

Remarks on the Education Technology Initiative in Union City February 15, 1996

Thank you very much. Mr. Vice President, thank you for that introduction and for your leadership to advance the technological revolution in America and especially to bring its benefits to all of our children. Thank you, Mr. Mayor; Superintendent Highton; Senator Lautenberg; Congressman Menendez; Secretary of Education Klagholz; Bob Fazio, the principal of this fine high school; I'm glad he's not running for President this year. *[Laughter]*

Jim Cullen, the vice chairman of Bell Atlantic, thank you so much for everything you have done to make this school district a success, and the work you have done throughout this State and throughout your area of service. To the folks at Bergen Academy and Secretary Riley and to others joining us on the information superhighway, including students from 65 schools in 3 counties—and I believe Congressman Torricelli is out there in cyberspace somewhere—it's nice to have all of you with us. And let me say a special word of thanks to the parents, the teachers, and the students of this school and the Bergen Academy who joined us today to talk about what all this means to our children and our future. And let me ask us all to give a special word of recognition to the two students who just spoke, who must have been somewhat nervous but did not betray it, Marlon Grenados and Tonya Nagahwatte; they did a great job.

I'm very glad to be back in New Jersey and in Union City. All of you know that the Vice President and I came here today because this school system is undergoing a remarkable transformation. I want the rest of the country to know about it, and I want everybody in the country to be able to emulate it. Let me begin by acknowledging the contributions of Congressman Bob Menendez, who was formerly mayor here, a true native son of Union City, a sponsor of the New Jersey Telecommunications Act in 1991 that set the stage for the remarkable events we are celebrating today.

The rebirth of Union City and your schools reminds us that we do live in an age of great possibility if people are willing to work together to make the most of it. More Americans from all walks of life will have more chances to live

up to their dreams than at any time in our Nation's history. New technologies are opening prospects for vast new areas of human activity that will bring prosperity. A growing global marketplace is putting a premium on the kind of ingenuity and skills Americans can contribute to the present and the future.

But let's face it, we also know that this new era is a time of great new challenges, putting new pressures on families that are not particularly well equipped to deal with it. More and more of our citizens are living better, but more and more of our families are working harder and harder just to keep up. They justifiably wonder if they and their children will be winners in this new age, or if they will be left behind in some downsizing or in some job in which they never get a raise.

After what I have seen today, I believe more strongly than ever before the answer to the problems of those who are not yet benefiting from the information age is not to try to put walls up or turn around and go back, it is to keep going forward until every child and every family in every home, in every workplace can see what we are seeing here today.

You know, in the State of the Union Address I talked about the importance of the budget discussions we have been having in Washington for the last year, the need to finish the work of balancing the budget but to do it in a way that recognizes our obligations to our future through investments in education and environmental protection, and that recognizes our obligations to our families and to our larger American family, including those who through no fault of their own need help from all of us, and that's why we ought to preserve the Medicare and Medicaid programs. But I also said there, and I would like to reiterate here, I believe there is a broad bipartisan consensus in this country to continue the work until we have eliminated this permanent deficit, until we are living within our means, until we are committed, all of us, in living on a balanced budget.

So what we have to do now is look to the future. In that address, I outlined what I believe are the seven great challenges facing America if we want all Americans to have a chance at

the American dream and if we want to grow together, not be driven apart. We must build stronger families and better childhoods. We must have better education; we must make sure all of our children—every single one of them—has access to the educational opportunities of the present and the future. We must build economic security for every single working family genuinely willing to work for it to hook into that future so that they will not be left behind. We must continue the fight to make our streets safer until crime in America is once again the exception, not the rule. We must work to clean up our environment while we grow our economy and forever dispose of the myth that you cannot have a strong economy unless you are destroying your environment; we cannot afford any more of the luxury of pretending that that is true. We must continue to work to lead the world toward a direction that is more peaceful and free. And finally, our Government must be one that serves and works and earns your trust, instead of your distrust.

I think it is fair to say that none of those goals can be achieved unless we are successful in improving the quality of education for all Americans. We will do this through a partnership, not through big Government. The high-tech information age means that all large bureaucracies will be restructured, that more decisions will be pushed down to the grassroots, that people will be able to make more decisions for themselves.

But we dare not go back to an era when all of our people were left to fend for themselves. We have to go forward together with teamwork, just the way Union City has gone forward together with teamwork to have this remarkable educational achievement we celebrate today. I thank Congressman Menendez for what he said in echoing the title of the First Lady's book, which I'm pretty proud of. He is right, it does take a whole village to raise and educate our children. And it takes all of us to meet all these common challenges.

That's what Union City is an example of. That's why we wanted to come here today. I loved looking into the eyes of young people in the meeting which we just came from and hearing one of them say, you know, the thing about this technology is we can all achieve. It doesn't matter whether we're the richest family in the State or not. It doesn't matter what our background is. It doesn't matter if our parents

came here just a few years ago. This is the great equalizer. We can have high standards and high expectations and we can all make it if we work together. That is the message America needs to heed today.

For 3 years, working with our distinguished Education Secretary, Dick Riley—who may not be a cheerleader in his next life—[laughter]—but has been a terrific cheerleader for America's children for the last 3 years and, indeed, even before—we have worked on a simple strategy for education. We believe in high standards. We believe in high expectations. We believe in high levels of opportunity. We believe in high technology. And we believe the doors of college should be open to every single American citizen.

We have worked hard to expand Head Start; to implement the Goals 2000 program, which gives to States and school districts the ability to advance toward high national standards through grassroots reforms, like public school choice or even letting teachers start their own public schools or doing things like you have done here that can't be done everywhere in the beginning. We have worked to create a network of school-to-work programs to help young people who don't go on to college immediately to at least find good jobs and to continue their education when they leave high school. We have set challenges to schools to recognize that they must impart the basic values that keep our society together, through character education and teaching good values and good citizenship.

All these things we have done. We have expanded Pell grants and created a new direct lending program that makes it easier for young people to borrow money for college and easier for them to repay it. Our AmeriCorps program is now giving 25,000 young Americans a chance to work in their communities to solve problems at the grassroots and earn money for college.

But we have to do more. In the State of the Union I proposed giving a \$1,000 merit scholarship to the top 5 percent of every high school graduating class, to expand work-study to include a million students so more people can work their way through college. And if we are going to cut taxes, what better way to do it than to give a tax deduction of up to \$10,000 to every American family for the cost of college tuition? That would be a good way to cut taxes.

But we know that none of these things will work until we bring the information and technology revolution into every school, and through

the schools, into the homes of every school student in the United States of America. You heard the Vice President say he was in Philadelphia yesterday to celebrate the birthday of ENIAC, the first computer. He was too delicate to say it's 50 years old this year, and it was born in the same year I was. [Laughter] The computer and I this year will become eligible to join the American Association of Retired Persons. I don't know about the computer, but I hope I don't quite qualify this year. [Laughter]

Let me just say, when I was the age of the students here—let me just give you some examples of what has happened in this 50 years. When I was the age of the students that we met with today, the big technological breakthroughs were Technicolor movies and stereo music. I can remember when 3-D movies came out and you got to wear little glasses to look at the movies. And we really thought that was hot stuff, that we had to put glasses on to see movies that looked like real people. I remember when color televisions and cellular telephones and computers that could fit on somebody's desk were science fiction; nobody could even imagine it.

For our young people today, that all seems like ancient history, not science fiction. They interact with computers at the supermarket, at the checkout counter, in video arcades, in their homes. You know, to them it's all second nature. I'd venture to say that at least half the adults in this room have learned more about computers from their kids than from any other source.

But it's a real misfortune that not every schoolroom in America has the computers we celebrate today here and at the Bergen Academy. That is wrong. And that's why I have issued this challenge to our Nation to form a national partnership to make sure every young American has access to the future through the information superhighway.

When I was young, I thought the future was there for every American who would work for it. It turned out to be true for my generation. It will be true for this generation, too, and it will be a bigger, brighter, broader future, but only if we bring the benefits of the information revolution to every single one of them.

Bob Menendez talked about the achievements of this school district. But think about it: Not so long ago this school system was on the brink of a State takeover under New Jersey's law, that actually has a lot to recommend it, saying that

if students aren't learning, the State should have a right to move in. But you rescued it. And you did it the way we have to meet our challenges, everybody working together, everyone doing their part: the board of education voting to modernize, Bell Atlantic making all the contributions it made linking up the schools, the State of New Jersey helping with its resources, teachers and experts writing a new curriculum, parents actually coming here for weekend training taught by a teacher and her students, parents who now can work with their children at home on the computer.

And the students have taken this opportunity and this responsibility. They feel empowered, and they know it makes learning more fun. You know that with the computers in the classroom and at home, linked together, homework is being done in a new way; classrooms, lessons take on a new life; parents and teachers can keep in touch by E-mail. Test scores have gone up, and truancy and dropout rates have gone down. In the words of the Vice President that he coined 4 years ago, everything that should be up is up and everything that should be down is down. And that's the way it ought to be all over America.

We're not just talking about an option that it would be nice for schools to have. Over 130 recent academic studies have shown clearly that the use of technology in support of instruction has led to higher achievement in language, in art, in math, in social studies, and of course, in science. We have dramatic proof of the power of technology to expand opportunity for our young people. We have to harness that power and spread it throughout this country.

In the State of the Union, I called on Americans to join in this national mission to make every child technologically literate, to connect every classroom and library in our country by the dawn of the 21st century, which is just a few years away, to connect them with quality computers, trained teachers, creative software. We must do everywhere what you have done here.

We are making real progress. We are bringing companies and volunteers together in California to wire 20 percent of those schools this year alone. And the Vice President and I are going out there in a few days to celebrate that. And in the telecommunications bill which I signed last week, there is a requirement for companies to provide a discount for connecting all of our

classrooms and libraries to the information superhighway. And I thank the people in Congress who unanimously—almost unanimously—passed that bill, and the industries that supported it. We must all continue to do our part.

But our National Government must do its part, too. Consistent with the recommendations of the National Information Infrastructure Advisory Committee, which I appointed and which recently issued its last reports—full of communications executives and others expert in communication around our country—I am today announcing a major initiative to energize our people to work to fulfill that mission even more quickly. I am proposing in my present budget, paid for in the balanced budget, a \$2 billion technology literacy challenge that will put the future at the fingertips of every child in every classroom in America.

The two Members of Congress here present are in a unique position to support this endeavor: Senator Lautenberg, because before he became a Senator he was in the information business, and he saw the possibilities of computers, and he knows it should be used to do more

than make successful businesses, it should make successful students; and Congressman Menendez, because of what he has done with you here.

Together, working with like-minded Democrats and Republicans, we can make this America's cause. We can do this. We can have computers in every classroom. We can have all students eager to learn. We can have the face of every single child light up, and we can know that down deep inside every child can believe again that he or she—no matter what their background, no matter what their economic challenges—can fulfill the mission that they have the capacity to fulfill. We can do this. We can do it together, and I believe we will.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:30 a.m. in the gymnasium at St. Michael's Academy. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Bruce D. Walter of Union City; Tom Highton, superintendent, Union City School District; and Leo Klagholz, New Jersey secretary of education.

Statement on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Report on Tobacco and Youth

February 15, 1996

This week at the White House, I heard directly from a group of children about the easy access and allure of cigarettes.

This report is further evidence that parents need all the help they can get in their daily struggle to keep our kids tobacco-free.

Every day, more than 3,000 young people become regular smokers. Nearly a thousand of them will have their lives shortened because of tobacco-related illnesses. Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in this country, con-

tributing to more than 30 percent of all cancer deaths.

Let me be clear: This administration will continue to lead the fight to help parents protect children from the hazards of tobacco addiction.

NOTE: The Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released the report entitled "Accessibility of Tobacco Products to Youths Aged 12–17 Years—United States, 1989 and 1993" on February 16.