

stay on track to hiring 100,000 high-quality teachers to reduce class size in the early grades. We must fulfill our commitment to build and modernize public schools. And we must invest in efforts to mentor disadvantaged students to help them understand that if they learn what they need to learn, they can all now go on to college.

This entire strategy is rooted in fundamental values: Everyone counts; everyone deserves a chance; everyone has a role to play; and we all do better when we help each other.

Fixing a failing school isn't easy, but communities are proving every day that it can be done. So we must continue to invest more and demand more. We owe it to our children and to our future.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 3:37 p.m. on February 25 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on February 26. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 25 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Remarks at the National Governors' Association Dinner February 27, 2000

The President. Ladies and gentlemen, good evening. We will follow our custom tonight, which means that Governor Leavitt and I will give toasts, after which there will be no more duties, and we'll have a good time. [Laughter]

I want to welcome Governor and Mrs. Leavitt, Governor and Mrs. Glendening, and all of you to the White House, the 93d meeting of the National Governors' Association. I feel like I've been to most of them. [Laughter] Actually, we were thinking tonight, Secretary/Governor Riley and Secretary/Governor Babbitt, when we leave this year, will have attended 16 of these dinners. And I figure Governor Thompson and Governor Hunt are about that many. But I will have attended 20. And I told Governor Kempthorne tonight that he made a good swap when he left the Senate and became Governor; I told him I never got tired of being Governor. And I always look forward to your coming here.

Two hundred years ago exactly this year, Thomas Jefferson became the first Governor to be elected President. One of the central principles he carried with him, from the writing of the Declaration of Independence to the statehouse to the White House, is that the role of Government can never be fixed in time or place; it must remain fluid while anchored to firm principles. Jefferson said, "Laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As new discoveries are made, new

truths disclosed, institutions must advance also and keep pace with the times."

Well, today, 200 years later, in the tradition of Thomas Jefferson, our Nation's Governors are keeping pace with the times. This year your theme is "Strengthening American States in the Global Economy." It is truly a new economy. It has changed not only the way people make a living but the way we live and relate to each other and to people all around the world.

For 7 years now, you and I have worked as partners to give the American people the conditions and tools they need to make the most of this new world, with a Federal Government that is smaller, less oriented toward regulation, and more committed than ever to achieving high goals. With your help and hard work, America has made great strides in these last 7 years, cutting crime, cleaning the environment, improving education, moving millions from welfare to work, building the longest prosperity in our Nation's history.

For your role in all these achievements and for the work that you will do with us in this millennial year, I thank you. It has been a great joy and a great honor for me to serve as President and especially to work with the Governors.

I leave you with only this thought. In my lifetime, our country has never had the opportunity we now have to build the future of our dreams for our children. The longest expansion in American history before this one was in the decade of the 1960's. I graduated from high

school in 1964. President Kennedy had been killed. The country was heartbroken, but we united behind a new President. We believed at the time that the economy, which was booming, would go on forever; that we would solve our civil rights challenges peacefully, through laws and courts; and that we would prevail in the cold war without particular incident.

Two years later, riots were starting in the streets. And 4 years later, 2 days before I graduated from college, Senator Kennedy was killed. That was 2 months after Martin Luther King had been killed and 9 weeks after President Johnson said he could no longer run for reelection, and our country was divided along partisan and cultural lines in ways that still manifest themselves.

I say that not to be somber but just as a cautionary reminder that it's easy to assume, when things are going well, that it is part of the natural order of things and that it will always be so, without regard to what actions we take, what words we speak, what hopes we harbor in our hearts. In a year, I will be a private citizen; most of you will still be serving. Remem-

ber that. We have the chance of a lifetime, and I, for one, have waited 35 years for my country to have that chance. It's a great honor for all of us to serve.

I offer you a toast and the fond hope that you will make the most of it.

Thank you very much.

[At this point, the participants drank a toast.]

The President. Governor Leavitt, the podium is yours.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:38 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Michael O. Leavitt of Utah, chairman, and Gov. Parris N. Glendening of Maryland, vice chairman, National Governors' Association, and their wives, Jacalyn and Frances, respectively; and Governors Tommy G. Thompson of Wisconsin, James B. Hunt, Jr., of North Carolina, and Dirk Kempthorne of Idaho. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Governor Leavitt.

Remarks in a Roundtable Discussion With the National Governors' Association

February 28, 2000

The President. Thank you. Good morning, Governor Leavitt, Governor Glendening. It's a great pleasure for me to be here with many members of my Cabinet and my Chief of Staff, John Podesta, and Mickey Ibarra, who does such a good job of working with all of you. Hillary and I especially enjoyed the time we spent at dinner last night, and I hope you did as well.

Over the last 7 years, I've tried to build a genuine partnership with all of you, based on greater resources, greater flexibility, and a greater commitment to shared goals. I think we could all agree that the results have been good: welfare rolls cut in half; 2 million children enrolled in the Children's Health Insurance Program; 150,000 young people in AmeriCorps; our schools improving.

This year we'll have a lot to do. Among other things, we have to work hard to make sure that we count every American in the census.

We begin the new century on a high note. In the last 3 months of 1999, economic growth was 6.9 percent, the fastest in more than a decade. This month, expansion has lengthened to the point that we are enjoying the longest economic period of growth we've ever had. Our social fabric also is on the mend: the lowest crime level in 25 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 30 years, the lowest poverty rates in 20 years, the lowest female unemployment rates in 40 years, and the lowest African-American and Hispanic unemployment rates ever recorded.

I believe that in this new economy, government's role is to give the American people the tools and the conditions they need to make their way and to advance our Nation's progress: fiscal discipline, investments in education and technology, new markets for American products and services.