

Statement on Signing the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 *May 4, 1994*

Today it is with pride that I sign into law H.R. 2884, the "School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994." The enactment of this legislation fulfills a promise I made to the American people. It is particularly appropriate that the enactment of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 so closely follows the enactment of the "Goals 2000: Educate America Act." These Acts are important milestones on our Nation's journey toward excellence and equity in our schools and workplaces. In particular, the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 will provide a better education for our young people as they progress from school to a first job in a high-skill, high-wage career and to further education or training.

We have failed for too long to give our young people the opportunity and tools to make the critical and challenging transition from school to a first job with a future. Too many students either drop out of school or complete school without the skills they need to succeed in a changing world. They lack a sense of the promise and potential that lies ahead of them. The School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 will help change that.

In today's global economy, a nation's greatest resource—indeed, the ultimate source of its wealth—is its people. To compete and win, our work force must be well-educated, well-trained, and highly skilled. Let me repeat what I said earlier this year: "We are living in a world where what you earn is a function of what you can learn . . . and where there can no longer be a division between what is practical and what is academic."

We all know that low-skilled jobs are becoming scarcer. Those jobs are being replaced by technology or drifting to countries whose workers are eager to labor for a small fraction of American wages. In short, the days of unskilled teenagers leaving high school and finding good-paying factory jobs for life are gone.

The School-to-Work Opportunities Act can help young people adapt to this changing world, making it an important part of my work force strategy. This Act will ensure that during the last 2 years of high school, and typically for at least 1 year beyond, young people will benefit in several ways. They will be able to obtain

quality on-the-job experience combined with classroom instruction, leading to certification in marketable skills. Such well-marked paths to productive roles in the working world will benefit both our young people and the Nation's many businesses anxious for skilled new employees.

This Act is not another top-down mandate for one more Federal program. Under the School-to-Work Opportunities Act, Federal funds will be available, for a limited period, as venture capital to stimulate State and local creativity in establishing statewide School-to-Work Opportunities systems. To promote systemic reform, State and local participants are given a substantial degree of flexibility to experiment and to build upon current promising approaches. All the States' systems will, however, have to share certain common features and basic program components that experience demonstrates are crucial to a quality school-to-work system. Also, by forming local partnerships of individuals who have a stake in their children's future, communities will play an active role in giving American youth access to skills and employment opportunities.

Under this Act, States and communities can build bridges from school to work through programs that provide students with a wide array of learning experiences in the classroom and at work. All School-to-Work Opportunities programs will contain three core components. First, the school-based learning component will include a coherent multi-year program of study tied to high academic and occupational skill standards, such as those to be developed as a result of the recently enacted Goals 2000: Educate America Act. Second, the work-based learning component will provide students with a planned program of job training and work experiences, including workplace mentoring, in a broad range of occupational areas. Third, the connecting activities component will ensure coordination of the work-based and school-based learning components, as well as encourage the active participation of employers. By completing a School-to-Work Opportunities program, a student will earn a high school diploma or its equivalent, a diploma or certificate from a post-

secondary institution (if appropriate), and an industry-recognized skill certificate for competency in an occupational area.

This Act fosters the creation of “partnerships” in local communities that will develop and tailor the local School-to-Work Opportunities programs to the needs and resources of those communities. The partnerships will consist of representatives of many important local interests, such as employers, educators, labor organizations, students, parents, and local government agencies. These partnerships will, starting immediately, foster the design and implementation of a School-to-Work Opportunities system in every State. The partnerships can develop the local program based on promising practices already underway. Together, States and communities will take the lead in determining goals and priorities, developing new strategies, and in measuring progress.

H.R. 2884 was developed by the Administration working closely with the Congress in a spirit

of bipartisan cooperation. This spirit of cooperation will continue on many different levels in the day-to-day operation of the School-to-Work programs. First, the Act will be jointly administered by the Secretaries of Labor and Education. Second, States and communities can work together in developing the various programs that will become part of this system. Third, the formation of the partnership at the local level will allow communities to examine their needs and to address them in a cooperative manner.

Today, with my approval of H.R. 2884, we start on the path to a better future for our Nation’s young people.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
May 4, 1994.

NOTE: H.R. 2884, approved May 4, was assigned Public Law No. 103–239.

Statement on the Implementation of the Israel-Palestinian Declaration of Principles

May 4, 1994

The signing today in Cairo of the agreement to implement the Israel-Palestinian Declaration of Principles marks another milestone in progress toward a lasting peace in the Middle East. On behalf of all Americans, I have called Prime Minister Rabin and Chairman Arafat to congratulate them for this accomplishment. I expressed my high regard for Prime Minister Rabin’s courageous leadership and stressed to Chairman Arafat the importance of moving without hesitation to make this agreement a reality. I also telephoned yesterday and again today President Mubarak to underscore our gratitude and appreciation for the key role he played in making this historic step forward possible.

Now the focus must be on implementing the Declaration of Principles in as rapid and successful a manner as possible. The process of transforming the situation on the ground for the better must begin. The promise of a new future of hope for Israelis and Palestinians alike must now be realized. I assured Prime Minister Rabin and Chairman Arafat that the United States would do everything possible to help make this happen.

Building on the progress achieved today and our ongoing discussions with parties in the region, I am hopeful that this can be the year of breakthrough to a lasting and comprehensive peace for all the peoples of the Middle East.