

So I'm very hopeful, I'm very excited, and I hope that now we can just hear from you. And Mr. Swearingen, I think you're going to run this show, so——

Carl Swearingen. We'll try, sir.

The President. ——the floor is yours.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:17 p.m. in the Physical Education Athletic Complex at Augusta State University. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Zell Miller of Georgia and Carl Swearingen, chairman, Georgia's Partnership for Excellence in Education. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks at Augusta State University in Augusta February 5, 1997

Thank you so much, Tanya. She did a great job, didn't she? Let's give her a hand. I thought she was terrific. *[Applause]*

Dr. Bloodworth, thank you for making me feel so welcome here at Augusta State today. I must say, when I came in, Dr. Bloodworth had his whole family there, and you can't say that he's not trying to practice what he preaches. His son, Paul, has a Georgia HOPE scholarship, and his daughter, Nicole, was an AmeriCorps volunteer last year. If we could get everybody to follow that lead, we'd have no problems at all in America within no time. That's great.

I thank Mayor Sconyers for coming to meet me at the airport and for being here. He made a politician's promise. He promised that I would get some good barbecue before I left town, and I'm going to see if he keeps it.

I thank the many members of the Georgia Legislature who are here, and I know they have a pivotal role in education. My good friend Commissioner Tommy Irvin, I thank him for being here. I thank Secretary Riley for being willing to serve as Education Secretary. He has established a remarkable record already, and we just got started. And I thank him.

I thank Senator Coverdell and Congressman Norwood for coming down here with me on Air Force One today, along with Senator Cleland. I have to tell you this. I've known Max Cleland for a long time; I admire him for many things. When we go back home on Air Force One today, he will be landing at Andrews Air Force Base for the first time since he landed there as a terribly wounded veteran from the Vietnam war. He has come a long way, and we are proud of him.

I'd like to thank the other students who are here from the Augusta Technical Institute and

its president, Terry Elam; Dr. Francis Tedesco and the students of the Medical College of Georgia; Dr. Shirley Lewis and the students of Payne College; and of course, the students and faculty of Augusta State. Thank you for being here.

When I arrived today, to read the local paper, I was wondering if any of you would come, because the local paper had a history of Presidents coming to Augusta, and there were so many and they came so often, I thought this might just be another day at the office. *[Laughter]* I read that my very first predecessor, George Washington, visited a precursor of your school, the Richmond School, in 1791—Richmond Academy. And he, George Washington, apparently did not give a speech; instead, he sat through oral exams. *[Laughter]* I'm glad you're letting me talk today. *[Laughter]* After the State of the Union last night, I'm so tired I couldn't pass any exam, written or oral. But it's certainly good to be at a place where no one I hear speaking has an accent. *[Laughter]*

In my State of the Union Address last night, I sought to challenge all of you to rise to the moment of preparing America for the 21st century. What I want all of you to understand is two things.

Number one, we really are moving into a time where more people from more walks of life will have a chance to rise higher and to live out more of their dreams than at any time in history. You must believe that. That is true—not a guarantee but a chance.

Number two, we all tend to think that the times we live in are normal. If you look at the whole sweep of human history, if you look at the whole sweep of American history, this is a highly unusual time. Why? Because we now

enjoy both prosperity and peace, but we're living in a time of such change we can't afford to just sit back and enjoy it, because the speed at which we're changing the way we work and live and relate to each other and the rest of the world is so great and its scope is so profound that we have lots of work to do.

But this is a blessing, not a curse. Very rarely have our people in this country ever had the freedom just to come together and totally shape our own future, unforced by a war, unforced by domestic turmoil, unforced by depression. We can sit here and construct a future for the children of America that is better than any time in all of human history, and we had better get at the work of doing it.

I came here today for some good reasons. Senator Cleland mentioned that President Roosevelt used to come to Georgia a lot, to Warm Springs. When Roosevelt came here and saw the plight of so many Georgians living in abject poverty, he got the inspiration to electrify rural America. For us it's hard to imagine today. Most families are wondering whether they can afford a computer in their home. When Roosevelt came to Georgia, a lot of families couldn't turn on a light. And he had this inspiration that electricity ought to be given to something besides people who lived in the cities. And the rural electrification effort was born, out of the inspiration he saw in Georgia.

And now, as we prepare for the new century, we have to give people another way to turn the lights on. We have to give everybody the tools to make the most of their own lives. And the most important thing we can do is to give people a good education, not just in terms of what they know but to put all of our people in a position that they can keep on learning for a lifetime. And that's why I came to Georgia, because Governor Miller, with the HOPE scholarship, with the pre-kindergarten program, with the commitment to hook up all your schools to the Internet, with all the other initiatives, has turned the lights on, and America is seeing the light.

It is no secret that I am a great admirer of your Governor. He spoke for me in New York in 1992 and talked about the house his mother built with her own hands. And with his thick Georgia accent, he pierced the deafest ears of people who never heard anybody talk like that before. [*Laughter*] And no one who heard that speech will ever forget the vivid image of

his mother crossing the creek with the rocks in her hand.

Governor Miller is the son of a teacher. He became a teacher himself. He's given his life to bringing education to every child here. But he has something else that's very important and embodied in that Marine Corps pin he wears on his lapel every day. Whatever he decides to do, he does with the same conviction and intensity and doggedness that he showed when he was a member of the United States Marines. And I'm glad he's fighting for you and your future, and I'm grateful that he's fought for me.

I also want to say to you something else. In the world in which we are living, we can do things together that will create the opportunities for people to make a great deal of their lives. But you will have to work harder to make more of it than the people did when rural electrification came in. We could come together and set up an authority and run those powerlines out and then all people had to do was flip a switch and the lights came on. Now we can come together and create the greatest structure of education in the world, but you can't just flip a switch. You have to go to work. You have to make the most of those opportunities.

No one can force-feed an education. People have to want it badly, deeply, in a way that makes learning not only important but fun. But it is work, and it is work that every American citizen must be prepared to do for himself or herself and with all of our children, every single one of them.

Last year I had the opportunity to speak at Princeton University in New Jersey. It was a great honor for me because they only ask the President to speak every 50 years, when they celebrate a 50th anniversary, and I just sort of fell into it. But I talked to them about how important it was for people not to believe that America's future rested solely on the young people who would graduate from our most elite institutions of higher education, that America's future rested on our ability to give everybody a higher education.

And I asked Governor Miller to go up there with me, and there we were, two southern boys sort of ogling the Ivy League. And I asked the people of Princeton to support taking Georgia's HOPE scholarship national, to give hope to all of America with a HOPE scholarship in every State, in every community. That's what I asked the Congress to approve last night: \$1,500 tax

credit to make a typical community college or other 2-year program available to virtually everyone in the United States and a \$10,000 tax deduction for the cost of any tuition after high school at any program, undergraduate or graduate, and an expanded IRA you can withdraw from tax-free for education, and the biggest increase in Pell grants in 20 years. We can educate America with that program.

But I ask you to remember, too, that last night I said there were 10 principles to this program. Secretary Riley, in no time at all given the miracles of modern technology, has got them written up for us here. We'll be glad to send you a copy if you want one. But there are 10 things we have to do. Even though we're balancing the budget and cutting spending, I recommended \$51 billion for education, by far the biggest amount of money the National Government has ever committed to education.

But it is not enough. And briefly, let me say to you that there are other things we must do, the most important of which is to make up our minds that we are finally going to achieve international excellence in education and that we do believe that all our children can learn. A lot of people don't believe that. I believe people perform according to their expectations, their support, and how we treat them and what we offer them.

We should begin with the proposition that every 8-year-old should be able to read, every 12-year-old should be able to get on to the Internet, every 18-year-old should be able to go on to college, every adult should keep on learning for a lifetime. We must start with the elemental principle that there should be national standards of excellence in education—not Federal Government standards, not something that takes away local control, not something that undermines the State's role in leading the way in education—but algebra is the same in Georgia as it is in Utah. We have to set up national standards for what every student must learn.

Teachers should be trained to help students meet these standards. There should be national tests reflecting the standards. All the teachers will understand this when I say it: There are lots of standardized tests; what we need are tests that reflect standards. And they're two very different things. Every State by 1999 should agree not only to have high standards but to have all their fourth graders take a national test, the same one, in reading, and all their eighth

graders take a national test, the same one, in mathematics.

If you saw last night, if you watched the State of the Union, you know that there were 20 school districts that did something a lot of school districts wouldn't dare do, in northern Illinois. They agreed to go together to try to achieve international excellence in math and science for their eighth graders, and they agreed to take, with students from all over the world, the Third International Math and Science Survey. It is truly an international test reflecting what students should know worldwide at that point in their careers.

And the kids from those 20 school districts who took the test—a representative sample of them—of all their students—they tied for first in science and tied for second in math. But what I told them after the speech was over is I'd have been proud of them if they had finished dead last, because they had the courage to say, "We want to know how we stand against what we have to know." And I want you to support everybody in America doing that.

A lot of this intellectual work is like every other kind of work. We have to set the standards high and then train to meet the standards. People who work out can't do 100 pushups the first time they try. Not every student, not every school district, not every State will do all that well on these examinations the first time they're given. That is not the point. The point is to find out what we know and what we need to learn. We're not trying to put anybody down. We've got a whole country to lift up to a new century where learning will determine our future.

The second thing we have to do is to value our teachers more, to train them better and support them more. Many of our finest educators have worked hard to establish a system of national credentials for excellence in teaching. Five hundred master teachers have been certified by the national board since 1995. I offered a budget to the Congress last night that would permit 100,000 more teachers to be certified, so we could have at least one teacher in every school in America who had been through a rigorous training program that that teacher could then share with every other teacher in the school, to support the teachers who are going to determine the quality of education of our children.

The third thing I want to do is to do more to help our children read. There was a story in the press a couple of days ago which pointed out that we now have four school districts in America where the children in the school districts speak as their native tongue over 100 different languages. You want me to say that again? That's unbelievable, isn't it? Four. Atlanta—I don't know how many tongues there are, but Atlanta is the headquarters to more international companies than any other city in the country. They must have 50 or 60 there.

Now, one consequence of this, along with increasing poverty over the last 20 years of young children, is that 40 percent of our 8-year-olds can't read at grade level. And that simply means they can't read a third-grade book by themselves, 4 out of 10. How many are capable of doing it with the brain they've got up there? Nearly all of them. You must believe this; otherwise we're just up here talking to ourselves. Nearly all of them are capable of doing this.

So we have a lot of work to do, and our schools cannot do it all alone. We need more help from the parents, but we also need more help from the rest of us. I am committed to mobilizing a citizen army of a million people to be trained as tutors and to be willing to tutor children in every community in this country so that by the year 2000 every 8-year-old can pick up a book and say, "I can read this book all by myself." And I want you to help us do it.

We're going to use a lot of our AmeriCorps volunteers to mobilize the system, but we need a million people. I have asked that at least 100,000 of the 200,000 new work-study slots that we created in last year's budget be devoted to college students who are willing to work as tutors. And last night I said 60 presidents have already pledged thousands of their work-study students to do that. I hope some of you in this room today will say, "I'd be honored to try to teach a child to read so that child can have the same opportunity I have today to be a student in a university." I hope you will do that. Your country needs you to do that.

The fourth point I want to make is that we have to start teaching children very early. Georgia has what I believe is the most extensive pre-kindergarten program in the United States. Good for you. Good for you. We have extended Head Start coverage to 3-year-olds in the last couple of years. And that's a very good thing.

But we have to begin even earlier. We now know that children's brains develop more than half of their capacity—not what they know but their capacity to learn—within the first 4 years. We now know that a child with parents who have confidence that they can help that child and understand what they're supposed to do will get as many as 700,000 positive contacts from the parents in the first 4 years of life. A child with a parent who feels ill-equipped for the job, who has no idea what to do, who desperately loves her child but just doesn't know, may have given that child as few as 150,000 positive contacts in the first 4 years. You tell me which child is going to be better when they're 18, given what we know now from these scientists.

So we have got to support, all of us, everything we can do to help get out there and convince parents, even if they don't have a good education, they can do something very important for their children from the day they are born. That is my wife's strong commitment and mine. We're going to bring together scientists and educators from all over America this spring at a conference on early childhood development and the brain. And we're going to try to take all these new discoveries, so that when our children do get to school, the teachers will be able to do what they want to do with them, because they have been given the opportunity to develop in a wholesome, positive way in the first 3 or 4 years of their lives. And I hope you will support everything that is being done here to that end.

Next we want to support more innovation in our public schools. And I want to compliment Georgia for its magnet schools and for the charter school program you've just started. It's unfamiliar to most Americans, but basically charter schools are public schools that are free from some of the rules and regulations that other schools have to follow, created by teachers, parents, and others with a certain mission. But they can exist only as long as they fulfill the mission. If they don't produce educational excellence, they don't keep their charter. And Georgia is leading the way there, too.

Last night I asked the Congress to give me enough funds to support 3,000 of those schools. That's 7 times as many as there are in the United States today. But that, again, is an important part of innovation. Eventually, we need to get to the point where every school is just

like these charter schools—every school is just like these magnet schools. They all have their own personality; they only have their own culture; they have their own standards; and they work. But the best way to do it is to create models in every school district of the United States, and that's what the charter school movement will do. And that's another reason I'm very proud of the State of Georgia for trying to lead the way.

The next point I want to make is—somebody has got a sign up there to say they have a middle school and they wear school uniforms. Hold that sign up there. "Mr. President, Glen Hills Middle School Wears Uniforms." Thank you very much. Stand up without the sign. Stand up. There you go, good for you. [Applause] Thank you. Now, I promise we did not organize this. I didn't even know they were going to be there. [Laughter]

Last night I said our schools need to teach character education. We need to teach young people to be good citizens. And we need to support these schools when they try to find their own way to do that. Schools that require school uniforms, that's one way to do that. I've been in school districts where the crime rate dropped, the violence in the school dropped, the dropout rate dropped, and the wealthier kids as well as the poorer kids liked it better when they adopted their own uniform of their own choosing in a way that helped them preserve order in the schools. That's one way of creating school identity. It normally works in grade school and junior high better than high school, for obvious reasons, but it can have a positive impact.

The point is that we need to recognize that our schools are molding the character of our young people, and we should not discourage them. One of the best things Secretary Riley has done, of all the wonderful things he's done, is to get out here and push the teaching of character education and to try to make it clear that we do not have to have a value-free environment in schools. That is cancerous. We should have a valued environment in the schools. And I thank him for that, and I know you believe that.

The seventh thing we're trying to do is help the school districts that are absolutely overwhelmed with growth, with a lot of buildings that are falling down, get out of the hole they're in. The National Government's never done this before, and I wouldn't be doing it now, but

we have 52 million public school students, the largest number in history, with more buildings falling down than any time in history. I've been in school districts where half the kids were going to class in trailers outside the regular building.

And we need to do what we can to support local efforts. So if people at the local level are willing to put up their funds to try to build the buildings and repair the buildings that the schools need, we want to be in a position to support what they're doing. And we think with a modest expenditure we can help to spark \$20 billion more in school construction and repair over the next 4 years. And that's what we intend to do, and I hope you'll support that.

Just two other points very quickly. Learning has got to become a lifetime endeavor. Ask someone who works in a bank whether it's different being a bank teller today than it was 10 years ago. Go into any working environment and see how different it is now from the way it was just a few years ago. I spent a lot of time working with law enforcement. Do you want to know one reason that the crime rate's dropped in America for 5 years in a row for the first time in years and years and years—is that our law enforcement officers in a lot of our bigger cities where the crime rate's very high have become basically high-tech managers of criminal justice resources to support local neighborhoods. In New York, they had a precipitous drop in the crime rate when they realized that they could have computer reports every single day of every offense in that vast city, put it up on a map, study the patterns of crime, and put the police into the neighborhood working with the people—changing it on a daily basis.

Every kind of work is different. That's why I have asked the Congress to pass what I call a "GI bill"—you heard Max Cleland talking about the GI bill—what I call a "GI bill" for America's workers.

We've got 70 different training programs the Federal Government has put up for people who are unemployed or underemployed over time. Every one of them had a good justification. Today, we don't need that anymore. Nearly every American is within driving distance of a community college or another community-based educational institution like this one—nearly every American. So I say get rid of that, put the money in a pot, send a skill grant to every adult who's eligible for it, and let that man

or woman figure out where to get the best education. They'll figure it out in no time, and it will be a place like Augusta State. That's what will happen. And I hope you will ask your Members of Congress to support that.

Last thing I want to say is this. We have got to do what Governor Miller plans to do here; we have got to harness the full force of technology to every school in the United States. Now, I have this argument all the time with people my age who aren't very good on a computer—that includes me; I'm not saying they aren't and I am—but a lot of people come up to me and they say, "Now, Mr. President, I like your education program, but I think you're overdoing this Internet deal. I mean, you know, what good is the Internet if people can't read and write?" The point is that a lot of these kids will be more interested in learning to read and write if they have access to technology. And if we hook up all of our schools to the Internet, it will mean that for the very first time in the entire history of the United States of America, the kids in the poorest schools, the kids in the most isolated rural schools, and the kids in the wealthiest schools will all have access to the same universe of knowledge in the same way at the same time. That's never happened in the history of the country before. It will revolutionize what it means to be a student. And it will also say to all these kids that now feel like nobody cares about them, "You're just as important as anybody else. You matter. You can learn whatever you want. You can be whatever you want to be."

This is not about technology. This is about unleashing the power of the human mind that resides in every single one of our young people. So I say, what Zell Miller is doing here in Georgia will put you ahead of the pack, but the most important thing is, it may make everyone in America want to do this even faster than I thought we could do it. Every class, every school—eventually every home will have a connection to every school through a computer.

And let me just give you one example. I visited a school district in New Jersey that was doing so poorly the State was literally going to shut it down and take it over. Most of the students were lower income. Many of them were from first-generation immigrant families whose parents did not speak English. And I saw the Bell Atlantic phone company, along with

some other companies, go in there, put computers in all the classrooms, give them to all the kids and to a lot of the children who were having trouble, actually put personal computers in the homes and teach the parents, the immigrant parents, how to E-mail the teachers and the principals.

And you say, "Why are they doing all that? These people need to learn to read, write, count, speak basic English." All I know is, 3 years later this school district that was going to be shut down had a lower dropout rate, a higher graduation rate, and higher test scores than the average in the State of New Jersey, which has the second highest per capita income in the United States of America. Don't tell me all of our kids can't learn. They can learn if we do it right and we help them and we support them.

But again I say, we have a limited amount of time. You don't know how long America can go in a state of prosperity and peace where everything looks rosy to the country. You don't know how long we can go still tolerating in a passive way the loss of as many kids as we're losing to crime, to drugs, to all the problems we have. We don't have a lot of time. There really are just a few days over 1,000 days until the year 2000. But very few societies in all human history have had the opportunity we have to have peace, prosperity, opportunity, and the chance to forge our own future.

This is a call to action. I am committed to doing my part. You must do yours.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 3 p.m. in the Physical Education Athletic Complex. In his remarks, he referred to Tanya Davis, chair, student senate, who introduced the President, and William Bloodworth, Jr., president, Augusta State University; Mayor Larry Sconyers of Augusta; Tommy Irvin, Georgia commissioner of agriculture; Terry Elam, president, Augusta Technical Institute; Francis J. Tedesco, president, Medical College of Georgia; and Shirley Lewis, president, Payne College. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks at the National Prayer Breakfast February 6, 1997

Thank you very much, Congressman Barrett. I want to thank you for making it possible for me to follow Dr. Carson. [Laughter] And that business about worrying about whether the Secret Service would take you away if you talked too long, if that were true I wouldn't be here today. I'd be long gone. [Laughter] That biochemical description of—I got a real problem; I can't remember my home phone number anymore. [Laughter]

Senator Akaka, Mr. Speaker, Congressman Gephardt, to all the Members of Congress and the Governors who are here and our leaders and visitors from other lands and ministers and citizens from the United States. I've had a wonderful day today. I would like not to pour cold water on the day, but just as you go through the day I would like to ask all of you to remember the heartbreaking loss that our friends in Israel have sustained in the last couple of days with 73 of their finest young soldiers dying in that horrible accident in the air.

I would like to also say that, like all of you, I was very elevated by this experience, as I always am. I thought Dr. Carson was wonderful. I thought the Scriptures were well chosen. I appreciate Doug Coe and all the people who work on the prayer breakfast so much.

I would like to just say a couple of things very briefly. In my Inaugural Address and again in my State of the Union, I quoted Isaiah 58:12, which Reverend Robert Schuller sent to me a few days before I started my second term, to remind us that we should all be repairers of the breach. And it's a very moving thing. And basically the political press here read it in the proper way; they said Clinton wants the Republicans and Democrats to make nice to each other and do constructive things.

But then I got to thinking about who is it that's in the breach. Who has fallen between the cracks? If we repaired the breach, who would we be lifting out of the hole? And very briefly, I'd like to just mention three things and to ask you not only to pray for these three groups of people but also to do something about it. I don't know about you, but whenever I hear somebody like Dr. Carson speak, I can clap better than anybody in the audience. Then the

next day, when I get up and try to live by what he said I was supposed to do, it turned out to be harder than it was to clap. So I would like to ask you to think about who is in the breach, if we're supposed to be repairers of the breach.

The first group of people that are in the breach are the poor in America, and they're different then they used to be. When I was a boy, most poor people were old. In 1995, we learned last year, we had the lowest rate of poverty among older Americans in the history of the country. We have succeeded in taking them out of poverty, virtually all of them. We should be proud of that and grateful. Today, almost all the poor are young, very young people without much education, a lot of mothers like Dr. Carson's mother, struggling, doing the best they can to raise their kids.

We just passed this welfare reform bill which I signed and voted for because I believed it. And we did it because we believed that the welfare system had gone from being a system that helped the poor to help themselves to move off welfare, to a system that trapped people because the family unit has changed and there are so many single parents out there having children, and there isn't the stigma on it there used to be. And a lot of people now seem to be stuck on that system from generation to generation. So we changed it—we didn't change it; we tore it down. We threw it away. We said, "There's no longer a national guarantee that you can always get a check from the Government just because you're poor and you've got little babies in your home. Now the kids can have health care and we'll give them food, but you don't get an income check every month. And you've got to go to work if you're able to."

So the people that are in the breach are the people that we say have to go to work, who want to go to work, who can't go to work. And you have to help us repair the breach. Two and a quarter million people moved off the welfare rolls in the last 4 years. A million of them, more or less, were adults who went to work; the others were their children—a million out of 11 million new jobs created.