

Mrs. Ford's

Remarks

National Legislation Conference, Congress of Parents
and Teachers

The White House; February 18, 1976

I'm delighted you could come to the White House, and I hope you'll enjoy browsing around these beautiful rooms as much as I do. Not long ago, I was visiting with some children. They wanted to know if I had seen any White House ghost. Well, I haven't, but I do feel the presence of the history that has been made here. History really is just the story of people, and so many of the important people of our past have lived or visited here. I hope you have that feeling too, because this house belongs to you and all of the American people.

I don't know many of you personally, but I feel like I do. Maybe it's because we share a love of children and a concern about their education. I've met so many parents in my many years in the PTA. At one point, I belonged to three separate PTAs, and I knew many dedicated parents and teachers working to make their schools good and happy learning places for children.

I've known many school principals and teachers who believed that parent involvement was the secret to a good school. The PTA gives parents a way to voice their interest in their child's school.

I feel very strongly the PTA is very important to the children as well as the school. I became involved with the PTA in 1958 when Mike was in the first grade and continued until Susan graduated last year. During those years, I found the PTA invaluable to me as a mother, because it gave me the opportunity to meet and work with the mothers of the children my children were going to school with.

My husband often spoke at the PTA on legislative problems that dealt with schools, and he arranged educational trips to the Capitol annually. We both benefited from the PTA, because we believe you don't just send children off to school, you have to go with them and share their world. We are a family that gets involved in each other's activities, and when the children were in school, the PTA helped us share their school experiences.

My children's friends came from every racial, religious and ethnic background, and by being active in book fairs and as room mother, I got to know their friends. This was so important to me.

With my children and in teaching dance, I found learning can be so exciting, but the atmosphere has to be just right. To me, this is what the PTA is all about--providing that atmosphere.

Even though my husband and I have officially retired from the PTA, we are still very concerned about good schools. Our Nation's future depends upon a sound education for our children. We commend your work in strengthening our schools and through them our children, and we share your concern about seeing that our schools are good, safe places for children to learn and grow.

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