

**PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION**

**East High School Speech
3/2/96**

**Hillary Rodham Clinton Speech
East High School
Erie, PA**

Welcome by Principal, Student Council President, and Mayor of Erie

Introduction by Ron DeNicola, 21st Congressional District Candidate

"Thank you, thank you, thank you very much. It is great to be back in Erie and I am so pleased to be here with all of you at East High School, thank you for inviting me. I've had some memorable trips to Erie both as a youngster traveling with my family when we would come every summer and some Christmas seasons through Pennsylvania on our way to Scranton where my Father grew up, with detours to Penn State where he played football. But I don't think I've ever had a time like that late, late night when the President, the Vice President and Tipper Gore and I came to Erie. We still talk about that, with the bus pulling up after midnight, and so many of you waiting there to greet us. And we have all tried in the last four years to keep faith with those of you who believed that this President would put people first and that's exactly what he's been doing. So, thank you very, very much.

I want to thank your Principal, your Superintendent, your School Board and the Faculty and Students here. I want to thank your Mayor and all the Elected Officials, because it is a privilege for me to come to talk with you about Education, and it's also a great pleasure to see a young man stand before you, one of your own, who understands what is at stake in this election and who stands up for what the real interests of the people of Western Pennsylvania are. I hope you will send Ron to Congress to represent you.

As Ron has said, he knows what it's like to work hard and to come from a family that works hard. He worked his way through school. He graduated from college thanks to federally backed student loans, and the GI Bill. He understands how education gave him a head start and he wants to be sure that he works along with the President to give that opportunity to all young people and here we are in a high school that perhaps more than any that I've been in represents what is at stake, what kind of future we want to have for all of us. I am thrilled that this community in partnership with GE has singled out this school to be one of the schools that will show the way into that future and I commend all of you for having that vision together.

And I also want to say a special word of congratulations to the marching band, which has done so well. My husband always congratulates the band having played in a band and knowing how much hard work is involved in that, Kerry, and I want to congratulate all of you and your fellow band members.

But what I want to speak about today is what is at stake in this election for the people who will be most affected, because you know this election is much more about Kerry and the students here than it is about me, or the Mayor, or the Principal, because it will be electing through our

votes the last President of the 20th Century and the first President of the 21st Century. And when we go to the polls in less than 4 weeks to cast our votes, I hope all of us will be thinking about our children and our grandchildren and the kind of future we want for them. And the key to that future is education. The President often talks about his vision for the future and he will say that he has 3 basic challenges for us to meet. First, he wants to establish opportunity for all Americans. A friend of mine called it, giving everyone the right to try, making sure we have a strong economy that is producing jobs, making it possible for people to afford quality health care, protecting our environment and investing in education and protecting and preserving the programs like Medicare and Medicaid and Social Security that have stood the test of time.

And the 2nd challenge is to expect all of us to be responsible, responsible for ourselves, for our families, for our neighborhood and communities, and country so that together opportunity and responsibility will add up to be a stronger American community. There is nothing more important than achieving the President's vision than what we will do about education. The President knows that education is a lifelong learning experience. It starts in the home with mothers and fathers who know they are our child's first teachers. It goes on from there into the kind of programs like head start that will prepare all youngsters to do well in school. We also then go into the elementary schools where we have to set standards and goals to achieve and the President has said he would like to see us all work with our teachers to make sure every student can read by the end of 3rd grade. And, one of the most important ways to do that is by respecting our teachers and valuing the work that they do every single day.

And just as you have decided here in Erie as you build this new high school of the future. The President has said we must be sure that every classroom and library in America must be hooked into the information super highway. We cannot, cannot let any child, no matter who that child is, be left out. We must enable every single student to be part of the information age. You are moving in that direction with this new high school that you are building, but we need to make sure every classroom in Erie, every classroom in Western Pennsylvania, is also hooked into what will be a most important part of the new global economy, the access and use of information. Just today, the President held a very important conference where he announced some additional initiatives: to use technology to improve education, health and family life, to build an internet infrastructure that will enable every community to be hooked in to the Internet, to have what he calls the Technology Literacy Challenge Fund and what he did today was to announce that there will be a partnership between the Federal government and the private sector.

Just as you are doing here in Erie, with your partnership between the school district and GE, you have led the way by demonstrating how together we can work to build this new kind of technological future. He announced today that a group of CEO's will be raising private dollars to match the federal dollars to use to convert every classroom, school and library to access to the Internet. It's very important that we get this done by the target date the President has set the year 2000.

And finally, the President called today for the Federal Communications Commission to set an

education rate so that schools can afford to use the Internet; so that when your new high school is up and going your students will be able to use it right away.

Now, if we do all that, if we prepare our students, if we respect and support our teachers, if parents become involved in the education of their children, if we do take on the challenge of the information age, then we must be sure that every student who graduates, who wants to go on to college can do so without regard to financial consideration.

Now I know one of the goals here at East High School is to double the college-going rate. Is that right? And I am very proud to hear that, because I want every student in this high school who is willing to work hard and take responsibility for their future to be able to go on to school and the President has a specific set of proposals that he wants to implement that would enable every student to do just that.

#1 He wants to set-up IRA's, accounts that you can have in your local bank, where you can take your money and put it in tax-free and take it out tax-free and use it for education.

#2 He wants to establish what the President calls Hope Scholarships that would enable every young person to have at least 2 years at a community college or a technical college, because every young person would be eligible for a \$1500 tax credit which would pay the cost for most community college's education anywhere in the country.

And finally, as the parents of a child who is looking to go to college next year, the President knows how expensive that is and he wants it to be possible for every family to deduct \$10,000 a year for the cost of college and post-college expenses.

Now, when the President makes these proposals, he makes them at the same time that he proposes a balanced budget, because his Balanced Budget Plan pays for those proposals, line by line and dime by dime. They are not part of a risky tax cutting scheme. They are part of building a stronger America by investing in education and paying for it as we go.

Now, if the President is able to get this done, it will only be because he will have members of Congress like Ron who understand the importance of education and will vote to support these plans. And you know it is a good investment for us all in this country to support the educations of our young people, because a good education is not only important for the individual and for that individual's family. It's important for all of us that we raise the educational skill levels of all of our people. That's why the President believes so strongly in providing these opportunities, but he knows and all of us know that nobody can make a student study, nobody can make a student go to college, ultimately the responsibility rests with the individual, so although the President wants to provide the opportunity, he also expects people to be responsible in taking that opportunity and making the most of it. Yet, we know also that if everybody in this auditorium got a good education and began to be economically better off than they could have dreamed, that also alone is not enough, because if you get a good education, but you don't have any feeling of

obligation for your community or your country, then you're not going to make a contribution to building that stronger America for the 21st Century. There are many, many societies around the world with educated and prosperous people who don't respect people who are different than themselves, who feel no obligation to help better their community. And we know what happens, we have seen it in the headlines and on the television newscasts. We know that if people don't try to help each other along life's way, then it becomes a battle for survival, and conflict and violence often results. I saw that first hand, I went to Bosnia last spring, I went at the President's request to thank our troops who are deployed there to try to implement the Dayton Peace Accords and it was spring break so I was able to take my daughter, and our first stop was Tuzla, which is the headquarters for our American Forces. And I met for a couple of hours with civilians from Bosnia, Muslims and Croats and Serbs. And I just listened, I listened as doctors and nurses told me what it was like to try to treat patients under bombardment. I listened as teachers explained how they had tried to keep track of their students only to find that they had been injured or killed or were missing. I heard women tell me when there were knocks on their door and when they opened it to see neighbors surrounded by strangers who had come to take away their fathers or their husbands or their sons and they had never seen them again. Person after person told me these painful personal stories. And they also said with pain in their voices and their eyes that they didn't know how these things happened to them. One man said, you know, Mrs. Clinton, the people who have led this ethnic cleansing are educated people, they not only have college degrees, they have advanced professional degrees. And yet they do not treat anyone who is different from themselves with respect. And another man said, I want to thank the President and the American people for giving us a chance to try to lead a peaceful and normal life, but more than that he added, I want you to know that we are looking to America as an example of a society that is able to work together and build a better future bringing many, many people of different backgrounds whose parents came from Italy or whose parents came years and years ago from Asia or so many other places around the world. I knew exactly what that man meant as I got into one of those large Army helicopters and went out to 2 of our base camps, Camp Elisha and Camp Bedrock, and as the helicopter landed and as I got out and I walked towards our soldiers who were waiting to greet me, what did I see? I saw men and women in uniform. I saw black and brown and white faces and as I began to shake hands, I heard the accent of every region of our country. And one soldier said, you know Mrs. Clinton, before I came here I really didn't understand what this was all about, but now I'm glad I did, because we are making a difference. Sometimes it's just little ways. He told me how they would clear a field of mines and then the farmer would come back to plant or all of a sudden next to a house that had been uninhabited they would see a line of wash and know that the family had come back or they would hear children playing. Things we take for granted. And another young soldier said, you know, these people all look alike and they are fighting and killing each other. He said, in the neighborhood I come from, people look different and you know whose on what side and you have to try to get along, but here it is so confusing, it doesn't make any sense, but I'm glad we're here, he said, because we're showing these people how we get along and we work together. I thought about that when I returned home and talked with my husband, because so often in our country we do take advantage of our blessings, don't we? We forget all that people have sacrificed and done to make it possible for us to gather here in peace and freedom in this high

school auditorium about to have an election that is free from violence and interference, because we are a democracy and we govern ourselves. And so when we think about this upcoming election, think about what's at stake as we look toward a new century. Think about the opportunities we want people to have for good jobs with rising incomes and the President's strategy to make that work. Think about making health care available and affordable. Think about protecting Medicare and Medicaid. Think about expanding Family Leave so that parents can come to parent/teacher conferences and be part of their child's education. Think about protecting the environment. Think about education and how important it is that we do all we can to give our young people the best education they can get. And think also about how each of us will try to be as responsible as we can be to take care of our families, to be better neighbors, to be involved in our communities and to care deeply about the future of our country, because when the President talks about building a bridge to the 21st Century, he means that it's not just his job, it's not just Ron's job when he goes to Congress, it is all of our jobs. All of us must be bridge builders. Everyone of us has a role to play. And if we invest in the education of all of our children, if we expect them to do well and we hold them accountable and we give them the help and the tools they need, then we can build a bridge that is big enough and wide enough and strong enough for all Americans to walk across into the 21st Century with confidence and optimism and hope and that's what I hope you will vote for in this election. Thank you very much."