

the United States Senate, and Secretary Riley, who has been my friend since we started our governorships together over 20 years ago now. And I'm glad to see Mrs. Shriver here, and I thank the family of Congressman King for coming, my colleague in the Irish peace process. We're glad to see all of them.

But most of all, I want to thank Lissette Martinez and Leonard for showing up and reminding us why we're all here today, because they were great. When she held her children's pictures up here, I thought, if those kids and their parents are the future of America, we're going to be just fine—we're going to be just fine.

Even though the definition of well-educated was very different over 200 years ago when this country was founded, our Founding Fathers thought it was of pivotal importance. In 1787, they declared that all new territories set aside land for public schools, establishing the principle that public education, though a State and local responsibility, must always be a national priority. In 1862, President Lincoln signed the legislation creating the land grant college system. In 1944, the GI bill gave millions of returning veterans tickets to what became the first mass middle class in the history of the world. In 1958, the launch of Sputnik led to Federal funds to improve science and math education in our country. In 1965, Federal support for education expanded further to bring minorities and the poor, long shut out of the classroom, inside to the full benefits of public education. At each of these turning points in our history, our country strengthened public education to match the challenges of the times.

Now in our time, as others have said, we face another challenge, the emergence of a global economy that is fast-paced, technologically sophisticated, driven by information and, at the same time, the emergence in our country of a breathtakingly diverse group of young people, diverse by race and ethnic background, by religion, by culture, by income, by circumstance.

We now have an economy in which the workplace is no longer just for men but also for women; the workday is no longer bound by the hours of 9 to 5; and the workplace is increasingly at home. When I became President 6 years ago, only 3 million Americans were earning their living at home; when I ran for reelection, the number was 12. Today there are about 20 mil-

lion Americans earning their primary income out of their homes. This is a stunning statistic.

To meet the challenges of this new economy with our new society, we have to rely on our old values, but we have to make sure that we manifest them in modern ways. That means our public schools must change. They must teach our children while reflecting the way we work and live now and will work and live in the 21st century.

In the last 6 years we have worked hard on this, with the help of all of you in this room and those whom you represent throughout the United States. Forty-eight of our 50 States have now adopted tougher academic standards which we called for when the Goals 2000 program passed back in 1994.

Thousands of schools have become safer, better learning environments, cracking down on gangs and guns, violence and discipline, adopting school uniforms and other systems designed to create a better, more equal learning environment. The percentage of students who report being threatened or injured at school nationwide is down.

We've begun to organize an army of tutors to help elementary school children learn to read and middle school and high school students to prepare for college. And I'm very proud of all the young people all across America who are working in these tutoring and mentoring programs.

We've dramatically increased our investment in early childhood learning through the Head Start program. We're making real progress in connecting every classroom and library to the Internet by the year 2000. And as Secretary Riley said, the E-rate for which the Vice President fought so hard means that we've not only hooked up those classrooms, but they can actually afford to log on.

Last fall, we fought for and won from Congress a downpayment on 100,000 new highly trained teachers to reduce class sizes in the early grades, and we made a beginning on our proposal to offer to pay off the college costs of young people who will go into our most underserved areas and teach for a few years when they graduate from school. I hope the new Congress will keep up the payments so we can keep the teachers going. And I hope they will work with me to build or modernize 5,000 schools.

The charter school movement, which I have championed since 1992, is growing. When I took