Remarks to a Joint Session of the Michigan Legislature in Lansing, Michigan

March 6, 1997

Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, Governor. Thank you all for that wonderful welcome in this magnificent capitol. I'm delighted to be here today with so many of your State officials—Lieutenant Governor Binsfeld; your State board of education president, Kathleen Strauss. I don't know if Frank Kelley met Theodore Roosevelt, but he did meet me when I became attorney general. [*Laughter*] And some days I feel about that old. I want to thank the mayor of Lansing, Mayor Hollister, for meeting me at the airport, and all the other State officials and dignitaries who are here—Representative Sikkema, thank you, sir; and Senator Cherry and Senator Posthumus.

I want to thank the Members of Congress and others who flew down here with me today—your former Governor, Jim Blanchard and his wife, Janet; Congressman Dingell; your Congresswoman from here, Congressman Debbie Stabenow; Representative Levin; Representative Kilpatrick; Representative Conyers; Representative Stupak; Representative Camp; and Representative Hoekstra and Representative Barcia. Did I get them all? [*Laughter*] Nine, we only had nine here. I could only muster nine, but that's a quorum—[*laughter*]—even in the State legislature—of the Michigan delegation. I thank them for coming down.

Thank you, Wendell Anthony, for your invocation, and thank you for making me feel so welcome.

When I came in, the Speaker and I were looking up at this magnificent ceiling, and I noticed that the seal of the State of Michigan was right next to the seal of my home State of Arkansas. And maybe one reason for that is that the Congress approved us coming into the Union at the same time.

I was reading also the account of Theodore Roosevelt coming here 90 years ago. I know you have partisan differences today. You might be interested to know that 90 years ago there were 32 Republicans and no Democrats in the Senate. [*Laughter*] If you clap too much, I've got a great closing line—Governor, you'll get mad at it. [*Laughter*] There were 95 Republicans and 5 Democrats in the House. And it was the aftermath of the Civil War.

I say this because our two States have been entwined in an interesting way over the course of time. We were allowed together into the Union because Michigan was a free State and Arkansas was a Southern slave State, and Michigan became the party—adhering to the party of Abraham Lincoln, of freedom, and the party of Theodore Roosevelt, which the Governor explained. And most of us Democrats are pretty proud of those folks, too. They represent the best in America.

Then, after the Great Depression, Michigan basically became the home of tens of thousands of people from my State who simply could not make a living anymore on the farm, and the factories of Michigan gave people from Arkansas, black and white together, the chance to come up here and build a decent middle class life and educate their children and be a part of what was then America's future. So anybody from my roots must be exceedingly grateful to the people of Michigan and the history and the heritage of Michigan.

When Theodore Roosevelt was here, he was going to Michigan State to address the graduates there, just as I did a couple of years ago. And I might say the president of Michigan State is here, and I told him today that he gave me a picture of Theodore Roosevelt's address to the graduates at Michigan State, and it now hangs on my office wall at the White House at the entrance to my little private office off the Oval Office, and I look up there and see Teddy Roosevelt speaking every day that I go to work.

Before that, he came here, and when he spoke here I suppose the place looked about like it does now, thanks to your magnificent renovation, and I applaud you for doing this. People all over America should remember it's worth investing a little money to protect your roots and your heritage, and the beauty and meaning of what we were, as well as what we hope to be.

In 1907 when Teddy Roosevelt came here we were at the dawn of the industrial era. This building had been wired for electricity

only 2 years before he showed up. And when President Roosevelt left here to go to the college campus, he got in a newfangled contraption called a Reo automobile. I read the newspaper article from your local paper from 1907 this morning, and it said that it was something of a risk for him to get into the car, but it was probably the wave of the future, who knew what would turn out. [*Laughter*]

Then, like a good politician, I read that when he was at Michigan State, at the campus, he learned that there were, in fact, two different car manufacturers competing with one another in Lansing, so he took the other one back. [*Laughter*] He took a Reo out and an Olds back.

That was a rare moment. Just think what happened from that moment to this one. Think about the century that that moment and this one spans—all but 10 years of this century—and why it became the American Century, what a big part of it Michigan was. Building a great middle class, offering a haven to people from all over America and to immigrants who would come here from other lands to work, to make their way. Building an industrial power that could prevail in two World Wars and overcome a Great Depression. Building an ethical power that could live up to the meaning of its Constitution in the civil rights revolution and expanding opportunities to young people to vote and to women to fully participate in the life of America. Just think what has happened in the 20th century.

When Roosevelt was here in 1907, it was a rare moment. We were moving on to the stage as a world power. Everyone recognized it. We had by then been a nation for more than 100 years, and everybody knew there was something unique about America, a free democracy where people could vote and decide and make their judgments. And it was growing and being nourished. We were exceedingly prosperous by the standards of the time.

And Roosevelt knew that you had to make the most of peace and prosperity and leadership, and he did. And so did his successor, Woodrow Wilson. And because of them together and the work they did with like-minded members of both parties, we built an era that set the framework for America's leadership, growth, and prosperity, and the explosion of people into the middle class, which became the hallmark of Michigan's greatness.

When I was a kid in Arkansas our per capita income was barely half the national average. We all knew if you could find your way up here and got a job, you could still make a good living. That all began at the beginning of this century. It is a very rare thing for a country to have peace and prosperity and the possibility of shaping its own future. Abraham Lincoln said in the Civil War, "My policy is to have no policy. I'm controlled by events." If I said that, I would be ridiculed, rightly so. But he was controlled by events. He did have a policy; it was to keep the Union together and then to liberate us from the scourge of slavery. But he was controlled by events.

When the Depression came on and President Roosevelt called for an era of bold experimentation, he was controlled by events to some extent. He couldn't say, the major issue in America is the climate or even education or anything else. He was controlled by events, and the war did that. And to some extent, the cold war did that for us. When Sputnik went up and we got into the space race and wound up winning it, we were almost forced into it. Now we have peace and prosperity on the edge of an era of unimaginable possibility.

We just finished 4 years where our country, for the first time during one administration, has produced 11½ million jobs. Michigan, the unemployment rate has dropped, and the Governor said your welfare rolls are down 30 percent. You see this kind of progress, this energy, this movement, this possibility in America—dramatic new advances in science and technology occurring. This is a rare time.

What happens to people, usually, when they are prosperous and unthreatened? Well, they usually get complacent, and then they normally find some reason to fall out with one another, usually over something incredibly petty, just in the nature of human events. And I come here to say to you today, we here in America and you here especially in Michigan who have done so much for so

long, we cannot afford to do that. We owe something better to our children. We have been given this unique opportunity, the same sort of opportunity we had when your predecessors were listening to Theodore Roosevelt here 90 years ago, except one on an even grander scale. And we have to make the most of it. We have to build America in the new century. And we also have to know that we have to do it as one America.

I am gratified that Governor Engler said what he did about the education program today. I am gratified that this bipartisan State legislature has given me such a warm welcome, for we have to forge a new partnership for a new time.

While the era of big Government is truly over—the Federal Government now has 285,000 fewer people working for it than it did on the day I took the oath of office—the era of big challenges for our Nation is not over. And now, we know that national leadership can and must point the way, but the real responsibility is one we all share.

Especially, there are two areas I want to discuss today—educational excellence, high standards for all students; and welfare reform, breaking the cycle of dependency for everyone capable of independence in America—for these issues are at the core of what it means to prepare America for the 21st century, giving all Americans not only the opportunity but the tools they need to make the most of their own lives in this new global knowledge economy.

The Governor referred to this in his remarks. When I gave the State of the Union Address, I said that during the cold war, because our national security was threatened by communism, politics stopped at the water's edge. Today, our national security depends upon our ability to develop the capacities of all of our people, so politics should stop at the schoolhouse door.

Between 1992 and 2000—think of this—89 percent of the new jobs created in this economy will require more than high school levels of literacy and math skills. But only half the people entering the work force are prepared for these high-paying jobs, even though about 80 percent of them are high school graduates. Our schools are still turning out millions of young people who simply are not equipped for the new world of work. That is why our number one priority must be to make our system of public education the best in the world, and you must believe we can do this.

A few years ago, almost 8 years ago now, I had the honor of joining the other Governors then serving with President Bush at the University of Virginia to write the national education goals. I still think they're pretty good goals. If you ask me what the consequences would be if they were implemented, we could say bluntly that it would mean that every 8-year-old would be able to read independently, every 12-year-old could now log on to the Internet, every 18-year-old could go to college, and every adult American could keep on learning for a lifetime. That is what I want to be the reality in this country.

In the State of the Union Address, I laid out a 10-point plan, a call to action for American education that describes the steps I believe we must all take, beginning with the youngest children, expanding and improving early childhood learning. The First Lady and I will be having a conference on early childhood learning and the brain to try to deal with these enormously significant new findings over the last couple of years, what we know about not only when children learn but how they learn and what happens if we don't do for them what they should do.

An enormous percentage of the capacity of the brain to absorb information to operate is developed in the first 4 years. I'll just give you one statistic: The average child that grows up in a family with two parents caring for that child, even if they both work, that have reasonably good educations and deal with the basic developmental tasks, will give that child 700,000 positive interactions in the first 4 years. The average child being raised by a single parent with low self-esteem and low self-confidence and no training in parenting will get 150,000 positive interactions and spend roughly 7 times as much time before a television doing nothing, in the first 4 years. This has enormous consequences for the way we become. So we're going to talk about that.

We have to open the doors of college wider than ever. If 90 percent of the jobs

require more than a high school education and the 1990 census shows that the only group of younger workers whose incomes went up instead of down after you adjust for inflation were those that had at least 2 years of some kind of training after high school, we ought to make the 13th and 14th years of education just as universal by the year 2000 as a high school education is today.

I know that for years Michigan has been in the forefront of that, helping people to save for college. I have a proposal to provide tax credits for the cost of a typical community college for 2 years, and tax deductions up to $10,000 a year for the tuition cost in any post-high school education, and an expanded IRA that can be used for the same purpose. We have to do this.

We also have to give more of our workers the ability to keep on learning for a lifetime. For 4 years, through a Democratic Congress and a Republican Congress, I have been given equal opportunity to fail to pass the ''GI bill'' for American workers. But it seems to me to be a simple idea. I just want to take the 70-odd programs that were developed with the best of intentions over the years, for this training program, that training program, and the other one, put them in a big fund, and when a worker becomes eligible for help through unemployment or underemployment, send them a skills grant and let them take it to the local community college or the nearest education institution. They can find out for themselves what they need to do to improve their education. We don't need all that stuff in the middle of them, between them and the money. Send them the money, let them get the education. I hope you will help me pass that in the Congress. I think it is a good thing.

I want to help for the very first time through an innovative program to use Federal funds to lower the interest rates on local bond issues to help schools with enormous building problems to repair their broken infrastructure or build new facilities when they are doing their part. This is a very important thing.

We have the largest number of schoolchildren—as Secretary Riley never lets me forget—we have the largest number of schoolchildren in history in our schools this year, the first time we've ever had a bigger group than the baby boom generation. I have been to schools where the buildings were falling down. My wife was in a school this week where some of the floors were closed, and the kids were going to school on some floors and couldn't go into other floors or other rooms because they didn't comply with the building codes. I have been into other schools with beautiful old school buildings surrounded by temporary facilities to hold the children.

So I think it's an appropriate thing for us to do, not to try to take over this function and not to try to substitute for people assuming responsibility, but when there's a terrible problem and people are doing their own work, if we can, by a prudent and limited investment, lower the cost of that so that more people can afford to do more construction and repair, I think we should.

I'm also strongly committed—the Vice President and I have been working on this very hard—to getting every classroom and every library in the country hooked up to the Internet by the year 2000. And I want to thank your Congresswoman, Debbie Stabenow, for the work that she's done in supporting that.

Secretary Riley has awarded Michigan a grant of $8.6 million for the technology literacy challenge to help your classrooms move into the 21st century, and I ask all of you to support that. There is enormous willingness in the private sector to help us get this done, and it can revolutionize—just think of it—if we can hook up every classroom and every library to the Internet by the year 2000, for the first time in the history of the country ever—ever—children in the poorest district, the richest districts, the middle class districts, all of them will have access to the same learning in the same way in the same time.

And those of you who have children or know children who are already proficient in using the Internet, it's a stunning thing. The other day, my daughter picked a topic to do a research paper on, and she said, ''Dad, can you get me a couple of books on this out of the library?'' I came home with four books, and she had eight citations she had gotten off the Internet—eight articles and things.

So my labors were one-third of her research project.

This is an incredible thing. If we make this available to all children, it will change in a breathtaking way what people can become, what our children can imagine themselves becoming. And I ask you to help us do that.

I thank you, Governor, for what you said about our support for greater discipline and safety and character education in the schools. I have proposed funding 1,000 new community school programs across the country to help our schools stay open after school, on the weekends, in the summertime, to try to give those children who need some positive place to go, some support, some help to stay out of trouble, a place to do that.

I have studied very carefully this problem of rising juvenile crime when overall crime has been going down dramatically in America. And the communities that are reversing that trend, that had juvenile crime going down are the places that make sure that all those kids have something positive to say yes to, even as they're being told to say no to the wrong things. So I want the schools to be able to do that in every community where it's needed in the United States.

We have to make sure that we do everything we can to help our classroom teachers be the best they can be. For years, educators worked to establish nationally accepted credentials for excellence in teaching through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, which is headquartered here in Detroit, Michigan.

Now, Michigan has the third highest number of board-certified master teachers in the country, and that's a good thing. But there are still only a few hundred who have been board-certified. My new budget will enable 100,000 teachers all across America to seek certification as master teachers. And our goal should be to have one certified master teacher in every single school in America. That will make more master teachers we need for those schools, and I hope we can do it.

As has already been said today, I do believe that we need a strong system of public education that gives parents and communities more freedom and flexibility. I think we should work together to give parents more choices for what public schools their children attend all across America. I think we should help teachers, parents, museums, and others to create new public charter schools.

I have proposed to double the budget of the program so that we can increase by tenfold the number of charter schools we have by the year 2000, to create—[*applause*]—and I think it's important to emphasize what we want. We want high standards, schools that are open to all children regardless of their backgrounds. We want an example of accountability which will then spread to all other public schools. But we want to say to them, you can stay open only as long as you do a good job. That's what the charter means; that's what a charter is.

Ultimately, what we want to do is to prove that we have a model here that can be used everywhere else. It is simply not true that if you have a few public schools that all the rest of them can't be good, if some of them are good that they all can't be good. That is not true. It is not true that because it's a public institution we can't achieve excellence everywhere. If that were true, we'd have some good Army units and some bad Army units. And we'd be afraid to go to war, and you wouldn't sleep well at night. Isn't that right?

So you do not have to accept the feeling that you know this wonderful principal, and if only everybody else could be that way. That is simply not true. Leadership can be taught, leadership can be trained, and 90 percent of the children in this country plus—99 percent of them—can learn what they need to know to succeed and triumph in the modern world. They can do it, and we have to do it. [*Applause*]

Now that you've clapped, I will say they are capable of it, but they don't know it today. Let's face the fact. The truth is that 40 percent of the fourth graders in this country still cannot read a book on their own. In Germany or Singapore, students learn 15 to 20 math subjects in depth every year. Typically in the United States, we run over 30 or 35 every year in a superficial way. Then we have these comparative tests. They normally win, especially since they stay in school longer than we do, day-in and day-out, year-in and year-out.

But without these skills, children will not be able to develop the capacity to think and to reason and to analyze complex problems. All these skills will be essential to succeeding in the world of the 21st century in jobs that have not been invented or even imagined yet.

Now, what do we have to have? We have got to have high standards, high expectations, and high levels of accountability. That is why I have challenged our Nation to meet these national standards in the basics, not Federal Government standards but national standards, representing what every child, wherever he or she lives, however poor, rich, or middle class he or she is, must know to do well in the world of the 21st century. And I think we should begin by having every State test every fourth grader in reading and every eighth grader in math by 1999 to make sure these basic standards are met.

We already have widely accepted rigorous standards in both reading and math and widely used tests that are based on these standards. They're just not given to everyone or designed to be given to everyone. Michigan and more than 40 other States have participated in a test called the National Assessment of Education Progress. The education committee members in the audience call it the NAEP test. It measures a State's overall performance against a high national standard of excellence.

Just last week we released the annual assessment of math performance and it shows, across the country, that our 4th-, 8th-, and 12th-graders are doing better. And as the Governor said, Michigan's score is among the most improved in the Nation.

Tens of thousands of students across the country have also taken the Third International Math and Science Survey, a test that reflects world-class standards our children must meet in math and science. The headquarters for that test is just down the road at Michigan State. And I want to thank Dr. William Schmidt at Michigan State for his leadership of this important study. I think he's here with us today. Where are you, Dr. Schmidt? He's here somewhere. Thank you very much, sir.

If you saw the State of the Union Address, you know there are a group of children in northern Illinois that took this test in 20 school districts north of Chicago, and they finished tied for first in science and tied for second in math, I think. Very impressive.

Unfortunately, these tests also don't provide scores for individuals, they simply measure how an entire area or group of people are doing. What we need are exams that will literally measure the performance of each and every student in each and every school. That way, parents and teachers will know how every child is doing compared to other students in other schools, other States, and other countries. And most important of all, they will know how the child is doing compared to what you need to know to go forward.

And I want to make it clear what the difference is. It doesn't matter if your child makes the highest grade in the class if nobody gets over the standards bar. Conversely, in this sense it doesn't matter if your child makes the lowest grade in the class if everybody gets over the standards bar. That's the difference. We have a lot of these standardized tests. We need tests that test to the standards, that say whether you have crossed the threshold of what you must know to do well in the world of tomorrow.

That's why I'm presenting a plan to help the States meet and measure these standards. Over the next 2 years, the Department of Education will support the development of new tests for the fourth grade reading and the eighth grade math, to show how every student measures up to high and widely accepted standards. They'll be developed by independent experts in consultation with leading math and reading teachers. The Federal Government will not require them, but these tests will be made available to every State that chooses to administer them. That is the significance of the announcement that the Governor made. I want to create a climate in which no one can say no, in which it's voluntary but you are ashamed if you don't give your kids the chance to do this.

Together, we are saying this. This is not a partisan issue. There is no Democratic or Republican way to teach. There is no Maryland or Michigan way to learn. Reading is reading; math is math. No school board or State legislature can rewrite the rules of algebra in Alaska to make them different than

they are in Arkansas. It cannot be done. Every State must put politics aside, work in a bipartisan fashion, test our children in the same rigorous way. Politics should stop at the schoolhouse door.

This will not be easy. Some of our children won't do very well at first. We don't need to make them feel like failures; we need to make them understand we're doing this so we can know how to measure their success. If they don't do very well at first, it's probably more our fault than theirs. And a lot of it, I will say again, is because when we see people in difficult circumstances, sometimes out of the goodness of our heart, we exercise our compassion by expecting less of them. And we are selling their future right down the drain every time we do it.

I can tell you, over the last several years—you know, I was a Governor a long time—I served with Governor Engler; I served with Governor Blanchard; I served with Governor Milliken. I have been all over this country to schools. I have seen schools in areas with high murder rates, where it was unsafe to get in the school, where there were no guns, no knives, no dope, no dropout, and test scores were above the State average. I could go through example after example after example. And every time I see one, I get more hopeful and more angry, because if you can have one good school where the kids are learning against all the odds and all the obstacles, then you know when you leave that school there is no excuse for that not happening everywhere. This will help that happen everywhere. This will help that happen everywhere.

Let me make a comment now about one other part of this education program that I think is very important, and that's our America Reads program. We announced it here in Michigan last August in Wyandotte, when I was there on my train trip. And I did it with the help of two elementary school students, Justin Whitney and Elizabeth Schweyen. We announced the America Reads challenge. We set a goal mobilizing a million volunteer tutors to help every 8-year-old learn to read independently. We're going to use 11,000 of our AmeriCorps volunteers to mobilize and train the army, we're going to get at least 100,000 college students to help, and I might say in the last budget we added 200,000 more work-study slots, and there's another 100,000 in this budget, so we'll go to a million kids on work-study, and I want 100,000 of that extra 300,000 to help teach our children to read. And I'm pleased that 16 Michigan college presidents have already pledged to provide their fair share of those students.

I don't know if you remember what we did that hot August day, but Elizabeth and Justin read "The Little Engine That Could" to me, and I said I want every child to be able to do this and say, "Here's this book, and I can read this all by myself."

Today Elizabeth and Justin are here with us, and I would like to ask them to stand up. Where are they? They're out there. There they are. Thank you. I will do what I can to help your young people be ready to be tested. I am asking the Department of Education and the National Science Foundation to identify and coordinate resources throughout the Federal Government and through the nonprofit sector that can be used to help students to meet the math standards. I want to help young people learn more science as well and to make the Government a resource.

The Federal Government has some of the world's most esteemed laboratories and research institutions. We ought to make sure every high school math and science teacher has easy access to the work of these laboratories and the experts there through the Internet, and we're going to do our best to set up that kind of system and make it available to all of your teachers so they can in turn make it available to your students. We can do this. We can do this.

We can also meet the challenge of welfare reform, and I can't leave here without talking to you about it for a couple of minutes, because I want to make it clear where we are now, and this is something else we've got to do together. In the last 4 years, the welfare rolls went down by 2½ million people, the largest drop in the history of the country. Now, how did that happen? And Michigan had a reduction of 30 percent, above the national average. How did that happen?

We know that about half the drop was the result of the economy producing 11½ million

jobs. We know about 30 percent to a third of it was the result of the fact that 43 of our States had vigorous welfare reform experiments, and the ones that were statewide, like yours, had better results. We know that there were some result from the fact that we increased child support collections, working together to get really tough within the States and across State lines. Child support collections went up by 50 percent in the last 4 years, and we know that helped some people to get off welfare.

Now we have a new law, and the new law says there should be time limits for how long a person could be on welfare; there should be time limits for how long a person could be on welfare consecutively—2 years before getting a job. There are tough work requirements. We leave the medical aid and food aid to poor children and their families in place. We increased the aid going in child care at the Federal level, and then we give the States the flexibility to decide how to design the program to move people from welfare to work and support them at an appropriate level in the meantime.

Now, that's what it does. I signed the bill, and I thought it was the right thing to do. But I also want you to know that we have to do now something else; we have to make it work. That law was not the end of welfare reform; it was the beginning. It gave this problem to you. You remember what that old country musician Chet Atkins said: ''You got to be careful what you ask for in this old life, you might get it.'' And so now you have it.

Now, we have been telling poor people they have to be more responsible. ''If you can work, you have to work. You've got to succeed at home as parents and in the work force.'' Now we have a responsibility. You're telling people they've got to go to work; we've got to make sure there's a job there for them if they go to work.

Let me say precisely what this means, because I want to be precise. I think it's very important that since the States have responsibility here, every State needs to know exactly how many jobs have we got to create in Michigan only for people to move from welfare to work, how many jobs in Arkansas, how many jobs in Arizona, how many jobs. And how many jobs would that mean we'd have to do by county, and how are we going to do this.

Basically, if you look at the law's requirements and the fact that it's phased in, the requirement for States to put a certain number of people at work, you will have to—as a nation, we will have to create about another million, a little bit less, maybe 900,000 jobs for welfare recipients only, and move approximately another 2½ million people off welfare in the next 4 years to meet the requirements of the law.

Now, in the last 4 years, we did it with 43 of the 50 States having welfare reform experiments but only some of them were statewide. But we also had 11½ million jobs. We never had that many before. Maybe we'll do it again. I'd like that a lot, and I'll work on it hard. But no one can predict with any certainty what will happen.

So you must imagine, how will we make it more attractive—and we don't have the money to have big public service employment. I do have some money in my budget to give to the urban areas especially and to isolated rural areas with high impact unemployment to help them do work that needs to be done anyway in their cities. But that won't get the job done. Most of this will have to be done by private employers.

Our plan will give tax credits of up to 50 percent of the salary up to $10,000 a year for people that hire people right off the welfare roll and do not replace someone else, they hire them for a real new job. It will give other incentives for businesses to hire people off welfare, and incentives for job placement firms and for States to create more jobs for welfare recipients. You'll get more money if you create more jobs for them. And if your past is any indication, you'll be one of those that will be claiming the incentives, and that's a good thing. And it does provide more money for training and for child care and in our budget for the new transportation bill, more money for transportation, because that's a big issue in a lot of places for moving people from welfare to work.

But you are going to have to get help. And the private employer community and the community nonprofits community and the

religious community, they're all going to have to help. You also have the option to do something else: You can, totally at your own discretion, let people take some or all of the welfare check and you can give it to the employer as an employment and training subsidy. And some States are going to have to do that because their training dollars are inadequate so they're going to have to depend on on-the-job training. Missouri is doing this now in the Kansas City area; Florida has adopted a version of it; a number of other States have. I urge you to look at that. I think it's a legitimate thing to give a private employer, for a limited period of time, a subsidy for training and for hiring people who are otherwise very hard to hire.

That's another point I want to make. Keep in mind, about half the welfare caseload gets off on their own. It's the other half that we have to liberate from permanent dependency, and it's harder for them to get into the work force and harder for them to stay and harder for them to learn the basic things. And so we're going to have to go out to our employers and say, ''Hey, we want to help you.'' Or in the case of the churches and the nonprofits, the tax credit is not worth anything to them because they don't pay taxes anyway. But the wage subsidy would be worth something to them to get them to enlist.

So, you know, I have really collected—how many employers are there in America with more than 100 employees? How many nonprofits are there? How many religious institutions are there with more than 100 members in the congregation or more than 200 members? Every State needs this information. Every community needs this information, and those folks need to be hit up to do their part, especially if you ever heard anybody in your local neighborhood cussing the welfare system who works people. Go back and say, ''Okay, we got rid of it. Now what are you going to do? What are you going to do? We need your help.''

The last thing I wanted to say is—and this may be a moderate problem in Michigan, will be a huge problem in some States—I signed the welfare reform bill, but I said when I signed it I thought we made a mistake to eliminate all aid to legal immigrants. Now, when an immigrant comes to America, they say—they have to promise that they won't try to get on welfare, and they won't take any public money. That is true. But it's also true it takes 5 years to become a citizen; meanwhile you work and you pay taxes. And in a country like ours that lets in a significant number of immigrants—in your largest county now, you have people from over 140 different racial and ethnic groups—bad things are going to happen to good people just when they show up every day. There will be car wrecks; there will be serious illnesses; there will be crime victims; and I personally think it's wrong to either dump that problem on the door of the State legislature or, in the alternative, just tell them to do without. And this is a great nation of immigrants. I think this is unworthy of us, and I'm going to try to change it, and I hope that you will support that. It would be good for you if you do.

Thank you for making me feel so welcome today. Let me say again, you ought to go back and get the local paper and read the article about Teddy Roosevelt. You ought to think about what happened in the intervening 90 years. You ought to realize that we have an even greater opportunity now, and with it a greater responsibility to forge a new partnership to deal with the new possibilities of this bright new era. And if we seize this responsibility of ours, there is no telling what can happen—good and wonderful and positive for America.

So it is our duty, but it is our good fortune. You ought to go home tonight and thank God that you got a chance to serve the public at this moment in time. It is a rare time. And you ought to wake up tomorrow determined to do it with greater energy and enthusiasm and dedication than ever before.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:36 a.m. in the House of Representatives Chamber at the State Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. John Engler, Lt. Gov. Connie Binsfeld, Attorney General Frank J. Kelley, and former Gov. William Milliken of Michigan; Curtis Hertel, Speaker of the House; Mayor Dick Hollister of Lansing; House Majority Leader Ken Sikkema; Senate Minority Leader John Cherry; Senate Majority Leader Dick Posthumus; Rev. Wendell Anthony, Fellowship Chapel, Detroit, MI, who gave the invocation; William Schmidt, professor, Michigan State

University; and James J. Blanchard, Ambassador to Canada and former Governor of Michigan.

Statement by the President on the Death of President Cheddi Jagan of Guyana

March 6, 1997

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death early today of President Cheddi Jagan of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana. President Jagan was a respected statesman in our hemisphere of democracies. He was one of the founders of the People's Progressive Party and for over 45 years played an active role in his country's political life. I remember warmly our meeting at the Miami Summit of the Americas in December 1994. President Jagan was a champion of the poor who devoted himself to alleviating poverty in his country and throughout the Caribbean.

On behalf of the American people, I extend my deepest sympathies to the Jagan family and the people of Guyana.

Memorandum on Educational Excellence in Math and Science

March 6, 1997

Memorandum for the Secretary of Education, the Director of the National Science Foundation

Subject: Preparing Students to Meet National Standards of Excellence in Eighth Grade Math and Improving Math and Science Education

Since the early 1980s, U.S. elementary and secondary school students have begun taking tougher courses, and we are starting to see the results. National Assessment of Educational Progress scores have improved in math and science, with gains in mathematics equal to at least one grade level. On the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), average math scores are at their highest in 25 years, even as the number and diversity of test-takers have increased. However, the eighth-grade results of the 41-Nation Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS), released last fall, show that the United States is below average in math and just above average in science. That isn't acceptable; in this technology-rich information era, our students need to perform much better in both subjects, but especially in math, if they are to excel at higher-level math and science courses that are critical to college admission and success and to citizenship, productive employment, and lifelong learning.

The first step in raising achievement is lifting expectations and setting high standards for what students should know and be able to do. Our National Assessment of Educational Progress, TIMSS, and the standards developed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics give us a solid framework to build on. Last month, to help parents and teachers learn who needs help, what changes in teaching to make, and which schools need to improve, I asked the Secretary of Education to develop a voluntary national test for individual eighth-grade students based on widely accepted, challenging national standards in mathematics. The national test will be available to States and local school districts to give to their students in the spring of 1999, and will measure whether students have reached a high level of mathematics proficiency.

The primary responsibility for achieving high standards rests with students, teachers, parents, and schools in local communities across America. However, it is imperative that we work to ensure that Federal resources support student success as well. We must ensure that Federal programs, research, and human resources are used as effectively as possible to help improve teaching and learning.

Therefore, I direct the Secretary of Education and the Director of the National Science Foundation to form an interagency working group and to develop an action strategy for using Federal resources to assist States and local school systems to prepare students to meet challenging math standards in eighth grade, and for involving the mathematics, scientific, and technical communities in support of these efforts.

The action strategy should include recommendations for the use of Federal resources to help States, local school districts, and schools to improve teaching, upgrade