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to get people to invest in the areas that have been left behind.

And one of the things that I asked the Congress to do is to give people in America with money to invest the same incentives to invest in poor communities in America we give them to invest in poor communities overseas.

Now, I just went on a tour—you probably saw the press when I was Clarksdale, Mississippi, but I was also in Appalachia; I went up to South Dakota to an Indian reservation; I went to Phoenix and East St. Louis and Los Angeles. There is an enormous feeling out there in the country today that we ought to really make an effort—it's the first time I have felt this—there's a great feeling in the Congress, and I think in both parties, that we ought to do something for the areas that have still not felt the economic recovery of the country. And that's what we're here to talk about. That's what I'm going down to the Culture Center to discuss.

So the last thing I want you to know—and I know Secretary Slater would echo this—is that you couldn't have two better people representing you than Blanche Lambert-Lincoln and Marion Berry. They wear us out every single week to do something for you.

And finally, let me just say it's good to be back here. All of you have been very good to me for more than 20 years now. I probably wouldn't be President if it weren't for eastern Arkansas, and I am very grateful. And I want you to know that in the year and a half I have left on my term, I am going to do everything I can to bring more economic opportunity not only to the Delta but to every place in America that is not a part of what our country as a whole is enjoying today.

Thank you, and God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:50 a.m. in the West Hangar at West Helena Municipal Airport. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Johnny Weaver of West Helena, AR.

The President's Radio Address

August 7, 1999

Good morning. At the edge of a new century and an increasingly competitive global economy, we know that our children's futures will be determined in large part by the quality of the education they receive. More and more, what you earn depends upon what you learn.

Our administration has made education a high priority, focusing on standards, accountability, and choice in public schools, and on making a college education available to every American—with increased Pell grant scholarships, better student loan and work-study programs, and the HOPE scholarship and other tax credits to help families pay for college tuition. Because of these efforts, more young people have the chance to make the most of their God-given abilities, and take their place in the high-tech world of the 21st century.

Today I want to talk about what we're doing to build on our progress, by reaching out to young people and challenging all of them to reach for their dreams by preparing for college. Because as far as we've come, we know, still, there is much to do; for too many children, especially in economically distressed communities, aren't getting the chance to reach their highest potential.

That's why we've worked hard to expand Head Start; to connect every classroom in America, even in our poorest communities, to the Internet; to launch the America Reads program, which has mobilized tens of thousands of student tutors to help millions of children learn to read; and to expand after-school programs, to keep kids in school and learning, not on the street and losing their way.

But to really make a difference in disadvantaged children's lives, we must instill in them the unshakable belief that if they work hard, they will be able to go on to college. And we must give them the tools to achieve that dream.

I know how important this can be. No one in my family had ever gone to college before me. But I never doubted I was going to college, because everyone in my life guided me to reach that goal. That's what I want for every child in America. For years now, Congressman Chaka Fattah, Eugene Lang—who started the ''I Have a Dream'' Foundation—and the Ford Foundation have been dedicated to supporting new partnerships to meet that challenge.

Last year, in my State of the Union Address, I asked Congress to support our plan to create hundreds of these partnerships between universities, colleges, middle schools, and community and business organizations. These innovative programs start early, reaching out to students no later than seventh grade, staying with them all the way, from providing students with mentors who encourage them to have high hopes and high expectations for themselves, to ensuring that schools teach the classes that prepare young people for college entrance exams, to helping families figure out how to pay for college. These programs can make all the difference in whether a young person goes to college.

Last year, with bipartisan support, Congress passed and I signed, legislation creating the GEAR UP program. With the leadership of Senator Specter of Pennsylvania and Senator Harkin of Iowa, we secured the funds to put this plan into action. Today I am pleased to announce the first $120 million in GEAR UP grants to help States and communities all over the country inspire and guide their children from the playground to the college classroom.

I'm glad to be joined here today by Congressman Fattah, by Senator Specter, and also by Congressman Becerra from California, who supports this program. And I ask Congress to fully fund my request to double our commitment to these programs now, so that we can reach more of our children than ever. GEAR UP is a great example of what we can accomplish when we put progress ahead of partisanship and put our children's future first.

Unfortunately, this is exactly the kind of program that the Republican large tax plan would jeopardize. Families don't take a costly vacation and then say they'll figure out when they get home whether they can make the mortgage payments or pay the college tuition. And I don't think we should decide on this big tax cut and just hope there's enough left over to pay for education and to save Social Security and Medicare and pay off our national debt. We have worked very hard to turn around the deficit. Now is not the time to turn our backs on our children's future.

So today I say again, let's join together across party lines to put first things first and build a stronger America for the 21st century.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 12:17 p.m. on August 5 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on August 7. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 6 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Remarks at a Gore 2000 Meeting in Little Rock, Arkansas

August 7, 1999

The President. Thank you. Well, Myreon, you did a great job. I don't know what you're running for, but you've got a good chance. [*Laughter*] Congratulations.

Let me thank all of you for coming here on this hot summer Saturday afternoon. Especially, I want to thank Congressman Bill Jefferson, Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, Congressman Bennie Thompson for coming from out of State to join our Senator Blanche Lambert Lincoln and Congressman Marion Berry back there. And I believe Congressman Vic Snyder is here. And also, a former Governor of Tennessee, Ned McWherter, our great friend, thank you for being here, sir.

I thank all the pastors and educators and businesspeople and community activists who are here. Many of you have been my friends for over 20 years, and all of you helped me to be elected President, with my friend and partner Al Gore. And then you helped us to be reelected for the first time a Democrat had done that in 60 years. And we know it could not have happened without your support.

I want to say just a couple of things and turn the microphone over to the Vice President. Oh, let me also thank our Secretary of Transportation, Rodney Slater, who's from the Arkansas Delta. We're glad that he's here.

When we took office—a lot of people have forgotten what it was like when we took office. We had high unemployment, low