

Right after the Civil War, as the country was spreading westward and occupying the whole continent, the Congress provided for the establishment of land-grant institutions, like the great State universities in Illinois, in my home State, all across the country. Abraham Lincoln really oversaw it during the Civil War, the idea, but the institutions themselves were actually created after the Civil War. It dramatically changed America, the idea that we could actually give people a college degree who lived in a place as far west as Illinois, which was on the edge of the frontier when Mr. Lincoln was elected President.

Then, at the beginning of this century, we finally made public schools like this available to all of our children. People moved from farm to factory, from the country to the city, and it became essential that everyone at least have some basic education. After World War II, out of a sense of national obligation, we gave all of the veterans a chance to go to college, and it was one of the central elements in exploding the great middle class and creating the kind of middle class communities we have here in this consortium. It was a phenomenal thing.

Now, the Government did not do that for anyone. All it said was, you served your country; here's a college degree if you can get it—if you can get it. And that's the beauty of education; you can't really give it to anyone. You can put it out there, and you can help people, but the students themselves have to seize it.

Now, this has been an obsession of mine for a long time. I grew up in a State—when I was born in my home State, our per capita income was only a little over half the national average right after World War II. And I know that everything good that's happened there in an economic way has been in no small measure the result of our elevating the levels of education. In a much more personal sense, I am absolutely certain that I would not be standing here as President today if it had not been for my teachers. It is clear, and I'm certain.

When I became Governor almost 20 years ago now, we began to do things to try to help advance the cause of education. My daughter just had one of her best friends up here to the Inauguration who is a student at a school of mathematics and science that I established as one of my last acts as Governor. Dr. Kimmelman mentioned the National Education Goals, which were promulgated by the Gov-

ernors and President Bush in 1989. I had the honor of being the Democratic Governor whose job it was to draft the goals.

So I know a lot about those goals. And I thought they were very good then; I think they're better now, because the wealth of our country now no longer primarily depends upon our oil, our gold, our land, or our factories. It is now and will increasingly be measured in the minds and creativity of our people and our achievements in science and technology and also in the humanities, because we have to learn how to manage all this new power we're giving to ourselves.

We have to, in short, commit ourselves for the first time now to have the best education in the world, not just for the few but for the many. We have the best higher education system in the world; there's no question about it. But we do not have the best system of education in the world from start to finish for all of our children, and we cannot be satisfied until that is exactly what we have in the United States of America. Now, the Congressman said this; the Secretary said this; Dr. Kimmelman said this. In America, we have a unique heritage. Our educational system is a local system governed by local school boards and the people they appoint; governed by laws enacted at the State level, not the national level. And the Federal Government's role in education basically is a fairly recent vintage. It goes back about 30 years or so.

But essentially what the Federal Government has tried to do over time is to equalize opportunity in education by opening the doors of college to more people, by recognizing that some districts don't have the resources and some States don't have the resources to meet the needs of people, by dealing with the problems of populations who have needs that may be more expensive. And I think one of the great advances in education in my lifetime has been the provision of educational services through the school systems to students with disabilities, enabling them to achieve enormous things.

And then, increasingly, over the last 10 to 12 years, the Education Department has tried to do more in research and in spurring reform. And since I have been in this office, we have moved in all those areas. We've dramatically increased the number of people in Head Start. We've improved and expanded college scholarships, college loans, and work-study, adding