



Certificate of Appreciation

Presented to **THOMAS TANGRETTI**

in recognition of your presentation before the

KIWANIS CLUB OF DELMONT-EXPORT AREA

*Your contribution to our club is deeply appreciated.
We hope this certificate will serve as a lasting memento
of this pleasant occasion.*

Louanne Cavatta
President

Barbara J. Barron
Program chairman

June 11, 1992
Date

Rep. Tangretti Remarks

Kiwanis Club

June 11, 1992

(Usual Greetings and Acknowledgements)

It's a pleasure and a genuine honor to address so distinguished and public-spirited an organization as the Kiwanis.

The people of Pennsylvania depend a great deal on voluntary associations for the social fellowship they provide and for the public services they render to their communities.

And no organization is better suited to those purposes or does more to put those ideals into practice than the Kiwanis.

It's because of their interest in public service that the members of Kiwanis often occupy positions of leadership in their communities and its institutions.

And none of our institutions is of greater importance than our schools and the education they provide for our children -- yours and mine.

That's why I want to talk to you about education in Pennsylvania, its costs and its results.

Many of you have business backgrounds, so you understand the language of cost-benefit analysis.

And so did the young college graduate I heard of who went home with his fiance to meet his future wife's parents for the first time.

With the job market the way it is, this new graduate...a business major... had only one job offer, and not a very good one at that.

"I spent \$100,000 on my daughter's education," the father fumed, "and you want to marry her on an income of \$10,000 a year!"

"But sir," said the young man, "that is 10 percent on your investment."

Well, many of our taxpayers are having the same kinds of thoughts as the father did about their education investment.

It's surely an expensive proposition. Almost half our state budget...the biggest single item in the budget...goes to education.

Combining federal, state and local dollars we spend about \$11 billion dollars a year for elementary and secondary education...about \$6,600 per student.

Yet, while Pennsylvania ranks near the top in per student expenditures and we pay our teachers more in combined salaries and benefits than any state in the country, the measures of our schools' performance are dismal...3rd in illiteracy...45th in SAT scores...46th ~~in graduates going on to college...~~and we're ~~among~~ the highest in school strikes and the number of students affected by strikes.

Clearly, we can no longer blame our school performance problems on lack of money.

lost 69 PS
\$ 1.4 Billion
New money
70-75%
TO Salaries
& benefits-

While it will always be true that our schools must be adequately funded, it is equally certain that increased funding alone will not guarantee improved results.

Our problems go much deeper than that and call for new ideas...bold new ideas.

And many of these ideas are emerging, not just in Pennsylvania but in various ways and in various places around our country.

I'm sure many of you have seen the stories in the past few weeks of the president of Yale University, a man named Benno Schmidt, and his coming retirement from his prestigious post at one of our finest universities. - *Yale*

He's leaving to head what is called the Edison Project, a plan to create a nationwide chain of private schools to compete with the public school system.

Twelve states are now offering parents some form of choice within the public schools and one city -- Milwaukee -- is now providing kids who qualify economically with vouchers to attend private nonsectarian schools.

As many of you know, I am a sponsor of the school choice bill to provide the same kind of opportunities to Pennsylvania's parents and school children.

That bill was turned down in the state House last December on constitutional grounds, even though it is consistent with the kinds of public supported school choice programs that routinely operate at the level of higher education.

Programs like PHEAA loans and grants that are good at any college in Pennsylvania, federal Pell grants, and the G.I. Bill of Rights that is hailed as the greatest advance in education in this century.

Despite last year's setback, I believe school choice is still very much alive and is a trend that will accelerate and reinforce a number of other needed reforms of the education system.

Some of the other ideas that I believe deserve consideration and wider application include proposals such as:

The Magnet Schools that are already in use in some areas of the state. These schools offer educational opportunities for kids outside their neighborhood schools, especially in specialized areas of education. The use of Magnet Schools should be significantly expanded.

Decentralization and local autonomy. The more schools are freed from needless controls from outside the school setting, such as the state bureaucracy...mandates and administrative overhead...the freer education professionals are to organize their program effectively.

Expanding local control would enhance the professionalism of teaching, and expand the power of parents and school boards to control school policy.

Act 195 Reform. Pennsylvania has led the nation in strikes by teachers and school employees and in the number of students affected by strikes since Act 195 went on the books in 1970.

I believe enough time has elapsed and enough experience has accumulated to demonstrate the Act's weaknesses and the need for major changes.

There is no reason that any state which pays its teachers as well as Pennsylvania, should also have the level of conflict Pennsylvania has in its education system.

It isn't necessary to strip Pennsylvania school teachers and school employees of legitimate employment rights...far from it.

But experience has shown too many instances of privileges that have been abused...parents and students disadvantaged and left powerless to carry on their lives...and communities rent with conflict.

If these reforms have a familiar ring to those of you with a business background...the benefits of competition, providing parents with consumer choice in education, decentralized authority, labor reform...it's because the competitive market is the model for many of the changes that are proposed.

And it's an acknowledgement that the state monopoly on education is not meeting the needs of taxpayers, students, parents, and the society at large.

Indeed, people from the business community provide the core leadership for the movement that is advocating these reforms.

And not, as the opponents of reform would have you believe, a collection of fire-eating religious zealots who are out to shred the constitutional separation of church and state. Not at all.

In the final analysis, though, our primary concern should have but one focus: our kids.

The stakes for our children are simply too great.

It is their future, their livelihoods, and the society they will inherit that will be affected by the policies we make.

Which is why all of our policies and certainly our education policy should be deemed not so much "pro-business" or "pro-teacher union" or pro-anything else, but truly "pro-children."