

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the First Lady
(Amherst, New York)

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REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY
AT TOM REYNOLDS FOR CONGRESS LUNCHEON

The Buffalo Marriott Niagara
Amherst, New York

12:52 P.M. EDT

MRS. BUSH: Thank you, each and every one of you, for the very, very warm welcome to Buffalo. I appreciate it very much. Thank you, Tom, for that very kind introduction. Governor Pataki, thank you very much for joining us today and for your great work for the state for the last 12 years. Thank you very, very much, Governor. (Applause.)

Tom's wife, Donna Reynolds, is also here. When your spouse is in politics, you're involved whether you want to be or not. And we know that successful politicians have families who stand with them and are there for them all the time. Donna has been with Tom and supported his political life for 26 years. Isn't that great? (Applause.) And that's even more remarkable, considering that Donna, who is from Texas, is still a Dallas Cowboys fan. (Laughter.) Tom, of course, is a huge fan of the Buffalo Bills. So thank you, Donna, for your loyal support of Tom, and of my home team. (Laughter and applause.)

I'm delighted to be with each and every one of you today to support Tom Reynolds' campaign for the United States Congress. Congressman Reynolds serves as Deputy Majority Whip. At the beginning of the 109th Congress, Tom was unanimously chosen by his colleagues to be Chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee -- one of only eight Republican House leadership positions. But Tom is best known for his devotion to representing the people of New York. And in Washington, he's distinguished himself as a powerful advocate of the 26th district.

During his eight years in the House, Congressman Reynolds has brought almost half a billion dollars in federal funding to the 26th district. He's advanced health care in the region by securing federal investments at the University of Buffalo's Bioinformatics Center, and in the Roswell Park Cancer Institute. And Tom restored vital funding to the federal Manufacturing Extension Partnership program, which helps New York State's 26,000 small- and mid-size manufacturing companies compete in the global marketplace.

Tom brought to the House the principles of efficiency and accountability that he developed during his successful real estate career. He works to make sure that New York tax dollars are spent wisely and responsibly. And as a member of the House Ways and Means Committee, Tom helped eliminate taxes and regulations that have hindered economic development in upstate New York. By sponsoring legislation to extend relief from the alternative minimum tax, Tom has helped middle class New Yorkers keep more of their own money.

And he supports the President's tax cuts. These tax cuts have fueled our economy, and they've helped add 5.7 million new jobs since 2003. And that means 5.7 million more Americans wake up every morning with the dignity and the sense of purpose that comes with a job.

There are few people more dedicated to bringing jobs to New York than Congressman Reynolds. During the last round of base closings, Tom led the effort to save the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, saving 3,000 upstate New York jobs.

Offering young people the hope of good employment is one of the most important things we can do for our children. Another way we can help young people is by steering them away from dangerous behaviors and guiding them toward the knowledge and the self-respect they need to build successful lives.

In his 2005 State of the Union address, President Bush announced the Helping America's Youth Initiative, and he asked me to lead it. Helping young people learn to make wise decisions for their lives is at the heart of Helping America's Youth.

Since the President announced the initiative, I've traveled to many parts of our country. I've visited with young people and with the adults who are so important to their lives. I've been to schools and to after-school programs. I've visited fatherhood initiatives. I've met with mentors, and Big Brothers and Big Sisters. I've visited gang intervention programs, where I met with young people who are leaving gangs and finding jobs.

All of these visits led to the White House Conference on Helping America's Youth last October, and then to two regional conferences, one in Indianapolis and one in Denver. At the conference, we introduced an online, interactive Community Guide. This guide helps concerned adults learn more about the problems facing youth in their own communities, and they can learn what local resources are available to address those problems. The guide is available on the Helping America's Youth website, which is www.helpingamericasyouth.gov -- that's g-o-v. I encourage you to look at the website, and to use these resources here in Buffalo in your own community.

One of the best ways to help young people succeed is by providing them with a good education. And a good education starts with reading. In the House, Tom has been a champion of the Reach Out and Read program, which works with pediatricians to educate parents about the importance of reading with their children.

Reach Out and Read focuses on children between six months and five years of age, during the crucial early years, which is when children first develop their verbal skills. Through a network of more than 44,000 doctors, nurses and other health care professionals, Reach Out and Read delivers literacy advice and about 4 million books to more than 2.5 million needy children every year. At Reach Out and Read, the doctor actually prescribes reading, letting parents know how important it is for their child's brain health to have been read to. Congressman Reynolds has helped secure \$10.2 million in federal funding for Reach Out and Read. Thank you, Tom, for this very important work. I appreciate it very much. (Applause.)

We all know, though, that the well-being of young people in New York and throughout our country ultimately depends on our ability to protect them, as we've been reminded in recent days by the school shootings in

Colorado, Wisconsin, and this week in Pennsylvania. Families across the country are saddened and troubled by these attacks.

Next week, the White House, in partnership with the Departments of Education and Justice, will host a conference, a National Conference on School Violence. The conference will help affected communities heal in the wake of these tragedies, and will equip Americans with the information they need to ensure that their children can learn in safety.

But keeping young New Yorkers safe also requires protecting them from foreign threats, by defeating terrorism and increasing liberty abroad.

Congressman Reynolds appreciates the needs of our troops at this crucial time in our country's history. During the 1970s, Tom served for six years in the Air National Guard, and achieved the rank of Sergeant. And in Congress, Tom is a champion of the men and women of the United States military. (Applause.)

And thanks to our troops, the Iraqi people are now free from the oppression of Saddam Hussein, and are working to build a democratic future for their country. And in Afghanistan, women and girls can now be educated. It's hard for us to imagine a country that would prohibit half of its citizens from being educated. But now little girls are in school all over Afghanistan. (Applause.)

All of us are proud of the men and women who are deployed around the world, defending our country overseas to make sure that families are kept safe here in the United States.

Tom's dedication to the people of New York, and his achievements, remind us of why he must be reelected to the United States Congress. (Applause.)

Tom understands that America faces challenges too important to be reduced to just politics. President Bush has an ambitious agenda for the rest of his time in Washington, and he takes his responsibility to the American people very seriously.

Ending our dependence on foreign oil, reforming our immigration system, rebuilding the Gulf Coast, and keeping our country safe from terrorism are not easy tasks, but they're absolutely vital goals. To accomplish them, we must have serious national conversations, conducted with civility and respect. And Tom Reynolds is a thoughtful and positive part of that dialogue. (Applause.)

This is just one reason why Congressman Reynolds is a wonderful leader for New York. When you look through his distinguished record of public service, you'll find many more.

Thank you so much for coming out to support Tom. Thanks for your generous support for his reelection. I urge you to redouble your efforts between now and November to make sure Tom Reynolds is reelected to the United States Congress.

Thank you all very much. (Applause.)

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1:04 P.M. EDT