

Governor Mike Pence
Jobs for America's Graduates
March 14, 2014
Remarks as Prepared for Delivery

Thank you all for having me here today. As Vice Chair of the National Board of Directors for Jobs for America's Graduates, it is my honor to join Indiana's Superintendent of Public Instruction Glenda Ritz and all of you in recognizing this outstanding group of young Hoosiers. I applaud all 125 of you for your hard work and for making it all the way to the state competition—selected from more than 3,500 statewide competitors.

I'd like to add my thanks for all of the JAG mentors and the schools that help implement this innovative program, as well as those outside of the school programs who work hard to keep JAG going. I know there is an exceptional community of people who support this program, including more than 2,000 employers statewide. I thank the leadership at Ivy Tech, for generously offering space here at your central campus for this competition, as well as the entities represented through the competition's judges, including:

- Indiana Dept. of Correction
- Dept. of Workforce Development
- Indiana Dept. of Education
- Commission for Higher Education
- Department of Child Services
- Indiana Housing and Community Development
- Ivy Tech/Vincennes University
- PNC
- TPM
- Noble of Indiana
- Vectren
- The Wabash Center
- Connected by 25
- Environmental Certification Lab
- Cook Group
- IU Health

I'm sure everyone in this room has a favorite teacher. Mine is my wife, Karen. She's spent her entire career in the classroom in a wide variety of schools.

When most people tell you about their favorite teacher or mentor, they tell you about the one who pushed them the hardest, who challenged them to grow; the person who held them to a high standard.

Our teachers and mentors know that setting high expectations works. Your presence at this competition is evidence of that. It also shows that you all have a teacher or mentor or maybe even two in your lives to whom you owe a big thank you.

The state of Indiana recognizes that each and every person who works with JAG is making a difference every day in the lives of the students you serve, and in our state. Thank you.

We believe in this program, and we believe in each and every student who is involved in it.

In my role as Vice Chair of the National Board of Directors for JAG, I work with fellow public servants to help the organization achieve its goals of increasing access for education, employment and the opportunity for higher education for our young people.

Our nation is experiencing the highest unemployment rate among teenagers and young adults in American history.

We cannot overstate the value of a good education and of the opportunity for career-based learning in our classrooms. When we look at our workforce and ways to improve it, we must begin and end with education. From pre-K to high school and beyond, a young person's learning makes the difference between graduation and a constant game of catch-up throughout their lives.

JAG fully understands this importance and has one of the highest impacts of improving employment of any program assessed in the past 34 years by the Center for Labor Market Studies.

And here in Indiana, I can assure you that when it comes to career pathways and opportunities for education for young Hoosiers, our state's goals are aligned closely with those of JAG.

As many of you may know, the very first policy goal we announced when I interviewed for my current job was to reprioritize career, technical and vocational education in every high school in Indiana.

And we've already made strides to make that goal a reality.

In 2006, when Indiana implemented JAG, the program served 217 students at 12 in-school programs statewide. It continued to steadily grow and reach positive outcomes with 91 percent of young people graduating in the 2012-2013 school year. Moreover, they earned more than 2.3 million in scholarships—the highest of all JAG states nationwide.

The program was working, and we wanted to show our full support.

Until 2013, Indiana was the only JAG state among 34 that was funded entirely by federal Workforce Investment Act dollars. Last year, with the help of leadership in the Indiana General Assembly, we secured 6 million dollars in state funding allocated each year of the current biennium—the first time state funding has been directed to JAG. With this funding, the organization has the necessary capital to hire JAG specialists in the new schools districts, expand existing districts to full capacity, and expand local community coordinators—which are key to Indiana’s successful program—who connect JAG students with employers and the WorkOne system.

As a result, the 2013-2014 JAG Indiana has expanded to 105 in-school programs and 12 out-of-school programs in 2014, having the potential to serve more than 5,000 youth. These efforts are certainly worthy of our applause today.

I want Indiana’s schools to work for all of our kids, regardless of where they start in life or want to start in life. I want young Hoosiers to find their passion, set goals, and achieve them. And once they’ve received the education they need—whether it’s learning new skills or earning a higher education—I want them to stay here in Indiana, start businesses, run businesses, raise families, and contribute to the economy and culture of Indiana.

My job as Governor is to help make Indiana such a great place for you to live, grow, work and thrive that you wouldn’t think of going any place else.

So how do we do that?

We start by creating good jobs and by recognizing that education is critical to our success in job creation. Our state’s education system – including programs like JAG – play a key role in Indiana’s economic development, both because strong schools help companies attract talented employees and because they develop the quality employees of the future – smart, well-prepared young people just like you.

Getting results in our schools will pay off in new jobs, higher wages and great opportunities for you, our kids, and for all of us in the Hoosier state.

If we want to get Indiana's economy moving again, we have to continue to push for better results for our students. It is the right thing to do for you and your classmates, for your parents, and ultimately, for Indiana's economic future.

There is no better way for you to improve your state, your country, or your world, than to improve yourself. You are already on the path to making this world a better place. Keep up the good work.