

Feb. 27 / Administration of George Bush, 1991

Orientation; George Varga, president and chief executive officer of Tungsram Co., Ltd., Hungary; Haile Aguilar, general manager of the Warsaw Marriott Hotel; Drew Lewis, chairman of the board of the Citizens Democracy Corps; David S. Gergen, editor-at-large for U.S. News & World Report; Dep-

uty Secretary of the Treasury John E. Robson; Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence S. Eagleburger; President Vaclav Havel of Czechoslovakia; Bruce S. Gelb, Director of the U.S. Information Agency; and Ronald W. Roskens, Administrator of the Agency for International Development.

Remarks at a Meeting of the American Society of Association Executives

February 27, 1991

Thank you very, very much. And what a wonderful reception. And I interpret that, I think properly, the same way I interpreted the applause at the State of the Union message: as strong support for those men and women that are serving our country overseas. And now the war is almost over, and I think we owe them a vote of thanks, and I think I heard it right now. So, thank you, Bill, and I'm just delighted to be here.

I want to shift and talk about domestic matters. And Bill, I couldn't help but glance at this marvelous quilt coming in here, and I do think that we owe you and all the others in the association a vote of thanks for following through and, indeed, being Points of Light.

I want to salute our Attorney General who is with us today; our two able Secretaries so concerned also about what we're talking about today, Secretaries Kemp and Sullivan; Ted Sanders, who is doing a superb job as our Acting Secretary at Education; and, of course, my old friend, a man so well-known to all of you, Bob Woodson of the Center for Neighborhood Enterprise. You know, it's hard to believe that a year has passed since the challenge Bill mentioned, since I challenged the members of ASAE to channel the tremendous energy of this organization and transform a nation through community service. And what a terrific job you've done.

Looking around the room today, peeking before I came in here, I see so many familiar faces, so many people that are making a difference in the lives of others. Every

man and woman here believes in the power of the individual and is bolstered by the conviction that America is indeed a land of opportunity. For more than 200 years, America has been the home of free markets and free people. And there is no question: Opportunity in America is the envy of the entire world.

The story of America has been the story of opportunity. Throughout our history, we've pioneered the frontiers of liberty for all humanity. Our Founding Fathers created perhaps the most simple yet profound document in modern history: our Constitution and Bill of Rights. Abraham Lincoln broke forever the chains of human slavery. The suffrage movement made the promise of democracy a reality for women. The founders of our public schools unleashed our national potential through universal education. And by their struggle for equal rights, the leaders of the civil rights movement helped bring dignity to the oppressed and disenfranchised. The story of opportunity in America is the story of Thomas Paine and Frederick Douglass, Clara Barton, the Wright brothers, Rosa Parks.

But it doesn't end there, with these heroes from our past. There are the new American heroes of today, many of them in this room. And they, too, are inspired by pride, integrity, faith in the dignity of man, and courage, yes, courage to overcome the odds. It's called leadership by example, and it's made America the world's great beacon of freedom.

These modern visionaries are the ones that are making history, propelling us into the next American century. Theirs is a movement—it's more than 200 years old, as old as the Declaration of Independence—a movement defined by what Jefferson called "the American mind" and what I've been calling "the American idea." It continues to sweep our country today with a vigor as strong as ever. It's a vision driven by the strength and power of the American dream.

And I share that vision, for what is the American dream if it isn't wanting to be part of something larger than ourselves? If it isn't creating a better life for our children than we might have had? If it isn't the freedom to take command of our future? For most people, these aspirations means enjoying the blessings of good health or having a home to call one's own or raising a family, holding a stake in the community, feeling secure, secure at home or in our neighborhood.

But for others, sadly, America has not yet fulfilled the promise of equality of opportunity. We know who they are: They're the hopeless and the homeless, the friendless and the fearful, the unemployed and the underemployed, the ones who can't read, the ones who can't write. They are the ones who don't believe that they will ever share in the American dream.

I'm here to tell any American for whom hope lies dormant: We will not forget you. We will not forget those who have not yet shared in the American dream. We must offer them hope. But we must guarantee them opportunity.

It's been said, "Hope is a waking dream." That awakening begins with learning, understanding the power and potential of individual effort, developing a skill, and with it, independence, earning a living, with dignity and personal growth. More skills mean more freedom, more options for even greater opportunity.

Today, our administration is proposing an agenda to expand opportunity and choice for all. It involves more than six major initiatives across the scope of our entire Government: restoring quality education, ensuring crime-free neighborhoods, strengthening civil and legal rights for all, creating jobs

and new businesses, expanding access to homeownership, and allowing localities a greater share of responsibility. In its entirety, I believe it represents one of the most far-reaching efforts in decades to unleash the talents of every citizen in America.

In several weeks, I will have legislation to enact this agenda on the desk of every Congressman. The administration's educational excellence proposals, by way of example, will put choice in the hands of students and parents so that they can choose the best school to attend. Our higher education system is clearly, unquestionably, the finest in the world: creative, innovative, and highly competitive. From the GI bill to Pell grants, college students already have the power to choose. And now it's time that our education system, all of it, became the finest in the world.

We're also proposing education reforms to build flexibility and accountability into our school systems. We've seen what education reform can do, from East L.A. to East Harlem. We're encouraging Governors to bring together teachers, parents, and administrators to work together to meet the needs of all students. We must cut the dropout rate and ensure that every student in America arrives at school ready to learn and graduates ready to work.

For some time now, the administration has called for the restructuring of American education. We've got to raise our expectations for our students and our schools. But if we're going to ask more of them, it wouldn't be fair to tie the hands of the teachers and principals, particularly those who make a difference. We need responsive schools, customer-driven ones if you will, schools that are more market-oriented and performance-based, because it's time we recognize that competition can spur excellence in our schools. Choice is the catalyst for change, the fundamental reform that drives forward all others. These ideas will stir us and guide us toward meeting the national education goals the Governors and I set up after that famous education summit, because we can't expect to remain a first-class economy if we settle for second-class schools.

Millions of jobs await America's graduates in the coming years. But to fill those jobs,

entrepreneurs will look increasingly to America's minorities—blacks, Hispanics, and Asians—and to people just entering the economic mainstream—workers with disabilities and mothers who have chosen to work outside the home. The majority of those jobs are safer, are cleaner, higher skilled, better paying jobs. And they will go to the ones who have what it takes, a quality education.

Everyone knows the best education takes place in a safe, drug-free environment. It is difficult for children to learn if there's violence in the classroom or crime out in the schoolyard or drug pushers along the way home. And older students and workers find it hard to attend night school or put in late hours at the office because of the danger that darkness brings, especially in crime-ridden neighborhoods.

Low-income Americans are the ones more likely to be intimidated by crime, less likely to be able to take advantage of opportunities that may be across town or even just around the corner. They're the ones defending themselves and their families from the drug dealers and muggers down the hall or down the street. And they're the ones who need opportunity the most.

It is in their name that this battle for the streets of our cities must be waged. The thugs and the gangs and the drug kingpins should be the casualties of this war. Our tactics: mandatory sentences for using a firearm in a violent crime; strengthened protection against sex crimes and child abuse; tough prosecutors; courts that mete out equal justice, swiftly and surely; a prison system that is up to the job. And finally, our strategy must include an unequivocal commitment to our young people. There are meaningful and adventurous alternatives to a life of crime. And it starts with an education, a neighborhood that's safe and secure.

Opportunity is built on these foundations, but the door is opened by one thing: a job. Every American who wants a job should be able to get one. Of course, vestiges of the past remain. Bigotry and discrimination, regrettably, still do exist. But we have powerful legal tools for eliminating discrimination. And remember, the legal guarantees of equality of opportunity are largely in

place: *Brown versus the Board of Education*, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Fair Housing Acts of both 1968 and 1988, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

To assure that every American enjoys the equality of opportunity and access, I am determined to continue the vigorous enforcement of these and of all our civil rights laws. And where our laws need improvement, I am committed to refining them. We will soon introduce legislation with strong new remedies to protect women from sexual harassment and minorities from racial prejudice in the workplace. And I call on the Congress to act promptly on this important initiative. But legislation that only creates a lawyer's bonanza helps no one. We all know where opportunity really begins. As I said above, it begins with a job.

In our hardest hit urban and rural areas our enterprise zone proposal will create new small businesses. We're providing new incentives for employers to hire more workers by eliminating the capital gains tax on businesses in these areas and attracting more seed capital. Our proposals mean economic growth, more minority entrepreneurs, and most importantly, again, jobs.

The American dream also means choosing where to live and, for many working people, owning a home someday. We're offering public housing residents not only control and management of their own community but, for the first time, access to home ownership and private property to gain a stake in their communities. We've asked the Congress to provide much-needed funding for the HOPE program in 1991, to make this opportunity a reality in our inner cities this year. And we're proposing that Americans be allowed to use the money from their IRA's to buy their first home. These initiatives will bring us closer to our goal of 1 million new homeowners by 1992.

You know, there's something reassuring about becoming a part of a neighborhood, a community that pulls together in times of crisis, that looks out for one another. Each community in America is different, and its residents know best how to take care of each other, what the best options are for programs and services for those who need a

hand. And so, we're proposing to allow communities to restructure programs at the local level.

Our strength as a nation lies in the strength of our communities, the sum of our neighborhoods and families, our hopes and dreams for the future. This is our administration's agenda for opportunity. It begins in the heart of every person who believes in freedom and lives on in the American dream. Every man and woman in this room shares its vision. The great poet Carl Sandburg put it this way, "nothing happens unless first a dream." Our mandate is to make the dream a reality.

We face a new century, a new American century. Half a world away, our allied troops face a defining moment in the new world order. And they are succeeding in their battle because each and every one of them possesses a pride in their country, integrity in their cause, and courage in their heart.

Our troops will be home soon, coming home to a grateful nation. And I want to ensure that their return is to a land of equal

opportunity. And just as they have stood to safeguard our freedom, the world's freedom, let us stand with pride, integrity, and courage in our hearts and expand the freedoms of all Americans. It's up to each of us to secure the triumph of the American idea. And that idea is opportunity.

With God's help and yours, we will succeed. Thank you all very much. And may God bless our troops, and may God bless the United States of America.

Note: The President spoke at 11:08 a.m. in the Grand Ballroom at the J.W. Marriott Hotel. In his opening remarks, he referred to R. William Taylor, president of the American Society of Association Executives; Attorney General Dick Thornburgh; Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Jack Kemp; Secretary of Health and Human Services Louis W. Sullivan; Acting Secretary of Education Ted Sanders; and Robert L. Woodson, president of the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise.

Address to the Nation on the Suspension of Allied Offensive Combat Operations in the Persian Gulf

February 27, 1991

Kuwait is liberated. Iraq's army is defeated. Our military objectives are met. Kuwait is once more in the hands of Kuwaitis, in control of their own destiny. We share in their joy, a joy tempered only by our compassion for their ordeal.

Tonight the Kuwaiti flag once again flies above the capital of a free and sovereign nation. And the American flag flies above our Embassy.

Seven months ago, America and the world drew a line in the sand. We declared that the aggression against Kuwait would not stand. And tonight, America and the world have kept their word.

This is not a time of euphoria, certainly not a time to gloat. But it is a time of pride: pride in our troops; pride in the friends who stood with us in the crisis; pride in our nation and the people whose strength

and resolve made victory quick, decisive, and just. And soon we will open wide our arms to welcome back home to America our magnificent fighting forces.

No one country can claim this victory as its own. It was not only a victory for Kuwait but a victory for all the coalition partners. This is a victory for the United Nations, for all mankind, for the rule of law, and for what is right.

After consulting with Secretary of Defense Cheney, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Powell, and our coalition partners, I am pleased to announce that at midnight tonight eastern standard time, exactly 100 hours since ground operations commenced and 6 weeks since the start of Desert Storm, all United States and coalition forces will suspend offensive combat operations. It is up to Iraq whether