

some reciprocal effort. But it has to be reciprocal. We can't—I don't think, after what happened to those people, I don't think that—I don't have any confidence that a unilateral gesture would have any success.

Now, I would be interested to see how the Pope's visit goes and what happens there. I'm very encouraged that he's going. I was encouraged that the Cuban people were permitted to observe Christmas. And we'll just see what happens. I've got—the Pope is a very persuasive fellow and he, after all, is the voice of God

to those of us who believe that. And we hope that he does well.

I've got to run. I'm sorry. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:18 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Alan and Susan Patricof; Greek immigrant Dimitrious Theofanis and his son, Nick; Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and Pope John Paul II.

Remarks at Mission High School in Mission, Texas

January 9, 1998

Thank you. Good morning. Well, first of all, weren't you proud of Elizabeth? Did she do a great job or what? *[Applause]* And she looked so tall standing here. *[Laughter]* Thank you, Elizabeth.

You know, there's been a lot of exciting things in Mission in the last couple of weeks. The valley got its first snowfall in 40 years, and, you know, all these limousines and cars descending on the area—to get an unexpected visit from Koy Detmer.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to be here. I have so many people to thank, but I want to start with Congressman Hinojosa, who has been a great friend of yours, a great Representative, and a great ally of mine to expand economic opportunity and trade and to improve education and to reduce the dropout rate especially among young Hispanic students. He represents you very, very well, and I thank him for helping me to come here today.

I'd like to thank Congressman Solomon Ortiz and Congressman Ciro Rodriguez and a native of Mission, Mission High School class of 1946, the former chairman of the Agriculture Committee in the House of Representatives, Congressman Kika de la Garza, and his wife, Mrs. de la Garza. Thank you for being here.

I'd like to thank the education commissioner, Mike Moses; the land commissioner, Garry Mauro; members of my administration who are here, including White House aides Mickey Ibarra, Janet Murguia, Cynthia Jasso-Rotunno; and the head of the Overseas Private Investment

Corporation, George Munoz. All of them came down here today to meet with community leaders before I came out here to talk about the economic future of the valley and what we could do to help to accelerate the growth of your area.

I want to thank the legislators and the mayors who are here: Senator Carlos Truan, Representative Ismael Flores, Representative Miguel Wise, Representative Roberto Gutierrez; Mayor Ricardo Perez of Mission; the McAllen mayor, Leo Montalvo; the Edinburg mayor, Joe Ochoa. I thank the chairman of the Democratic Party, Bill White, for coming here. And as an old member of the band, I'd like to thank the high school bands from Mission, Edinburg, Weslaco, and Hidalgo for playing.

I thank the college students from South Texas Community College and UT-Pan Am, high school students from Hidalgo, Willacy, Bee, Brooks, and San Patricio Counties, and I thank the other AmeriCorps volunteers for being here.

This morning I talked with some community leaders about economic opportunity. Today, to this great and happy crowd, I want to talk with you about educational opportunity. And I want America to know about this school district. The Mission school district may not be the wealthiest one in the Nation, but it is rich in results. Attendance is up; dropout rates are down. Ten years ago, only about a quarter of Mission's high school seniors went on to college. This year, thanks in part to the new opportunities at the South Texas Community College, almost two-

thirds of the high school graduates will go on to college.

I am trying to see that every high school classroom, every middle school and elementary school classroom, and every library in this country are hooked up to the Internet by the year 2000. Let me tell you what that piece of paper says that just blew away—it says that just 2 days ago, every classroom in Mission High School was hooked up to the Internet, well ahead of schedule. Congratulations to you. Now some of the classrooms will become laboratories for the Nation as you begin using state-of-the-art video conferencing to take advanced college courses, as well as virtual field trips all around the world. Congratulations. I want America to see you and know that all children can learn and every school can improve. You have proved it, and I want you to stay on the course.

I want America to have an educational system where 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 on learning for a lifetime. We have to have high standards and proven reforms, the best use of new technology, help to the children who need it, and a real commitment to the proposition that every child can learn.

We have to work to reduce the dropout rate. We have to convince many of our students, interestingly enough, especially in Latino communities throughout the United States, that what used to be a good thing to do, to drop out of school and go to work to help your family, can now in fact hurt your family and hurt your future because there is so much difference today between what someone with an education can learn and what someone who leaves high school before graduation can learn. That message has to be hammered home. And again I say, together we can do it, and you are setting an example here in Mission. And I thank you for that.

I also came here with a guarantee, one that is embodied in the sign that I stand in front of, for young people and for adults who work hard and achieve in the classroom, the results will pay off. Just a week ago, we began a new era in American education. Thanks to brand new HOPE scholarships and other initiatives, money is now no longer an obstacle to any American going to college. For the first time in this country's history, we can literally say we have opened the doors of college to everyone who has the

desire and who has the preparation to go. That is a signal, important achievement for the United States.

Ladies and gentlemen, I loved it, and I think you did, too, when Elizabeth said that I was the first sitting President to come here not running for election. But I did come here in 1992 running for election, and I saw good, hard-working Americans, patriotic Americans, people who always answer the call of service when their country needs them, people who love their families and believe in their children and desperately want a better future for their communities. And I said I wanted us to take a new direction to the 21st century to make the American dream alive for every person who was willing to work for it, to make every American, without regard to race or background, part of our American community, and to do what is necessary to keep America the world's leading force for peace and freedom and prosperity.

And the bargain I offered the American people was opportunity for everyone who is responsible, but we must have responsibility for everyone if we want opportunity, and a community in which everyone was part of our national family. The Government's job in that kind of America is to create the conditions and give people the tools to make the most of their own lives. That is what we have tried to do with the economy, and we must do more. That's what we talked about this morning in our community leaders meeting, and that is what we must do with education.

Right now, our approach looks pretty good. Our Nation is on a roll. Just this morning we learned that the economy added another 370,000 jobs last month. That means 14.3 million new jobs for Americans in the last 5 years. The deficit has been reduced by 90 percent, and next year, for the first time in three decades, we will have a balanced budget. Wages are rising for ordinary working people for the first time in 20 years. Hispanic unemployment is dropping. Record rates of small business growth are occurring. Hispanic-American new small businesses are being started at 3 times the national average rate. There are hundreds of thousands of new Latino homeowners in America, and we have over two-thirds of the American people in their own homes for the first time in our history.

Despite these gains, you and I know that Hispanic family income is not yet on the rise, and

here in the valley and other areas of America, the unemployment rate is still unconscionably high. One of the biggest reasons is that too many young people who live here drop out of school. Many leave for good reasons, as I said earlier; they want to help their families by working. But in a global economy, the best way for a young person to help his or her family is to stay in school, set yourself on a college path early, and complete at least 2 years of college. People who at least have a community college degree have a very good chance of getting a job with stability and prospects of a growing income. People who do less than that in a global economy where we depend more and more on what we can learn every day and the new skills we can apply, are playing Russian roulette with their future. That is why we have worked very hard with dedicated Members of Congress like Mr. Hinojosa to reduce the dropout rates and to reward people who stay and learn.

And let me tell you what I meant when I said there's a guarantee for people who go on to college now. Last year in the balanced budget, we put in place a college opportunity agenda that literally had the largest investment in helping people go to college since the GI bill was passed when the soldiers from the valley came home 50 years ago.

Here's what it means to the people who live here. First, we created HOPE scholarships and an education IRA; they started on January 1st. HOPE scholarships will basically use the tax system to reimburse families for up to \$1,500 a year to pay for the first 2 years of college. That means schools like South Texas Community College will be virtually free to virtually all Americans. With education IRA's, parents will now be able to set money aside for their children's college education and let it grow, and then withdraw from the fund later without paying any taxes on it.

The second thing we've done is to create lifetime learning credits, tax cuts worth up to \$1,000 a year to students who go to the 3d and 4th years of college or who go to graduate school, and those are available to adults who go back to school or to training programs because they have to change careers or they need to upgrade their skills.

The third thing we did is to increase Pell grant scholarships for nearly 4 million low and moderate income families. And finally, we made student loans easier to get and easier to pay

off as a percentage of your income, so that no one ever has to fear borrowing money to go to college because they're afraid they will go broke trying to pay the loan back. Now you can get the loan at lower cost and less time and pay it back as a percentage of your income when you get out of school.

We are also offering young people more opportunities to do community service through the AmeriCorps program and earn money to go to college; 100,000 have taken advantage of it.

Now, there is one other thing I want to talk about. A lot of people have to work their way through school, like I did, and usually those of us who do think we're the better for it. Sometimes, if you have to work a little, you even are more disciplined with your time and you wind up studying a little more. The balanced budget I will submit to Congress next month will include a record 1 million work-study positions for college students. That represents an increase of nearly 50 percent during the last 3 years alone. It's not just about increasing financial aid, that's about increasing the circle of community service and the winner's circle of opportunity for the future.

For example, work-study students at more than 800 colleges in America today are helping to make sure that we reach one of our education goals, that every 8-year-old can read. Through the America Reads challenge, tens of thousands of college students are earning money for college while going into our schools to tutor young people to make sure that they don't get out of the third grade without being able to read independently; and now we'll have a million people doing that kind of work.

Let me just say this to all the young people here in this audience: We can create opportunities, but you have to seize it. I am determined—whenever I come to South Texas, I leave more determined than ever to find some way to better reward the energy, the patriotism, the commitment, the vision of the people here. We can do more to build on the empowerment zones and to do other things to help you to grow your economy, to preserve your environment, to create more jobs. But nothing—nothing—will matter in the end unless the young people who live here are committed to developing their own minds and keeping their visions high and believing in themselves and their futures. That is the most important thing. You have to believe that.

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You have to make sure that you have raised your sights as high as you can.

And let me just say, I don't want to embarrass him, but I'd like to compliment the principal here at Mission High School, Mr. Ahmadian. He came here in the late seventies from Iran, without being able to speak a word of English. Now, as the leader of this remarkable school, he's helped thousands of people go on to careers in education, in medicine, in law enforcement. He's helping them to do what he did with high standards for higher education. Whether you're the son or daughter of a migrant laborer, or a doctor, the same formula applies: high standards and higher education; taking responsibility; sitting down with family, teachers, guidance counselors; committing to work hard to learn, to do the homework, to think about the future.

We're going to do our part in Washington to make sure that those of you who are prepared

for the future can go on to college. We've removed the obstacles. There's an open field ahead, but you have to reach the goal line. Take the ball and run with it. Your future is bright; the future of the valley is bright; and the future of the Nation is in your hands.

God bless you. *Gracias. Viva el valle.* Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:05 a.m. in Tom Landry Stadium. In his remarks, he referred to Mission High School student body president Elizabeth Gonzales, who introduced the President, principal Masoud Ahmadian, and alumnus Koy Detmer, NFL Philadelphia Eagles player; Lucille de la Garza, wife of former Representative Kika de la Garza; and William H. White, chair, Texas State Democratic Party.

Remarks at a Reception for Representative Ruben Hinojosa in McAllen, Texas

January 9, 1998

Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you, Ruben. Thank you very much to the Cantus, to Alonzo and Yoli, for having us in their modest little home here. [Laughter] Is this a beautiful place, or what? It's really wonderful. I'm so glad to be here.

I want to thank the Congressman and Marty and their entire family for making me feel so welcome down here. I thank Congressman Solomon Ortiz and Congressman Ciro Rodriguez who are also here and have been good friends of our administration and good for this country. I'm glad to be joined here today by the Secretary of Education in my administration, Dick Riley; our land commissioner, Garry Mauro; our State Democratic chair, Bill White; the county Democratic chair, Ramon Garcia; McAllen's mayor, Leo Montalvo, and all the other local elected officials.

I'd also like to thank Alfonso Hinojosa who created those beautiful wooden chairs inside. I don't know if you've seen them, but they commemorate my visit. And I said when I sat down in one that it actually made me feel like a real President. I felt—actually, I almost felt like a

monarch sitting in that chair. It's a little too highfalutin for me on a daily basis. [Laughter]

Hector Reyna, Sr., I thank you for creating the stained-glass Arkansas State bird and flower. And I'd also like to welcome State Representative Richard Raymond, who is a candidate for land commissioner. Thank you all for being here, and I'm very glad to see you.

Let me say that I'm honored to be here to help this Congressman mobilize his district, to sit down this morning, early, with a lot of community leaders and talk about the economic challenges still facing the valley: what should be done to generate more jobs, more investment, to rebuild the transportation system and improve the quality and supply of water—all the issues we discussed this morning.

I loved going over to the school and seeing the children and telling them that starting this January we could honestly say we had opened the doors of college to all Americans. We've made community college virtually free to nearly everybody in this country now with tax credits called the HOPE scholarship. We've given a \$1,000 tax credit for the junior and senior year