

President Unveils Tech Initiatives for Energy, Health Care, Internet

Remarks by the President at American Association of Community Colleges Annual Convention
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THE PRESIDENT: Thanks for the warm welcome. Jessie, thanks for letting me come by and share some thoughts. You picked a great place to have a convention. What a great city Minneapolis is. (Applause.)

I -- Jessie's right. I spend a lot of time at the community colleges around the country because I see the community college system in America as such a hopeful place, a place where people can gain the skills necessary to become employable; a place where people can gain the skills necessary to realize dreams. The community college system is accessible and it's affordable and it's flexible. It's a major asset of our country. And I want to thank those of you who are here who are leaders in the community college system around the country. I want to thank you for your dedication; I want to thank you for your spirit; I want to thank you for your vision; and I'm here to say "thanks" on behalf of all of America. (Applause.)

Not only do I want to talk about the role of community colleges in our society today, but I want to talk about the role of community colleges in the out years as we promote a new generation of American innovation. I'm going to talk about the need for us to develop an energy policy that is based upon new technologies, new hopes, that will enable us to become less reliant upon foreign sources of energy, and at the same time, continue to improve our environment.

I want to talk about the use of information technology to improve medicine and to make sure we keep the patients at the heart of the health care system. And I want to talk about affordable broadband technology so that America can stay on the leading edge of technological change.

First, Jess, thanks for leading this august group. He's Tejano. Nothing better to be in the presence of a Tejano. Jess told me coming in here that -- I asked him where he was raised. He said, Southern California. He said he didn't speak English when he came to America at age five. His dad had big dreams for him. And here he is, years later, introducing the President of the United States in perfect English. It speaks to the great hope of America, doesn't it? It speaks to our great society that says to Jess's dad, you can realize your dream here. You can raise your son. You son can be educated and rise to an important position in making sure America is an educated society. Jess, I appreciate your determination. But I really appreciate the determination of your good father to see that you have a chance to succeed in the greatest nation on the face of the earth. (Applause.)

I want to thank George Boggs, the President and CEO of the American Association of Community Colleges for hosting us. I know you're going to honor my friend Rich Carmona, who is the U.S. Surgeon General. Rich is a graduate of the community college system. He's an interesting guy. He's doing a heck of a good job for us. I'm proud that he has agreed to serve our nation. And I'm proud of the fact that you're honoring him. You've made a really wise choice. And whoever the judges are to decide that Rich was the right person, congratulations on such good judgment. (Laughter and applause.)

I want to thank the governor who has joined us today. The governor is a backer of the community college system here in Minnesota. Governor Pawlenty is doing a great job for the people of this state and I'm proud you're here, Governor. Thank you for coming.

I also want to thank Norm Coleman, the United States senator. He flew down with me today on Air Force One. I'm not suggesting he was looking for a comfortable ride -- (laughter) -- but he got one. (Laughter.) He's a good fellow who's serving the state of Minnesota well, as are Jim Ramstad and Mark Kennedy, members of the United States Congress. I really appreciate you all taking your time to come and honor the crowd here today with your presence.

I want to thank the Speaker of the House, the Majority Leader of the state House here in Minnesota for coming. I want to thank all state and local officials who are here. It's awfully nice for you to come out and spend a little quality time with your President. (Laughter.)

I want to congratulate the 2004 New Century Scholars who are with us today. (Applause.) Thanks for aiming high. Thanks for working hard. Thanks for setting standards. And congratulations on achieving one goal in what I hope is a productive and happy life.

I also met a woman -- lady today named Melissa DuBose. She is a high school student. She showed up at the airport. And she's there because I love to herald soldiers in the army of compassion. I love to point out to people these heroic stories of citizens who are trying to make the community and world a better place.

You know, oftentimes we talk about the strength of America, and one of our strengths is our military. I intend to keep it strong. Another strength is the fact that we're a wealthy nation, and that's good. That's important.

But the true strength of the country is the hearts and souls of our citizens. That's the real strength of America. Our real strength is because we're a compassionate nation where people have heard a universal call to love a neighbor like you would like to be loved yourself.



Melissa DuBose is such a person. She travels to Honduras to help people in orphanages. What a lovely spirit that is, isn't it -- a high school student here in Minnesota spreading love and compassion for those who need it in Honduras. Melissa is just one example of many in this community who help feed the hungry, find shelter for the homeless, mentor a child, or helping to change our country and our world one soul at a time. I don't know where Melissa is. Where are you, Melissa? There you are. Why don't you stand up. Thanks for coming, and God bless your work. (Applause.)

We have the strongest economy of any major industrialized nation in the world. And that is -- it's an amazing statement, when you think about what this economy and our country has been through. And the reason I bring that up is because I know how important the entrepreneurial spirit is; I know how important education is to the future of this country. And I believe it was the spirit of America and our education system, in part, that helped us overcome the challenges we face.

We faced a recession. And those are tough times, obviously. They're tough times for workers looking for work. They're a tough time for small business owners who are worried about whether or not there will be capital available to expand. It was a very difficult period.

There will be an argument as to about why the recession was shallow. Of course, I believe it was shallow because people had more money in their pocket to spend, which made the recession one of the most shallow in American history.

And then, as we were recovering from that recession and a stock market decline, the enemy hit us. And that obviously affected us. Our economy lost nearly one million jobs in just three months after the attacks. Remember, the stock market shut down, airplanes weren't flying. It was a very difficult period. It was also difficult for our psychology because it was the first time we realized that we were a battlefield.

For years, when we grew up -- at least us baby boomers grew up -- we thought that oceans would protect us from harm's way. And then we learned a solemn lesson on that day. We learned the lesson that there is an enemy which hates us because of what we stand for. Because we love freedom, because we value freedom, because we work for free societies, there's an enemy which is willing to inflict harm. The enemy also is the kind of enemy we've really never faced before because they're willing to kill innocent women and children and men of all religions in order to affect our psychology.

So September the 11th was a tough hurdle to overcome. We will overcome it because we're a strong, resolute nation. And we will overcome it by staying on the offensive and bringing these killers to justice before they harm America again.

And as we were recovering from that, we faced corporate scandal. I don't know if you remember the period -- I clearly do -- that we were beginning to recover, and CEOs in corporate America didn't tell the truth, which shook the confidence of this country. In other words, these people weren't responsible citizens. They didn't tell the truth to shareholders, they didn't tell the truth to employees, and it hurt. We passed tough laws. We said there will be a consequence if you're not a responsible CEO in corporate America. We made it clear that we're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America. And the people in America are now beginning to see justice being done.

But we've overcome that hurdle. And then, as you know, I made a decision to protect the country against further harm. One of the lessons of September the 11th is that when we see threats, we must deal with them before they fully materialize. That's one of the lessons that our country must never forget about September the 11th. We can't hope a problem goes away anymore. We must deal with it.

See, my most important job is to protect the country. That's my most solemn duty, to make sure as best as we possibly can that the harm done to our citizens doesn't happen again. I saw a threat in Iraq. The Congress looked at the same intelligence and saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the same intelligence and they said, there's a threat.

So I went in front of the U.N. and said, why don't we do something about it now? The man has ignored you for ten years. For the sake of world peace, why don't do something about it? People felt that way, of course, because he had used weapons of mass destruction on his own people. They remembered that. They remembered he invaded his neighborhood. They remembered he paid suiciders to go kill Jewish people. They knew that he had relations with terrorists. We all saw a threat. And he hid. He said, no, I'm not going to listen to the demands of the free world. So faced with trusting a madman and hoping for the best, or working to make sure America's more secure, I will always make the decision to keep America secure.

And that's what we're doing today. We're acting to make sure the country is secure, and it's hard work. Our military is performing brilliantly. We must defeat enemy there so we don't have to face them here. But we're working for something bigger than just security, short-term security. We're working for free society in Iraq. You see, a free society is a peaceful society. A free society in the midst of a region of the world where there's hatred and intolerance will be a historic moment for change for the better.

I shared a story the other day during a press conference where I talked about a dinner I had with Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan. And we're eating Kobe beef. I don't know whether it's grown here in Minnesota or not, but it's real good. And it dawned on me in the course of our conversation that had we not gotten the peace right after World War II that I don't think I -- it's possible I wouldn't have been sitting with the Prime Minister of Japan talking about how to make the Korean Peninsula more peaceful. See, we're talking about North Korea. We're talking about the dangers of the North Korean dictator having a nuclear weapon; what it would mean for world peace. And then it dawned on me in the course of the conversation that one of these days, an American President will sit down with a duly elected leader in Iraq, from Iraq, to talk about how to bring peace to that troubled part of the world.

These are historic times. It's a historic opportunity to spread peace and freedom. I believe that freedom is not America's gift to the world, freedom is the almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world, and free societies will be peaceful societies. (Applause.)

The reason I brought that up is, I want to put it in perspective, put these statistics in perspective. The economy is strong and it's getting stronger. We've overcome a lot. I happen to believe it's because of pro-growth economic issues, but I also know it's because the entrepreneurial spirit is strong, the small business sector of America is strong, and there's great opportunities in this country. Retail sales are strong, interest rates are low, home ownership is at the highest rate ever, which is a fantastic statistic, when you think about it.

I mean, ours is a society in which we encourage people to own something. When you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of the country. We want more people owning their own home. The minority home-ownership gap, while it still exists, is getting better. We want everybody to own a home, not just a few, not just those who live in suburban America. We want home ownership to be a vital part of the future of our country.



Durable good orders are up. Industrial production in the first quarter rose at the fastest pace in nearly four years. In other words, things are getting better. There's renewed confidence. When people invest in equipment, it makes -- it means it's more likely somebody is going to find work. And that's what's happening. There are new jobs available.

But the problem we face in the short-term in America is some workers do not have the skills necessary to fill the new jobs. There are jobs being created during this period of economic transition. And yet, there are willing workers who don't have the skill set necessary to fill those jobs. And I think you'll find in different communities around the country, there are people looking for nurses, or teaching, or different technology fields of technology. And you know who knows this best? The community college system understands it best. (Applause.)

You know, the people closest to the situation in each community are those who can best devise a strategy to meet the growing demand for workers and the need to make sure the workers have the appropriate skill sets. I was in Forsyth County Community College in North Carolina where former textile workers are now getting the skills to work in biotechnology. There's these people, worked in one industry, the industry became non-competitive, and the government stepped in and helped. As you know, there's ample programs for worker displacement monies to help pay for community college.

But the most important thing that happened was that the community college administrators went to the local employers and said, what do you need? If you're looking for workers, what do you need? And they changed curriculum to meet the needs of the employers in that community and people are now getting the skills necessary to work.

The River Community College in Florida is opening a new center next May to provide cutting-edge training in robotics, in lasers, and phototonic [sic] technology. In other words, there's a demand for these kind of workers, and what the community college system does is it provides a fantastic opportunity for job training, for new educational opportunities. In Illinois and Ohio, community colleges have joined efforts to train workers to fill high-tech jobs in the manufacturing sector.

So the first thing I want to say is, thanks for what you're doing to make America a more hopeful place. Thanks for providing an opportunity for somebody who says, the job I used to work in is beginning to be transitioned out as our economy changes, and help me get the skill sets necessary to be employable.

I'll never forget meeting a lady in the Mesa Community College. And she was a graphic design artist. And she wanted to gain skills necessary to get -- make more money. She understood that with education, you become a more productive worker. She also said -- understood that productivity increases means higher pay. And so she went to the community college. She got an associate's degree. She got out. She got employed by a high-tech company. And she made more in her first year in her new job than she had made in her last year as a graphic artist.

See, not only does the community college system help somebody get employed, they help somebody to become a more productive worker. And there's a lot of talk about productivity in our society. Productivity provides interesting and important challenges. First of all, the more productive your workforce is, the faster your economy has to grow. See, if you've got -- if a worker can produce more goods and services per hour than in the past, in order to add new workers, the economy has to grow faster than productivity. And it's a challenge.

And that's why we can't become isolated from the rest of the world. We've got to reject economic isolationism. That's why we've got to have good legal policy. That's how we've got to make sure that the small business sector is vibrant. That's why we've got to make sure the entrepreneurial spirit is strong.

But it also is the reason why the community colleges are important for the future. Because if productivity is necessary for employment, it is the community college which helps the citizen become more productive. But it's also the community college which helps a citizen make more money. Productivity increases lift the standard of living for citizens in our country. After all, since 2001, the after-tax income of Americans has climbed by 10 percent -- over 10 percent. Part of it has to do is our workforce is more productive and the people of the community college system are making a vital contribution.

Now as we encourage innovation and change -- and I'm going to talk about three ways to do so -- but as we do so, as we make sure America can compete in the world by fostering new technologies, it is always important to remember the vital role education plays in our society. Technologies change, but the vital role of education never changes.

And it starts with making sure that when somebody goes to a community college, they can actually read and write and add and subtract, which is why we've got to get it right in the early grades in America. The No Child Left Behind Act is a vital important piece of legislation, and I'll tell you why. For the first time, in return for federal money, we have asked this fundamental question: Can you read and write and add and subtract? Are you teaching our children the basics? We've increased federal spending by 49 percent for public schools since I got sworn in. And what's changed is, we're now saying, show us whether or not a child can read and show us early.

Now, if you believe every child can read, then you're willing to ask the question, show us if they can read. If you believe they can't, then you're willing to accept a system that just quits on kids early and shuffles them through and guess who gets hurt: parents who may not speak English as a first language, inner-city black kids. It's easy to walk into a classroom full of kids that's "difficult to educate," they call them, and say, just don't measure, let's just move them through and hope we get it right.

See, I think that's backwards. I think our society has a got a challenge, what I call the soft bigotry of low expectations. I think we've got to raise the bar for every single child. And the best way to determine whether or not we are succeeding is to insist that states measure, to show us whether or a child is literate. (Applause.)

I've heard every excuse in the book about not measuring. Oh, you can't teach the test. You can teach a child to read and they can pass a literacy test. Oh, you know, we're testing too much. How do you know whether or not a child is moving through the system and can't read if you're not willing to say, let's be accountable?

Now, I think accountability is the cornerstone for making sure that we have a literate society. In the No Child Left Behind Act, there's money available to help students early before it's too late. We have got to stop this business about social promotion. We've got to be able to say, here's a problem, let's solve it early. Let's make sure there's additional money to focus on the kids so we don't have a pipeline full of illiterate children. Now, the No Child Left Behind Act is raising the bar and raising the standards, because I believe and I know you believe every child has the potential to learn.

Now, you've got to recognize, there are some kids who have been shuffled through. And that's why we need intensive intervention in middle schools and high schools. And so I'm working with Congress to pass the Striving Reader and Math Initiative Program, and that's a fancy word for saying we're going to intervene quickly with struggling middle-class -- middle grade and high school students. Listen, you can't, in a community college system, expect to be able to do your job if you spend a lot of time on remedial reading programs. We've got to get it right early and we will get it right early.

And at the same time, in order to make sure that we've got the skill sets necessary for what is a changing world, a changing economy, we need to focus on math and science in our public schools. And we've got a shortage of teachers in the public schools, and so we've laid out a program to encourage scientists and engineers from the private sector to teach in the public school.

We've got to reform the Perkins Act, which is a vocational training, which didn't emphasize the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century, it emphasized one aspect of job training. But there needs to be math and science as a part of the Perkins Act of the vocational training, so that the citizens who are coming out of high school can be worked with to make them available for the jobs of the 21st century.

The Pell Grant program is a vital part of making sure that people have the skill-set necessary for the jobs of the 21st century. My budget increases the number of students receiving Pell Grants. We've increased the number by a million since I took office. Four-hundred-thousand of those, 40 percent of those, are for the community college system here in America. Pell Grants are a vital aspect of making sure that we meet our fundamental obligations to provide people the skills necessary for the jobs that will be available.

I proposed an extra \$1,000 per year in enhanced Pell Grant scholarships for students who take a rigorous high school curriculum. In other words, there ought to be incentives for people to do better. We ought to be raising that bar, not lowering the bar.

We ought to be increasing standards. We ought to be expecting the best of every student in America. I proposed a Presidential Math and Science Scholarship fund to give scholarships in those fields to low-income students. In other words, what I'm telling you is, is that in order for us to be a society which is able to compete, in elementary school and in high school, we must raise the standards.

As well, we must support our community college systems. The community college systems provide great opportunity for people to go from high school to community college to higher education. That's important. The community college system also provides great opportunity for people who never went to college, who have worked, to go back and get a degree in order to help make themselves more productive.

And so, as Jessie mentioned, I proposed to Congress a \$250 million program to help community colleges form partnerships with local businesses. This is a practical way to help people find work. It's a practical way to make sure the skill-set matches the jobs of the 21st century. I think this will help train 100,000 more people a year. It's a way to keep America on the leading edge of change. You can't change as a society if you don't have a workforce that is capable of working in the new jobs of the 21st century. That's what I'm telling you. And the community college system provides the capacity for us to have the skill-sets necessary in our workers. (Applause.)

I know many -- I know many of you have been involved with the Workforce Investment Act. It needs to be changed. Listen to this statistic, we spend \$4 billion a year on the Workforce Investment Act, and pay -- that money paid for about -- training for about 200,000 adults. It doesn't seem like we're getting -- something may be wrong there. (Laughter.) We can do a better job with the money we're spending. (Applause.)

So I laid out a reform package, that we've got to give states more flexibility. You see, flexibility means you're more able to match -- you hear me say that, I'm going to keep saying it until we get it right here in America -- until you match the willing worker with the skill-sets necessary to be employed. That's what flexibility means. If you're inflexible in your system, it means you miss opportunity, it means you're not able to design a curriculum that meets the needs of the local community. It means that opportunity goes by. There needs to be a strict cap on overhead costs. If you're spending \$4 billion and 200,000 are trained, some of it is not going for the worker. It may be going to pay administrative costs.

And there needs to be a strict cap. We need to make sure there are clear results. You've heard me talk about results in the public school system. I think people need to be measured. I think we need to say, what are the results? If it's 200,000 for \$4 billion, the results aren't good.

Right now, there are so many goals, there are no goals. If you're involved with the Workforce Investment Act, you know what I'm talking about. There's all kind of measurement standards. The primary measurement standard is, are you using taxpayer's dollars in a good way to train people for jobs. That ought to be the standard. See, that's where our focus is. (Applause.)

America leads the world because of our system of private enterprise and a system that encourages innovation. And it's important that we keep it that way. See, I think the proper role for government is not to try to create wealth, but to create an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit flourishes. That's what I love about the country, the entrepreneurial spirit.

I'm sure you've met in your communities small business owners who had the big dream, started out with an idea in a garage, and now, are employing people. That's what we ought to encourage. And the proper role of government is to foster that kind of environment. You've heard me talk about ways to do so, make sure that we're -- we reject economic isolation and make sure tax policy encourages innovation and growth, and to make sure the legal system is fair -- listen, frivolous lawsuits make it awfully difficult for people to expand their businesses and people to find work -- make sure the health care system is vibrant and patient-oriented. I'll talk about that in a minute.

The government can help as well, though, by providing research scholars. I mean, one of the things we've got to recognize is that if we want to be competitive in the future, that we've got to encourage research and development so that the next wave of technology is America's wave of technology. In other words, if we want the people to be working here at home, this country's got to stay the leader in innovation and change and the government can help.

I proposed raising federal spending on research and development to \$132 billion since I -- from -- it's a 44 percent increase since I came in office. Look, that's a big number, but what I'm telling you is, is that the government can be a vital part of providing the research that will allow for America to stay on the leading edge of technology.

I think we ought to encourage private sector companies to do the same, to invest in research. And therefore, I believe the tax credits that are critical for encouraging of research ought to be a permanent part of tax code. They're set to expire. Congress ought to make tax cuts permanent.

But what I'm telling you is, there is a vital role for our country to make sure that we put investment in place that will make it easier for the country to compete in a worldwide economy, and therefore make it more likely our citizens will find work, so long as they have the skill set necessary to match the jobs.

Now, I also want to talk about three other goals of ways to make sure that we're the innovative society of the world. First, you know, we need a different energy strategy than the one we have today, a strategy that uses technology and innovation to diversify our supplies, to make us less dependent on foreign sources of energy, and to improve the environment.

The debate in America on energy policy has been almost zero-sum, when you think about it. It's like, they say that we must protect the environment and therefore have less energy, or they say that pollution is the price of progress. See, I disagree with either of those extremes. I think that we can use our technology and innovation to get beyond the false choices of the past and that we can have an energy policy that is -- meets our national objectives; which, by the way, is an innovative society. You can't be an innovative society if you're stuck on foreign sources of oil. You may be short-term, but long-term, I don't see how we can be the world leader if we're constantly dependent of foreign sources of oil. (Applause.)

So research and development is necessary to change the energy policy of the country. And you say, what do you mean? Well, I believe it's possible to grow our

way out of some dependence on foreign sources of energy. I mean, I can't wait to see the day when Minnesota farmers are out there harvesting corn that becomes an integral mix of the energy supply of the country. So we've got research and development to encourage biomass and effective ethanol -- the use of ethanol as a part of the new supplies of the American economy.

I think we have to have safe nuclear energy. I think we ought to be continuing to research and spend research dollars to make sure that we're able to properly harness nuclear energy without harming the environment. I think it's possible we do so.

I also know that we've got a plentiful supply of coal in our country, and that's why it's important for us to continue to explore clean coal technologies, so we can use the energy supply here at home in a way that is -- achieves, in a national objective, diversifying away from foreign sources of energy and protecting our environment. Technology and research will enable us to do so.

I want to talk about one other aspect of promising technologies, and that is the hydrogen fuel cell, which captures energy from chemical reaction between hydrogen and oxygen. See, it captures energy from a chemical reaction between hydrogen and oxygen. That's positive because the exhaust of that engine is water. It's -- and I'm confident we can achieve this technological breakthrough to the point where I've asked Congress to spend \$1.2 billion -- which they have -- in research into developing clean hydrogen powered cars.

We are making progress on hydrogen fuel cells, and that's positive. Private companies, including auto makers -- see, auto makers are beginning to see what the future is going to be like. They're beginning to see the need for diversification away from the current energy policy. They've already spent a billion dollars of their own money to develop hydrogen fuel powered cars and the infrastructure necessary to deliver hydrogen fuel.

See, one of the challenges is not only developing a car that works, but imagine the infrastructure changes necessary to fuel cars ten years from now. One of the things consumers like is they like to go to their neighborhood gas station. When you hear talk about development of infrastructures like go to your neighborhood hydrogen station -- and that's going to be a difficult hurdle in order to make sure that we've changed behavior here in America, but it's a hurdle that we've got to overcome. It's a necessary hurdle.

Today, the Department of Energy has selected recipients for \$350 million of research grants. In other words, the administration is now acting upon the Congress' appropriations. They're funding research into practical hydrogen fuel storage. So not only how you distribute it, how do you store hydrogen. They're encouraging the construction of hydrogen refueling stations around the country. We're beginning to change behavior. And they're helping scientists develop hydrogen fuel cells that can be used in heavy trucks and farm equipment and other industrialized vehicles.

See, when we get it right here, when we get the hydrogen car up and running, not only will it make America a better place, we'll become the innovator of the world. That's what we want to be. We want to be the leader in the world. We want to be the country that leads the world in innovation and technological change. (Applause.)

Another we can do so is to make sure the health care system leads the world in innovation and quality and safety -- always remembering, however, that the patient needs to be at the center of every medical decision. That's an important part of this. (Applause.)

Many of you have seen the advances of -- close hand of medical research. Just think of some of the advances that are coming. We're using a gene chip technology to help for cancer treatments. The world is changing dramatically in the field of medicine in many exciting ways. We're using brain imaging to discover the physical causes of mental illness. We're using tissue engineering to restore damaged or diseased tissues. And these are all incredible changes, and America is on the leading edge of change in medicines. And we need to keep us that way.

But one of the things that hasn't changed very much is the way doctors and hospitals do business. The 21st century health care system is using a 19th century paperwork system. Doctors use paper files to keep tracks of their patients. Pharmacists have to figure out the handwriting of a doctor. (Laughter and applause.) Vital medical information is scattered in many places. X-rays get misplaced. Problems with drug interaction are not systematically checked. See, these old methods of keeping records are real threats to patients and their safety and are incredibly costly. Modern technology hasn't caught up with a major aspect of health care and we've got to change that. We've got to change it.

I catch the story of a man name Bob Brown from Kalamazoo, Michigan. Maybe this will help people better understand why we need to change. Bob's daughter Elizabeth developed a rare form of leukemia. She had a complicated case and she had to see a lot of doctors. All told, Elizabeth -- that's the daughter's name -- regularly visited three hospitals and saw more than 50 specialists. Here's what Bob said about the paperwork that he had to deal with. "Every time we saw a specialist, we answered the same questions." He got fed up and he started getting copies of every note that a doctor added to Elizabeth's medical file. Eventually, he filled up two big binders with her medical records, which he carried everywhere he went so she didn't face delays or mistakes when she saw a new specialist. He says that fortunately, carrying those files around helped in his case. It helped get -- it helped get Elizabeth the treatment she needed in a faster way.

The problem is, is that he shouldn't be having to carry around the binders. The system is antiquated; it is old. They should have personal electronic medical files available that accurately and securely keep a patient's medical history, and in Elizabeth's case, her treatments. In other words, medicine ought to be using modern technologies in order to better share information, in order to reduce medical errors, in order to reduce cost to our health care system by billions of dollars. To protect patients and improve care and reduce cost, we need a system where everyone has their own personal electronic medical record that they control and they can give a doctor when they need to.

And so you say, how do we do this? Well, first you set a goal. Within ten years, every American must have a personal electronic medical record. That's a good goal for the country to achieve. The federal government has got to take the lead in order to make this happens by developing what's called technical standards. In other words, there needs to be standards. As you know, docs talk, like, different languages in different offices and there needs to be -- in order to have uniformity, there needs to be standards available, and it's a good role for the federal government, that will allow medical records such as x-rays and lab tests to be stored and sent electronically.

So step one is to set the standards. And we've done good work and we'll try to finish the standards by the end of this year. I say we -- it's the Department of Health and Human Services that are involved with this important project. We've set out money to encourage demonstration projects that will show the health care providers the need to use electronics to make their records system more modern.

As well, there's the senior department that we've announced today at the Department of Health and Human Services to coordinate these efforts with hospitals and medical groups. In other words, a proper role for the government is to take the lead in this case. And after all, we should; we spend enormous amounts of money in the health care field. I mean, we're a large provider -- spender for health care: Medicare, Medicaid, Veterans' benefits, employee benefits. And so the federal government must create the incentives for health care providers involved with the federal government to use medical records, and in doing so, will go a long way toward introducing IT, information technology, into a part of medicine that desperately needs it.

As we do so, I want to repeat what I said earlier. Patients will have control over their privacy. I fully understand there's a issue of privacy. And the people who

ought to determine the extent of privacy, their privacy, of course, is the patient, the consumer. (Applause.)

The third goal is to make sure that we have access to the information that is transforming our economy through broadband technology. I'm talking about broadband technology in every part of our country. I was the governor of Texas for a while. I remember talking about access to information and there was always a group of people saying, that's fine, big cities get it but rural people don't. I'm talking about broadband technology to every corner of our country by the year 2007 with competition shortly thereafter. (Applause.)

Educators understand the great value of broadband technology. I mean, the -- I'm not surprised that people involved in the community college system, when you mention broadband technology nod their heads. It's the flow of information and the flow of knowledge which will help transform America and keep us on the leading edge of change. And we've got to make sure that flow is strong and modern and vibrant. And by the way, we've got to make sure that there's competition for your -- for your demand. We need more than just one provider available for not only community colleges but also for consumers. In our society, the more providers there are, the better the quality will be and the better the pricing mechanism will be.

Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte is using broadband to conduct classes for students all across their state. You know, one of the interesting opportunities for the community college system is to provide education opportunities for people who work out of their home, for example. And the expansion of broadband technology will mean education literally will head into the living rooms of students. That will even make the system more flexible and more available and more affordable.

Same with health care. Again, if you're from a state where there's a lot of rural people, there's nothing better than to be able to transfer information quickly from a rural doc to a hospital for analysis in order to save lives. It's happening all around our country. The ability to send an x-ray image in seven seconds and have a response back in ten minutes with a preliminary analysis oftentimes will save lives. But you hear us talk about making sure health care is accessible and affordable. One way to do so is to hook up communities and homes to broadband. It's going to be a really good way for us to make sure the health care system works better and the education system works better. And it also is going to be an important way to make sure that we're an innovative society.

Now, the use of broadband has tripled since 2000 from 7 million subscriber lines to 24 million. That's good. But that's way short of the goal for 2007. And so -- by the way, we rank 10th amongst the industrialized world in broadband technology and its availability. That's not good enough for America. Tenth is 10 spots too low as far as I'm concerned. (Applause.)

Broadband technology must be affordable. In order to make sure it gets spread to all corners of the country, it must be affordable. We must not tax broadband access. If you want broadband access throughout the society, Congress must ban taxes on access. (Applause.)

Secondly, a proper role for the government is to clear regulatory hurdles so those who are going to make investments do so. Broadband is going to spread because it's going to make sense for private sector companies to spread it so long as the regulatory burden is reduced -- in other words, so long as policy at the government level encourages people to invest, not discourages investment.

And so here are some smart things to do: One, increase access to federal land for fiberoptic cables and transmission towers. That makes sense. As you're trying to get broadband spread throughout the country, make sure it's easy to build across federal lands. One sure way to hold things up is that the federal lands say, you can't build on us. So how is some guy in remote Wyoming going to get any broadband technology? Regulatory policy has got to be wise and smart as we encourage the spread of this important technology. There needs to be technical standards to make possible new broadband technologies, such as the use of high-speed communication directly over power lines. Power lines were for electricity; power lines can be used for broadband technology. So the technical standards need to be changed to encourage that.

And we need to open up more federally controlled wireless spectrum to auction in free public use, to make wireless broadband more accessible, reliable, and affordable. Listen, one of the technologies that's coming is wireless. And if you're living out in -- I should -- I was going to say Crawford, Texas, but it's not -- maybe not nearly as remote. (Laughter.) How about Terlingua, Texas? There's not a lot of wires out there. But wireless technology is going to change all that so long as government policy makes sense.

And we're going to continue to support the Federal Communications Commission. Michael Powell -- Chairman Michael Powell, under his leadership, his decision to eliminate burdensome regulations on new broadband networks availability to homes. In other words, clearing out the underbrush of regulation, and we'll get the spread of broadband technology, and America will be better for it. (Applause.)

I've come today to talk about practical ways to make sure we lead the world when it comes to innovation and change. And by leading the world when it comes to innovation and change, we'll make America a hopeful place for those who want to work, and those who want to dream, and those who want to start their own business.

And the community college system is an integral part of that strategy. That's what I'm here to tell you. It's an integral part so long as you're willing to listen to the needs of those who are looking for workers. It's an integral part so long as you continue to be entrepreneurial in the delivery of education. The community college system is a cornerstone of good economic policy. It's a cornerstone of sound educational policy. And it's one of the reasons why I'm optimistic that America will lead -- continue to lead the world when it comes to innovation and change. And that will be good for our people. That will be good for the revitalization of what I call the American spirit and the American dream.

I want to thank you for what you do. I appreciate your compassion. I appreciate your interest in the future of our country. May God continue to bless your work and may God continue to bless our country. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

END 10:20 A.M. CDT

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