto Schools.

I want to thank all these corporations and all their leaders for their new commitments, and I want to thank Covad for leading an effort to increase minority participation in the high-tech industry. We are nowhere near where we ought to be on that.

Now, the commitments of governments and corporations are only part of the equation. The rest requires motivation, and that's what I want us all to focus on for the rest of our time here. Frankly, all the computers and software and Internet connections in the world won't do much good if young people don't understand that access to new technology means access to new learning opportunities, new job opportunities, new entrepreneurial opportunities, access to the new economy.

That's why I am very pleased that the Kaiser Family Foundation is going to create a major public service campaign to inspire young people to get on computers and get on-line. The ads will air on NBC, ABC, CBS, Fox, BET, Univision, MTV, the Cartoon Network, and other major channels. They will feature Magic Johnson and Rebecca Lobo, who will highlight new technologies and the fact that they're not only fun, they can open a lot of doors in life. BET.com will also air their own PSA's, encouraging African-Americans to use the Internet and participate. Let's give them all a hand. That's great. [Applause]

Now, let me just say this. I want to thank the people at Plugged In again, Magda and all the others. Places like this can change lives for-

ever. You come in, learn how to design webpages or set up networks or just how to use the Internet as a tool for discovery. That gives you the power to control your future.

I want to show you something. If you haven't done this, I want to urge you all to take a look at the classifieds from yesterday's San Jose Mercury News. There are 10,000 technology-related jobs advertised in this paper. If they could be held by every unemployed or underemployed person in East Palo Alto, this would be a better country today. So whether it's finding a high-tech job or serving as a teacher or just being a more effective parent, every young person needs to know how to use this technology. It will serve you well, no matter what you do.

Now I'd like to begin our discussion by asking Rebecca Lobo a question that I hope will help us to understand what's involved here in getting young people to actually commit themselves to becoming technologically literate.

A lot of people, Rebecca, across the country look up to you because you're tall. [Laughter] And they also look up to you because you're a great basketball player, a great human being, and therefore a great role model. They see the life you have; they'd like to have a career in professional sports. But a lot of kids have to find their stardom somewhere else. There are only so many people who can make it in sports, but everybody can make it in life. So I'd like to know how you would speak to children to try to persuade them how to become technologically literate, why they should master computers and the Internet. What would your message be?

[Rebecca Lobo, a player for the Women's National Basketball Association New York Liberty, said that children should follow their dreams and that access to the Internet offers a way to find paths to success.]

The President. I'd like to—is it on? I'm still technologically challenged, right? [Laughter] I want to ask Reverend Jackson a question. You've been involved in the civil rights revolution all your life. We were just in Selma together. When Dr. King died, he was moving the civil rights revolution to a new stage, the stage of economic opportunity. And you have spent most of the last 30-plus years trying to extend that opportunity to people who have been left out and

left behind. What do you think this new technology means to your prospects of succeeding at the work of the last 30 years?

[Civil rights leader Rev. Jesse Jackson recalled that young America came alive in the civil rights movement of the fifties and sixties to achieve social change. He announced an upcoming Rainbow/PUSH Coalition conference in East Palo Alto to energize youth, parents, and churches to take advantage of technology and to close the digital divide.]

The President. Thank you.

I would like to ask a question of Carly Fiorina. One of the things that bothers me about being President is that I can—I'm a fairly high-energy person, so I can go to a place like East Palo Alto, and we can get everybody together, and we can get all these commitments, and people can follow through on their commitments. But I'm always worried that somehow there will be a gap between this moment and when people's lives really change. And I would like to know what you think it will really take for the information revolution to permeate this community and others like it, to the extent that we really will be able to guarantee equal opportunity to all these kids if they master the fundamentals of the information revolution.

[Carly Fiorina noted the constant war for talent in the high-tech industry and said the need for skilled personnel would continue because it was a growth industry with no end in sight. She said that information technology and the Internet could be the great equalizer and erase barriers of time, distance, and prejudice; however, without those tools, skills, and access, the digital divide would become greater.]

The President. Thank you. Let me just say—I just want to follow up on something. I want you to think about this. We're all sitting here talking about this, with 10,000 job vacancies being advertised in the paper yesterday in this area. If we don't do this now, when are we ever going to get around to it? Do you think we'd be having this meeting if the unemployment rate were 10 percent in America, or 10 percent in California? This is the time we've got to do this.

We're back in Washington today debating legislation about how much—not whether but how much—we have to raise the cap on visas to bring in people from other countries who are

trained in these skills. And I'm pro-immigration. I'm all for this. We've got to do it. We've got to keep these industries going. We've got to do the right thing. But I'm also trying to make sure when we do it, we get more investments to train people here to do those jobs, because you can do it.

And I just want to say something to the local folks here and to the kids who are here. You've got to decide whether you believe intelligence is equally distributed in this world—I do; whether you believe ability is equally distributed—I do. I mean, not for everything; I couldn't play basketball like Rebecca. But everybody can do something, and everybody can learn this.

I just got back from India, a country with a per capita income of \$450 a year. And I was in a poor village where I saw women who were almost illiterate—had never even been given the privilege of going to school—getting on computers, calling up their government's webpage, getting information about how to take care of their newborn babies in remote villages, because they had a computer with a good printer to take the software, give it to them, they could take it home.

This can change the way the world works, and it can save you and your children from having to wait 30 years to move into the mainstream. It can be done in a matter of months or a year. But you have to believe it, and you have to take advantage of it. And if we can't do it where there's 10,000 job vacancies in the paper, we will never get around to doing it.

I would like to ask Bob Knowling to talk a little bit about—to be more specific here. What kind of job opportunities are available for minorities, for example, who may come from poor homes or poor neighborhoods or poor communities, if they get the skills and the training they need? And what do you think is the most important thing they could do and we could do to bridge this gap?

[Robert E. Knowling, Jr., noted that the industry offered a wide variety of job opportunities, but women and people of color often got through the educational process and then did not get the jobs. He said high-tech businesses should stop merely paying lip service to diversity in hiring, and he hoped the next time the President visited, there would be only a few job vacancies remaining.]

The President. Good deal.

President's Use of the Internet

[Magda A. Escobar, executive director, *Plugged In Enterprises*, began the question-and-answer session with the community members in the audience, and a 9-year-old asked how the President used the computer and the Internet.]

The President. Mostly—let me tell you what, you know what I did? At Christmastime I actually ordered Christmas presents with the computer. I confess, I don't use it much for E-mail, but that's for very personal reasons. When I want to talk to my daughter, for example, I get on the phone and call her. If you work for the Government, you don't use E-mail very much unless you want it all in the newspaper. [Laughter]

So I mostly use—and the other thing I do is I try to find new sites. When I hear about something new, I try to get onto it. For example, when I learned that now up to 30,000 people were making a living off eBay—I'm always reluctant to give one company a free commercial here but—and that a lot of them had once been on welfare, I wanted to look at it and figure out, how were these people making a living?

So for me, I'm almost like you, I'm still trying to learn about all this, and I'm so interested in what its possibilities are. But the only thing I get personal benefit out of is shopping, because it's hard for me to move around very much. [Laughter]

Let me say, I also wanted to thank—I forgot to say something—I wanted to thank the Costañó Elementary Choir. They sang before I got here. So let's give them a big hand. Thank you very much. [Applause]

High-Tech Industry and Community Development

[Ms. Escobar noted that America Online was broadcasting the event live on the Internet and questions were being submitted from 17 locations across the country. She read a question about what students could do to attract high-tech industries to their area.]

The President. You should answer that.

[Ms. Fiorina answered that high-tech industries would go where there was skilled labor, where the education system continued to develop skilled labor, where the tax system was encouraging, and where transportation systems enabled growth.]

Reverend Jesse Jackson. Mr. President?

The President. Go ahead, Jesse. Let me just answer that question real quick, though, because this is important. People ask me this all the time.

The truth is, everything Carly said is right. Therefore, if you really want high-tech jobs in your area and you don't have them, you need to examine your school system and then get someone who understands all these factors that she just mentioned, to come into your community and help you develop a specific plan for all the changes you need to make to get it done. This is not something that can be done in a speech; I used to do this for a living when I was a Governor. This is about having a specific plan—what are you going to do; what's the list of people you're going to contact; who's going to do the work?

So if the students who asked me this question are really interested in it, your community needs a plan. And then somebody needs to be charged with carrying it out, and then somebody else needs to be checking on them to make sure they're doing it. It is like every other endeavor: You've got to have a plan, and then you've got to execute it.

[Reverend Jackson reiterated that many pockets in the Nation were fundamentally disconnected and in need of a combination of structural universal access, motivation, and access to capital for entrepreneurship.]

The President. I agree with that.

Any other questions in the audience here? Go ahead.

Future Technology

[A 9-year-old girl asked what technology would be in the future.]

The President. Well, I certainly can't answer that. Who wants to answer that? Bob, you want to answer that question?

[Mr. Knowling suggested that smart cards and smart chips would replace money, and devices for Internet access would become more mobile. He said that globalization would increase, and the Internet revolution would make the Industrial Revolution pale in comparison. Ms. Fiorina added that young people would help figure out the future, and technology would become personalized and nonintrusive.]

The President. I also think what you will see is that—two things—I think all communications, information, and entertainment systems will merge. So people will be carrying around things that are telephones or faxes or televisions, you know, calling up movies, everything else in one little thing they can carry around with them. I think you will have that.

And the other thing I think will happen is there will be a radical alteration in the relationship of energy to work, which will enable us to dramatically improve the protection of the global environment and generate a whole different kind of jobs than we've ever had before. I think those are the two things that will happen over the next 20 years.

There was one other—I promised the lady over here—that young woman, yes, I promised her.

High-Tech Industry Internships

[*The next questioner asked if the President would help the community's youth receive internships in Silicon Valley. Ms. Fiorina interjected that Hewlett-Packard's internship program had been successful for both the company and interns.*]

The President. How old are the interns? When do you start?

Ms. Fiorina. Most of them start at the end of their high school years and in their college years. I don't think we have interns much younger than 15 or 16.

The President. Let me just say this. Maybe one of the things that the mayor could do is to sort of scout the interest in the high schools of the community and then talk to some of the companies about it. I'll bet you could arrange for some intern or intern-like programs for kids in their high school years so at least they could be exposed to these companies and see what it is they need to do. And we could come out with something good here.

Internet Access in Low Income Areas

[*Ms. Escobar read a final question from the Internet about plans to help children from poor neighborhoods get access to the Internet.*]

The President. Well, right now, what we are trying to do is to make sure all the schools are wired. And when we started, only about 3 percent of our schools were, 1993. Now, we're up to 95 percent of the schools in the country

have at least one Internet connection, including 90 percent of the schools in low income areas. Surprisingly enough, some of our schools, believe it or not, can't be wired because they are so dilapidated, which is why I've been trying to get a school construction initiative passed through Congress.

This may be hard for you to believe out here, but there are schools in New York City that are still heated by coal-fired furnaces. In Philadelphia, the average school building is 65 years old. And there are literally some of our poorest schools in our poor neighborhoods that we are physically unable to wire. But apart from them, by the end of this year, we should be at 100 percent of the schools.

Then what I think we need to do is to look at some of the things that have been done, for example, by Lucent and others in Union City, New Jersey, where they are trying to put more computers and Internet connections into the homes of first generation immigrants so that they can—the parents can E-mail the principals and the teachers and learn and actually having—my goal is—it can't be done while I'm still President, but I'm going to keep working on it—my goal is to have the penetration of computers and Internet access in this country to equal the penetration of telephone usage. That's what our goal ought to be. We ought to not quit until we get there.

Ms. Escobar. Mr. President, we actually have time for one last question from the audience.

Audience member. Hello.

The President. No, let this lady go, and then I'll take yours. No, this lady first and then you. Okay, go ahead.

Audience member. Hi, Mr. President. My parents both voted for you. [*Laughter*]

The President. Thank you very much.

Diversity in Science and Engineering

[*The audience member asked about programs to promote more access to science and engineering for African-American females.*]

The President. Well, I mentioned one of them in my announcement, but I think that beyond what we have talked about here, I think generally there needs to be a greater emphasis among young female students and among minority students on science, engineering, mathematics education. And we actually have some initiatives to invest in that, to do more outreach,

do more recruitment, get more people involved in these programs, to encourage more people to go on to college to major in these programs in the 21st century science and technology initiative that the Congress has. And I think it's about a \$3 billion initiative. I think it has very broad bipartisan support, and I expect it to pass.

But I think we need to continue to just work on recruitment and then make sure that the kids that are interested in it take the courses in high school they need to take to get into the college majors. But I hope—that's one of the things that I was talking about. You know, we don't have enough women or minorities in a lot of these technology fields. But there are a lot of other fields related to science and engineering where we need more. I was talking to a young woman yesterday, who is a classmate of my daughter's at Stanford, about that, in the engineering area.

I think a lot of it, too, is making people believe they can do it. You know, in that sense, there is a parallel to the—you know, a few years ago, we had a lot of talented women basketball players, but they didn't imagine that they could have a pro league that could work. But it does now, and so Rebecca has got a whole different life than she would have had if she had been an all-American college basketball player 20 years ago. She wouldn't have had the life she now has. And that's—someone imagined it, and then they went around putting it together.

And I think it's even easier if we could just get more talent into the science and technology and engineering fields. And I think the main thing is recruitment and then making sure the young women and other people who have been left out actually do the preparatory work they need to get into the majors. I think the companies will recruit them coming out of college if they get there in the first place.

Now, I promised this lady she could ask her question.

President's Visit

[In lieu of a question, the audience member welcomed the President and other dignitaries on behalf of the East Palo Alto community.]

Ms. Escobar. We have received hundreds of E-mails from students across the country. And once the President gets back, I understand he will be responding to them.

The President. Yes, we want to respond to all the E-mails.

Ms. Escobar. Great, wonderful!

The President. Anything else? Let me say to all of you—I'd like to ask you to give a big hand to Senator Bennett and all the Members of the House of Representatives that are here. I thank them for coming. *[Applause]* One of the things I've noticed after 7 years of being President is that the President gets to give the speeches, but if the Congress doesn't appropriate the money, it's just a speech. So I think their interest in being here is very encouraging, indeed.

I want to thank all the chief executive officers of all these companies who are here, because much of the work that will be done and much of the commitment that has been made today comes from them. So give them a hand as well. *[Applause]*

And let me urge you again not to get discouraged, to work on this, and to remember that as big as the challenges seem, there are other people for whom the challenges are greater. I will just give you one example. When we get to the Shiprock Reservation today, we will be at a place where only 20 percent of the residents have telephones. Now, you can't be on the Internet if you don't even have a line. The last Indian reservation I visited, the unemployment rate was 73 percent.

The one thing you have here is physical proximity, and you ought to make the most of it. I'm out there trying to figure out how to help other people overcome physical distance, from Appalachia to the small towns of the Mississippi Delta to these Native American reservations. You've got the proximity. These people showed up here today for you. And now, to some extent, the community, the schools, you've got to make the most of this. They want to be here to help you, and you can do it.

Thank you very much, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:07 a.m. in the parking lot at Plugged In. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Sharifa Wilson of East Palo Alto, CA; Julian Lacey, manager, Plugged In Enterprises; and Earvin (Magic) Johnson, former National Basketball Association player.