

build the future of our dreams for our kids. I want to vote for people who understand the future, who can take us there. I don't believe we ought to jeopardize the economic policy that has brought us this much prosperity. I think we ought to deal with the aging of America in a way that helps promote both opportunity and guarantees for people who need it. I think we ought to do more to improve excellence in education for everybody. We ought to bring economic opportunity to the people who have been left behind. I think the Democrats are right on these things, and that's why I'm staying here. Look at the minimum wage. Look at Patients' Bill of Rights. Look at all these other issues." That's what I hope you will say.

But whatever happens, I hope every single solitary soul you talk to between now and November, you will tell, "Look, do not blow this. This is the American people's chance to conduct vastly important job interviews that will determine what kind of people we're going to be in 10, 15 or 20 years. And we've never had

a chance like this before, at least in my lifetime, so I want us to make the most of it."

We need a Democratic majority in the House. We need to win these other elections—not for partisan reasons but because the divides between us, I think, are clear, and I believe we're right. If you think that, don't leave your activity when you walk out the door here. Keep talking about it.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:18 p.m. in Room 202 at City Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor John F. Street of Philadelphia; Mayor Susan Bass Levin of Cherry Hill, NJ, candidate for New Jersey's Third Congressional District; Pat Casey, candidate for Pennsylvania's 10th Congressional District, his father, former Gov. Robert P. Casey of Pennsylvania, and his mother, Ellen; Ed O'Brien, candidate for Pennsylvania's 15th Congressional District; and Representative Ron Klink, candidate for U.S. Senate in Pennsylvania.

Remarks at Mayer Sulzberger Middle School in Philadelphia May 19, 2000

Well, one thing I can say is, I'm glad I didn't have to run against Toya Doe for President of the United States. [Laughter] Didn't she do a wonderful job? I thought she was great. She was terrific. Thank you.

I'm so glad to see you all. I'm glad to be back in Philadelphia. I want to thank my great friend Chaka Fattah for so many things, but especially for championing this program and creating the certificate that the students will receive today. I also want to acknowledge the presence here of another great Member of the House of Representatives from the State of Pennsylvania, Ron Klink. Thank you for being here today, Ron.

I thank Pedro Ramos for his fine remarks and his work. And I thank your principal, Kathleen Lacey, for having us here. Thank you. I'd also like to acknowledge, on this side of me is the Deputy Secretary of Education from Washington, DC, the people who fund this program, Mr. Frank Holleman. Thanks for coming, Frank.

And we also have the Shoemaker Middle School principal, James Slaughter, and two of your cluster leaders, Janet Samuels and Armita Sims. Thank you for being here. And I'd also like to acknowledge the two school board members who are here, Sandra Glenn and my long-time friend Reverend Ralph Blanks. It's nice to see you, my friend. I'm glad to see you.

There's one more Sulzberger success story I'd like to acknowledge today, and that is a man who was vice president of his class here 42 years ago, just got a master's degree in education—in elementary education and administration. And he's a teacher at Shoemaker, Congressman Fattah's father, Mr. David Fattah. Welcome. Thank you, sir.

Now, before I talk about this program, I have to just mention one other thing, because something happened nearby here yesterday that I want to mention. Previous speakers have said that I devoted a lot of time as President to education, and I have. I have supported virtually

every one of the reforms that Mr. Ramos discussed. I believe there should be no social promotion, but I think there ought to be strategies to turn around schools that aren't working. I think that children ought to have after-school and summer school programs and mentoring programs. I don't think kids should be branded failures when the system fails them. So I think all children can learn. That's why I like this.

I have supported the school dress policy that you mentioned and zero tolerance for guns in schools. But one of the things I have recognized over the years is that the first and most important thing is that our children have to be safe in school and on the way to and from school if they're going to learn in school.

The reason I bring that up today is that I've been heavily involved in trying to make our streets and our schools safer, for over 7 years. I'm proud of the fact that crime has gone down every year I've been in office and that we've put another 100,000 police on the streets. We've provided more after-school programs and other things for kids to do. We passed the Brady bill and the assault weapons ban. But we need to do more.

And I have advocated a comprehensive strategy for stronger enforcement of the laws on the books, putting 50,000 more police on the street in high crime neighborhoods, and doing more to keep guns away from criminals and kids, including closing the gun show loophole and requiring child trigger locks and stopping large ammunition clips from being imported. I also think if people buy a handgun, they ought to get a license, like they do when they buy a car, to prove they don't have a criminal background and they know how to use the gun safely.

But anyway, the reason I mention this today is, yesterday the State senate of your neighbor, New Jersey, in an overwhelming bipartisan vote, Republicans and Democrats, voted to raise the legal age of handgun purchase to 21, to require ballistics tests for all new guns so we can keep up with the bullets used in crimes, to increase enforcement efforts, and require the development of smart guns that can only be fired by the people who own them and therefore cannot be stolen or otherwise used or abused.

Now, this is a big deal because it will also minimize accidental deaths involving children. So I just wanted to say that the people of New Jersey and their representatives, in joining Cali-

fornia, Massachusetts, Maryland, and other States in taking this kind of action, deserve our thanks. This will not keep any lawful gun owner from hunting, from sport shooting, from having weapons for self-defense, nothing that changes the law of lawful ownership, but it will save some children's lives, like the kids that are in this room today.

And that's what that Million Mom March was about last weekend. Nobody wants to take anything away from anybody they're legally entitled to. But we ought to do more to make America the safest big country in the world. And the NRA—they're about to meet in their convention down in Charlotte today, and I hope they have a good meeting, but I hope they—they need to think about this. Nobody who differs with them on this issue is trying to take anybody's gun away from them, but we just want more criminals and kids to be without the ability to get guns, because they're not supposed to have them. And nobody claims they can legally have them, and we just want to keep more people alive. And I think New Jersey did a good thing yesterday, and we ought to give them a hand for what they did. *[Applause]*

Now, I want to talk about GEAR UP a minute. And I want to sort of tell you how this started. It was mentioned earlier that a person in Philadelphia had promised sixth graders if they'd stay in school that he would send them to college. I have a friend in New York, Gene Lang, who did that many years ago—promised the kids at this old elementary school that if they'd stay in school, he'd send them to college.

And Chaka came to me one day, Congressman Fattah did, and he said, "You know, we're doing all this work to open the doors of college to everybody." Now, for example, all you kids, if you had to borrow the money to go to college, you might say, "Well, how can I borrow the money to go to college? I might not be able to pay it back." So we changed the law so you can borrow the money at lower costs, and then, whatever you decide to do, you can pay it back as a small percentage of your annual salary, no matter how much you borrow.

We increased the Pell grants. We passed the HOPE scholarship, which gives a tax credit of up to \$1,500 for a college education, which essentially says that we make community college free. This year I'm asking the Congress to allow a tax deduction of up to 28 percent of the cost of college tuition, up to \$10,000. So if you

owe \$2,800 in income tax and you spend up to \$10,000 on college tuition, you wouldn't owe any income tax anymore. That would be good.

Anyway, what he said to me was, "That's all well and good, but most people that I know in inner-city Philadelphia"—or rural Arkansas, where I'm from, for that matter—"they don't know we did that. And the kids that need it most are least likely to know about it." So, he said, "We ought to have a mentoring program to help kids when they're coming of age and they start to think about this, so that they get the learning and other support they need, and they know that they will be able to go to college if they do what they're supposed to do."

We worked as hard as we could to open the doors of college for all, but you guys have got to walk through those doors. And I really believe that in the future we will look back and see this GEAR UP program as a profoundly important step in ending inequality, in lifting people in America. And no matter what he said giving me credit for it, it was Congressman Fattah's idea. It wouldn't be here if it weren't for him, and he deserves the credit.

One thing I noticed about being President is, because you've got the microphone, you tend to get the credit. Now, sometimes you tend to get the blame, too. [Laughter] I was glad to support it, glad to fight for it, and I'm glad we got it done. But I thank you, Congressman, for what you did.

Now, why is it so important? Your great Philadelphian, Benjamin Franklin, once said, "Genius without education is like silver in the mine." Not mind, mine. What does that mean? The silver is not worth anything unless you get it out of the mine, right? Otherwise, it's just down some dark hole somewhere. So always, always, education has been important. But today it is more important than ever before. And all of you know why, don't you?

You've seen computers. You know how the Internet works. What you may not know is that we are doubling the whole volume of knowledge in the world about every 5 years now. We are developing supercomputers that will soon operate on chips the size of a teardrop. You will live in an age where you'll find out what's in the black holes in outer space and what's in the deepest holes in the ocean.

You may know somebody that's in a wheelchair because they had an accident. Probably in the lifetime of the children in this room,

the biological sciences and the computer sciences will merge, and when somebody has an accident and they've injured their spine, they'll take a picture of that spine, and a computer program will design a little chip you can put in the spine that will allow people to get up and walk—in your lifetime.

I think in your lifetime we'll find cures for Alzheimer's, for Parkinson's disease. I think we'll have a vaccine for AIDS. I think we'll be able to keep women from dying from breast cancer and men from dying from prostate cancer. I think that you will communicate, as a normal course, through your computers over the Internet with people all over the world. And pretty soon that little screen that you use for the Internet will get smaller and smaller, and you'll be able to use it for telephone conversations and for your television. And all your communications will be in one small but powerful computer, with one screen and one keyboard. And then someday, you'll get rid of the keyboard, and you'll just talk at the computer, and it will do what you tell it to.

It's going to be an exciting time. But if you don't have a good education, if you don't read well, speak clearly, write well, understand basic math and basic technology, you won't be able to take full advantage of it. On the other hand, if you do have a good education, this technological revolution is going to take more people out of poverty more quickly and enable more poor neighborhoods in America and poor villages in remote countries around the world to develop their capacities than anything that has ever happened in all of human history.

So I might see, as you grow up, the poor parts of my native State in the Mississippi Delta flourishing, because it won't matter that they're way out in the country anymore because they're connected to the Internet. I'll be able to see poor neighborhoods in Philadelphia and New York City and other urban areas able to get the same kind of investment and start the same kind of businesses and do the same kind of things anybody anywhere else can—if we have a good education.

You know, there are places in America—you kids might be surprised about this—there are Indian reservations in America where 70 percent of the people still don't have telephones—70 percent—where over half the people don't have jobs. But they, too, can be helped but only if they have education.

So I wanted to come here today because I think kids in poor neighborhoods and poor places like I grew up are just as smart as kids anywhere else. I think the good Lord has made education equal. But I think you've got to gear up. *[Laughter]* Otherwise, I don't care how smart you are—Ben Franklin was right, your silver might as well be down in the mine.

I was the first person in my family ever to go to college. I had a grandmother who got a correspondent's degree in nursing, lived in a little old place with about 50 people until she was old enough to move to the biggest city around, which had 6,000 people in it. But from the time I was a kid, for whatever reason, my mother and my grandmother and my step-father, who didn't have a high school diploma, they told me I was going to college. From the time I was 8 or 9, I believed them. They said it, and I just decided I was.

We've done everything we could to remove the financial barriers. We've done everything we could to give your schools support, to identify problems and turn them around and increase the quality of education. But the children have to live in an environment where excellence is expected and people know it will be rewarded. So the idea behind GEAR UP is, get children when they're young and stay with them until they actually go to college.

Every one of you who's been a part of it, I thank you. I thank the leaders from the schools, the universities, the businesses, the community organizations for mentoring our young people, for taking them around college campuses, for letting people see colleges and imagine it. I never went on a college campus when I was 9 or 10 years old, I think, until my music took me there. One of the things I learned from the time I was your age is, if you want to do something big with your life, first you have to imagine that you can do it. You have to know how to put a picture in your mind of what you want to be.

So Toya says, "I want to be a teacher." How does she know she wants to be a teacher? Because she's seen people teaching and doing good things and lighting fires of excitement in children's minds. And so she can imagine what a wonderful thing it would be to be a good teacher.

The Bible says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." I wish it were written in positive terms: Where there is vision, the people

flourish. I want you to be able to imagine your dreams. And that's another big part of this program.

I want to thank all the educators for getting the young people excited about academic achievement and helping to improve their study skills and strengthening the curriculum and getting kids to take courses like algebra they might otherwise just as soon not take, but it will help you go to college. And take the hard courses. Challenge yourself. Your mind is just like any other muscle in your body. If you want it to work better, you've got to work at it. Don't be afraid.

Do you know that over 90 percent of the people—really about 99 percent of the people—are capable of learning 100 percent of what they need to know to do nearly anything. Most of us never use more than a modest percentage of our brain power. You should be brave. You can do it.

I believe that intelligence is equally distributed in the world, but opportunity isn't. What we're trying to do is to make opportunity as equally distributed as intelligence is. But effort is not equally distributed, either.

I remember when—I'm going to Chicago when I leave you, and since Philadelphia is in the basketball playoffs and Chicago isn't, I can now say this. *[Laughter]* Back in the years when the Bulls were doing so well—you know, my wife grew up in Chicago—so we were out there, and we knew a lot of people that were associated with them. And everybody was talking about how Michael Jordan was the greatest natural basketball player they had ever seen. And this friend of mine who was associated with the Bulls said, "Yes, he certainly is, and you'd be amazed, because he's also the first person that comes to practice, the last person that leaves. He still shoots more free throws in practice than anybody on the team. You'd be amazed how much more of a natural athlete he is because he works harder than everybody else."

I like to play golf. But once I heard a commentator say to a great golfer that all the people who played with him said it was astonishing that he was also a lucky golfer. And he said, "Yes, I've been real lucky, but I've noticed that the harder I work, the luckier I get." *[Laughter]*

So we're dealing with three things here: What you've got inside you, the silver in the mine; whether you have opportunities and you know it, your vision; and then your effort, which only

you can supply. But we believe in you, and you must believe in yourself. You've got to stay in school and aim high and go to college, because you can afford it and there will be a place for you. And there is only going to be more emphasis on that.

And I understand that the Sulzberger School already has 300 students enrolled. And I understand that the reading and math scores have already gone up. So I want to tell you—I'm just going to make one announcement today, because I believe in this. Today we're going to give out \$185 million in new grants for summer school and after-school programs, to support 48 States in setting up learning centers, to try to help more people do what you're doing in this GEAR UP program and in other programs that work. Everybody needs an education in America, and we've got to provide it.

Now, guess what? We had 1,000 good applications we can't fund with that \$185 million. And one of the things that I want to do to support GEAR UP here is to get enough money into our budget so that every school in the country will be able to offer after-school programs to every child who needs it. That's in our budget this year. And we're going to fight for it, and I hope you'll help us.

And so far, we haven't persuaded the Congress to adopt this or to fully fund Representative Fattah's GEAR UP program so that more kids can be in it. But I think that my coming here and showing you and having Toya speak to the country through the press corps here, ought to give a little more impetus behind the GEAR UP program. We need more support for it.

Out here in this audience today, there may be another future great President; there may be another future great business leader; there may be another future great minister; there may be someone who will discover an absolute cure for AIDS; there may be someone who will design a car that will get 500 or 600 miles a gallon. All of you think about that. One of you could do that. And every one of you can have a good life and do something that makes a difference and have children of your own that will have even better lives. That's what GEAR UP is all about. We believe in you. And we want you to believe in yourselves.

Good luck, and God bless you.

Now, symbolizing what every student who completes this program will do, Congressman Fattah and I are going to give Toya Doe, representing all of you, her 21st Century Scholars Certificate. I hope that all of you will have these, go through this program, and finish it. This is a ticket to the future. And remember, if you gear up, you'll get to college. And after that, there's no stopping you.

So let's give Toya another big hand. [*Applause*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:40 p.m. in the auditorium. In his remarks, he referred to student Toya Doe, who introduced the President; Janet C. Samuels, University City Cluster Leader; Armita B. Sims, Overbrook Cluster Leader; Pedro Ramos, president, Philadelphia Board of Education; and Eugene M. Lang, founder, "I Have a Dream" Foundation.

Remarks at a Reception for Representative Joseph M. Hoeffel in Philadelphia May 19, 2000

Thank you, Joe. Thank you for inviting me here, giving me something to do so I didn't have to do the wash this afternoon. [*Laughter*] Marcel, I thought you did a great job. Thank you for your leadership of our party. I thank Chaka Fattah, my good friend. We just came from his district where we did an education event. And I want to thank Ron Klink for joining

us today and for making this race for the United States Senate. If he gets enough funding to get his message out, I predict to you he'll win. And I hope you'll help him do it. Thank you, Ron.

I'd like to thank all the other candidates and legislators and other officials who are here. My good friend Marge Mezvinsky, I thank her for coming here. Marjorie is—our children are good