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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

February 10, 1997

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO THE MARYLAND STATE LEGISLATURE

State Capitol

Annapolis,
Maryland

11:20 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all for that wonderful reception. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for what you said. Thank you, Senator Miller, for that 10-year walk down memory lane. (Laughter.)

It is true that when I met his mother I fell in love with her, even before I found out she had 10 kids. (Laughter.) It's not often you meet a person who can elect you if her family votes for you. (Laughter.)

Thank you, Governor Glendening, for your leadership here on so many issues. Lt. Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, Attorney General Curran, Treasurer Dixon, my old friend, Comptroller Louie Goldstein. I was in the first grade when he became Comptroller. (Laughter and applause.) The walking argument against term limits, you know. It's amazing. (Laughter and applause.)

I'd like to thank so many members of your very distinguished congressional delegation for joining me today -- Senator Sarbanes, and Senator Mikulski; Representative Wayne

Gilchrest, your Congressman; Representative Connie Morella; Representative Ben Cardin, Representative Al Wynn and Representative Elijah Cummings.

Now, I know that Ben was formerly the Speaker here, and that Al and Elijah and Connie and Senator Sarbanes were all members of this body. It kind of makes you wonder how Senator Mikulski and Congressman Gilchrest got elected to Congress. (Laughter.) It's obviously a good training program here. (Laughter.)

I'd like to thank the President of the Maryland State Board of Education, Christopher Cross, for being here. When he worked for President Bush, he and I stayed up all night one night, writing the national education goals, which began the process which bring us to this point today. Thank you, sir, for being here. And I'd like to thank your State Superintendent of Education, Nancy Grasmick, for being here.

Then, there are two people who are not here, who are here with us in spirit, and I would like to ask that we all remember them today -- our good friend, Congressman Steny Hoyer and his late wife, Judy, who was one of the finest educators this state ever had. And I know we miss them today. Steny and his family are in our prayers, and we are grateful for the dedication of Judy Hoyer's life to the children and the people of Maryland.

I would also like to say I'm very glad to be here with two members of my Cabinet, Secretary of Education Dick Riley and the Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala. They have served our administration and, more importantly, the American people, exceptionally well, and I thank them for their presence here today.

And when I finish talking, if you want anything else, call them. (Laughter.)

I should also say, since Senator Miller mentioned it, that my college roommate, who lived on the Eastern Shore, Tom Kaplan, is here. And he's still my friend after all these years, which is either a great tribute to his patience or to the roots and values of the people of Maryland. So I'm glad he's here.

I wanted to come here today to talk in greater detail about the issues I discussed in the State of the Union that require us to prepare America for the 21st century. It is important that we gather here at this turning point in our history. It was, after all, in this state house that George Washington resigned his commission as General of the Continental Army. In fact, it was right down the hall in the Lieutenant Governor's Office that Thomas Jefferson wrote George Washington's words of resignation.

It was here that the Treaty of Paris was prepared and ratified, ending the Revolutionary War and beginning the greatest experiment in democracy and opportunity the world has ever known.

Just think what began here in this building. What an experiment it has been. All the turmoil we have survived -- the Civil War, the two world wars, the Cold War, the social upheaval -- all the triumphs of our country in civil rights and women's rights, the environmental movement, workers' rights, bringing in all the immigrants, the explosion in science and technology, the political, the economic, the social achievements of this country. What an incredible experiment it has been since the events of so long ago when the treaty ending the Revolutionary War was signed and ratified here.

At each step along the way, how did we keep growing, how did we overcome, how did we work through, how did we reach higher? We always had responsible citizens. We were always able to come together as one country. And we were always driven by a clear vision.

I would argue to you that we are at another turning point today and we need responsible citizens, a united country, and a clear vision. We face a moment of peace and prosperity, and it gives us an extraordinary opportunity to actually decide what kind of future we want for America in the 21st century, and then go to work to build it. It is very important that we understand that such moments are extremely rare in our history.

We have perhaps had only one before. After World War II, we dominated the world economically. We were the most powerful country in the world militarily. We had some ability to decide our future and, thank goodness, we did the right thing with the Marshall Plan and rebuilding Europe and Japan, our former friends and our former foes. But we were constrained by the Cold War.

At the beginning of this century probably is the time most like this one when we entered the Industrial Era as a powerful and wealthy country at peace. But never have we been quite like this, as the world's only superpower, just completing four years where we produced more new jobs than at any other four-year period in our history, looking toward a world that is full of troubles, to be sure, but so full of explosive opportunities.

We have an incredible responsibility -- we in America and you in Maryland. Thanks to the leadership of your Governor, and the work that all of you have done, unemployment's at a six-year low, things are going well for you here. Your family incomes have risen to fourth in the nation. Your welfare rolls have dropped almost 25 percent since 1995. Student achievement has risen and more schools are meeting the high standards you have set. We are well positioned.

But it is a moment of choice. We cannot afford to squander this moment in complacency or division. That's normally what happens to people when they sort of get happy and satisfied. They get complacent or they fall out over little things. And this is not a time for us to squander in petty bickering or small ambitions.

This is a time for us to build a new century.

We have to meet all the challenges we still have. There are still too many poor children in this country and too many lives of children being lost on the streets of America every day. There are still too many of our areas in our cities and isolated rural areas that have not felt the uplift of the economic recovery. We still have not balanced the budget. We still have not finished all the unfinished business of the Cold War. Not everybody who works hard is feeling the opportunities that are available in America. We have unfinished business.

Then we have new challenges that we have to face. We have to prepare for the aging of the baby boomers. I know I'm the oldest one; that's a self-interest plea here, I think. (Laughter.) We have to prepare for the aging of the baby boomers. We have to make sure that we're ready for this new worldwide competition. We have to meet the new security threats of the 21st century, in terrorism and ethnic and religious and racial conflicts. We have to meet the new environmental challenges of the 21st century, most of which will be global in nature.

So there are challenges out there. But the most important thing is, there are staggering opportunities. More people will have more chances to live out their dreams than any people who ever lived in the history of the Earth if we do the right things. (Applause.) If we do the right things. (Applause.)

We have worked for the last four years essentially to try to make sure America works again, that we are functioning at a reasonable level of proficiency so that we can have the freedom to do that, to shape our future. And we changed the economic course of this country away from supply-side economics to investment economics, to move toward a balanced budget, to reduce the deficit, the interest rates, to expand our trade around the world and to invest in our people. The results have been good.

We've tried to move the debate over social policy in Washington away from rhetoric to reality, centered on families and communities. You've got now five years of declining crime. You've got the biggest drop in welfare rolls in history. You've got real efforts being made through the family leave law and other things to help people succeed in raising their children and in the workplace. We're in a position now to know what works and to know that we can have confidence that if we work together we can make a difference in assaulting our most profound challenges here at home.

We've tried to define the role of government away from the old fight that's dominated America almost ever since World War II, to say government is not the problem, government is not the solution; government's job is to create the conditions and give people the tools to solve their problems and make the most of their own lives. (Applause.)

So now we have this chance. And it's hard when you're not threatened by a foreign enemy to whip people up to a fever pitch of common, intense, sustained, disciplined endeavor. But that is what we must do, my fellow Americans. That is what we must do.

We are strong enough to shape a future that will take advantage of all this life-enhancing technology, of these new economic opportunities, of the new opportunities we have to build a structure of peace around the world, of the new opportunities we have to put the Information Age at the fingertips of the poorest, as well as the wealthiest children in our country, and we had better do this. Our children and our grandchildren will never forgive us if we blow this chance to make their future the best future -- (applause).

It is obvious that to prepare our people for the 21st century we will need a new, more far-reaching, deeper partnership in America. The era of big government is over, both because we can't go on running national deficits till the end of time and because the nature of our problems requires a different approach. But the era of big national challenges is far from over. It will never be over. And the ones we face are very big, indeed.

National leadership can point the way. It can move barriers out of the way that have prevented our states, our cities, and our people from solving their own problems. But the real responsibilities of building this future are ones we all must bear together. I will do my part. I will do what I can to see that the national government does its part. But, in turn, you must work with me and with others to make sure that we seize this opportunity while we stand strong enough to do so.

Today I want to talk about two critical areas: giving our children the best education; and finishing the job of welfare reform, breaking the cycle of dependency, moving millions of more people from welfare to work. Taken together, these issues really are at the core of our national mission to prepare America for the 21st century.

Everyone must have the tools to succeed in the knowledge economy; that means education and training. Everyone willing to work hard with those tools must have a chance to do so. That means finishing the job of welfare reform. Education and welfare reform are about bringing all Americans to the starting line of the economy, then making sure all of them are ready to run the race. Our number one priority must be to ensure that America has the best education in the world. (Applause.)

I cannot add much to the statement we made so long ago in the National Education Goals seven years ago now, almost eight years ago. But my shorthand statement is every eight-year-old has to be able to read, every 12-year-old should be able to log on to the Internet, every 18-year-old should be able to go to college, and every adult American should be able to keep on learning for an entire lifetime. That should be our goal. (Applause.)

Because our future was at stake in the Cold War, we had a bipartisan foreign policy. Politics stopped at the water's edge. Well, now our future is at stake, in large measure depending upon whether we can give all of our people world-class education. Therefore, we must have a nonpartisan commitment to education, and politics should stop at the schoolhouse door in the 21st century. (Applause.)

It is not enough for members of Congress and members of the state legislatures and elected executives to embrace this commitment. Our businesses, our educators, our parents, all our citizens must make the same commitment. I'm gratified that you have a number of Maryland parents and teachers and businesspeople committed to education here today. I thank them for being here and I thank you for inviting them.

In my State of the Union address, I laid out a 10-point call to action for American education, which is embodied in this booklet. And I want to say just a few words about a number of issues today and then focus on one in particular. And I want to thank the State of Maryland for taking the lead in doing so many of the right things. A lot of you have worked with me going back long years in the past when I was a governor on these educational issues, and I thank you for what you've done.

First, every child has to be able to read independently by the third grade. I'm pleased that the University of Maryland at College Park has already pledged more than 2,300 of its students to work as reading tutors over the next five years. That is a great thing. (Applause.) We're going to use 35,000 of our AmeriCorps volunteers to help to try to mobilize a million of these students. We think we can get at least 100,000 out of the new work-study students approved by Congress in the last budget. Then all the schools have to make use of volunteers once they are trained. But we have to do this.

You just think about it. If 40 percent of our children can't read at grade level, how in the wide world do we expect them to learn algebra, trigonometry, calculus, physics, biology, chemistry. It is very important. Unless we get this done, the rest cannot happen. And it is going to take a national effort of monumental proportions to do it. But we can do it, because the children can do it. The children can do it. They just need for us to do our job and they then will do the rest. So I want you to help us to finish that job. (Applause).

We must expand public school choice. And Baltimore City has done that through its charter schools. We must rebuild crumbling schools. And you heard the Governor say that's a priority for him as well. We must make it possible for all of our children to have access, the same access, in the same time, to the same knowledge. That's what hooking up all these classrooms to the Internet is all about. And I thank Maryland for its commitment to that objective. (Applause.)

In the last four years we have opened the doors of college wider than ever before -- through the direct college loan program and expanded Pell Grants, 200,000 more work-study positions, and the AmeriCorps program. But we have to do more. And I am very pleased, Governor, that you have proposed these state HOPE Scholarships to open the doors of college.

I just came back from Georgia -- Secretary Riley and I went to Augusta -- 230,000 people in the state of Georgia who maintained a B average have had their tuition and their schoolbooks paid for by the state HOPE Scholarship program. In a representative crowd there, I had person after person after person of all ages, telling me, I was a HOPE scholar; I had a chance to go to college; I never could have done it otherwise; I wouldn't have made it otherwise.

There is no better expenditure of our money. It will raise the per capita income of this state more quickly, it will get over inequalities in income groups more quickly, and it will bring people together for a stronger future more quickly than anything else.

So I applaud the proposal you have put before the legislature here, and I also tell you I will do my best to pass our national version of the HOPE Scholarship to give a tax credit of \$1,500 for two years -- that's the typical cost of community college tuition -- and a tax deduction of up to \$10,000 a year for the cost of tuition for any education after high school. This will make a difference. (Applause.)

We also propose making the IRA available to more savers, and then let people withdraw from their IRA tax-free if the money is used to pay for education -- and the biggest increase in Pell Grant scholarships for needy students in 20 years. And our G.I. Bill for America's Workers would take the 70 different federal programs for job training, put them in one block, and send a skill grant to an unemployed or an under-employed worker and say, here, you take it to the nearest institution of education and get the training you need. Nearly every American lives within driving distance of a community college or another community-based university or educational institution that can provide the training today that all people know they need to have a better future.

So we need to do these things together, and they will make a big difference. I also believe we have to teach our children to be good citizens as well as good students. And I'd like to thank the Lt. Governor for supporting the statewide program of character education you have here, to have a statewide code of discipline, to remove disruptive students from the classroom, to promote community curfews. And again, I thank you for being the only state in America to require community service to graduate from high school. You have the first class of seniors graduating today -- that's a good thing. That's a good thing. (Applause.)

hope that you will push this, and I hope you will lead the way. I want to be able to take this crusade across the country and tell people if they don't believe we can do it, call Maryland. You have the courage to do it. Stand up. (Applause.)

Now, let me just say a couple of words about welfare reform, because that's very important. For years and years and years, all the governors -- I was one of them -- said we want more control over the state's welfare system; we want to do that. We could reform the welfare system. We could make it work. We could end the culture of poverty and dependency. Well, you got it. (Laughter.) And this has got to be a focus of your efforts now, because this is very, very important.

We ended the old welfare system basically in two steps. First of all, in the last four years, Secretary Shalala and I worked with 43 of the 50 states to launch welfare reform experiments which, along with a growing economy and a 50 percent increase in child support collection -- something I'm very proud of -- helped to reduce the welfare rolls by 2.25 million; that's the biggest drop in welfare rolls in the history of the country -- an 18 percent drop. You can be proud of that and proud of what you did. (Applause.)

Here in Maryland you did better than the national average. You used your waiver to move 51,000 people off the welfare rolls, and you had about a 25 percent drop. And you can be proud of that. (Applause.)

You also answered my call to revoke the driver's licenses of people who deliberately -- who can and don't pay their child support. And I think that's a good thing. We're going to do more to collect child support. We can move 800,000 more people off welfare tomorrow if people just paid the child support they owe and that they are capable of paying. So I thank you for that. (Applause.)

Now we come to the hard part. The new law, supported by the governors and all state associations, says that every able-bodied person on welfare must move to work within two years; that the states can have a little cushion fund to support those who can't move into the work force either because they're disabled or because the economy is not so hot.

But now, think of this challenge. In the last four years, 2.25 million people moved from welfare to work in an economy that produced 11.5 million jobs. That's a record for any four-year administration. We have to do at least that well in the next four years. That reduced the welfare rolls by about 20 percent, 18 to 20 percent.

So you've got about 10 million people left and about -- maybe a little more than 10 million -- and about 4.5 million of them are adults, and about 4 million, anyway, are going to be able-bodied and able enough to physically work. And then there will

be some moving in and out of the work force. There always is, as people retire and all. But through deliberate efforts we're going to have to create at least 2 million jobs. And if we don't do it, what will happen?

Keep in mind, this welfare reform bill has this ringing declaration: Everybody who can work, everybody who's able to work has to take responsibility for their own lives. No more permanent dependency. Full of moral precepts. Well, the morality shoe is now on the other foot. Those of us who supported that, we now have a moral obligation to say, everybody we told, "you have to go to work" actually is able to work. Because if we are not able to do that, then the law's consequence will not be to liberate people from dependency, but to make people who are dying to go to work even worse off just because they couldn't find a job.

This is a serious, stiff challenge. And the challenge is primarily on you and the employer community, which is the way you said you wanted it. But it's there now. You know that great old country music star, Chet Atkins, used to say, you got to be careful what you ask for in this life; you might get it. So here it is. What are we going to do? Is there a way out? Yes, there is. Can we do this? You bet we can. You bet we can. We can do it, but we have to do it together. And we have to do it with discipline.

And we need a plan. And it needs to go down to every community. And we're going to have to ask people to help. And you need to really closely follow your numbers and make sure you're doing what it takes to be done.

How are we going to do it? First, we have to pass the federal program that I recommended, which will give tax credits to private employers of up to 50 percent up to \$10,000 to hire people -- only if they hire people from welfare to work. And then we have to support the provisions of the welfare reform law which continue the health care, continue the nutrition, and provide much more money for child care than the previous law. That's the good news.

This legislation also gives you the authority for the first time to take money that had been used on welfare checks and give it to private employers as a wage or training supplement. Now, this can be very important in convincing nonprofit employers, who don't pay taxes anyway, to hire people off welfare and make an extra effort. All the community nonprofits, every church or other religious organization in the state of Maryland, of any size, without regard to their faith, they're all under an admonition to care for the poor. Now you can say, we'll give you a little money to help if you will do the rest.

Missouri had a program like this in Kansas City, where they gave the welfare check to private employers for more than a year -- they could keep it for a couple years -- as a wage and training premium if they would hire people off welfare. I met a man who had a data processing storage company with 25 employees, and five of his

employees he'd hired from the welfare rolls, and he loved it. And they loved it.

And if we can do it, it is better to hire people in small groups or one on one, because you're trying to lift people out of a culture of dependency into a mainstream culture of work. But this man was willing to do that. And they have to pay about \$1.75 above the minimum wage to get the wage subsidy there and to give people a living income. But still it costs them less than the minimum wage to do it.

Florida has just decided to follow suit. And I hope other states will follow that lead. You've got to -- believe me -- to meet these job targets, your employer community is going to need every last option you can give them. And somebody's got to have a plan, I mean a game plan, that challenges every sector and every community to do what has to be done. So I urge you to use the flexibility you have been given to do that.

Secondly, I urge you to make sure that the money you have saved from welfare reform will be used to move even more people to work. I know Maryland has taken its considerable savings from welfare reform efforts and put them into a special rainy-day fund to create jobs and to move people from welfare to work. And that's something other states ought to copy, because if welfare reform is going to succeed in the beginning, all states are going to have use those savings on efforts like child care, wage subsidies, employment incentives, or other ways to create private sector jobs.

Let me just say one other thing. I hope as you do this, you will not forget sort of a parallel population not on welfare, and those are young, single men who are unemployed who are eligible for food stamps but not welfare. Keep in mind, their loss to the work force is an enormous loss to our society. It leads to higher crime. It leads to fewer two-parent families. It leads to robbing them of the potential of what they might become. And a lot of places now are beginning to try to -- instead of talking just about the welfare population -- the young unemployed population so that these young single men can be treated in the right way, too.

And in Missouri, what they did, we gave them a waiver, and they actually took the food stamp payments for the young single men and gave them to employers with the same sort of incentive as the welfare payments for young women going from welfare to work. So I urge you to think about that.

Finally, let me say, what is our vision? I can tell you what my vision -- why do we do all this? Here's my vision. Here's where I hope we'll be in a few years. I hope all over America in a few years, we will have a community-based employment family support system for people who are out of work, and people will come into this system whether they come off the welfare rolls or off the employment rolls through the unemployment rolls, and we won't make a distinction. It will just be good people with kids or without kids,

depending, who are out of work who need to get back into the work force. And we'll have a system for moving them back in, and we'll have a system of subsidies for people at the margins so that employers will be encouraged to make that extra effort to restore people to the dignity of work. And meanwhile, we'll always be helping people support their children in fulfilling their first and most important job.

Now, that's my vision. That's what I hope we would get out of this welfare reform effort. But the next two years are going to be critical, because about two years from now, people are going to start running out of their two-year time limit, and then the spotlight will shift from all of them to all of us. And we will be asked, what did we do when the welfare reform bill passed. What did we do to make sure that those we told you have to go to work had the chance to go to work. So I urge you to think about this.

This is exciting, but it's bracing; because our society has never done anything like this before in ordinary times. And I do not believe that when the bill passed, people had really focused on the dimensions of the challenge. I had, and I was willing to make it. I'm willing to try to -- to jump off this cliff, to hold up this high standard. I think we can do this. I think we can develop a work-based society that does not have people trapped in permanent dependence. But it's going to take everybody thinking about it, working on it, and doing things they had not done in the past. And so I ask you to do that. (Applause.)

I just want to make one final point the Governor's already mentioned. I know Maryland is considering using its own money to continue providing some basic benefits for legal immigrants who have lost federal aid now that the federal bans have taken effect. That's the right thing to do, but you shouldn't have to do it all by yourself. That's why every state and every governor -- Republican or Democrat -- I hope will join with us to try to persuade the Congress to restore just the basic health and disability benefits that used to be available until this new law passed when misfortune strikes them. (Applause.)

The argument made by the majority when they passed this was, when an immigrant comes to America, you've got to sign a piece of paper that says you're not going to take public benefits. Now, that's an understandable policy. We shouldn't be inviting people to come here just to get on welfare or to get on Medicaid or Medicare. But we can solve that, and did, by simply saying that every immigrant has a sponsor, and the sponsor's income will be deemed the immigrant's income until the immigrant becomes a citizen. That's the way to solve that.

But if you have all these immigrants coming here, and even before they can become citizens -- suppose an Indian from New Delhi comes to Maryland to develop computer software programs for one of your growing businesses, and stays here three years, and has a one-year-old child and a three-year-old child. What does that person

do if he or his spouse gets hit by a car, or is the victim of a crime, or one of the children is born with cerebral palsy, and they don't have regular health care that will take care of all these things.

So what do we say? Tough luck? You had misfortune? Yes, you've worked hard; yes, you've paid your taxes; yes, you've been perfectly legal; yes, you've complied with every provision of the law; yes, you didn't try to sneak in our country, you waited your turn just like everybody else. But I'm sorry. Yes, we took the benefit of your brain. You made us a richer, stronger country. We wanted you in here. You had skills we needed. But I'm sorry. This is wrong, folks. This is unworthy of a great nation of immigrants and we ought to fix it. (Applause.)

When you get right down to it, all this business about education reform and welfare reform, and what do we have to do to prepare our country for the 21st century, and will we have the discipline, strength and courage to take advantage of this unique moment in history -- it really comes down to two questions: What does America mean, and what does it mean to be an American?

America must always be a nation becoming. We're never there; we're always becoming -- becoming a more perfect union, full of new promise for our own people and new hopes for the world. And what does it mean to be an American? We're the ones who have to make that happen.

Thank you and God bless you. (Applause.)

END

12:16 P.M. EST

Message Sent To:

PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
MARYLAND STATEHOUSE, ANNAPOLIS, MD
Monday, February 10, 1997

Acknowledgments: Gov. Parris Glendening; Lieutenant Gov. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend; Speaker Cas Taylor; President of the Senate Mike Miller; Sen. Barbara Mikulski; Sen. Paul Sarbanes; Rep. Wayne Gilchrest (represents Annapolis); Rep. Ben Cardin (served as Speaker of this body); Rep. Al Wynn and Rep. Elijah Cummings (both served in this body); President of Maryland State Board of Education Christopher Cross; State Superintendent of Education Nancy Grasmick.

I'm pleased to be here today, in the building that served as our nation's first peacetime capitol, to talk about one of the greatest challenges in our peacetime history: preparing America for the 21st Century, and ensuring that all Americans have the tools to make the most of their lives.

It is appropriate that we gather here today, at an important turning point in our history. It was in this statehouse that George Washington resigned his commission as General of the Continental Army -- in fact, it was right down the hall in the Lieutenant Governor's office that Thomas Jefferson wrote General Washington's words of resignation. It was here that the Treaty of Paris was prepared and ratified -- ending the Revolutionary War, and beginning the greatest experiment in democracy and opportunity the world has ever known.

As a country, once again, we face a moment of peace, prosperity, and extraordinary opportunity -- having won the Cold War, reversed the tide of crime and welfare and budget deficits, and built the strongest national economy in a generation. Thanks to Governor Glendening's leadership, there is much to celebrate in Maryland as well: unemployment is at a six-year low. Family incomes here have risen to fourth in the nation. Maryland's welfare rolls have dropped almost a quarter since 1995. Student achievement has risen, with more schools meeting the high standards Maryland had the courage to set.

But today's peace and prosperity is not something we can rest on -- it is something we must build on. That is why I stood before the Congress last week, and issued a call to action. For the first time in decades, we are strong enough to truly prepare ourselves for the 21st Century -- to help all our people seize the promise of the global economy, the Information Age, and life-enhancing new technology. But if we do not all take responsibility, and rise to this challenge -- if we do not summon the energies of all our people, from our statehouses to our schoolhouses, from our homes to our houses of worship -- we could lose this opportunity to shape our future.

That is why I am here today -- with a message I will carry not just to this state legislature, but to other state legislatures, communities, and forums in the months to come. To prepare America for the 21st Century, I am asking for a new kind of partnership -- with the people in this chamber, and people all across America. The era of big government is over. But the era of big national challenges is not. And while national leadership can point the way -- while national leadership can remove some of the barriers that had prevented our states and our people from solving their own problems -- the real responsibility is one we all share. As President, I am prepared to point the way -- to shine a light on what is working -- and to leverage the efforts of

all Americans to meet our challenges. But you must be prepared to work with me, to seize this moment of opportunity while America stands strong enough to do so.

Today, I want to talk about what we must do in two critical areas: giving our children the best education, and breaking the cycle of dependency by moving millions from welfare to work. Taken together, these issues are at the core of what we must do to prepare America for the new Century. We must help everyone have the tools to succeed in this knowledge economy -- and that means high-quality education and training. And we must make sure everyone willing to use those tools -- everyone willing to work hard and take responsibility -- has a chance to do so. Education reform and welfare reform are about bringing all Americans to the starting line of this new economy, and then making sure they are ready to run the race.

Our number-one priority -- the high threshold of the future we must cross -- must be to ensure that all Americans have the best education in the world: that every 8-year-old can read; every 12-year-old can log on to the Internet; every 18-year-old can go to college; and every adult can keep learning for a lifetime.

Education has always been the heart of opportunity in this country. As we prepare for unimagined new work and careers, the best investment we can make is not in land or factories or equipment, but in our minds -- the one asset we can carry with us no matter what the future holds, so we can make and remake our lives at every turn.

We must never forget that one of the greatest sources of our strength throughout the Cold War was a bipartisan foreign policy. Because our future was at stake, politics stopped at the water's edge. Now we need a non-partisan commitment to education -- because education is the critical national security issue for our future, and politics must stop at the schoolhouse door. That is why America's states and businesses, parents and teachers must work with us, above and beyond the old divisions, to renew our schools -- and I am pleased that a number of parents, teachers, and business people could join us today.

In my State of the Union address, I laid out a ten-point plan, a Call to Action for American Education [hold up booklet], that describes the steps we must take -- and the State of Maryland is already doing many of the right things. We must help every child to read by the third grade -- and I am pleased that the University of Maryland at College Park has already pledged more than 2,300 students to work as reading tutors over the next five years. We must expand public school choice -- as Baltimore City is doing through its new charter schools. We must rebuild crumbling schools -- a priority for Governor Glendening as well.

We must open the doors of college wider than ever before -- and I am pleased that the Governor is proposing state HOPE scholarships to open the doors to college. They will complement my national HOPE Scholarships to make the first two years of college as universal as high school -- a \$1,500 tax credit for the first two years of college and a \$10,000 tax deduction for all college costs, plus expanded IRA's to save for college and the largest increase in Pell Grants in 20 years. We must give more of our workers the ability to learn and to earn for a lifetime through my G.I. Bill for Workers -- transforming the tangle of federal training programs

into a simple skill grant that goes directly into workers' hands.

We must teach our children to be good citizens as well as good students -- and thanks to Lieutenant Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, you have begun a comprehensive, statewide program of character education. You have developed a statewide code of discipline, and are removing and helping disruptive students, so all our children have a chance to learn. You have heeded my call to promote community curfews, as part of your plan to prevent youth violence. Again under the leadership of the Lieutenant Governor, Maryland is the only state in America that requires community service to graduate from high school, with the first class of those seniors graduating this year.

My education plan is a comprehensive one. But any education plan can only be as strong as the things our children learn each day. That is why our success depends upon holding our students to the highest standards -- making sure they learn the basics that will be the foundation of success in the 21st Century. When 40% of our fourth graders do not read as well as they should -- when students in Germany or Singapore learn 15 to 20 math subjects in depth each year, while our students often race through 30 to 35 without really learning them at all -- we are not doing what we should to prepare our children for a knowledge economy.

Let's understand why these basics are so important. The point is not merely to teach our children facts and figures, but to teach them the ability to think and reason and analyze -- to give them the tools and skills that will serve them in jobs and careers we cannot even contemplate today.

Maryland is making a good start. You have developed clear standards for what our children should learn by the 3rd, 5th, and 8th grades, in particular in reading and math, and clear tests to measure them, school district by school district, and school by school. You are holding schools accountable for making the grade, rewarding excellence, and intervening in schools that are not performing. Because you have set high standards, Maryland has seen five years of steady, sustained progress in meeting those standards.

But Maryland, and all states, must do more. To compete and win in the 21st Century, we must have a high standard of excellence that all states can agree upon. That is why, in my State of the Union address, I called for national standards of excellence in the basics -- not federal government standards, but national standards, representing what all our students must know to succeed in the 21st Century. I called on every state to test every 4th grader in reading and every 8th grader in math by 1999, to make sure these basic standards are met.

We already have widely-accepted, rigorous national standards in both reading and math -- and widely-used tests based on those standards. In reading, Maryland and more than 40 other states have participated in a test called the National Assessment of Educational Progress -- which measures the state's overall performance against a high national standard of excellence. In math, tens of thousands of students across the country have already taken the Third International Math and Science Study -- a test that reflects the world-class standards our children must meet for the new era. Last month, I visited Northern Illinois, where 8th grade students from 20 school

districts took that test, and tied for first in the world in science and came in second in math. We know it is the right standard -- and we know our children can meet it if they are challenged to do so.

Unfortunately, the current tests don't provide individual scores; they only measure how an entire state is doing. What we need are tests that will measure the performance of each and every student, and each and every school. That way, parents and teachers will know how every child is doing compared to students in other schools, other states, and other countries.

That is why I am presenting a plan to help states meet and measure the highest standards. Over the next two years, our Department of Education will support the development of new tests for 4th grade reading and 8th grade math to show how every student measures up to the existing, widely-accepted standards. The tests will be developed by independent test experts in consultation with leading math and reading teachers. The federal government will not require them, but these tests will be available to every state that chooses to administer them. I believe that every state must participate, and that every parent has a right to honest, accurate information about their child's performance.

To anyone who says that in a country as big as America, we can't possibly have common national tests in the basics, I say: from Maryland to Michigan to Montana, reading is reading and math is math. We have plenty of standardized tests in America today; what we need are tests that reflect standards -- and they are two very different things. If we are serious about holding our children to the highest standards, every state in America must take up our challenge, and test our children in the same rigorous way.

If anyone understands the importance of high standards, it is the businesses that will depend upon our children in the 21st Century. They know that only by ensuring that we have the best-educated, the best-trained, the best-skilled workforce in the world can we compete and win. **Today, I am pleased to announce that National Business Roundtable is endorsing our call for national tests in 4th grade reading and 8th grade math. Together with America's parents, teachers, and lawmakers, they will join our crusade to make American education the best in the world.** I want to offer a special word of thanks to Norman Augustine, CEO of Lockheed Martin and head of the Business Roundtable's Education Task Force, who has done so much to help reform Maryland's schools.

To reach high standards, we must also have the best teachers. For years, educators have worked to establish nationally accepted credentials for excellence in teaching. Just 500 of these teachers have been certified since 1995. My new budget will enable 100,000 to seek national certification as master teachers. We should reward and recognize our best teachers -- quickly and fairly remove those few who don't measure up -- and challenge more of our finest young people to consider teaching as a career.

Raising standards will not be easy. Some of our children will not be able to meet them at first. But good tests will show us who needs help, what changes in teaching we must make, and which schools need to improve. We're not doing right by our students when we set low

expectations. For too long, too many students have moved through our schools who could not read and write at the most basic levels. That is why, in addition to the 4th and 8th grade national tests we are urging, states should develop their own comprehensive benchmarks of what student should know to move up in school, and to graduate from high school. It's time to put an end to social promotions, and make sure a high school diploma really means something -- not to put our children down, but to lift them up.

Throughout my career in public life -- as a Governor, and as President -- I have worked harder on education than on any other issue. That is because renewing education, raising our standards, and lifting up our schools is the embodiment of everything we must do to prepare for the 21st Century -- to promote opportunity, demand responsibility, and build community. Nothing will do more to open the doors of opportunity to every American. Nothing will do more to awaken a sense of responsibility from every American, as they work to make the most of their education. And nothing will do more to build a strong, united community of all Americans -- for if every American has the tools to succeed, we can move forward together, as one America.

When it comes to providing the tools to succeed, our other great challenge is helping to move the permanent underclass into our growing middle class. Working together, we ended the old welfare system. Over the past four years, we worked with 43 states to launch welfare reform experiments, moving a record 2.25 million people off our nation's welfare rolls. Here in Maryland, you used your waiver to move 51,000 people off the welfare rolls in the past two years alone -- placing a special focus on teen parents by linking benefits to school attendance, breaking the cycle of dependency and making responsibility a way of life, not an option. You have answered my call to revoke driver's licenses from those who don't pay child support, to demand responsibility from all parents. Now we have enacted landmark national welfare reform, to make responsibility a way of life all across America.

That legislation brought an end to the old welfare system -- but it was really a new beginning. Now that we have demanded that those on welfare take responsibility, we must all take responsibility to see that the jobs are there, so people on welfare can become permanent members of the workforce. Our goal must be to move two million more Americans off welfare by the year 2000.

I have challenged the nation's businesses to join in this effort, and I have offered a plan to help them: Tax credits and other incentives for businesses to hire people off welfare; incentives for job placement firms and states to create more jobs for welfare recipients; training, transportation, and child care to help people go to work. I urge Maryland's businesses, non-profits, and religious organizations -- large and small -- to heed this important call. Each and every one of us must fulfill our responsibility -- indeed, our moral obligation -- to make sure that those who now must work, can work. I am especially pleased that Maryland's religious community is playing a strong role in providing child care, transportation, and job placement, and working closely with the State to make sure that welfare reform succeeds here.

The most direct and effective steps must be taken by the states. The legislation we passed gives states the authority, for the very first time, to take the money that had been used on welfare

checks, and subsidize private sector paychecks. Missouri began doing this under one of our waivers -- and it is working. Now I challenge every state to follow their example. Use the new flexibility you have been given. Turn those welfare checks into paychecks. There is no better way to find jobs for welfare recipients, or to keep them employed.

Second, I urge you to use the money saved from welfare reform to make sure that even more people can move from welfare to work. I know that Maryland has taken its considerable savings from its own welfare reform efforts, and put them into a special "rainy day" fund to create jobs and move people from welfare to work. If welfare reform is to succeed, all states should use those savings on efforts such as child care, wage subsidies, employment incentives, and other ways to help create private sector jobs for welfare recipients.

I also applaud Maryland for using its own money to continue providing benefits for legal immigrants -- even after the federal bans have taken effect. That's the right thing to do, but you shouldn't have to bear that burden alone. That is why every state and every Governor, Republican or Democrat, should join with me to get Congress to restore basic health and disability benefits when misfortune strikes immigrants who came to this country legally, who work hard, pay taxes and obey the law. To do otherwise is simply unworthy of a great nation of immigrants.

We passed historic welfare reform -- giving states the authority and flexibility they had asked for for years. We were right to do it. Now states must live up to their responsibility, and help us finish the job.

On education reform, on welfare reform, on all our major challenges -- let us build new partnerships across old lines of responsibility. Preparing for the 21st Century is not a job for any one level of government alone. Many of our greatest challenges do not fall under the authority of Washington, nor should they. The power to solve our problems rests with all levels of government, and all sectors of society -- and that is where we must forge our solutions as well.

Together, we must seize this moment of opportunity, and prepare our people for the changes and challenges of a new century. Together, we must renew our basic bargain of opportunity, responsibility, and community, and give everyone the tools to make the most of their own lives. If we rise to that challenge, we will enter the 21st Century full of new promise and possibility, for all who share a stake in the American dream.

Thank you, God bless you, and God bless America.